

Tuloy Ka Rito Sa Aming Bolóy! (Step Into Our Home!): A Case Study of Naneng Heritage Village Homestay Potential, Sustainability, and its Underlying Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Rural homestays are one of the primary keys to immersing guests in the local way of life. With its roots in indigenous culture, support for local communities holds transformative potential to make it a sustainable destination. This study aimed to assess the sustainability of homestays and identify challenges associated with this aspect using the sustainability principles criterion of the ASEAN Homestay Standard Framework in Naneng Heritage Village, Tabuk City, Kalinga. The study is based on qualitative research methods that include a case study and thematic analysis to meet the objectives. Results of this study reveal that offering sustainable and research-based programs boosts the performance of homestays and improves the overall sustainability and well-being of the locals in Tabuk City, Kalinga.

KEYWORDS

ASEAN Homestay Standard, Challenges, Guests, Rural Homestay, Sustainability.

ARTICLE HISTORY

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1. Introduction

Given the evolving preferences of travelers, the adoption of various homestay trends has created new opportunities to more effectively meet guest demands. Osman and Zakaria (2020) highlight the integration of technology and social media platforms in homestay development as a means of expanding market reach and enhancing visibility. Additionally, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) has been incorporated into the design and implementation of sustainable development practices within the sector (Dehui, 2023).

In parallel, Bhuiyan (2019) and Phunnarong (2021) emphasize the importance of providing meaningful and engaging tourist experiences through homestay-based learning activities and organized tour programs. These initiatives contribute to more immersive cultural interactions and promote community involvement in tourism.

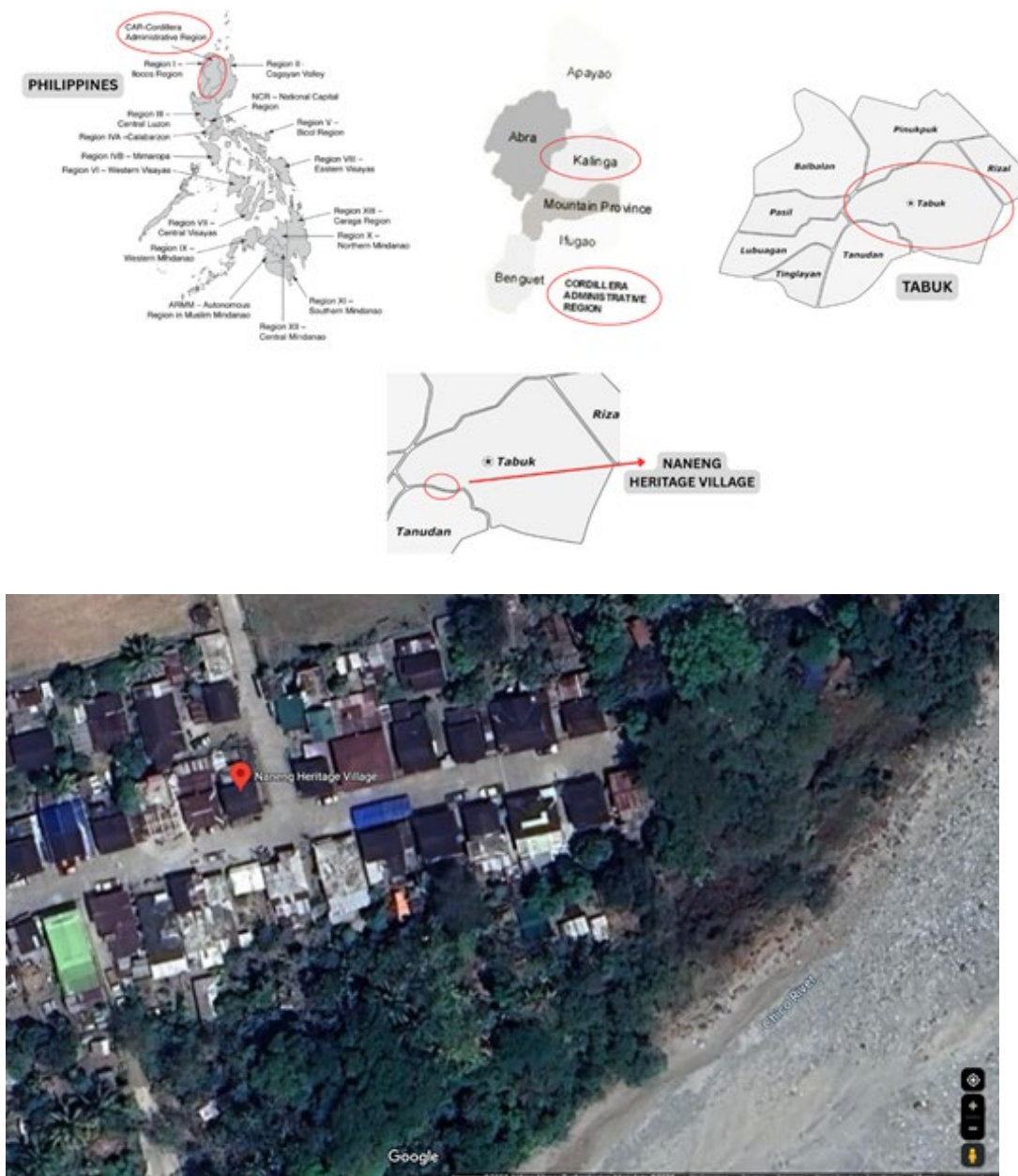
In the Philippine context, the Department of Tourism (DOT)—the primary government agency responsible for promoting tourism as a key socio-economic driver—along with local tourism offices, has increasingly implemented training programs aimed at elevating the quality of homestay operations. These efforts are aligned with the standards established by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a regional organization comprising Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, which seeks to foster political and economic cooperation and regional integration (Dagooc, 2019).

One such initiative is the Community-Based Cookery Program for the Western Tabuk Homestay Organization in Naneng Heritage Village, implemented in partnership with the City Tourism Office, the Department of Tourism–Cordillera Administrative Region (DOT-CAR), and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) (Gacuya, 2022). Naneng Heritage Village is known for its rich tradition of backstrap loom weaving, with many homestays offering live demonstrations. While elderly women are the primary practitioners of this craft, younger members of the community, including children, are actively involved in preserving and continuing the tradition (Pinili, 2020).

Moreover, increasing guest demand for environmentally sustainable services has led homestay operators to prioritize sustainability over other trends (Eastern Kentucky University Online, 2023). In response, many have adopted sustainable practices across social, cultural, environmental, and economic dimensions, despite the associated financial costs. These innovations are essential for maintaining competitiveness and enhancing guest satisfaction in an increasingly dynamic tourism accommodation landscape.

