

## STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS A CAREER IN THE HOMESTAY INDUSTRY IN SABAH

*(Persepsi Pelajar Terhadap Kerjaya dalam Industri Inap Desa di Sabah)*

Ku Intan Putra Ku Husin\*

Politeknik Tawau Sabah, KM36, Jalan Balung, 91009 Tawau, Sabah, Malaysia

---

### ABSTRACT

The homestay industry nowadays is seen growing rapidly and it is considered as a branch of entrepreneurial career and a profitable source of income. As a career in entrepreneurship requires a high level of skill compared to a salary job, so there are various perceptions about the challenges of entrepreneurship. Therefore, this study was conducted to see how far the students' perception towards a career in the homestay industry. The research instrument used is a questionnaire that has been distributed to Tawau Polytechnic diploma students. The sampling technique used is random sampling. The data obtained was analyzed descriptively using SPSS v.23 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software. A total of 55 have answered the questionnaire. The findings of the study analysis show that most respondents agree with the study items. Therefore, the findings of the study explain that many respondents have a positive perception of a career in the homestay industry and consider this industry interesting. However, even though they have a positive perception in the homestay field, many respondents are not sure if they have the desire to build a career in the homestay business. The implications of this study explain the need for exposure related to the ins and outs of the homestay business from the homestay entrepreneurs themselves so that students understand that there is a wide opportunity and potential for the homestay industry in Sabah.

**Keywords:** Student perception; homestay business; profit potential

---

\* Corresponding author: Ku Intan Putra Ku Husin, Politeknik Tawau Sabah, KM36, Jalan Balung, 91009 Tawau, Sabah, Malaysia,  
email: [kuintanputra@gmail.com](mailto:kuintanputra@gmail.com)

Received: 29 April 2023

Accepted: 29 February 2024

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17576/JH-2024-1601-06>

## ABSTRAK

*Industri inap desa pada masa kini dilihat berkembang pesat dan ia dianggap sebagai satu cabang kerjaya keusahawanan dan sumber pendapatan yang menguntungkan. Memandangkan kerjaya dalam bidang keusahawanan memerlukan kemahiran yang tinggi berbanding pekerjaan makan gaji, maka timbullah pelbagai persepsi tentang cabaran keusahawanan. Justeru, kajian ini dijalankan untuk melihat sejauh mana persepsi pelajar terhadap kerjaya dalam industri inap desa. Instrumen kajian yang digunakan ialah soal selidik yang telah diedarkan kepada pelajar diploma Politeknik Tawau. Teknik persampelan yang digunakan ialah persampelan rawak. Data yang diperolehi dianalisis secara deskriptif menggunakan perisian SPSS v.23 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Seramai 55 orang telah menjawab soal selidik. Dapatan analisis kajian menunjukkan kebanyakan responden bersetuju dengan item kajian. Oleh itu, dapatan kajian menjelaskan bahawa ramai responden mempunyai persepsi positif terhadap kerjaya dalam industri inap desa dan menganggap industri ini menarik. Namun, walaupun mereka mempunyai persepsi yang positif dalam bidang inap desa, ramai responden tidak pasti sama ada mereka mempunyai keinginan untuk membina kerjaya dalam perniagaan inap desa. Implikasi kajian ini menjelaskan perlunya pendedahan berkaitan selok belok perniagaan inap desa daripada pengusaha inap desa itu sendiri supaya pelajar faham bahawa terdapat peluang dan potensi yang luas untuk industri inap desa di Sabah.*

**Kata kunci:** *Persepsi pelajar; perniagaan inap desa; potensi keuntungan*

## INTRODUCTION

Malaysian graduates have been challenged with the issue of unemployment with the increasing trend in the unemployment rate in recent years. The increasing rate of unemployment in Malaysia among graduates in Malaysia (Rahim & Kamis 2023) is worrying because this issue can lower the image of the education system in Malaysia and subsequently may cause some companies to lose confidence in our local graduates (Kadir et al. 2020; Tahrir et al. 2023). Graduates who cannot find a job within the scope of their studies are forced to find a job unrelated to their field. Unfortunately, most employers rarely accept graduates from other fields to avoid any risk in the future. According to Mohd Yahya (2005), A total of 17 graduate people (31.5%) said that the reason given by the employer was their qualifications do not match the position they are applying for. This is because they have no expertise in the field and may require high training costs for new employees. Thus, the study of Kadir et al. 2020, urges that the cause of this problem be given immediate attention. One of the growing industries is the tourism and recreation industry and this situation opens bright job opportunities. As reported by Yusop Teppo (2021), Sabah is an interesting

