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Assessment of Homestay Business Standard Compliance in a Tourism Village: Implications for Sustainable Rural Tourism Development

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how community-based homestays in Buluh Duri Tourism Village, Serdang Bedagai Regency, meet Indonesia's homestay business standards and what the observed compliance gaps imply for sustainable rural tourism development. Rather than treating sustainability as a direct regulatory outcome, the study uses regulatory compliance as an analytical entry point to examine the institutional and governance conditions that shape implementation in a developing rural destination. The study used a qualitative bounded case-study design and examined two homestays operating in the village. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, document review, and limited tourist feedback, triangulating across sources. Compliance was assessed against the product, service, and management requirements specified in Ministerial Regulation of Tourism and Creative Economy No. 9 of 2014; environmental sustainability was examined as a complementary analytical dimension rather than as a formal regulatory category. The findings show uneven and partial implementation. Basic accommodation and hospitality practices were present, but gaps were observed in facility adequacy, service standardization, administrative routines, emergency preparedness, and environmentally responsible practices. The cross-case comparison suggests that compliance differences are associated with financial capacity, technical knowledge, training exposure, and the strength of institutional support. The study contributes a context-sensitive compliance perspective to the homestay and community-based tourism literature by showing how regulatory requirements interact with local implementation capacity. The findings support phased capacity building, technical assistance, and collaborative village-level governance rather than assuming that uniform standards can be implemented independently of local resources and institutional conditions.

Keywords: Community-based Tourism, Homestay Standards, Regulatory Compliance, Rural Tourism & Sustainable Tourism

1. Introduction

Rural tourism has increasingly been promoted as a strategy to broaden local economic opportunities, strengthen cultural identity, and support environmentally responsible development. In Indonesia, the expansion of tourism villages (*desa wisata*) has increased the importance of small-scale accommodation operated by local households. Homestays matter because they combine accommodation with direct interaction between visitors and host communities, positioning residents not only as beneficiaries of tourism but also as service providers and destination actors (Basak, 2021; Mura, 2015; Pusiran & Xiao, 2013).

However, the community-based character of homestays also creates a governance challenge. Many rural homestays operate with limited capital, informal administrative systems, and uneven access to training and technical assistance. These conditions may constrain their ability to translate formal business standards into day-to-day practices. Consequently, regulatory compliance is not solely an operator-level issue; institutional capacity, local governance arrangements, and the support available to small tourism enterprises also shape it.

In Indonesia, Ministerial Regulation of Tourism and Creative Economy No. 9 of 2014 established minimum standards for homestay businesses (*pondok wisata*). Importantly, the regulation organizes the standards into three formal dimensions—product, service, and management—comprising 28 sub-indicators. Previous studies have discussed homestays primarily in relation to authenticity, tourist satisfaction, community participation, rural development, and service quality (Kayat, 2002; Mura, 2015; Zhou, 2022). Other studies identify recurring implementation barriers, including weak management capability, limited finance, and insufficient institutional support (Aritama & Diasana Putra, 2021; Nordin, 2023). However, fewer studies have used a detailed regulatory-compliance lens to connect these operational conditions with broader debates on institutional capacity, community-based tourism governance, and sustainability.

This gap is especially relevant in emerging tourism villages where regulatory expectations may exceed the financial, technical, and organizational capacity of community-run accommodation. Buluh Duri Tourism Village in Sipispis Subdistrict, Serdang Bedagai Regency, North Sumatra, is a suitable setting for this assessment. The village has nature-based tourism potential associated with the Bah Bolon River and white-water rafting, but its accommodation sector remains small and developing (Budhiawan et al., 2025; Rosari et al., 2024). At the time of the study, only two homestays were operational.

This study therefore separates two analytical tasks that were previously conflated in the manuscript: first, assessing conformity with the formal homestay standard; and second, interpreting the observed compliance gaps in relation to sustainable rural tourism. The study does not claim that compliance causes sustainability outcomes. Instead, it examines how compliance patterns and implementation constraints may affect service quality, community-based tourism governance, and environmentally responsible destination development.