Conversely, sustainability remains a crucial component in the growth and long-term viability of rural homestays. The comprehensive integration of its dimensions—environmental, socio-cultural, and economic—is essential for ensuring the continued relevance and resilience of these accommodations. However, not all homestay operations successfully address all facets of sustainability. Basak et al. (2021) and Jasrotia et al. (2022) highlight a lack of support in the socio-cultural dimension, often attributed to weak engagement between homestay owners and guests. In terms of economic sustainability, Joshi and Bahun (2023) point to the growing threat posed by larger accommodation establishments, such as hotels, in nearby areas. These establishments not only dominate the market but also limit promotional opportunities for smaller homestays. Similarly, Khatter (2023) reports deficiencies in environmental sustainability, noting that some homestay owners remain passive or indifferent toward eco-friendly practices.

Neglecting any one of these sustainability pillars can undermine the credibility of rural homestays as models of sustainable tourism. In light of these challenges, the present study focuses on the intersection of accommodation, tourism, and sustainability. It investigates how homestays, as distinct and community-based accommodation options, contribute to local tourism by offering authentic cultural experiences while advancing responsible tourism practices. By applying the ASEAN Homestay Standard Framework, this research aims to assess sustainability practices, identify prevailing challenges, and provide actionable insights to support the sustainable development of homestays within the village context.

Figure 1. Naneng Heritage Village Location

Source: Own elaboration and Google Maps

Tabuk City is widely recognized for its rice cultivation and for meeting the ASEAN Clean Tourist City Standard, particularly in the areas of solid waste management, health and sanitation, and environmental advocacy (GMA Regional TV News, 2024). Within the city, Barangay Naneng—illustrated in Figure 1—has a population of 778, representing approximately 0.64% of Tabuk's total population as of the 2020 census (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2021). Known as "The City's Seat of Heritage and Culture," Naneng is distinguished by its historic 1920s European-inspired houses, many of which now operate as homestays (Naneng City of Tabuk, n.d.).

Amid the growing popularity of homestays in Tabuk City, it is increasingly important to consider the sustainability dimensions that support long-term viability, particularly in the context of Naneng Heritage Village. Existing disparities in the application and understanding of sustainability—specifically in the socio-cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions—require further clarification. A comprehensive approach that explores the interconnections among these sustainability aspects is essential. Such an approach would enable Naneng Heritage Village to develop more integrated and effective sustainable tourism strategies aligned with both community values and broader regional goals.

The objective of this study is to assess the sustainability of homestays and to identify the challenges associated with implementing sustainable practices, using the sustainability principles outlined in the ASEAN Homestay Standard Framework. To address this objective and cover the components of the sustainability matrix, the following research questions were formulated:

- 1) In what ways do homestays foster intercultural understanding and appreciation in accordance with the socio-cultural sustainability criteria of the ASEAN Homestay Standard?
- 2) How do homestays contribute to the village's economic growth, as defined by the economic sustainability principles of the ASEAN Homestay Standard?
- 3) What practices are implemented in homestays to ensure environmental sustainability based on the ASEAN Homestay Standard?
- 4) What challenges are encountered in achieving a balance among the socio-cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainability in homestay management?

Moreover, as part of its objectives, the study aimed to recommend sustainable development programs for Naneng Heritage Village in Tabuk City, Kalinga. Upon achieving its primary objectives, the research also fulfilled the following purpose:

- 1) Provided homestay owners with actionable recommendations to enhance the overall guest experience, facilitate intercultural exchange, and promote sustainable tourism and economic growth within the local community.
- 2) Served as a valuable guide for the local government unit (LGU), the City Tourism Office, and the Provincial Tourism Office of Tabuk City in advancing homestay accommodations as a key driver of tourism in the province.
- 3) Contributed to the enrichment and expansion of Tabuk's homestay sector by examining the gap between actual guest satisfaction and the level of development aligned with sustainability principles.
- 4) Offered insights significant to future researchers in defining and assessing homestay sustainability, particularly concerning the continued development of Naneng Heritage Village as a recognized homestay destination.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Homestay in the Philippines

A homestay refers to a form of accommodation that originates from private residences, where household facilities are upgraded to accommodate tourists seeking lodging. Beyond providing shelter, homestays offer a unique cultural learning experience. Tourists live under the same roof as local residents, observe and participate in daily routines, and gain firsthand insights into the community's way of life (Demolingo et al., 2021). The expansion of such arrangements across various destinations has led to the emergence of *homestay tourism* as a distinct niche within the broader service industry. Homestay tourism is characterized by personalized hospitality and an emphasis on understanding guest needs—factors that significantly influence tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Si & Bang, 2019). Unlike conventional accommodation, homestays provide a more authentic and meaningful experience, marked by genuine interaction and cultural immersion. As this tourism model gains momentum, it contributes positively to local economies by fostering entrepreneurship and supporting sustainable tourism development initiatives.

The homestay sector plays a pivotal role in improving the socioeconomic conditions of rural communities, particularly through community-based tourism, as emphasized by Zamzuki et al. (2023). This aligns with broader discourses on the intersection of homestay, tourism, and sustainability. Jasrotia et al. (2024) argue that sustainability across environmental, social, cultural, and economic dimensions enhances tourist satisfaction and encourages repeat visitation. While economic sustainability may not directly influence tourist satisfaction, the attitude and involvement of the local community serve as a critical moderating factor. This underscores the necessity for homestay operators to invest in sustainable practices—such as fostering community participation and preserving local traditions—to increase visitor satisfaction and promote long-term engagement.

Tabuk City, the capital of Kalinga Province, is widely recognized for its rice cultivation and is regarded as the regional agro-industrial center of the Cordillera Administrative Region. The city has received commendation from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for meeting the ASEAN Clean Tourist City Standard, which acknowledges efforts in solid waste management, health and sanitation, public safety, disaster risk reduction, environmental advocacy, and tourism service quality (GMA Regional TV News, 2024). Within Tabuk, Barangay Naneng had a population of 778 as of the 2020 Census, representing approximately 0.64% of the city's total population (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2021). Officially referred to as "The City's Seat of Heritage and Culture," Naneng is notable for its vintage 1920s European-inspired architecture, which now serves as homestay accommodations. The barangay is also known as the birthplace of "Inabel" weaving, a traditional textile deeply rooted in local heritage (Naneng City of Tabuk, n.d.).

Naneng Heritage Village and the surrounding rice terraces offer visitors a window into the past, featuring traditional houses known as *Ginitob*, many of which were constructed prior to World War II by Belgian carpenters. At the center of the village stands the Saint Joseph Parish, built in 1927, further contributing to Naneng's historical and cultural significance. In recognition of its heritage value, the local government has proposed an ordinance aimed at preserving the village as a cultural landmark (Hernando, 2024).

