

**GENDER ROLES IN CONSTRUCTING  
AUTHENTICITY AND HOSPITALITY:  
A STUDY OF HOMESTAY PULAU AMAN,  
PENANG**

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by

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>	<b>xi</b>
<b>ABSTRAK</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background of study	1
1.2 Problem statement	2
1.3 Research questions	5
1.4 Research objectives	6
1.5 Significance of study	7
<b>CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 Theories and Concepts	9
2.2.1 Authenticity	9
2.2.2 Hospitality	16
2.3 Gender and Tourism	23
2.4 Rural tourism in Pulau Aman	25

2.5	Homestay Programme in Malaysia	27
2.6	Tourism in Pulau Aman	33
2.7	Conceptual Framework	35
2.8	Research Gap	36
2.9	Conclusion	37
 <b>CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>		<b>39</b>
3.1	Introduction	39
3.2	Research location	39
3.3	Research design	41
3.4	Qualitative research	42
3.5	Establishing Rapport	43
3.6	Data collection	44
	3.6.1 In-depth Interviews	44
	3.6.2 Participant Observation	48
	3.6.3 Focus Group Discussion	49
	3.6.4 Data Collection	50
	3.6.5 Data Analysis	51
3.7	Ethical consideration	52
 <b>CHAPTER 4 – PULAU AMAN: HISTORY AND ITS SOCIETY</b>		<b>54</b>
4.1	Background	54
4.2	Introducing Pulau Aman	54
4.3	The History of Pulau Aman: Fishing Village	57
4.4	A trip to Pulau Aman: The Journey	57

4.5	Type of lodging	68
4.6	Homestay Operator’s Profile	70
4.7	Conclusion	79

**CHAPTER 5 – “GIVING GOOD SERVICE” – STAGING HOSPITALITY AND BEING HOSPITABLE 81**

5.1	Background	81
5.2	Staging Hospitality at Pulau Aman	81
	5.2.1 Staging traditional Malay house	81
	5.2.2 Women’s role in staging hospitality	83
	5.2.3 Eating together: building the ‘bond’	85
5.3	Hospitality from the perspective of tourists	88
5.4	Discussion and Analysis	91
5.5	Conclusion	95

**CHAPTER 6 – PRESENTING AN AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCE TO VISITORS 96**

6.1	Background	96
6.2	Presenting authenticity in Pulau Aman	96
	6.2.1 Activities and tours in Pulau Aman	97
	6.2.2 Showcasing traditional living life	104
	6.2.3 Host-guest interaction	107
6.3	Authenticity from the perspective of tourists	108
6.4	Discussion and Analysis	112
6.5	Conclusion	114

<b>CHAPTER 7 – SUSTAINING HOMESTAY BUSINESS – THE CHALLENGES</b>	<b>116</b>
7.1 Introduction	116
7.2 Challenges in Running Homestay Programme	116
7.2.1 Homestay maintenance	116
7.2.2 Lack of leadership	119
7.2.3 Lacking resources	118
7.2.4 Aging/old age	120
7.2.5 Lack of raw material	121
7.2.6 Women’s double burden	123
7.3 Discussion and Analysis	125
7.4 Conclusion	127
<b>CHAPTER 8 – CONCLUSION</b>	<b>128</b>
8.1 Introduction	128
8.2 Summary of research findings	128
8.3 Limitations of study	131
8.4 Implication of research findings	133
8.5 Conclusion	134
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	
<b>LIST OF PUBLICATIONS</b>	



## LIST OF TABLES

	<b>Page</b>
Table 2.1 Three types of authenticity in tourist experience	10
Table 2.3 Number of homestay's registration	32
Table 2.4 Homestay's income in Penang Island from year 2009 to 2016	33
Table 3.1 List of respondents (homestay operators and villagers)	47
Table 3.2 List of respondents (tourists)	47
Table 3.3 Schedule of the field work phase	50
Table 5.1 Summary of hospitality and being hospitable	93

## LIST OF FIGURES

		<b>Page</b>
Figure 2.1	Conceptual framework	36
Figure 3.1	Map of Pulau Aman	40
Figure 3.2(a)	Tourism plague of participating homestays	45
Figure 3.2(b)	Tourism plague of participating homestays	45
Figure 3.2(c)	Tourism plague of participating homestays	46
Figure 4.1	Location of Pulau Aman	56
Figure 4.2	A regular guest room in Pulau Aman	59
Figure 4.3	Catch of the day	61
Figure 4.4	Floating Restaurant	61
Figure 4.5	Sukun fruit on its tree	63
Figure 4.6	Clear water inside the Golden Well	64
Figure 4.7	The monument that described the history of the Golden Well	64
Figure 4.8	Kayak beside the sea	66
Figure 4.9	The camping area	66
Figure 5.1	Traditional Malay house in Pulau Aman	82
Figure 5.2	Example of table setting for visitors	85
Figure 6.1	Visitors getting out of the boat	98
Figure 6.2	Visitors taking a picture with flowers	99
Figure 6.3	Visitors taking a picture with the oldest Sukun Tree	100
Figure 6.4	Candid photo of visitors relaxing	100
Figure 6.5	Visitors in a traditional home	101