The study addresses the following research questions: (1) To what extent do the two operational homestays in Buluh Duri meet the product, service, and management indicators specified in Ministerial Regulation No. 9 of 2014? (2) What financial, technical, and institutional factors help explain the observed compliance gaps? Moreover, (3) What implications do these compliance patterns have for the development of sustainable, community-based rural tourism in Buluh Duri?

The study's scientific contribution lies in its compliance-based, capacity-sensitive perspective. Rather than treating regulation as a checklist, the study views implementation as an institutional process in which formal standards interact with resources, knowledge, local governance, and community-based operating practices. This perspective helps explain why a regulatory standard does not automatically produce uniform implementation across small rural tourism enterprises.

2. Literature Review and Analytical Framework

2.1 Homestays and Community-Based Rural Tourism

Homestays differ from conventional accommodation because the host household, domestic space, and local way of life form part of the visitor experience. This feature aligns homestays closely with community-based tourism (CBT), where local participation, local benefit, cultural interaction, and community control are central concerns. Prior research shows that homestays can support local income and strengthen host–guest interaction, but their small scale and informal organization can also create uneven service quality and limited managerial capacity (Pusiran & Xiao, 2013; Mura, 2015).

From a CBT perspective, standardization involves a tension between professionalism and authenticity. Minimum requirements for cleanliness, safety, information, and administration may protect visitors and improve market confidence, while overly rigid implementation may be difficult for household-based enterprises. Accordingly, the key question is not whether local authenticity should be replaced by hotel-like

standardization, but how to implement minimum quality and safety requirements without displacing the social and cultural characteristics that make community-based homestays distinctive.

2.2 Regulatory Compliance and Institutional Capacity

Regulatory compliance in small tourism enterprises depends not only on awareness of rules but also on the capacity to act on them. Operationally, institutional capacity means having financial resources, technical knowledge, administrative capability, human resources, and access to external support. For small rural homestays, requirements that seem straightforward in regulation—such as maintaining records, providing written safety information, or upgrading facilities—may still require resources and skills operators lack.

This perspective shifts the explanation of non-compliance away from a purely individual deficit model. A compliance gap may reflect a mismatch between formal expectations and implementation capacity. The regulation itself recognizes a role for public-sector support: its provisions on guidance and supervision assign government actors responsibilities for socialization, technical guidance, and operational training. Thus, compliance can be interpreted as a shared governance issue involving operators, village tourism institutions, and government agencies, not simply as an isolated business decision.

2.3 Governance, Sustainability, and the Compliance–Capacity Link

Governance matters because implementing tourism standards requires coordination across actors. Village tourism managers can facilitate common procedures and local monitoring; local governments can provide technical assistance and training; and homestay operators must translate guidance into routine practice. Weak coordination may leave operators with formal obligations but limited means to implement them.

This study treats sustainability as an interpretive outcome domain rather than a fourth regulatory dimension. The 2014 regulation formally covers product, service, and management; environmental practices such as waste handling and wastewater management appear within particular product requirements but do not constitute a separate regulatory category. The present study therefore examines environmental sustainability as a complementary lens for interpreting how operational practices may support or constrain long-term rural destination quality. This distinction avoids attributing sustainability outcomes directly to regulatory compliance while still allowing the study to discuss plausible implications.

2.4 Analytical Framework

The analytical framework links three levels of analysis. At the first level, the study assesses observable compliance with the formal product, service, and management indicators. At the second level, the study interprets cross-case differences through institutional capacity—financial resources, technical knowledge, managerial routines, and training exposure—and governance support. At the third level, the study discusses the implications of these patterns for community-based rural tourism, including service reliability, visitor safety, local enterprise capability, and environmentally responsible practice. This layered framework distinguishes regulatory assessment from interpretation and avoids unsupported causal inference.