and growing attraction for the tourism industry. Sabah has emerged as a captivating destination in the tourism industry due to several compelling reasons. Firstly, its rich biodiversity, including pristine rainforests, diverse marine life and unique flora and fauna, offers unparalleled opportunities for eco-tourism and nature-based adventures. Secondly, Sabah boasts stunning natural landscapes, such as majestic mountains, breathtaking islands and picturesque beaches, which attract adventure seekers, beach lovers and photographers alike. Additionally, the state is renowned for its vibrant cultural heritage, with indigenous tribes showcasing traditional customs, dances and crafts, providing visitors with immersive cultural experiences. Furthermore, Sabah's strategic location within the Coral Triangle makes it a prime spot for diving and snorkelling enthusiasts, offering unparalleled opportunities to explore vibrant coral reefs and encounter diverse marine species. Overall, Sabah's diverse attractions and unique experiences continue to position it as a rising star in the tourism industry. Following this, the homestay industry is a branch of the tourism industry and is seen as an entrepreneurial career and a profitable business (Kasuma et al. 2016). According to the Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture (Bernama 2020), the homestay industry in Sabah recorded positive growth and is one of the highest earning in Malaysia with an income of over RM6 million in 2019. Of that amount, Seri Serbang Homestay in Bongawan alone enjoys an income of approx. about RM2.02 million with 68,269 guests including from abroad.

The homestay industry in Sabah holds promising potential as a career path, yet there remains a gap in understanding students' perceptions toward pursuing employment within this sector. Despite the burgeoning tourism industry in Sabah, particularly in the realm of homestays, little research has been conducted to explore students' attitudes and inclinations toward embracing careers within this domain. Understanding students' perceptions is crucial for several reasons: it provides insights into the appeal and viability of homestay careers among the youth, offers guidance for educational institutions and policymakers in aligning curriculum and training programs with industry demands and aids in identifying potential barriers or misconceptions that may hinder the recruitment and retention of talent within the homestay sector. Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by investigating students' perceptions toward a career in the homestay industry in Sabah, shedding light on their attitudes, motivations and concerns, thus contributing to the enhancement and sustainability of the homestay sector in the region. Based on this situation, are students interested in venturing into the homestay industry? Or do they at least have a positive perception of the homestay industry? Therefore, this study was conducted to see how far the students' perception of a career in the homestay industry.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

The objective of this study is to assess the extent of students' perceptions regarding potential career opportunities within the homestay industry. Studying students' perceptions towards a career in the homestay industry is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, understanding their perceptions can provide valuable insights into their attitudes, interests and motivations regarding potential career paths in this sector. By identifying their perceptions, educators, policymakers and industry stakeholders can tailor educational programs, training initiatives and promotional efforts to better align with students' expectations and aspirations. Moreover, exploring students' perceptions can also help identify any existing misconceptions, barriers, or gaps in knowledge that may hinder their interest or participation in the homestay industry. Ultimately, by gaining a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions, stakeholders can develop strategies to attract, retain and empower a skilled workforce for the homestay industry, contributing to its sustainable growth and development. Therefore, this study is important to give exposure to students about career paths in the homestay field for students who have a deep interest.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Currently, there are 140 homestays with 227 villages throughout Malaysia with a total of 3,264 houses offering 4,463 rooms as of June 2009. This number is predicted to increase in the future (Yassin & Ramlan 2015). Nowadays, Sabah is also seen as a growing tourist destination centre (Yusop Teppo 2021). Sabah is an attractive tourist destination for various reasons that attract tourists worldwide (Muin et al. 2023). First, the natural beauty of Sabah (Abdurahman et al. 2023), which is stunning, includes the famous volcano, Mount Kinabalu (Nordin et al. 2023), as well as national parks rich in biodiversity, such as Kinabalu Park and Tun Sakaran Marine Park. In addition, Sabah offers exceptional diving experiences in areas such as Sipadan Island, which is a prime destination for seeing the diversity of marine life (Ramlee & Saat 2023). The uniqueness of Sabah's local culture, which consists of various ethnicities such as Kadazan-Dusun, Bajau and Murut, is also an attraction of its own (Samsul et al. 2023). In addition, tourists can also enjoy activities such as travelling to traditional villages, tasting delicious local dishes and participating in lively cultural festivals (Abdurahman et al. 2023). With a combination of natural beauty, cultural diversity and various exciting tourist activities, Sabah maintains its position as a popular and attractive destination. As such, the homestay business in Sabah plays an essential role in the tourism industry because it allows tourists to experience living with the local community. This situation has encouraged creativity and innovation in the tourism industry to achieve the target of 36 million tourist arrivals and an income of RM