Figure 6.6	Rohana preparing the demonstration of making Kuih Kapit for visitors	103
Figure 6.7	The tools used to make Kuih Kapit	104
Figure 6.8	Menu for lunch	106

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

UNWTO	World Tourism Organization
MOTAC	Ministry of Tourism and Culture
PAT	Plant a Tree
IADP	Integrated Agriculture Development Area Penang
MARDI	Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute
KPW	Kumpulan Pengembangan Wanita (Women's Development Group)

**PERANAN GENDER DALAM PEMBINAAN KEASLIAN DAN  
HOSPITALITI: SATU KAJIAN TERHADAP HOMESTAY PULAU AMAN,  
PULAU PINANG**

**ABSTRAK**

Kajian kualitatif ini mengkaji pembinaan keaslian dan servis hospitaliti dari perspektif gender di Homestay Pulau Aman, Pulau Pinang. Melalui kajian literatur, hanya terdapat sedikit penyelidikan yang dilakukan di kawasan penginapan homestay, terutamanya daripada perspektif gender dan kerangka teori pembinaan keaslian. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji peranan wanita dalam proses pembinaan keaslian (*authenticity*) dan servis hospitaliti melalui Program Homestay di Pulau Pinang, dan juga untuk mengkaji cabaran dan strategi yang diguna pakai oleh operator homestay wanita semasa mengantara peranan mereka untuk kerja-kerja domestik, dan pada masa yang sama, menyediakan servis hospitaliti dan menunjukkan budaya Melayu yang asli kepada pelancong. Selain daripada itu, kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk melihat persepsi pelancong mengenai peranan wanita dalam pembinaan keaslian dan servis hospitaliti. Data telah dikumpul daripada pengendali homestay dan juga pelancong yang melawat Pulau Aman menggunakan pendekatan kajian kualitatif. Temubual mendalam (IDI) telah dijalankan dengan pengendali homestay wanita dan penyelar program homestay. Selain IDI, perbincangan kumpulan berfokus (FGD) dan pemerhatian mendalam digunakan untuk mengumpul data mengenai program pelancongan ini. Sesi-sesi FGD dijalankan bagi mengupas idea tentang konsep hospitaliti dan pembinaan keaslian dalam kalangan pengendali homestay, juga bersama dengan sekumpulan pelancong yang melawat Pulau Aman. Pendekatan pemerhatian mendalam dijalankan untuk mengumpul data tentang pembinaan

keaslian dalam kehidupan seharian. Analisis daripada data yang dikumpul menunjukkan bahawa wanita sebagai pengendali homestay menjalani pelbagai peranan dalam rutin harian mereka, termasuk menjadi ibu, isteri dan peniaga. Servis hospitaliti yang ditekankan oleh pengendali homestay ini dilihat sebagai penyumbang paling aktif dalam industri pelancongan di kampung tersebut. Cabaran dan isu-isu yang dihadapi oleh pengendali homestay semasa memastikan kelestarian program homestay turut dibincangkan dalam bab analisis. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa pembinaan keaslian di Pulau Aman dapat dijalankan melalui servis hospitaliti oleh pengendali homestay wanita. Oleh itu, lebih banyak kajian lanjut diperlukan untuk mengenal pasti isu-isu dan cara untuk meningkatkan kualiti industri pelancongan di Malaysia.

**GENDER ROLES IN CONSTRUCTING AUTHENTICITY AND  
HOSPITALITY: A STUDY OF HOMESTAY PULAU AMAN, PENANG**

**ABSTRACT**

This is a qualitative study examining the construction of authenticity and hospitality from a gender perspective, in Homestay Pulau Aman, Penang. From literature reviews, there has been very little research conducted in the area of homestay accommodation, especially from gender perspectives and using authenticity framework. The purposes of this research are to identify roles of women in the homestay business in constructing authentic experience and hospitality services, as well as to study the challenges and strategies women homestay operators taken in mediating their roles at domestic levels while providing hospitality services and staging authentic Malay culture to tourists. Other than that, the study aims to explore the perception of tourists about the role of women in constructing authenticity and hospitality. Data was collected from homestay hosts and tourists who visited the Pulau Aman through a qualitative approach. In-depth-interviews (IDI) were conducted with women homestay operators and the coordinator of the homestay program. Apart from IDI, focus group discussion (FGD) and participant observation were utilised to gather data of the tourism programme. The FGDs were focusing on establishing ideas about concept of hospitality and authenticity among homestay operators and a group of tourists who visited the island. The aspects of authentic living were gathered through an extensive participant observation approach. Analysis of the collected data reveals that women operators undergo multiple roles in their daily routines, which includes being a mother, wife, and entrepreneur. By being hospitable, the homestay host were seen as the most active contributors in hospitality services in the village. Challenges

and issues of the homestay operators faced while ensuring the sustainability of the programme were also discussed. It is concluded that the construction of authenticity in Pulau Aman is gained through the performance of hospitality by the women operators. Hence, it is established that further research is required in order to identify more issues and ways to better the Tourism Industry in Malaysia.



# CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of study

Tourism is an ever growing industry worldwide, and it has continued to grow and becoming the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world (UNWTO, 2016). Modern tourism includes a growing number of new destinations and it is closely linked to development. In turn, these dynamics have turned tourism into a key driver for socio-economic progress (UNWTO, 2016). The iconic rural tourism enable product such as homestay programme to be a highlight in the Malaysian tourism industry as it exemplifies diversification that many tourists were looking for. As mentioned in the official website of Malaysia Travel, the fastest and easiest ways to experience homestay in a traditional village or “*kampung*” is the option you have to get to know the real Malaysia. When it comes to homestay programme, hospitality is an important element in the whole experience.

Authenticity and hospitality are significant in tourism study as it concerns the aspects of everyday life, language, food and rituals practiced by a particular community. According to Bruner (1994), authenticity means “originals, as opposed to a copy”, and he adds that no reproduction is equal to original. Whereas hospitality is functioned by establishing a relationship or to promote an already established relationship (Selwyn, 2001). The association between experiencing authenticity and act of hospitality is therefore used in this study to understand homestay program from a gender perspective. The concept of hospitality is often referred by homestay operators as “services” and is also considered as the most important tourism asset in

ensuring that tourist can experience the authenticity of homestay experience (MOTAC, 2016).

The thesis uses Anthropological lens to understand and explain how human societies work (Burns, 1999). Anthropology has expanded and changed radically by including many sub-field of study, including Anthropology of Tourism. In tourism studies, anthropologists have made significant contributions to a number of issues and cases, which includes the understanding of tourism's impact on host communities; the impact of travel on an individual; the power relationships in tourism developments; heritage and culture commodification; types of tourism and tourists; and the relationships between tourism and ethnicity, identity, material culture, nationalism, and the environment (Montero, 2012). Studying tourism using anthropological lens helps to uncover many grounds of research that often left untold. As reviewed by Stronza (2001), tourism can be an ideal context for studying issues of political economy, social change and development, natural resource management, and cultural identity and expression.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

Studies on gender and tourism are vital because they give us a wider perspective on the domesticated roles that are often delegated to women. A number of scholars argue that through tourism, the role of women becomes significant as they can break through from their stereotyped domestic role at home (Ashley et al, 2000; Ferguson, 2010; Kinnaird et al, 1994). Homestay, for example, has been argued to be a pro-women tourism opportunity as it promotes sustainable community development

by fostering gender equality (Acharya and Halpenny, 2013). studies also show that women in tourism were mostly concentrated in the lowest paid or lowest skilled sectors of the industry, while carrying out a large amount of unpaid work, part time job, particularly in family tourism businesses (Jucan & Jucan, 2013). So, in the case of women in homestay programme, the questions whether homestay business can really close or even widen the gender gap is still left unexplored.

In this study, the role of women in constructing hospitality and authentic experience will be explored. It will focus on the daily life routine activities of women homestay operators, including their responsibility to ensure that their houses stay clean, food preparation for tourists, and giving tender and warmth care to their guests. The characteristic of women's role is therefore studied to reflect the Malay hospitality that the homestay program is based on. The study also aims to look at the strategies that women homestay operators employed to achieve balance between their roles as homestay operator and mother as well. While undertaking the role of constructing authenticity and performing hospitality services as homestay operators, these women also faced challenges in doing so.

Besides that, the study also wanted to explore the issues of cultural products being commoditized in the package of homestay program. The problem with exploring this prominent issue in rural tourism is the conflicted desire between the tourists and the hosts. According to Cohen (1988), commoditization of tourism product has apparently changed the meaning of cultural products and of human relations, making them eventually meaningless to the tourist. The authenticity of tourism products showcased by the women in tourism industry were then destroyed because of commoditization as well. In addition, Cohen (1988) argued that "staged

authenticity” is said to prevent the tourist’s genuine desire for authentic experiences. These conflicted motives for tourist visit are vital in the discussion of authenticity and hospitality services offered in a homestay program.

Hence, the thesis will be examining women’s roles in leadership, and their motivation to emerge as successful entrepreneurs. Lastly, the study wants to examine tourists’ perception in the process of constructing hospitality and authenticity, and how the cultural products in the homestay program were perceived and showcase to the visitors, but at the same time did not neglecting the authentic element that was embedded in the culture. This thesis argues that women homestay operators are significantly involved in the construction of authentic experience while performing hospitality, and at the same time were full filling their domestic duties as care-givers at home.