Furthermore, Naneng represents a vital aspect of the region's heritage and serves as a significant cultural stronghold within Tabuk's rich socio-cultural landscape. As Villareal (2023) notes, homestays are among the most effective ways to understand and experience the local way of life. In this context, the homestays in Naneng Heritage Village promote authentic cultural experiences, allowing visitors to engage directly with local traditions and practices.

Homestay programs across the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) of the Philippines emphasize the dual function of cultural exchange and tourist accommodation (Dacles et al., 2018). One notable application is cultural immersion, where tourists and student visitors stay with local families for a designated period. While primarily a form of accommodation, this arrangement facilitates a deeper level of cultural engagement, as guests become immersed in the daily lives, customs, cuisine, and indigenous practices of the host community. Moreover, homestays in CAR contribute to local economic development by providing households with an additional source of income—particularly valuable in rural areas where formal employment opportunities are limited. Given the region's abundance of natural beauty and cultural richness, the homestay program has emerged as a strategic approach to promoting sustainable tourism. By fostering intercultural understanding and generating economic opportunities, homestays in CAR exemplify a community-based tourism model rooted in sustainability and cultural preservation.

2.2 Trends in Homestay Tourism

Previous studies have identified several emerging trends and techniques in homestay development aimed at meeting evolving guest preferences and expectations, particularly through the integration of technology and social media platforms. Osman and Zakaria (2020) found that homestay providers effectively utilize social media to promote their businesses to a wider audience and facilitate seamless online transactions. Complementing this, Dehui (2023) explored the innovative application of artificial intelligence (AI) in homestay design, emphasizing its role in creating comfortable and functional spaces. AI supports eco-friendly design principles by incorporating sustainable materials and technologies that maximize energy efficiency and encourage conservation practices among tourists. This commitment to environmental sustainability not only reduces the ecological footprint of homestays but also enhances customer loyalty and satisfaction. The integration of social media and AI into homestay operations has improved design quality and enabled more personalized guest experiences, thereby increasing the competitiveness of homestays in the tourism market.

Additionally, many homestay owners offer educational activities and tours to provide visitors with engaging and immersive experiences. Phunnarong (2021) highlights that such programs significantly influence the success of homestays by attracting more tourists to local communities. Examples include storytelling sessions, demonstrations, cultural performances, and guided tours focusing on rice farming, fishing, fruit orchard cultivation, handicrafts, historical sites, and community heritage. Bhuiyan (2019) further underscores the importance of cultural education through festivals, traditional events, and artistic

expressions. These learning activities not only enrich the visitor experience but also play a crucial role in preserving and revitalizing local culture, thereby enhancing the overall value of the homestay offering.

A notable trend in the Philippines' homestay industry is the increasing implementation of training programs for homestay owners, led by the Department of Tourism (DOT) and local tourism offices, to enhance the quality of accommodation services offered to guests. In Tabuk City, a growing focus has been placed on providing authentic experiences that immerse visitors in the local way of life, foster a hospitable atmosphere, and showcase regional cuisine. For instance, the City Tourism Office (CTO), in collaboration with DOT-Cordillera Administrative Region (DOT-CAR) and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), initiated a community-based cookery program for the Western Tabuk Homestay Organization of Naneng Heritage Village (Gacuya, 2022). Beyond culinary experiences, Naneng Heritage Village is renowned for its traditional weavers, and many homes offer demonstrations of backstrap loom weaving, allowing guests to observe this cultural craft firsthand (Pinili, 2020). These initiatives seek to elevate the Philippine homestay program to meet the esteemed standards set by the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Dagooc, 2019), ensuring guests enjoy exceptional and culturally immersive stays.

In addition to these localized efforts, broader trends in homestay development include the integration of technology and social media to better accommodate evolving guest preferences. Osman and Zakaria (2020) found that homestay providers actively utilize social media platforms to promote their businesses to wider audiences and facilitate seamless online transactions. Complementing this, Dehui (2023) examined the innovative use of artificial intelligence (AI) in homestay design, highlighting AI's role in creating comfortable and functional spaces through eco-friendly materials and energy-efficient technologies. These sustainable design practices reduce the environmental impact of homestays while enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty. The adoption of social media and AI technologies not only improves homestay operations but also offers personalized experiences, thereby increasing the appeal and competitiveness of homestays in the tourism sector.

Another important approach employed by homestay owners is the provision of educational activities and tours designed to offer tourists engaging and immersive experiences. Phunnarong (2021) identified that the success of homestays is influenced by such programs, which can attract more visitors to local communities. These activities often include storytelling, cultural demonstrations, performances, and tours involving traditional practices such as rice farming, fishing, fruit orchard cultivation, handicrafts, visits to historical sites, and learning about community history. Bhuiyan (2019) further supports this view by emphasizing the importance of educational initiatives that promote cultural awareness through festivals, traditional events, and the arts. Collectively, these learning experiences curated by host families are integral to the overall homestay offering, enhancing visitor engagement while preserving and revitalizing local cultural heritage.

In the Philippines, a notable trend in the homestay industry is the increasing implementation of training programs for homestay owners, spearheaded by the Department of Tourism (DOT) and local tourism offices, to improve the quality of accommodation and guest services. In Tabuk City, this has manifested in efforts to provide authentic experiences that immerse guests in the local way of life, create a welcoming atmosphere, and showcase regional cuisine. For example, the City Tourism Office (CTO), in collaboration with DOT-Cordillera Administrative Region (DOT-CAR) and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), launched a community-based cookery program for the Western Tabuk Homestay Organization of Naneng Heritage Village (Gacuya, 2022). Beyond culinary initiatives, Naneng Heritage Village is also known for its skilled traditional weavers, with many homes offering demonstrations of backstrap loom weaving for visitors (Pinili, 2020). These combined efforts aim to elevate the Philippine homestay program to meet the high standards set by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Dagooc, 2019), ensuring that guests enjoy exceptional and culturally rich experiences.

2.3 Sustainability for Homestay and its Challenges

Homestays are experiencing significant growth and hold promising potential within the tourism industry. To ensure their long-term development, sustainability efforts must adopt a comprehensive approach that addresses all dimensions—economic, socio-cultural, and environmental—rather than focusing on a sin-

gle facet (Janjua et al., 2021). However, achieving this holistic sustainability remains challenging, as various issues persist across these interconnected aspects in many homestay operations.

2.3.1 Economic Aspect of Homestay

Homestays cultivated an excellent doorway for income and employment for the local community, fostering economic growth. Zamzuki et al. (2023) note that the homestay industry is a catalyst for uplifting the rural communities' socioeconomic condition by providing investment opportunities for the growth of homestays. Indeed, income was a primary motivator for hosts to connect and engage in this industry, seeing it as an opportunity to increase their earnings. Conversely, tourist expenditure was one of the money-generating factors that significantly added to that contention and homestay development. Revenue generated from tourist expenditure is used to maintain and improve the appearance and services offered by this industry (Thapa, 2021), noting its valuable contribution to the community and quality improvement of homestays, which tourists will also benefit from.

