



Becoming International without Leaving the Island: Inbound Internationalization of Homestay SMEs in Gili Lampu, Nusa Tenggara Barat

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the process of inbound internationalization experienced and interpreted by homestay SME actors in Gili Lampu, West Nusa Tenggara, focusing on how they understand "becoming international" amidst geographical limitations, how digital platforms shape their experiences, how they negotiate local values with global expectations, and what transformations they undergo. This research employs a qualitative case study approach with an interpretive paradigm. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with eight homestay owners selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques, participant observation over two months, and documentation from digital platforms and field notes. Data analysis used the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña combined with thematic analysis from Braun and Clarke. Data trustworthiness was ensured through prolonged engagement, triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. The findings reveal four main themes. First, the meaning of "becoming international" is multidimensional, encompassing economic, social, and cultural meanings. Second, digital platforms are ambivalent, acting as "enablers and constraints" connecting them to global markets, while their algorithmic opacity creates dependency and anxiety.

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has fundamentally changed the global tourism landscape. Digital platforms such as online travel agencies (OTAs) and peer-to-peer accommodation platforms have opened up international market access for small-scale accommodation providers, including homestays in rural areas (Afren, 2024; Cheung et al., 2023). This phenomenon creates unprecedented opportunities for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the tourism sector to connect with foreign tourists without having to leave their geographical location (Alnajim & Fakieh, 2023; Guo, 2021).

In the context of Southeast Asia, regional initiatives such as the digital training program initiated by the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office (MTCO) with Agoda demonstrate the seriousness of various parties in empowering small-scale accommodation providers (Holland & Wise, 2023). The program is designed to increase the digital capacity of homestays, ecolodges, and guesthouses in rural and secondary destinations, by equipping them with the practical skills to create and manage property listings on digital platforms such as Agoda, upload images and room availability, set prices and promotions, and interact effectively with customer reviews (Vasilieva et al., 2022; Yen, 2024).

A similar phenomenon has also emerged in the South African region through the launch of *FlyingCarpet.travel*, a digital destination marketing portal that enables tourism MSMEs, including community-owned hotels and local artisans, to access global distribution channels without having to make large financial investments. The platform provides real-time bookings, multi-tier pricing, and instant confirmations specifically designed to support community-based businesses to be on par with large carriers in terms of accessibility and quality of service (Raji et al., 2024; Sutresno & Singgalen, 2023).

The literature on the internationalization of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) over the past few decades has been dominated by the perspective of outward internationalization, which is the process by which companies enter foreign markets through exports, direct investment, or cross-border partnerships. However, knowledge of inbound internationalization, the process of internationalization in which companies attract foreign customers to their domestic market instead of entering foreign markets, is still very limited (Avlijaš, 2023; Virglerová et al., 2021). (Bianchi & Stoian, 2024) defines inbound internationalization as a phenomenon in which companies do not need to leave their territory to become international; instead, foreign consumers come to them. Their qualitative study of tourism and hospitality SME manager owners in Latin America shows that managerial and organizational capabilities, including networking, marketing, technology, and innovation capabilities, together drive the success of inbound internationalization (Hermans et al., 2023; Sousa & Moses, 2025).

These findings open up a wide space for exploration, especially since different geographical and socio-cultural contexts can generate diverse dynamics (Lakshman et al., 2023; Nikmah et al., 2022). Unfortunately, research on inbound internationalization in the Southeast Asian region, especially Indonesia, is still very rare. In fact, as an archipelagic country with extraordinary marine tourism

potential, Indonesia offers a rich natural laboratory to study this phenomenon (Hardiyati & Purwaningsih, 2023; Prinanda, 2025; Wang & Ariso, 2025).

Gili Lampu, located in Sambelia District, East Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), is one of the marine tourism attractions that is rich in marine biodiversity. As an archipelagic country with a water area of 7.81 million km², much larger than the land area of only 2.01 million km², Indonesia has great potential in the development of community-based marine tourism (Baysha et al., 2024; Maghfiroh et al., 2023; Ramadina et al., 2023)

Previous research on sustainable marine tourism management through scuba diving tourism on Gili Lampu revealed that this area has significant attractions for tourists, including the potential to attract foreign visitors (Octadina et al., 2022). However, the same study also identified some obstacles in the process of developing and managing Gili Lampu tourist attractions, such as low human resources in the field of tour guides, and a lack of role in promoting diving tourism by Gili Lampu tourist attraction managers (Fauziah, 2021; Rachmidiani & Edison, 2023).

These findings indicate that there is a gap between tourism potential and management capacity, especially in utilizing digital platforms to reach international markets (Solihin et al., 2021). Homestays as community-based accommodation units have a strategic position in the Gili Lampu tourism ecosystem, but not much is known about how these homestay MSME actors navigate challenges and take advantage of opportunities to attract foreign tourists (Baysha et al., 2024; Fauziah, 2021; Rachmidiani & Edison, 2023).