### **1.3 Research questions**

- 1.3.1 How do women homestay operators construct authenticity and staged hospitality services in Pulau Aman?
- 1.3.2 What are the roles of women and their challenges in playing both roles as homestay operators and mothers?
- 1.3.3 What is the perception of tourists on the staging of authenticity and hospitality in Pulau Aman?

## **1.4 Research objectives**

- 1.4.1 To explore the ways women homestay operators construct authenticity and staged hospitality services in Pulau Aman
- 1.4.2 To study the roles of women and their challenges in playing both roles as homestay operators and mothers
- 1.4.3 To explore the perception of tourists on the staging of authenticity and hospitality in Pulau Aman

## **1.5 Significance of study**

This study aimed to undertake a systematic study on the role of women as the homestay program host in constructing authenticity and hospitality, while at the same time performing their domestic duties as care-giver at home. By exploring and understanding the issue of double burden of women in the homestay industry, particularly when looking at how authenticity is constructed, together with the service of hospitality offered by the women operators at the homestay, the findings could be potent in the development of tourism industry. More so, by understanding the domesticated job that these women must juggle in their daily life while conducting business and caring for the family, issues of gender norms and roles expectation will be examined further. The study wants to examine women's scope of job at the homestay premises, since pre-arrival of guests, during visits, as well as post-visits.

The thesis is arguing that homestay is a representation of authentic Malaysian life. Therefore, homestay is deemed to be the most suitable vehicle to study authenticity and hospitality for the reason that it reflects the most authentic model for tourism, and at the same time, the gender context is prominent. Homestay represents the way a community live, and ordinarily the women are in the home. As the visible operators in the island, the study is going to present the voices of the women. In addition, homestay is quite unique in the business of tourism in Malaysia as they are the visible operators. Are they really making money, and what are the challenges for their business? The studies will emphasize the practical significance of what works for the women, and what does not work for the women in terms of managing the homestay business and juggling their domestic roles at home. Even though the homestay operation is visibly women, but there is not enough research that really

studies the gender perspectives in a homestay. Most studies have been done on economic perspectives, thus how their business growth contribute to tourism.

Besides, the study will also be examining the operations of Homestay Programme through the construction of authenticity and hospitality, using gender perspective to compliment the research on women and tourism industry. The conceptual significance of employing gender perspectives in this study enable the researcher to examine issues of gender relations and tourism processes. This conceptual framework is based on the recognition that tourism processes are gendered in their construction, presentation and consumption, and the form of this gendering is configured in different and diverse ways which are both temporally and spatially specific. Lastly, the perspective of tourists on the roles of women in the field of hospitality service could add to the pool of knowledge in the field of gender and tourism.



## **CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This section will review related literatures in Anthropology of Tourism and Gender, the concept of rural tourism, and homestay programme as developed by Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTAC). Issues and challenges in homestay programme will also be explored. The chapter concludes by providing a conceptual framework that will be used in the discussion and data analysis of this study.

### **2.2 Theories and Concepts**

#### **2.2.1 Authenticity**

Authenticity is a concept that has received particular attention by tourism scholars. Wang (1999) argues that authenticity raises questions concerning how the ‘Other’ and the ‘Past’ are represented. Other scholars have argued that the tourism industry in this modern era promises an authentic experience but, in fact, most of the experience designed exclusively or made to look more attractive (MacCannell, 1973). The analysis of tourism activities demanded an exploration of how authenticity plays a role in shaping the experience of tourists or visitors. The meaning of authenticity itself tends to be confusing because the term may be used in two different senses; namely authenticity as genuineness of events, and also as a human attribute that signifies being one’s true self (Steiner & Reisenger, 2006).

The concept of authenticity has played a vital role in understanding tourist motivation and experience. Over time, scholars have diverse debates and further analyses have generated a plethora of literature in this field (Cohen, 1988; Crang, 1996). The centre of the debate lies in the meaning of authenticity. Boorstin (1961) argued that tourism concerns a pursuit of inauthentic, while MacCannell (1976) countered that authenticity is in fact an essential component of tourist motivation. Later, Wang (1999) survey of the field identified several theoretical perspectives on authenticity in tourism studies, namely objective; constructive, and existential authenticity. Table below shows the distinction between the three perspectives.

Table 2.1 – Three types of Authenticity in Tourist Experience

<b>Object-Related</b>	<b>Activity-Related</b>
Objective authenticity refers to the authenticity of originals. Correspondingly, authentic experiences in tourism are equated to an epistemological experience (i.e., cognition) of the authenticity of originals	Existential authenticity refers to a potential existential state by Being that is to be activated by tourist activities. Correspondingly, authentic experiences in tourism are to achieve this activated existential state of Being within the liminal process of tourism. Existential authenticity can have nothing to do with the authenticity of toured objects.
Constructive authenticity refers to the authenticity projected onto toured objects by tourists or tourism producers in terms of their imagery, expectations, preferences, beliefs, powers, etc. There are various versions of authenticities regarding the same objects. Correspondingly, authentic experiences in tourism and the authenticity of toured objects are constitutive of one another. In this sense, the authenticity of toured objects is in fact symbolic authenticity.	