3. Method

This research employed a qualitative bounded case-study design to examine homestay standard implementation within a specific rural tourism setting. Buluh Duri Tourism Village, located in Sipispis Subdistrict, Serdang Bedagai Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia, was selected because it is an emerging village tourism destination with a small accommodation sector. During fieldwork, only two homestays were operational. Both were included; therefore, the study used total coverage of the operational homestay population rather than sampling a subset.

3.1 Participants and selection

The study purposively selected informants based on direct involvement in homestay operations, village tourism management, local village administration, or direct experience as a homestay guest. Six participants were involved: two homestay owners/operators, one representative of the village tourism awareness group (Pokdarwis), one Village Secretary as a relevant local tourism stakeholder, and two tourists encountered during

field observation who had direct experience of the accommodation. The six participants represented these distinct categories; no overlapping roles were reported in the information available for this revision.

3.2 Data collection

Fieldwork was conducted on 12–13 October 2025. Interviews and non-participant observations were undertaken during the same field visits. The principal data-collection instruments were a structured observation checklist based on the regulatory indicators and oral information obtained through semi-structured interviews. We recorded audio only after obtaining the informant's verbal permission at the start of the interview. We obtained tourist feedback through brief conversations with two tourists encountered during the observation period. It served as supplementary contextual evidence rather than a representative measure of tourist satisfaction. We did not systematically record interview duration because we conducted interviews flexibly, based on each informant's availability and the flow of the conversation.

3.3 Regulatory operationalization

The compliance checklist was derived from Ministerial Regulation of Tourism and Creative Economy No. 9 of 2014. The regulation defines three formal dimensions: product (4 elements; 14 sub-indicators), service (1 element; 8 sub-indicators), and management (3 elements; 6 sub-indicators). We classified each indicator as Compliant (C) when the required condition was observed or corroborated, Partially Compliant (PC) when only part of the requirement was met, Non-Compliant (NC) when the requirement was absent, and Not Verified (NV) when available evidence was insufficient. We based the classification on convergent evidence from observation, interviews, and documents rather than a numerical score. We analyzed environmental sustainability separately as a complementary interpretive lens and did not treat it as a fourth regulatory dimension.

Table 1. Operationalization of the Ministerial Regulation No. 9 of 2014

Dimension	Element	Regulatory sub-indicators	Primary Evidence
Product	Residential building	1) 1–5 rooms specifically rented to guests; 2) adequate air circulation and lighting.	Observation; operator interview
Product	Guest bedroom	3) clean, well-maintained room with lock, mirror, clothes storage, lighting, and bin; 4) neatly arranged bed with pillow/pillowcase and sheet.	Observation
Product	Supporting facilities	5) visible, readable signboard; 6) bathroom with towel hanger, bin, toilet, water container, functioning drainage, and sufficient clean water; 7) clean/safe dining equipment when provided; 8) drinking water available.	Observation; operator interview
Product	Kitchen	9) clean and maintained; 10) clean, maintained, functioning equipment; 11) clean and maintained sink; 12) functioning wastewater drainage; 13) closed waste bin; 14) sufficient clean water for cleaning kitchen and dining equipment.	Observation
Service	Basic service procedures	1) room reservation; 2) guest identity recording; 3) cash and/or non-cash payment; 4) cleaning of the residential environment; 5) guest-room cleaning; 6) guest safety and comfort; 7) complaint handling; 8) simple written information on room rates, nearest health services, nearby public facilities,	Interview; observation; documents

Dimension	Element	Regulatory sub-indicators	Primary Evidence
		local attractions, and/or local values and culture.	
Management	Administration	1) dedicated area in the residence for administration with simple supporting facilities; 2) administrative recording of guest identity data.	Observation; documents
Management	Safety and security	3) written instructions to prevent fire or other emergencies; 4) first-aid equipment.	Observation; documents
Management	Human resources	5) application of Sapta Pesona principles (safe, orderly, clean, cool, beautiful, friendly, memorable); 6) participation in government-organized management capacity-building activities.	Interview; documents; observation