168 billion by 2020 (Amin & Ibrahim 2015). The homestay program empowers local communities to become homestay entrepreneurs. This is an opportunity for the local community to contribute to the local economy and poverty reduction (Kasim et al. 2016). According to Yong et al. (2021) and Samsul & Hussin (2021), community participation in the homestay business in Sabah is increasing, which has given good indications. (Yong et al. 2021). This means that there is a big opportunity for sustainable development in homestay programs that bring economic benefits to local participants (Pusiran & Xiao 2013).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology used in this study is based on a survey questionnaire. It consists of four parts, namely demographic profile, perception related to a career in the homestay industry and the desire to develop a career in the homestay field. The measurement scale uses a 5-point Likert scale; ranging from a score of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The choice between a 5-point and a 7-point Likert scale depends on various factors such as the level of detail needed, the complexity of the construct being measured and the respondents' ability to comprehend and provide accurate response. It reduces respondent burden and the cognitive effort required to decide, potentially leading to higher response rates and fewer missing data. A simple random sampling technique was used to collect data among Diploma in Tourism and Hospitality students at Tawau Polytechnic. Simple random sampling is often used because it ensures that every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected for the sample. It provides an unbiased representation of the population, meaning that everyone has an equal opportunity to be included in the sample. This helps to minimize sampling bias and ensures that the sample accurately reflects the characteristics of the entire population. The questionnaire was distributed online using Google Form. The data gathering process involved designing a questionnaire tailored to the research objectives and distributing it via Google Forms to a selected group of respondents. The online platform allowed for easy dissemination of the survey link, enabling respondents to provide their feedback conveniently. Responses were monitored in real-time, with reminders sent to encourage participation and ensure a sufficient sample size. Upon completion, the collected data were exported for analysis, where patterns and insights were identified to address the research questions effectively. Throughout the process, ethical considerations were upheld to maintain the confidentiality and integrity of the data collected. The sampling method of Krejci and Morgan (1970) was used and it was very helpful to simplify the sample size. A total of 55 students answered this question and this number is considered sufficient because only two classes (population 60) were involved in this study. The data was then analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS v.23). Analytical techniques use descriptive statistics consisting of scale descriptions, reliability checks, mean and standard deviation.

## RESULT

### 1. Respondent Profile

Table 1 provides demographic and background information about the respondents, which can shed light on their perspectives regarding potential career opportunities within the homestay industry. Firstly, the gender distribution indicates that most of the respondents are female (69.1%), which may influence their perceptions and preferences towards career options, including those within the homestay sector. Additionally, the distribution of student residence reveals that a significant proportion of respondents come from rural areas (36.4%) and inland regions (30.9%), suggesting that they may have firsthand experience or exposure to homestay accommodations in these areas, potentially influencing their perceptions of career opportunities within the industry. Furthermore, the data on family involvement in homestay businesses (9.1%) and respondents' knowledge about homestays (40.0%) indicate varying levels of exposure and familiarity with the industry among the respondents. Those with family involvement or knowledge about homestays may have more positive perceptions of career opportunities within the sector due to their existing connections or understanding of the industry. Similarly, respondents who have attended seminars or courses related to homestays (10.9%) may have a better understanding of the potential career paths available within the industry, influencing their perceptions accordingly. Moreover, the information on respondents' knowledge of suitable locations for homestays (52.7%) and availability of a house for homestay purposes (12.7%) provides insights into their readiness and resources to potentially venture into homestay businesses. Those who possess knowledge of suitable locations or have a house available may be more inclined to consider homestay-related careers, viewing them as viable and accessible options.

TABLE 1 Profile of Respondents

Item	n	%	
Gender	Male	17	30.9
	Female	38	69.1
Student residence	City	15	27.3
	Isolated area	3	5.5
	Rural	20	36.4
	Inland	17	30.9

Your family is working on a homestay	No	50	90.9
	Yes	5	9.1
Have knowledge about homestay	No	33	60.0
	Yes	22	40.0
Ever attended a seminar/course related to the homestay industry	No	49	89.1
	Yes	6	10.9
Have knowledge of suitable locations for homestays	No	26	47.3
	Yes	29	52.7
Have a house to be used as a homestay	No	48	87.3
	Yes	7	12.7