Source: Wang (1999)

## **Objectivism**

Wang (1999) attempts to analyse this concept by distinguishing between objective authenticity, constructive authenticity and existential authenticity. According to Wang (1999), the objective authenticity referred to “authentic” attraction visited by tourists and this relates to what is meant by MacCannell. According to this perspective, authentic experience means visitors wanted to see objects that are 'real' and not being staged for the benefit of tourists (MacCannell, 1973). The experience is said to be authentic if tourists feel so (Wang, 1999). However, Wang (1999) also argues that the objective and constructive authenticity may not explain all the motivation and experience of tourists. Thus, he introduced the concept of existential, a condition induced by tourist activities and is contrary to the authenticity that is described earlier.

## **Constructivism**

A constructivist approach describes authenticity as a socially constructed interpretation of the genuineness of the things observed (Cohen, 1988; Taylor, 2001). According to Wang (1999), things appear to be authentic because their genuineness is constructed by beliefs, perspectives, or powers. In the constructivist ideology, no one has access to a real world independent of human mental activity and symbolic language (Schwandt, 1994). According to Silver (1993), authenticity is a projection of tourist's own beliefs, expectations, preferences, stereotyped images, and consciousness onto toured objects. Cohen (1979) further conceptualised authenticity within a true–false personal continuum of perception ranging from complete authentic, through various stages of partial authenticity to complete falsehood. However, this is not fixed, and according to Cohen (1988), individuals can change

their views along this true–false continuum over time. Cohen (1988) also suggested authenticity is a fluid concept that can be negotiated through a process he calls emergent authenticity such that what is inauthentic may become authentic over time, and vice versa.

### **Existential Authenticity**

Regular human relationships commonly occur within institutionalized social contexts, with interactions subject to normative constraints (Kim & Jamal, 2007). Unmediated relationships not governed by social norms and regulations may be accessible when individuals are out of everyday social contexts (Arnold & Price 1993; Belk & Costa 1998; Celsi, Rose & Leigh 1993; Graburn 1983,1989; Lett 1983). Similarly, Wang (1999) suggested that authentic human relationship constitutes an important axis of tourism experience. In such ambience, tourists can ease themselves of the pressures stemming from inauthentic social hierarchy and status distinction (Wang, 1999). Thus, existential authenticity, unlike object-related version, can often have nothing to do with the issue of whether toured objects are real. In search of tourist experience which is existentially authentic, tourists are preoccupied with an existential state of *Being* activated by certain tourist activities. To put it another way, existential experience is the authenticity of *Being* which, as a potential, is to be subjectively or intersubjectively sampled by tourists as the process of tourism.

### **Staging authenticity**

According to MacCannell (1973) contemporary traveler's mission is not only to meet their satisfaction, but also to seek 'authenticity'. However, he argues that this finding is not determined by the quality of a search, but more on how travelers affected

by tour operators, tour guides, promotions and advertising. He said that most of authenticity has been staged to tourists by tour operators without knowing the truth. MacCannell (1973) was one of the first scholars to introduce the concept of originality in the study of motivation and travel experiences. He argues that modern humans see that people nowadays do not have the existential value and therefore have to look for it elsewhere, either in the community or society outside of their culture.

In his study, Goffman (1959) has described a structural division of social establishments into what he terms “front” and “back” regions. The front is the meeting place of hosts and guests or customers and service persons, and the back is the place where members of the home team retire between performances to relax and prepare (Goffman, 1959). Tourists commonly take guided tours of social establishments because they provide easy access to areas of the establishment ordinarily closed to outsiders (MacCannell, 1973). This kind of tour and the experiences, in which outsiders are allowed to be further in than regular visitors. In tourist settings, it may be necessary to note the existence of front and back regions. Thus, by referring to Goffman’s original front-back dichotomy, it is theoretically possible to distinguish six stages of the continuum, as shown in the table below.