Conversely, homestay operators in rural communities frequently rely significantly on outside assistance from the government (Lim & Lee, 2019). They needed cooperation regarding the adequate funds required to cover the expenses of homestay operators, such as facilities. Thus, collaboration and assistance from the government are paramount because cases of inadequate amenities may not satisfy the needs and expectations of tourists. This is supported by Woli's (2022) study, stating that the government must provide sufficient and satisfactory infrastructures, facilities, and even public awareness through education and training programs to empower visitors and operators.

2.3.2 Socio-cultural Aspect of Homestay

The socio-cultural dimension of sustainability centers on the interactions, behaviors, beliefs, and overall quality of life of homestay hosts and guests. Thapa (2023) observed that rural communities in Nepal have gained improved access to essential services such as better food, healthcare, education, and clothing through homestay tourism, which also strengthened social networks and community awareness, creating household opportunities. In Sirubari Village, daily cultural programs hosted by homestays actively engage tourists, fostering cultural preservation and enhancing the authenticity of the visitor experience (Bhandari et al., 2022). This integration of local traditions not only sustains the cultural essence of homestays but also serves as a key tourist attraction.

Community participation plays a crucial role in sustaining homestays, with the quality of host-guest interactions significantly influencing tourist satisfaction and cultural value recognition (Rabu et al., 2020). Such engagement encourages dialogue and raises awareness of local heritage. However, communication barriers remain a significant challenge. Meunchong (2023) highlights that many homestay operators struggle with English proficiency, hindering effective communication with international tourists, leading to misunderstandings, guest dissatisfaction, and limitations in service delivery.

2.3.3 Environmental Aspect of Homestay

The environmental dimension of homestay sustainability is critical, as the majority of homestay operations, services, and products depend heavily on natural resources (Pasanchay & Schott, 2021). Therefore, implementing environmentally responsible practices is essential both to protect and preserve these resources and to attract eco-conscious guests. Several homestay communities have integrated such practices into their operations, recognizing their importance for sustainability and long-term development. For instance, Nglanggeran Tourism Village in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, enforces a code of conduct that discourages tourists from participating in activities harmful to the environment (Wahyuni & Faisal, 2019). Other communities have promoted recycling, bulk purchasing, and reuse as key components of their environmental initiatives (Kour & Jasrotia, 2022; Zamzuki et al., 2023). Homestays adopting these practices have reported positive impacts on customer experience, which in turn enhances guest satisfaction (Moliner et al., 2019; Agyeiwaah, 2019). However, challenges remain; for example, some homestay owners in the Kodagu District of Karnataka perceive homestay tourism as having a negative environmental impact (Nirmala, 2021). These findings suggest that while environmental measures are being adopted, ongoing attention and action are necessary to address emerging issues and ensure sustainable development.

2.4 Homestay Requirements and Standards

2.4.1 DOT Homestay Standard

The Department of Tourism (DOT) accreditation enhances the credibility of homestay businesses by demonstrating compliance with established standards and a commitment to delivering quality services to guests. A DOT certification signifies that a homestay meets the minimum operational and service requirements within the tourism industry. According to DOT (2022), accreditation is categorized into three levels: basic registration, regular accreditation, and premium accreditation. Table 1 below outlines the specific requirements for each accreditation level (DOT, n.d.).

Table 1. The DOT Standards and Regulations - Accreditation Section

	Basic Accreditation	Regular Accreditation	Premium Accreditation
Homestays	Not Applicable	Valid Mayor's Permit	
		Proof of attendance to a Homestay Training conducted by DOT or DOT-accredited training institutions within the last two (2) years prior to application for accreditation	
		Contract between the unit owner and property management allowing such unit to be utilized for commercial purposes (for individual condominium units only)	
			Recognitions / Awards from local, national, or international award giving bodies (government or private institutions)
			Membership to LGU-registered Homestay Association

Source: Department of Tourism - Accreditation Section

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 ASEAN Homestay Standard

Wahyuni and Faisal (2019) highlight that a homestay's potential success depends on factors such as community involvement, homestay capacity, official registration, marketing integration, and hygiene standards. They argue that the ASEAN Homestay Standard offers a comprehensive framework that ASEAN member states can adopt. Among the criteria provided, Criterion 9, as presented in Table 2, which focuses on sustainability principles, served as the primary framework for this study's assessment of homestay sustainability in Naneng Heritage Village. The distribution of requirements under each sub-criterion follows the guidelines outlined in the ASEAN Homestay Standard.