3.4 Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Data analysis followed an iterative thematic procedure based on data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles & Huberman). One researcher conducted first-cycle coding to identify evidence relevant to each regulatory indicator and explanatory themes related to financial capacity, technical knowledge, training exposure, management routines, and institutional support. To reduce individual interpretation bias, the team then checked and discussed the coded data and preliminary classifications with researchers who participated in field data collection. The team resolved differences in interpretation through discussion and re-examination of available observation notes, interview information, and documentary evidence until agreement was reached. We then used cross-case comparison to identify similarities and differences between Homestay A and Homestay B. We strengthened credibility through method and source triangulation and by checking whether interview statements were consistent with observed conditions before assigning a compliance category.

3.5 Ethics

We informed participants about the interview's purpose and the use of anonymized homestay labels. We requested and obtained verbal permission to record each interview at the beginning. The documentation used for this revision did not include an institutional ethics approval number; therefore, the manuscript does not claim formal ethics approval.

4. Results & Discussions

4.1 Case Context and Overall Pattern

Homestay A and Homestay B are small, community-owned accommodations embedded in the village setting. The completed 28-indicator checklist shows a clear difference in the number of indicators classified as fully compliant. Homestay A recorded 12 Compliant (C), 11 Partially Compliant (PC), and 5 Non-Compliant (NC) indicators, whereas Homestay B recorded 17 C, 6 PC, and 5 NC indicators. No indicator remained Not Verified (NV) in the updated checklist. The difference is concentrated mainly in the product dimension; the two homestays show the same category distribution for service and management. Accordingly, the revised analysis describes Homestay B as having more fully compliant indicators, while avoiding causal or statistically generalizable claims.

4.2 Product Compliance

Product compliance showed the biggest cross-case difference. Homestay A recorded 6 Compliant, 7 Partially Compliant, and 1 Non-Compliant product indicators, while Homestay B recorded 11 Compliant, 2 Partially Compliant, and 1 Non-Compliant indicators. Both homestays provided 1–5 guest rooms, drinking water, basic kitchen equipment, functioning wastewater drainage, and basic dining facilities. Both lacked a visible business signboard, and both only partially met the bathroom requirement because some required fixtures were absent. Homestay A also showed partial compliance in ventilation and lighting, bedroom completeness, kitchen

cleanliness and maintenance, sink condition, closed waste-bin provision, and the quality of water used for kitchen cleaning. Homestay B met more of these product requirements, although it remained only partially compliant with the closed waste-bin requirement. Thus, the observed difference between the cases is primarily attributable to the completeness and condition of physical and supporting facilities rather than to service or management practices.

Table 2. Comparative Assessment of Selected Product Compliance Indicators in Homestay A and Homestay B

Selected observed indicator	Homestay A	Homestay B	Interpretive note
Air circulation/lighting	Generally adequate; lighting moderate	Generally adequate; lighting good	Both meet basic conditions, with stronger observed provision in Homestay B.
Clean water and bathroom facilities	Limited in observed provision	More adequate	Difference suggests unequal facility investment capacity.
Bed and linen condition	Basic	More standardized	Service readiness differs, but exact regulatory classification should follow the complete checklist.
Wastewater/waste facilities	Limited evidence of systematic practice	Limited evidence of systematic practice	These items also have environmental implications, but remain part of the product standard.

4.3 Service Compliance

The service dimension produced the same compliance distribution for both homestays: 5 Compliant, 1 Partially Compliant, and 2 Non-Compliant indicators. Both used a manual booking arrangement coordinated through Pokdarwis, which was classified as partially compliant. In contrast, guest identity recording, cash and bank-transfer payment, routine environmental cleaning, routine room cleaning, and guest safety and comfort were classified as compliant. Both homestays were non-compliant in complaint handling because they had not prepared a mechanism to receive and resolve guest complaints. They were also non-compliant in providing simple written visitor information on room rates, nearby health/public facilities, attractions, and local culture; they delivered this information orally through guides or “Pokdarwis.”