**Table 2.1 – MacCannell’s Stage Authenticity Continuum**

<b>Stage one:</b>	Goffman’s front region; the kind of social space tourists attempt to overcome or to get behind
<b>Stage two:</b>	a touristic front region that has been decorated to appear, in some of its particulars like a back region. Functionally, this stage is entirely a front region, and it always has been, but it is cosmetically decorated with reminders of back region activities
<b>Stage three:</b>	a front region that is totally organized to look like a back region. This is a problematical stage; the better the simulation, the more difficult to distinguish from stage four
<b>Stage four:</b>	a back region that is open to outsiders. It is the open characteristic that distinguishes these especially touristic settings (stages three and four) from other back regions; access to most non-touristic back regions is somewhat restricted
<b>Stage five:</b>	a back region that may be cleaned up or altered a bit because tourists are permitted an occasional glimpse in
<b>Stage six:</b>	Goffman’s back region; the kind of social space that motivates touristic consciousness

*Source: MacCannell (1973)*

MacCannell (1973) has argued that a more helpful way of approaching the same facts is in terms of a modification of Erving Goffman’s (1959) model of everyday life activities. The study of tourist settings front and back is to be treated as ideal poles of a continuum, as the poles were linked by a series of front regions decorated to appear as back regions, and back regions set up to accommodate outsiders. The touristic way of getting in with the natives is to enter into a quest for authentic experiences, perceptions and insights. Since MacCannell (1973) presents

this concept in tourism studies, there are different interpretations of the concept thus causing a lot of confusion particularly what is meant by “authenticity experiencing”.

### **Touristic Quest for Authenticity**

The lived experiences of the tourism performance are the factors that inform the subjective potential of the tourism experience. Postmodernity arrives when true meanings of cultural products and human relations are distorted by the constant reproduction process of signs and images (Kim & Jamal, 2007). The concept of authenticity has played a prominent role in understanding tourist motivation and experience, and diverse debates and analyses have generated a plethora of literature in this field (Cohen 1988a; Crang 1996). The centre of the debate lies in the meaning of authenticity. MacCannell (1976) proposed that “touristic consciousness is motivated by its desire for authentic experience”. Modern society is inauthentic and alienating, thus driving people to travel in search of the authentic since “reality and authenticity are thought to be elsewhere” (MacCannell, 1976).

If the homestay operator promises to the customers their services, then they must provide what they have offered. In other words, authentic tourism is all about the trust between the services providers and customers as well (Drumond, 2013). Authenticity also indicates making or doing something in the original or traditional way. For example, in a restaurant that serves authentic Finnish foods might be owned by a chef from another nationality, as well as located in another country, but the way of serving meals or foods seems authentic Finnish foods (Pusa, 2013). From this, it can be said that authenticity is a goal of experience. Family ties is a typical example of experiencing inter-personal authenticity, and from most tourists’ personal point of view, tourism or holiday itself is a chance for them to reinforce a sense of authentic

togetherness (Wang, 1999). In recreational tourism, one will gain pleasant experiences not only from sightseeing's and events or performances, but also simultaneously experienced natural and emotional bond among family members.

Fundamentally, authentic experiences are about escaping places, as well as activities where tourists are available as most of the tourists wanted to visit development spots and later to participate in usual activities offered at the place (Islam, 2015). In this study, the analysis will concentrate of how Pulau Aman is an exemplar case of existential authenticity, as a potential state of being that is triggered by tourism activities – or referred to as activity-related authenticity. Hence, this thesis takes constructivist approach in understanding authenticity and used constructivist grounded theory as its methodological basis. According to Starks & Trinidad (2007), the goal of post-positivist approaches to grounded theory is to develop an exploratory theory of basic social processes. Meanwhile, constructivist grounded theory researchers try to learn how participants construct their experience through their actions, intentions, beliefs, and feelings (Charmaz, 1995). The purpose of this constructivist grounded theory study was to understand tourist perceptions of authenticity of homestay experiences as a whole.

### **2.2.2 Hospitality**

The basic function of hospitality is to establish a relationship or to promote an already established relationship (Selwyn, 2001). Acts of hospitality in achieving the relationship are taking place during exchanges of goods and services, both material and symbolic, between those who give hospitality (hosts) and those who receive it (guests). Hospitality converts strangers into familiars, enemies into friends, friends



into better friends, outsiders into insiders, and non-kin into kin (Selwyn, 2001). The women homestay operators play a prominent role in providing hospitality services that the tourists demand for. Women have been known to be handling the works that involves domestic activities such as cleaning and cooking. In the Homestay programme, it is often women who are taking care of the participating houses in terms of maintaining the cleanliness and keeping the traditional ambience expected by guests.

Literatures on hospitality are mostly written on the issue of management and issue that relate to entrepreneurial activities. The philosophy of hospitableness as argued by Telfer (2000) is referring to the name of the trait possessed by hospitable people. In a simple definition hospitality refers to the act of “giving of food, drink, and sometimes accommodation to people who are not regular members of a household” (Telfer, 2000). The acts of sharing their own sustenance with the guests were done by the givers (or hosts) by providing these things in their own home. The central idea of act of hospitality is that the concept remains of sharing one’s home and provision with others. Hence, the main task of the host is more than just providing food and drink but also warmth and shelter, similar to the role of women homestay operator that is to share their house with their guests.