Table 2. Criteria No. 9 of ASEAN Homestay Standard

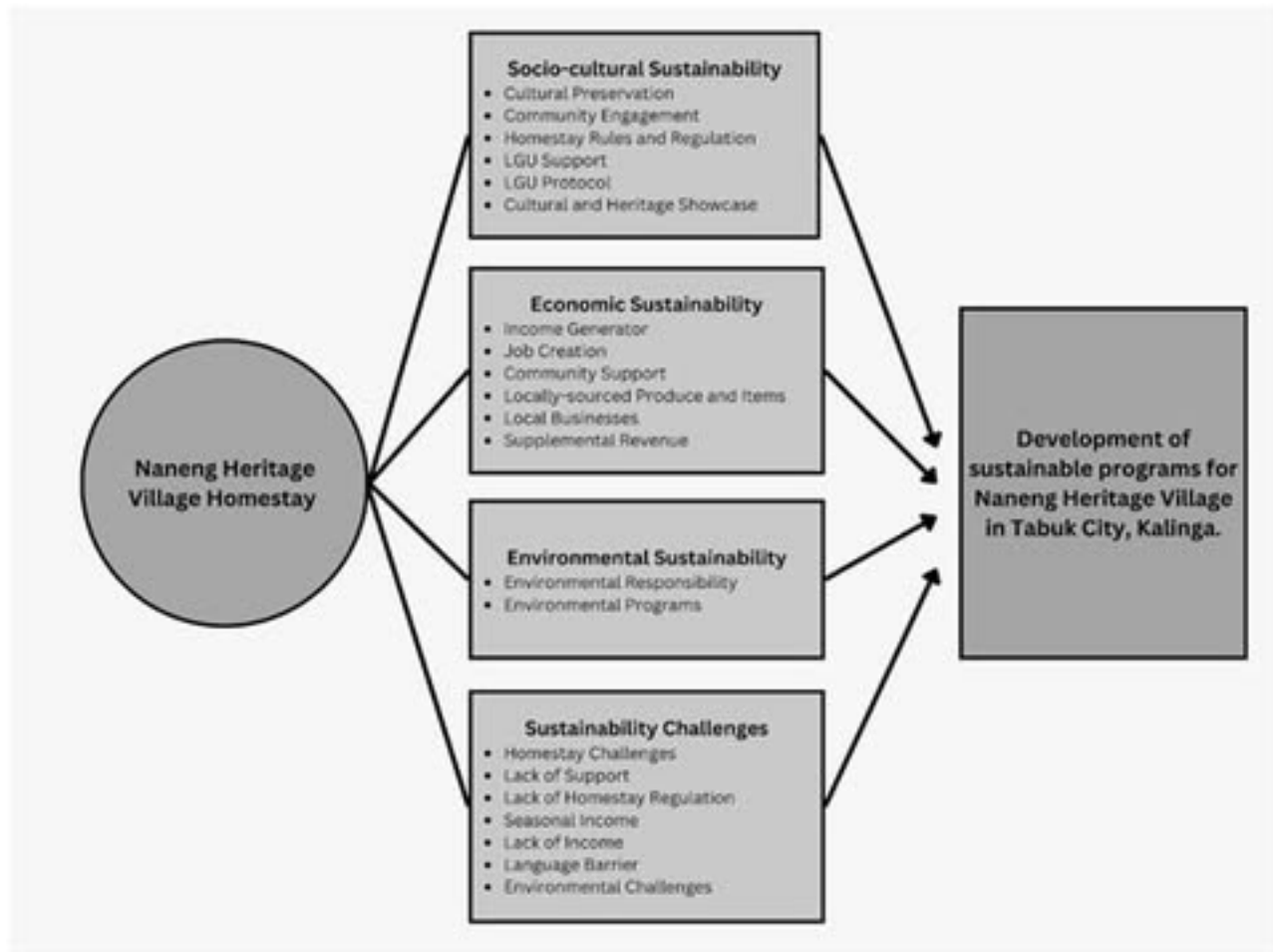
Criteria	Sub-criteria	Nº of Requirement
Sustainability Principles	Economic Sustainability	8
	Environmental Sustainability	6
	Sociocultural Sustainability	4

Source: ASEAN Homestay Standard - Criteria Section

4. Methodological Framework

This research employed the aforementioned framework to evaluate the sustainability of homestays in Naneng Heritage Village and to identify associated challenges.

Figure 2. The Study's Methodological Framework



Source: Own Elaboration

The study focused on the socio-cultural, environmental, and economic dimensions of sustainability, examining specific factors within each category. The framework provided a comprehensive basis for analyzing these challenges and for recommending programs to enhance the long-term sustainability of homestays in Naneng Heritage Village.

5. Design

This study employed a case study approach, a practical and widely used method within the qualitative research paradigm. As noted by Hennink et al. (2020) and Busetto et al. (2020), qualitative methods allow researchers to explore participants' perspectives deeply, understand their concerns, and interpret the meanings they assign to events or phenomena through narrative data rather than numerical analysis. In this context, the case study approach facilitated an in-depth understanding of the views of various stakeholders regarding the sustainability of homestays in the research site, thereby aligning well with the study's objectives.

Furthermore, the case study design enabled the researchers to conduct a detailed investigation of specific programs, events, or activities involving one or more individuals. This approach is especially suited for

research questions centered around “how,” “what,” and “why” (Priya, 2020; Coombs, 2022). By adopting this method, the researchers gained valuable insights into stakeholders’ positions within the framework guiding this study, capturing nuanced perspectives that other methodologies might not have revealed.

5.1 Selection and Study Site

The study’s participants were individuals who own and operate homestays in Naneng Heritage Village, Tabuk City, Kalinga. Using purposive sampling—a method for selecting participants based on their relevant knowledge and experience (Maggino, 2023)—the researchers identified 14 active homestay owners in the village. Gender was not a selection criterion. Participants were at least 25 years old, consistent with OECD Data (2023) defining prime working age as 25 to 54 years. Additionally, each had operated their homestay for a minimum of five years, following Dhliwayo’s (2021) findings that businesses surviving beyond five years are more likely to achieve qualitative growth and enhanced credibility. According to the Department of Tourism’s (n.d.) accreditation guidelines, participants were also required to have completed a homestay training program. All participants were members of the Western Tabuk Homestay Organization.

The research was conducted in Naneng Heritage Village, one of the oldest villages in Kalinga Province and known for preserving traditional backstrap weaving (Go, 2023). The village is officially recognized as ‘The City’s Seat of Heritage and Culture’ due to its vintage European-inspired houses built in the 1920s using native materials such as Narra, Guijo, and Lauan (Development of the City and the Environment, n.d.). Naneng also offers Department of Tourism-accredited homestays managed by the Western Tabuk Homestay Organization, which oversees homestay operations in the village.

5.2 Data Measure

The researchers employed in-depth interviews as the primary data collection method. In-depth interviews involve conducting one-on-one conversations with selected participants to elicit detailed information (De La Hera Gomez, 2024). As Rutledge and Hogg (2020) explain, this method aims to uncover participants’ emotions, perspectives, and experiences, as well as the personal significance they attach to the research topic. To facilitate openness and rich dialogue, the researchers encouraged participants to freely express their thoughts and reasoning. This approach proved valuable for the qualitative study, providing comprehensive insights into the lived experiences of homestay owners in Naneng Heritage Village, Tabuk City, Kalinga, and aligning with the study’s objectives.

5.3 Data Collection Procedure

During the fieldwork, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with participants, each lasting between 20 to 40 minutes. The interviews were guided by the research questions developed by the researchers and approved by the research adviser. Audio recordings were made to accurately capture the participants’ responses for later transcription and analysis.

5.4 Ethical Consideration

5.4.1 Informed Consent

The researchers provided participants with clear and comprehensive information regarding the study’s objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. This transparency ensured that participants were fully informed and could make an autonomous decision about their participation. They were also assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time without facing any negative consequences.

5.4.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

The researchers strictly adhered to the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173), ensuring that all information provided by participants remained confidential and was used exclusively for academic purposes. To further protect the participants’ identities, codes or pseudonyms were employed in place of their real names in all research data.

5.4.3 Transparency

To ensure the credibility and consistency of the findings, the researchers kept the participants informed about the progress of the study. After data collection, participants were given copies of their responses, the questionnaire, interview transcripts, and a summary of the data analysis. This process helped prevent misinterpretation of the data and safeguarded against falsification of findings.

5.5 Data Explication / Mode of Analysis

To gain a comprehensive understanding of homestay operators' experiences with sustainability and the challenges they faced, the researchers employed thematic analysis. This approach involved grouping data according to themes that directly emerged from the research questions. As Caulfield (2019) explains, thematic analysis carefully examines data to identify common ideas, revealing people's views, opinions, and experiences, which were thematically transcribed and interpreted in this study. Specifically, the research utilized a mixed development analysis approach—starting with an existing framework to develop questions, then collecting and analyzing data, and finally refining the framework based on the findings (Ho & Limpaecher, 2024).