## 2. Analysis of study items

Table 2 is an analysis of the student's perception and desire to build a career in the homestay field. On average, the majority of students have a moderate perception (mean score = 3.00 - 3.99) of homestay. This finding refers to the mean as follows: 1.00– 1.99 (Weak), 2.00– 2.99 (Low), 3.00– 3.99 (Moderate) and 4.00– 5.00 (High). Meanwhile, the item of desire to build a career in the homestay field is also at a medium level (mean score = 3.00 - 3.99). Based on the mean score analysis, three items that have an highest score for perception of the homestay industry are, I think the homestay industry is a career branch in the tourism and hospitality industry (mean score = 3.98); I think, there are still many opportunities to generate profit through the homestay industry in Sabah (mean score = 3.95); and For me, tourists will choose a homestay because of the price factor (mean score = 3.91). Meanwhile, the three items that have least score are, in my opinion, the homestay industry in Sabah is still lacking (mean score = 3.55); I think that the income in the homestay industry is good (mean score = 3.84); and I think foreign tourists prefer homestays rather than hotels (mean score = 3.85). Meanwhile the highest mean score for the desire to build a career in the homestay field are If I have capital, I will open my own homestay (mean score = 3.93) and the lowest mean score are I have a strong desire to own a homestay business (mean score = 3.44).

TABLE 2 Student Perception and Desire to Build a Career in the Homestay Field

No	Study item	Conbach's Alpha	Standard deviation	Mean score
<i>Perception of the homestay industry</i>				
1	I think the idea of getting involved in the homestay industry is very interesting	0.95	1.12	3.89
2	I think the homestay industry is a growing industry with many career opportunities		0.99	3.91
3	I think that the income in the homestay industry is good		0.98	3.84
4	I think the homestay industry is a career branch in the tourism and hospitality industry		0.97	3.98
5	In my opinion, the homestay industry in Sabah is still lacking		1.03	3.55
6	I think, there are still many opportunities to generate profit through the homestay industry in Sabah		0.87	3.95
7	I think foreign tourists prefer homestays rather than hotels		1.08	3.85
8	For me, tourists will choose a homestay because of the price factor		1.04	3.91
9	In my opinion, the homestay industry opens up lucrative employment opportunities		0.93	3.91
10	The homestay industry is a profitable branch of entrepreneurship		0.98	3.89
<i>The desire to build a career in the homestay field</i>				
11	I have a strong desire to own a homestay business	0.94	0.94	3.44
12	I intend to develop a career related to the homestay industry after graduation		1.03	3.47
13	If I haven't found a job yet, I'm interested in a career in the homestay industry		1.02	3.69



---

14	If I have capital, I will open my own homestay	1.07	3.93
15	I will prepare myself with the skills to venture into the homestay business	1.03	3.80

---

## **CONCLUSION**

The study examined students' perceptions of careers in the homestay industry, revealing generally positive attitudes toward various aspects of the industry. Respondents expressed interest in involvement, acknowledging it as a growing sector with ample career opportunities and good income potential. They recognized the homestay industry's significance within the broader tourism and hospitality sector but noted some deficiencies in Sabah's homestay offerings. However, they remained optimistic about the industry's profit potential and its role in providing lucrative employment opportunities. Overall, the findings underscore the favourable outlook toward the homestay industry among students, emphasizing its potential for growth and economic development in Sabah. Therefore, the results of the analysis of the study show that many respondents have a positive perception of careers in the homestay industry and consider this industry to be interesting. The Homestay program and community involvement is one of the initiatives to develop rural communities especially in Sabah and Malaysia. This is because the implementation of the program contributes to the increase of Malaysia's economic income as well as helps to improve the socio-economy of community members that are involved. Nevertheless, the findings show that many respondents are not sure whether they have the desire to develop a career in the homestay field. The implications of this study explain that there is a need for exposure related to the homestay business from the homestay entrepreneurs themselves as well as encouragement from a tourism-based environment so that students understand that there are opportunities and wide potential for the homestay industry especially in Sabah.

## **IMPLICATION, LIMITATION AND SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The implications of the findings for the homestay industry in Sabah are significant. Understanding students' positive perceptions of careers in the homestay sector can inform strategies to attract and retain talent in the industry, ultimately contributing to its growth and sustainability. Educational institutions and industry stakeholders in Sabah can utilize these insights to tailor educational programs, internships and mentorship initiatives that align with students' career aspirations in the homestay sector. Policymakers can also leverage this information to develop supportive policies

and incentives aimed at fostering entrepreneurship and innovation within the homestay industry in Sabah.