The term hospitality and homestay industry has been selectively appropriated to denote a large-scale service industry providing overnight accommodation and food services on a commercial basis. In turns, it represents the commodification of domestic labour. Nevertheless, tourism has been represented as a global phenomenon that is the best initiative to empower and help women progress, as its rapid growth and diverse, flexible nature in the business (Pritchard et al, 2007). According to these

authors, tourism has an immense potential in contributing to development and poverty reduction as it may represent an opportunity for women to earn some money, to improve their wellbeing and also to gain access to the public sphere.

### **Hospitality and bonding relationship**

The bonding relationship when tourists visit the homestay has occurred as a result of the living together with host-family (Lynch, 2000). The activities between homestay host and guests involve include eating together session, as well as any leisure activities with host families in order to produce key elements of a special relationship between foster parents and foster children (Osman et al., 2009). An ongoing relationship between tourists and host families has made homestay as a medium for the host families or homestay operators to expand its network of relationships.

In the context of tourism and anthropology, Carroll (2008) explains new family relationships or “new familial bonds” will be formed following the interaction between tourists and hosts. Cohen, Speier & Frohlick (2015) have identified that some of the fictional friendships in tourism are unpredictable and occur naturally by involving emotional aspects. According to their study, it has sparked a new global relationship in addition to the local cultural wisdom. The study of Leite (2017) also proves solidarity that forms fictitious friendship between the host and domestic and international tourists.

Within the homestay context, the relationship between hosts and guests moved to the next level of bonding, in a sense that strangers become friends, and becoming a part of family in a short period of time (Mura el at, 2015). As guests’ and hosts’

expectations, attitudes, and cultural backgrounds may diverge, homestay experiences can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts between tourists and locals (Lynch, 2000; Pearce, 1990). The act of hospitality in homestay programmes is therefore in close relation with the role of women as homestay operators. Hospitality is, thus deeply implicated in any analysis of patriarchy system, but a very limited literature in the context of gender and tourism.

### **Malaysian Hospitality**

Malaysia offers a lot of tourism opportunities in line with the hospitality industry. The opportunities include culture diversity, multiracial society, and ethnic minority. Tourists can find the whole of Asia in one country as the tagline goes; 'Malaysia Truly Asia'. Most of the time, tourists are inclined to find out the unique characteristics of the countries they visited (Majid et al, 2015). Hospitality business is created when the needs for certain services started to emerge for people who's being away from home. The travel could be from one country to another, one state to another, or just nearby their house. By doing so, people need a place to eat and sleep. Therefore, in order to satisfy one's need to eat and sleep while travelling, two main factors were considered under the big umbrella of hospitality services; namely lodging and food service (Jones, 2002).

So what hospitality services provide? It serves as a 'shelter' for people who are staying away from home, and food and beverages is provided for people eating away from home or not able to prepare their own meals. One of the characteristics of hospitality industry that is stated by Walker (2007) is the operation time of 24 hours a day and 365 days a year for hospitality businesses. Walker (2007) also pointed out that the personnel in hospitality industry must work longer time when compared to

the other industries due to its long hour's operation time. This characteristic is what made the hospitality industry is different from other services in the tourism industry, due to its needs to be readily available to customer's request and need. Although there are many researches in hospitality, there is little research has been conducted on Malaysian hospitality. People always heard about French service, English service, American service, Thai Service and other services. Each service has its own characteristic. They have their own way to provide the service.

The basic homestay concept was established long before due to little or no such accommodation facilities were existing last time. According to Irwana Omar et al (2014) it has become a norm for a group of travellers who wanted to stay for a while in a certain new place to crash a stranger home for few nights. The only other option they have is to stay covered under big tree or just stay on their cruise ship. These travellers or traders are often advised to respect the culture and to adhere to the custom of living in new areas to ensure harmony. Traditional Malay hospitality practices are divided into two things, which are how host received the guest, and how guest behaving in host's home. In addition to that, the arrival of Islam to the Nusantara region has shaped the Malay community which in return emphasised hospitality treatment for guests. Muslims are required for honouring guests and respecting the host. According to Muhammad (2009), guests are considered "special" to the host. According to Islamic teachings, a house that is frequent visited by guests will provide the host family a generous wealth or "rezeki" (Mohamed Taib, 2004). Accepting guests is also seen as a way for the host to practice honourable deeds.

## **Challenges of being hospitable**

Apart from being hospitable and receiving hospitality, there are several challenges faced by the homestay operators in ensuring the sustainability of the industry. Hospitality industry services is in need to meet customer's satisfaction, other than making profit and generate customer's loyalty (Lane and Dupre, 1997). In addition, good image of the hospitality industry would depend on the service business provide by the organizations under the hospitality system (Kozak & Rimmington, 1998). Thus, from the notion of being hospitable, the services provided must be treat as a function process where it will help the organization to generate profit, insure high quality, and make every moment count (Lane & Dupre, 1997).