4.4 Management Compliance

Management remained the weakest dimension in both cases. Each homestay recorded only 1 Compliant, 3 Partially Compliant, and 2 Non-Compliant management indicators. Neither homestay had a dedicated administrative area or written emergency/fire instructions. Guest identity administration was partial because operators photographed identity documents rather than maintaining them in a more structured administrative record. Basic first-aid materials were available but limited and shared with the household. Both operators had participated in tourism-awareness workshops or community-service socialization activities, but neither had received training specifically focused on homestay standards. The strongest common management practice was applying *Sapta Pesona* principles in daily hospitality.

4.5 Environmental Practices as a Complementary Sustainability Lens

The Ministry did not treat environmental sustainability as a separate regulatory dimension because Ministerial Regulation No. 9 of 2014 formally specifies product, service, and management requirements. Nevertheless, several observed product indicators are environmentally relevant. Both homestays had functioning wastewater drainage, but neither had a fully compliant closed waste-bin arrangement. Homestay A also showed issues

with kitchen cleanliness and water clarity, while Homestay B had more adequate conditions for these product indicators. These observations reflect sustainability-related operational concerns and opportunities for improvement, not evidence that regulatory compliance directly causes environmental outcomes.

4.6 Cross-Case Compliance Gap

The updated cross-case assessment indicates that Homestay B has more fully compliant indicators than Homestay A (17 versus 12 of 28 indicators). This difference is driven almost entirely by the product dimension, where Homestay B records 11 fully compliant indicators compared with 6 for Homestay A. In contrast, the service and management distributions are identical in both cases. Common weaknesses include the absence of a visible business signboard, a prepared complaint-handling mechanism, written visitor information, a dedicated administrative area, written emergency instructions, complete first-aid provision, and homestay-specific training. Interview evidence indicates these gaps stem from resource limitations and limited knowledge of the applicable standard.

Interview evidence supports this interpretation. The operator of Homestay A explained that each owner is responsible for facility improvements and stated, “At present, we do not have sufficient funds to upgrade the homestay according to the required standards” (Homestay A operator, interview, 12–13 October 2025; translated from Indonesian). The operator of Homestay B emphasized a knowledge and training gap: “I think the facilities and services are adequate, but I do not know what standards should be met. There has been no specific training for homestay owners” (Homestay B operator, interview, 12–13 October 2025; translated from Indonesian). These accounts are consistent with the checklist results, in which both homestays showed partial or non-compliance in several management, safety, information, and facility indicators.

5. Discussion

The revised findings support a capacity-sensitive interpretation of regulatory compliance. Homestay B's larger number of fully compliant indicators is concentrated in product-related requirements, whereas service and management show the same pattern in both cases. This suggests that differences in physical and supporting facilities may respond more to household-level resource availability, while management and service formalization reflect shared institutional and knowledge-related challenges. The concentration of partial and non-compliance in safety, written information, administration, and training indicates that compliance depends not only on material investment but also on the ability to translate standards into routine operating procedures.

This distinction is important because previous homestay research often emphasizes authenticity, participation, or tourist satisfaction, while compliance studies can become checklist-oriented. This case connects these strands by showing that minimum standards and community-based tourism are not necessarily opposed. Standardized guest registration, complaint handling, safety information, and basic facility requirements can support reliability and visitor protection without requiring homestays to lose their household-based character. The practical issue is whether operators receive sufficient support to adapt such requirements to a rural context.