However, it's important to acknowledge the limitations of the study. The findings may not fully capture the diverse perspectives and experiences of all student populations in Sabah, as the study may have focused on specific demographics or geographical areas. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data through questionnaires may have introduced response bias and the cross-sectional nature of the study limits the ability to establish causal relationships or observe changes in perceptions over time. External factors such as cultural, economic, or environmental influences may also have affected students' perceptions and intentions to enter the homestay business in Sabah.

Future research could address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs to track changes in students' perceptions over time and utilizing qualitative methods to gain deeper insights into the underlying reasons behind their career aspirations in the homestay sector. Comparative studies across different regions or countries could also shed light on the cultural and contextual factors influencing students' intentions to enter the homestay business. Moreover, exploring the role of mentorship, internships and experiential learning opportunities in shaping students' perceptions and career decisions within the homestay industry could provide valuable insights for future research and industry development efforts in Sabah.

## REFERENCE

- Amin, A. & Ibrahim, Y. 2015. Model of sustainable community participation in homestay program. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 6(3): 539–545.
- Bernama. 2020. Positive growth for Sabah homestay industry. *TheStar*, 14 Januari 2020. [www.thestar.com.my/metro/metro-news/2020/01/14/positive-growth-for-sabah-homestay-industry](http://www.thestar.com.my/metro/metro-news/2020/01/14/positive-growth-for-sabah-homestay-industry).
- Kadir, J. M. A., Naghavi, N. & Subramaniam, G. 2020. Unemployment among graduates-Is there a mismatch?. *International Journal of Asian Social Science* 10(10): 583-592.
- Kasim, M. M., Kayat, K., Ramli, R. & Ramli, R. 2016. Sustainability criteria for the Malaysia homestay programme. *International Review of Management and Marketing* 6: 1–7.

- Kasuma, J., Esmado, M. I., Yacob, Y., Kanyan, A. & Nahar, H. 2016. Tourist perception towards homestay businesses: Sabah experience. *Journal of Scientific Research and Development* 3(2): 7-12.
- Pusiran, A. K. & Xiao, H. 2013. Challenges and community development: A case study of homestay in Malaysia. *Asian Social Science* 9 (5): 1-17.
- Yassin, A. M. & Ramlan, R. 2015. Homestay entrepreneurs-drivers and barriers. *Advanced Science Letters* 21 (5): 1494-1496.
- Yong, K., Zainal, N. T. A. & Chekima, B. 2021. The relationship between entrepreneurial competencies and entrepreneurial success among homestay entrepreneurs in Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 11(6): 99-114.
- Rahim, M. A. R. A. & Kamis, U. M. 2023. Mengatasi salah tanggapan dan memahami peluang pekerjaan graduan PhD. *Views* 11: 23.
- Tahrir, N. F., Nasir, N. A. M. & Radzali, N. S. A. A. 2023. Kebolehpasaran pelajar selepas menjalani latihan industri bagi program diploma teknologi maklumat Politeknik Sultan Idris Shah: Era pasca pandemik. *Research and Innovation in Technical and Vocational Education and Training* 3 (1): 023-029.
- Muin, S. A., Abdullah, M. N. A. A. & Samuni, N. 2023. Usaha membangunkan model homestay patuh syariah (mhps): Menerajui pelancongan islamik di sabah. *Jurnal Sains Sosial* 8 (1): 25-43.
- Abdurahman, R., Hussin, R. & Nordin, D. S. N. D. 2023. Potensi pembangunan aktiviti pelancongan melalui penginapan inap desa berasaskan komuniti di kampung Pulau Gaya, Kota Kinabalu Sabah. *Journal of Borneo Social Transformation Studies* 9(1): 58-77.
- Nordin, D. S. N. D., Latip, N. A., Mansur, K., Hussin, R. & Shah, J. M. 2023. Challenges in implementation of community-based-tourism and homestay post-COVID-19 movement control order (MCO) at Kundasang, Sabah. *Planning Malaysia* 21(4): 265-281.
- Ramlee, S. R. & Saat, I. 2023. Impak kedatangan kuasa kolonial barat terhadap geopolitik Malaysia dari abad ke-15 hingga abad ke-20. *Perspektif Jurnal Sains Sosial Dan Kemanusiaan* 15: 93-105.

Samsul, S. S., Sintang, S. & Kumalah, M. J. 2023. Kelestarian pelancongan dan hubungannya dengan kesepaduan sosial: kajian kes komuniti tempatan Bongawan. *Journal of Borneo Social Transformation Studies* 9 (1): 129-137.

Yusop Teppo. 2021. Industri pelancongan Sabah terus berkembang. Utusan Borneo. <https://www.utusanborneo.com.my>.