Furthermore, the researchers applied the methodological framework, grounded in the ASEAN Homestay Standard and focused on the three sustainability dimensions, to analyze the findings. This alignment allowed for systematic categorization and interpretation of results within the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental sustainability aspects. By mapping the reported challenges within this framework, the study provided a thorough understanding of strengths and gaps in homestay operations, which informed targeted recommendations for enhancing the overall sustainability of homestays in Naneng Heritage Village.

Table 3. Thematic Analysis

Socio-Cultural Aspect		Environmental Aspect		Economic Aspect	
Categories	Theme	Categories	Theme	Categories	Theme
Cultural Preservation	Kamalayan (Awareness)	Environmental Responsibility	Gampanin (Role)	Income Generator	Agapay (Support)
Community Engagement		Environmental Programs		Job Creation	
Homestay Rules and Regulation				Community Support	
LGU Support				Locally-sourced Produce and Items	
LGU Protocol				Local Businesses	
Cultural and Heritage Showcase				Supplemental Revenue	
Challenges		Sustainable Program			
Categories	Theme	Categories	Theme		
Homestay Challenges	Limitasyon (Limitations)	Holistic Homestay Value	Integrasyon (Integration)		
Lack of Support (economic aspect)		Livelihood Training Programs			
Lack of Homestay Regulation (socio)		Homestay Preservation			
Seasonal Income		Local Tourism Promotion			
Lack of Income		Local Tourism Infrastructure			
		Local Community Knowledge in Homestay Management			

Source: Own Elaboration

6. Findings

Following the analysis of insights gathered from homestay owners during the data collection process, the researchers conceptualized the Kalinga sa Tahanan: A Homestay Sustainability Framework. This framework is anchored in Criterion 9 of the ASEAN Homestay Standard, which focuses on the sustainable development of homestays. It is specifically designed to support the sustainability of homestays in Naneng Heritage Village, Tabuk City, Kalinga.

Figure 3. The Kalinga sa Tahanan: A Homestay Sustainability Framework



Source: Own Elaboration

The framework highlights five (5) fundamental themes:

- 1) *Kamalayan (Awareness)* – Reflects the homestay owners' awareness and efforts to educate locals on the importance of preserving their culture, heritage, and history.
- 2) *Agapay (Support)* – Emphasizes the role of homestays in generating income and creating employment opportunities within the community.
- 3) *Gampanin (Role)* – Covers the responsibilities and initiatives undertaken by locals and homestay owners to promote environmental sustainability.
- 4) *Limitasyon (Limitation)* – Identifies the challenges faced by homestay owners in managing their operations effectively.
- 5) *Integrasyon (Integration)* – Represents the need to integrate all aspects of sustainable development—socio-cultural, economic, and environmental—into a cohesive and viable sustainability program.

This localized framework offers a holistic approach to improving the sustainability of homestay operations, rooted in both community values and regional development standards.

6.1 Kamalayan

Theme 1: Kamalayan (Awareness) refers to the consciousness and proactive efforts of homestay owners in ensuring that the local community remains educated about the significance of preserving its culture, heritage, and history. This awareness contributes directly to achieving socio-cultural sustainability and long-term success in homestay operations. Cultural preservation within the homestay context often manifests

through the deliberate showcasing of traditions, practices, and heritage—allowing both current and future generations, as well as guests, to understand and appreciate the local identity. A homestay owner shared:

“The children, it started with the children, they are taught about cultural dance, tradition and everything. Every time tourists visit the village, they perform and show them the cultural traditions.” (KI #1)

In this aspect, it is also vital to inform guests about the importance of respecting local customs and observing appropriate behavior during their stay. This responsibility forms another crucial dimension of cultural preservation. Homestay owners often implement house rules or follow protocols established by the local government unit (LGU) to guide guest conduct and ensure the safeguarding of local traditions and social norms. These guidelines help foster mutual respect and cultural understanding between hosts and visitors, reinforcing the role of homestays not just as lodging facilities, but as platforms for immersive and responsible tourism. Through these practices, homestays contribute meaningfully to the transmission and protection of intangible cultural heritage within the community:

“We’re open, but when it comes to household goods, they are allowed to use them. However, for example, the tapis, the tourists are not allowed to disrespect how we use and wear them.” (KI #3)

Moreover, community engagement and local government support in preserving culture and tradition are essential components of socio-cultural sustainability. As one mentioned:

“When it comes to preserving the culture, they do contests. Mostly because I am our school’s dance troupe coordinator; that’s why when tourists visit the village, the LGU funds it and gives financial support through tourism. They provide funds, and the children will present our culture to the tourists.” (KI #3)

6.2 Agapay

Theme 2: Agapay (Support) highlights the critical role of sustained assistance in ensuring the efficient operation and long-term viability of homestays. Adequate support and access to resources are essential for homestay operators to manage their businesses effectively. This theme underscores the economic significance of homestays, particularly in generating income and creating employment opportunities within the community. It reflects the value of collaborative support, illustrating how homestays contribute positively by offering financial assistance, fostering job creation, and strengthening social ties. Homestay owners benefit from substantial earnings, which enable them to sustain their operations, while also providing livelihood opportunities for local residents—ultimately helping to reduce unemployment and promote economic stability in the community:

“A lot. Because first of all, it’s income. Second, we help young mothers. Because other are unemployed. At the same time, we use it at home to buy soap, zonrox, cleaning supplies for the house, to help others, and then somehow, the children, and for house maintenance.” (KI #1)

Moreover, homestay owners demonstrate their support by donating a portion of their income during times of crisis, such as natural disasters. When fellow homestay operators face shortages or lack essential resources, they also engage in resource pooling to provide mutual assistance. A homestay owner shared that:

“In a form of donations, for example, “hey, we have visitors! Please donate something like this” or when I need help, solidarity, it is!” (KI #8)

Another form of community support is evident in how homestay owners assist one another by promoting and recommending fellow homestay businesses to tourists. As shared by a homestay owner:

“Yes, we have. There is Madam Ethel’s. And our weavers, they also sell.” (KI #3)

6.3 Gampanin

Theme 3: *Gampanin* (Role) focuses on the diverse responsibilities and initiatives undertaken by the residents and homestay owners of Naneng Heritage Village in pursuit of environmental sustainability. Community members actively collaborate in activities such as proper waste management, clean-up drives, and tree-planting efforts. They comply with barangay ordinances aimed at protecting the local environment and take part in educating visitors about their environmental initiatives. Through these collective actions, they cultivate a strong sense of responsibility and environmental stewardship within the community. A participant shared:

"We have clean-up drives, tree planting, and the barangay clean-up drive every quarter or at the end of the month...We usually do tree planting during October...We also inform parents when their children are going to events. Especially when the visitors are children, we need to tell them the rules, but if it's others, they already know." (KI #8)

Furthermore, the local government unit (LGU) actively participates in various initiatives aimed at cleaning and preserving the environment in Naneng Heritage Village. They support the community by strengthening and enhancing local environmental efforts. As shared by a participant:

"But the barangay also helps with cleaning, and so does the LGU, because there are government employees here, like Ma'am Reyna, who keep the area clean. There are two cleaners assigned by the LGU who are tasked with helping the barangay." (KI #14)

In addition to helping maintain the natural surroundings of Naneng Heritage Village, some homestay owners implement cleanliness regulations for their visitors, while others do not consistently enforce such measures. One owner who established rules regarding cleanliness has shared that:

"Yes, because sometimes those who come here don't dispose of trash properly, so it's necessary to have the right trash cans. Especially for plastic bottles." (KI #2)

6.4 Limitasyon

Theme 4: *Limitasyon* (Limitation) highlights the challenges faced by homestay owners in managing their operations. However, these challenges are not simply barriers; they represent opportunities for growth and development. Rather than constraining homestay owners, these difficulties motivate them to focus on devising strategic solutions. Common challenges include inadequate preparation for visitors, meeting tourists' expectations, and navigating cultural and language barriers. Some homestay owners shared the following statements:

"The problem is, the actual, is when visitors suddenly arrive without any preparation. The kind where they just show up, is it possible, "is there a homestay here?" Something that's immediate. Of course, we're not prepared for that." (KI #1)

"Yes, of course, some of our visitors don't understand us, sometimes they speak English, right? It'll just through actions...and there are foreigners who don't understand English, so they struggle, which is why we communicate through actions!" (KI #8)

Homestay owners encounter several structural challenges that affect the integrity of their properties. Common issues include termite infestations, which compromise wooden structures, as well as the natural deterioration of infrastructure caused by aging and inadequate maintenance. Additionally, the frequent threat of typhoons poses a significant risk, often resulting in damage to the exterior of homestays. Some participants pointed out these concerns, stating that:

"Sometimes, of course, it gets slow, and the house gets neglected, especially when the owner doesn't stay there often. It is infested like that." (KI #2)

"Especially during the rainy season, there are leaks that aren't visible or aren't fixed, so it gets damaged." (KI #8)

In relation to homestay operations, some owners face water shortages that disrupt their day-to-day functions. One shared experience mentioned that:

"We lack water source... Because if many people are doing homestays, our water source won't be enough." (KI #6)

Moreover, some homestay owners experience challenges in securing support from the local government unit (LGU) for funding or financing their operations, while others report receiving assistance. Funding is particularly needed for restoration and maintenance of their properties. When asked about the assistance received from the LGU, those who feel unsupported disagreed, stating that:

"There is nothing yet regarding homestays. Despite the number of people who come here, national agencies haven't given anything yet." (KI #7)

"There is no fund for construction." (KI #6)

In addition to these challenges, homestay owners experience seasonal fluctuations in income, as their operations depend heavily on tourist arrivals. They also face financial strain when earnings are redirected to cover expenses incurred in providing services to tourists, often resulting in insufficient net revenue. Some homestay owners have shared that:

"So when we offered homestay, it was minimal. It was just enough to buy food for them, and it didn't feel like we had any income." (KI #3)

"Lacking finances since there are no tourists." (KI #12)

6.5 Integrasyon

Theme 5: Integrasyon (Integration) emphasizes the importance of synthesizing all aspects of sustainable development to overcome challenges and ensure the success and longevity of homestay operations. Central to this process is understanding the holistic values of homestay owners, which is crucial for designing sustainable programs that address all relevant facets and are tailored to the specific nature of their operations. Such an approach empowers homestay owners to implement initiatives they consider essential for the enduring viability of their businesses. Some homestay owners shared the following:

"We learn to mingle with people. We learn to make friends. It's like this." (KI #1)

"Homestay is important. Especially for me, when there isn't much income, at least during the season there are [tourists]." (KI #2)

Considering this, homestay owners are well-positioned to recommend viable and sustainable programs tailored to their needs. Fundamentally, the sustainability of a homestay depends on its physical structure; without an intact and functional facility, the accommodation cannot serve its guests, undermining the viability of the entire operation. One homestay operator shared their cumulative call to action for homestay maintenance:

"Restoration of the houses, the heritage village. Many people came here, national agencies, they said...Let's expand in 10 years but they're not coming back. Because it's difficult for us to be alone because there must be a strong official." (KI #7)

Moreover, livelihood training programs and the integration of local community knowledge in homestay management are essential for providing guests with a meaningful and authentic experience. These programs also support homestay owners by offering alternative sources of income during the off-season.

They stated that:

"Maybe seminars, how to mingle. Seminars on how to prepare. How to entertain visitors, seminars on how to cook food. Trainings, of course finance, fundings for purchasing things they need like foods, materials that visitors really need." (KI #8)

"What would it be like if there weren't so many people [tourists], I hope it's for livelihood..." (KI #2)

Lastly, promoting local tourism and developing tourism infrastructure are crucial for enabling homestay owners to operate efficiently and meet guests' expectations. Such initiatives not only enhance the overall guest experience but also highlight the potential of homestays as an alternative form of accommodation. This, in turn, can increase homestay owners' income while raising tourist awareness of diverse lodging options. They suggested that:

"I think there's still a lack of equipment, there should be a museum. We have a museum there at elem but it was only used for the DepEd contest." (KI #3)

"I hope the weaving can be helped. Weaving center, ma'am." (KI #6)

7. Discussion

7.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications

The theme Kamalayan (Awareness) traces the socio-cultural dimension of sustainability. It reflects homestay owners' recognition of the importance of educating the community and informing both Filipino and foreign tourists about the local culture in Naneng Heritage Village. However, Meunchong (2023) notes that limited communication skills and inadequate English proficiency often lead to miscommunication and guest dissatisfaction. Despite these challenges, homestay owners demonstrate considerable effort to engage effectively with guests—especially foreigners—through gestures, body language, and cultural displays. These strategies foster host-guest relationships and ensure that visitors gain insight into the local culture. Engaging tourists in this manner is vital for the sustainability of homestays, as it promotes cultural recognition and raises awareness through meaningful interactions (Rabu et al., 2020).

From a practical standpoint, Kamalayan is enacted through cultural activities conducted within each homestay, such as traditional dances, the preparation and sharing of indigenous dishes, and artistic presentations. These cultural expressions entice guests and encourage interaction between operators and visitors (Bhandari et al., 2022). Such cultural movements motivate homestay operators to strengthen their commitment to preserving heritage by enhancing tourists' understanding of local customs.