The findings also illuminate a governance dimension. Operator interviews show that individual owners largely bear the cost of facility upgrades, while knowledge of the detailed standards and access to homestay-specific training remain limited. The Homestay A operator explicitly linked delayed upgrading to insufficient funds, whereas the Homestay B operator reported not knowing the detailed standards and not having received specific homestay training. These accounts do not establish a causal effect, but together with the observed compliance gaps they provide plausible evidence that financial capacity, technical knowledge, and institutional support shape the local implementation environment.

Environmental sustainability requires especially careful interpretation. The earlier manuscript treated it as a fourth regulatory aspect, but it is not. In the revised framework, environmental sustainability is a complementary analytical lens. Wastewater drainage, waste containment, and clean-water provision directly relate to product requirements, while waste separation, energy efficiency, and water conservation go beyond the minimum 2014 checklist. Their limited implementation in both cases suggests an opportunity to align homestay upgrading with broader sustainable-tourism objectives. However, the two-case qualitative design cannot establish that compliance itself produces environmental outcomes.

These results extend prior studies on community-based homestays by identifying a regulatory–capacity interface: the meaningful unit of analysis is not the rule alone or the operator alone, but the relationship between formal requirements and the local capacity to implement them. This helps explain why identical standards may be implemented unevenly across community enterprises. The contribution is therefore both theoretical and practical: compliance in rural tourism can be conceptualized as an institutional process shaped by resources, knowledge, local governance, and support structures.

From a policy perspective, a phased implementation model may be more realistic than expecting small rural homestays to meet all standards at once. Prioritize requirements with immediate safety and service implications, followed by administrative formalization, digital market access, and sustainability upgrades. Village tourism managers and local government can act as intermediaries by sharing templates, providing joint training, offering ongoing mentoring, and collectively procuring basic safety equipment. Such interventions would strengthen local capability while preserving the community-based nature of the accommodation.

6. Limitations

This study is a context-specific qualitative case study involving the two homestays operational in Buluh Duri during fieldwork. It aims for analytical depth rather than statistical generalization. The participant set was also small (six participants), and tourist feedback was limited to two tourists encountered during field observation; consequently, tourist comments were used only as supplementary evidence. One researcher led coding, but field researchers checked the coded data and interpretations through discussion. The compliance classifications depend on evidence available during the 12–13 October 2025 field visit and should therefore be interpreted as a time-bounded assessment. Future research could apply the full indicator matrix across multiple villages, involve independent coders, and combine qualitative explanations with repeated or quantitative compliance assessments.

7. Conclusion

This study assessed homestay standard implementation in Buluh Duri Tourism Village using 28 indicators derived from the product, service, and management requirements of Ministerial Regulation No. 9 of 2014. Homestay A recorded 12 Compliant, 11 Partially Compliant, and 5 Non-Compliant indicators, while Homestay B recorded 17 Compliant, 6 Partially Compliant, and 5 Non-Compliant indicators. The difference is concentrated in the product dimension: Homestay B met more physical and supporting-facility requirements, while both homestays showed identical compliance distributions in service and management. Both cases nevertheless share important weaknesses in complaint handling, written visitor information, administration, emergency preparedness, first-aid completeness, and homestay-specific capacity building.

Interpret the findings as context-specific evidence rather than causal effects. They suggest that compliance gaps stem from the interaction of limited financial resources, technical knowledge, training exposure, and institutional support. This explains why formal standards alone may not produce consistent implementation among small, community-run accommodation businesses.

The study offers a compliance-based analytical perspective that distinguishes formal regulatory assessment from broader interpretations of sustainability. It also shows that environmental sustainability should not be misrepresented as a separate dimension of the 2014 regulation; rather, environmental implications can be examined through relevant product requirements and complementary sustainability practices. For Buluh Duri, priority actions include practical technical guidance, management and safety training, low-cost facility upgrading, clearer administrative procedures, and coordinated support from village tourism institutions and local government.

Future studies should test the compliance–capacity relationship across larger samples and multiple destinations, use the complete regulatory indicator set, and examine how different forms of institutional support influence the trajectory of homestay upgrading over time.

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