Nevertheless, the essence of culture and identity in Malaysia or specifically the Malays is rapidly decreasing due to development and modernization. Developers and builders compete to build contemporary and so-called iconic building and paid less attention to the fundamental nature of Malay or vernacular architecture. Traditional Malay house is part of heritage value that attracts tourists to visit Malaysia and experience the culture. Since cultural tourism is a value that attracts tourists, it is important to acknowledge the influential attributes of Malay Muslim architecture (traditional Malay house) into the design of hospitality building.

Darke and Gurney's (2000) writing on the study of hospitality has confirms that a key forum for social learning about the subject in hospitality activities has indeed involves the domestic and private arena, essentially the nuclear family setting. The study shows that providing en suite and other room based facilities in hotels could be seen as a response to customers' demands for their own personal 'domestic' space in the hotel. When staying in homestays, however, the presence of the nuclear family

introduces individuals to the rules, rituals, norms and customs which shape hospitality activities in a social setting. Darke and Gurney (2000) continues to argue that to have a better grasp on what hospitality is all about, the understanding of food, drink, and accommodation provision in a nuclear family is vital. This is due to the reason that the domestic setting in the provision of hospitality related activities can be the forum for the inter-relationship between the domestic and the social arenas. They further argue that the act of receiving guests into their domestic settings (namely their home) provide the opportunities for placing both individuals and families in a context of “civilizedness”.

Moreover, it is worth-mentioning that guests also perform a role in evaluating the social connectedness of individuals and families to some extent. Thus, from the host’s point of view, these events provide opportunities for developing social relationships among family members, hosting for social display, and meeting social and status needs. The receiving of guests therefore performs important social roles in binding individuals and groups together. Darke and Gurney (2000) show that these instances can also be the source of tension and stress, where different expectations of the rules and taboos may result in behaviour that causes offence to the other Party. The private setting also helps to consider some of the issues related to the meaning of hospitality, hosting and hospitableness’. The several definitions given above imply that hospitality involves supplying food, drink, and accommodation to people who are not members of the household.

### **2.3 Gender and Tourism**

Scholars have argued that women all around the world have high involvement in tourism whether it is through being visitors, hosts or employees in the tourism destination sector (Sabina & Nicolae, 2013; Gibson, 2001; Butler, 1995). However, there is limited number of studies done on the topic of gender and tourism research. According to United Nation World Tourism Organization, studying gender and tourism is vital because it has the potential to contribute to a greater gender equality. Similarly, women empowerment could be achieved in line with the Third Millennium Development Goal. Women were represented in the tourism industry worldwide as majority, both in formal and informal jobs (UNWTO, 2017). Although tourism offers women with the opportunities for income-generation and entrepreneurship, women were mostly concentrated in the lowest paid or lowest skilled sectors of the industry. Women also were carrying out a large amount of unpaid work in family tourism businesses, therefore greater equality is an essential component of a sustainable tourism industry (UNWTO, 2016).

However, the sector has paid limited attention to the rights and status of women, especially to those in poorer countries, and to the impact that tourism has on their lives and livelihoods. Sabina and Nicolae (2013) in their studies also find out that women in tourism sector are frequently doing part-time work, and such work is not well remunerated and resulted in reduce access to more skilled jobs and management positions. A study was conducted in India to estimate the approximate monetary value of the work done by women without pay in India in 2009. The reports suggest that the value of unpaid work performed by women both from rural and urban areas of India amounts to approximately US\$612 billion per year (Choudhary et al,

2009). Despite the magnitude of this figure, the financial value of the domestic work done by women without pay continues to go unnoticed, and women continue to be treated as if they contribute nothing of value to society or the nation. Women were keep getting excluded from fair inclusion in both the formal and informal sectors (Nazneen, 2015). Gender plays a role in the hospitality and tourism as women were working in the tourism industry on average paid of 25% less than male workers for comparable skills, and more importantly, women represent two thirds of the global tourism industry in labor force (Mitra, 2003).

According to Earth Summit 2002, a study has been done to compare women to men working hours. The proportion of women to men's working hours is 89%, which means that women work 89 hours when men work 100 hours. The study comprises data from 39 countries, including many of the industrially developed countries. In addition, the proportion of women to men's wages is 79%. The significance of this data shows that women are working fewer hours than men, at the same time receiving even less pay. In recent studies, feminist researcher has identified a clear segmentation of men's and women's work in tourism (Simpson, 2017). Majority of women's work is concentrated in seasonal, part time or low paid activities such as retail, hospitality and cleaning.

Similar situation can be implied in the Malaysian Homestay Industry, in which women were given the task of cleaning and cooking for the guests, while men were in charge of entertaining and dealing directly with the guests (Ibrahim & Razzaq, 2009). Undoubtedly, combining work and caring responsibilities is the most significant factor preventing women from progressing to higher positions as cited by 70% of respondents in the study (Liu et al, 2015). According to Ateljevic (2008) tourism