Economic sustainability is equally critical, as underscored in Agapay (Support). Homestay operations generate income and create employment opportunities for local residents. Thapa (2021) highlights that homestay operators reinvest their earnings to maintain and improve both the physical appearance and services offered by their establishments. Participants in this study further report that a portion of their income is donated to the barangay, particularly during times of crisis, supporting the wider community and reinforcing collective assistance through donations. More broadly, earnings from homestay operations contribute not only to personal livelihoods but also to local economic growth, consistent with Zamzuki et al. (2023) assertion that the homestay industry serves as a catalyst for social and economic development.

Moreover, homestay operations benefit local community members, particularly young mothers, who assist with tasks such as cleaning and cooking in exchange for a share of guest payments. This arrangement strengthens community ties and provides supplemental income, underscoring the integral role of economic sustainability in the overall success of homestays.

As part of the sustainability principle addressing environmental sustainability, Gampanin (Role) represents the responsibilities and initiatives undertaken by homestay owners to protect the environment. This theme emphasizes the duties and actions essential to achieving environmental sustainability. Pasanchay and Schott (2021) underscore the importance of homestay owners' active participation in environmental practices as a means to safeguard their surroundings. In practice, fulfilling these responsibilities and supporting local government unit (LGU) initiatives—such as tree planting, street sweeping, and clean-up drives—can significantly contribute to fostering a thriving and environmentally conscious community. Homestay owners acknowledge that LGUs play a pivotal role in these environmental protection efforts.

Environmental sustainability is broadly defined by Moliner et al. (2019) and Agyeiwaah (2019) as maintaining a balance between human activities and the surrounding environment. Despite these positive efforts, homestay owners face various challenges, as highlighted by the theme Limitasyon (Limitation), which reflects the obstacles encountered by operators and calls for concerted action from both homestay owners and LGUs to enhance services. Woli (2022) emphasizes the government's responsibility to provide adequate infrastructure and facilities to empower both operators and visitors.

The findings identify several critical areas requiring attention, including structural maintenance and visitor management. Stakeholders play a vital role in addressing these challenges through financial and programmatic support. Joshi and Bahuguna (2023) note that government-backed homestay programs significantly motivate owners to initiate and sustain their operations. Nonetheless, homestay owners report difficulties maintaining their property structures, and Meunchong (2023) stresses the importance of effective communication—particularly with foreign tourists—to ensure satisfactory guest experiences. Language barriers continue to be a significant concern.

Moreover, homestay owners face water shortages and environmental challenges. Nirmala (2021) points out that homestays can also have negative environmental impacts. However, the local community's practices, particularly improper waste disposal by some residents—especially elderly individuals who discard garbage near the river—are identified as primary contributors to environmental degradation.

Thus, Integrasyon (Integration) within the framework underscores the necessity of encompassing all facets of sustainability to effectively address the challenges faced by the homestay industry and its operators. Janjua et al. (2019) emphasize that sustainability goals should not be limited to a single dimension but must holistically cover socio-cultural, economic, and environmental aspects. These recommendations, aligned with sustainable programs and the values perceived by homestay owners, are essential for achieving sustainable development, enhancing the quality of house structures and local tourism infrastructure, and improving awareness and quality of life for both residents and tourists. The holistic value attributed by homestay owners to their operations motivates them to pursue tailored sustainable initiatives—such as home renovations, training programs, and additional amenities—addressing their specific needs. This perspective echoes Janjua et al. (2021), who argue that sustainable development in homestays must integrate economic, socio-cultural, and environmental components. Such integrated approaches enable homestay operators to develop resilient and adaptive solutions, thereby nurturing the sustainability of the sector within their communities. Moreover, government support and active involvement are critical to these efforts. Insufficient funding can lead to dissatisfaction among tourists due to inadequate services and facilities, as well as among local operators struggling with maintenance, environmental program consistency, and cultural preservation.

Theoretically, the Kalinga sa Tahanan: A Homestay Sustainability Framework articulates the core dimensions of sustainability—socio-cultural, economic, and environmental—while identifying the challenges and sustainable interventions based on the perceptions and experiences of homestay owners. By integrating multiple theoretical perspectives, this framework offers a comprehensive resource for evaluating and addressing present and future sustainability challenges in the homestay sector.

Practically, the framework captures the key sustainability issues and challenges experienced by homestay owners in Naneng Heritage Village, Tabuk City, Kalinga. It provides actionable recommendations for homestay owners and stakeholders, fostering the ongoing development and resilience of the homestay industry amidst dynamic and evolving conditions.

8. Conclusion

This study assessed the sustainability of homestays and identified associated challenges. The researchers concluded that homestays play a significant role in promoting and practicing sustainable actions within Naneng Heritage Village. The socio-cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainability illuminate how homestay programs can foster intercultural understanding, stimulate local economic growth, and encourage environmental stewardship. Despite setbacks such as infrastructure limitations, cultural barriers, and environmental risks, homestay owners and the community demonstrate resilience and adaptability, contributing to a balanced and sustainable approach to tourism.

Through the *"Kalinga sa Tahanan: A Homestay Sustainability Framework"* aligned with the ASEAN Homestay Standard Sustainability Principle (Criteria 9), five key themes—Kamalayan (Awareness), Agapay (Support), Gampanin (Role), Limitasyon (Limitation), and Integrasyon (Integration)—reveal the dynamic interplay among stakeholders, including local residents, homestay operators, and government entities, in advancing sustainability in the area. These collaborative efforts highlight the community's commitment to preserving heritage while fostering economic and environmental resilience. Furthermore, this framework holds potential for broader application across the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), as it resonates with the region's cultural, economic, and environmental contexts. Its five dimensions provide a structured approach to preserving culture, promoting local livelihoods, ensuring environmental responsibility, addressing operational challenges, and integrating sustainability principles. These elements are particularly relevant to other indigenous and heritage-rich communities in the region—such as Benguet, Ifugao, and Mountain Province—where traditional practices, community livelihoods, and environmental conservation are deeply intertwined with tourism activities.

By adopting this framework, local government units (LGUs), tourism offices, and homestay associations within CAR can evaluate and enhance their homestay programs, making them more sustainable, culturally grounded, and community-driven. In response to the framework's recommendations, the researchers developed a sustainable program designed to further support these objectives.

8.1 Recommendation

The researchers recommend a sustainable program titled *"Bahay, Buhay: Balanseng Pag-unlad sa Kalikasan, Kita, at Kultura"* (Home, Life: Balanced Growth in Environment, Livelihood, and Culture), designed to address the challenges identified in this study and to provide benefits for both homestay owners and the broader community.

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