Based on this gap, this study aims to explore in depth the *inbound internationalization* process experienced and interpreted by homestay MSME actors in Gili Lampu. The main question that guides this study is: "How is the process of inbound internationalization experienced and interpreted by homestay MSME actors in Gili Lampu in their interactions with digital platforms and foreign tourists?" Specifically, the research questions are formulated as follows: (1) How do homestay MSME actors in Gili Lampu understand and interpret 'being international' in the midst of geographical limitations and resources they have? (2) How is the digital platform present and interpreted in the daily management of homestays, and how does the presence of the platform shape the experience of actors in interacting with foreign tourists? (3) What meaningful negotiations occur when local values meet the expectations and demands of international tourists? (4) What transformation do homestay actors experience in terms of knowledge, practice, and self-identity during the process of becoming international?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internationalization of SMEs: From Outward to Inbound

The literature on the internationalization of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) over the past four decades has been dominated by two main perspectives. First, the Uppsala Model views internationalization as a gradual process in which companies gradually increase their involvement in foreign markets, starting from markets with a small psychic distance (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009) Second, the

concept *Born Global* which shows that SMEs can go international directly from the beginning of their establishment by utilizing technology and entrepreneurial orientation Global (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004; Oviatt & Phillips Mcdougall, 1993) Although different, these two perspectives have fundamental similarities, namely they are both oriented towards *Outward internationalization* The process by which a company enters a foreign market through exports, investments, or cross-border partnerships. Criticism of this orientation arises because many SMEs in the service sector, especially tourism, are experiencing internationalization with different patterns. They do not need to "go" to foreign markets because it is foreign consumers who "come" to them (Bianchi, 2022). This phenomenon cannot be adequately explained by conventional theories that focus on foreign direct investment.

The Concept of Inbound Internationalization

Inbound Internationalization is defined as the process by which Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the homestay sector in Gili Lampu carry out a series of strategic adaptations and service innovations to attract, serve, and retain foreign tourists without having to physically expand or open branches abroad through four main dimensions: (1) Adaptation of services and facilities to meet the standards and preferences of foreign tourists; (2) Digital capabilities and international marketing through a presence on a global platform; (3) Cross-Cultural Capabilities human resources in communicating and serving foreign guests; and (4) Market orientation and new value creation Through the development of integrated tour packages that are relevant to the needs of global tourists (Bianchi, 2024).

Digital Platform and Homestay Internationalization

The development of digital platforms such as *Online Travel Agencies* (OTA), Agoda, and booking.com has changed the global tourism landscape. The platform allows small-scale accommodation providers to reach international markets without major investment in global marketing (Tussyadiah & Pesonen, 2018). The importance of this platform is reflected in regional initiatives such as MTCO's digital training program, Agoda's homestay in Southeast Asia, and the launch of flying Carpet.travel in South Africa. Concept *Platform-mediated internationalization* explains how digital platforms not only become distribution channels but also shape social relationships between hosts and guests. The review system creates a trust mechanism that allows foreign tourists to choose accommodation in places they have never been before. Recommendation algorithms affect homestay visibility in the global market (Pham, 2025). Thus, digital platforms are not just neutral tools, but agents that participate in shaping the experiences and practices of actors. However, the adoption of the platform by rural SMEs faces the challenges of digital divide, technical skills, and digital literacy (Minghetti & Buhalis, 2010).

Community-Based Tourism and Homestay

Community-based tourism (CBT) is defined as tourism that pays attention to environmental, social, and cultural sustainability aspects, which are managed and owned by the community to attract tourists (Thakur, 2026). CBT emphasizes the active participation of communities in the planning, management, and benefits of tourism, thereby contributing to economic empowerment and the preservation of local culture (Conte et al., 2025). Homestay is one of the most common forms of CBT implementation in Southeast Asia. In the homestay model, tourists live with local families, participate in daily life, and experience firsthand the local culture (Pradhan, 2024). Studies of homestay models in ASEAN show the diversity of practices in Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, each with uniqueness in management, marketing, and benefit-sharing (Widowati et al., 2025). Homestays that want to attract foreign tourists face multidimensional challenges: (1) cross-cultural language and communication, (2) service standards that meet the expectations of foreign tourists without losing local uniqueness, (3) access to global marketing channels, and (4) negotiation of cultural identity between maintaining authenticity and meeting global market expectations (Pradhan, 2024).

Context of Gili Lampu: Potential and Challenges

Gili Lampu, located in Sambelia District, East Lombok, is one of the marine tourist attractions that is rich in marine biodiversity. As an archipelagic country with an area of 7.81 million km², Indonesia has great potential in the development of community-based marine tourism (At et al., 2024). Previous research on sustainable marine tourism management through scuba diving tourism on Gili Lampu revealed that this area has significant attractions for tourists, including the potential to attract foreign visitors. However, the same study identified a number of obstacles: low human resources in the field of tour guides, and a lack of role in promoting diving tourism by tourist attraction managers (Floranika et al., 2022). These findings indicate a gap between tourism potential and management capacity, especially in utilizing digital platforms to reach international markets. Homestays as community-based accommodation units have a strategic position in the Gili Lampu tourism ecosystem, but not much is known about how homestay MSME actors navigate challenges and take advantage of opportunities to attract foreign tourists.

Previous Research and Research Position

Summary of Previous Studies

Table 1. Previous studies related to the Digital Divide, Homestay, and Sustainable Marine Tourism

Number	Author (Year)	Research Focus	Method	Key Findings	Limitations/ Gaps
1	(Mingheti & Buhalis, 2010)	Develop a theoretical framework for analyzing the digital divide	Conceptual (literature review & model)	The digital divide is multi-dimensional (access, motivation,	It is conceptual and has not been empirically

		in tourism between markets and destinations.	adaptation).	skills). Markets and destinations are classified in four levels of access; Optimal interaction only occurs at an equal level of access.	tested. Measurement indicators for each construct have not yet been developed.
2	(Voon et al., 2022)	Develop and validate homestay service experience measurement instruments (HomeServE) and test their effect on satisfaction and intention to return.	<i>Mixed-method:</i> FGD and survey (n=866) with CFA and SEM analysis.	HomeServE consists of 8 dimensions (32 items). Service experience has a significant positive effect on satisfaction, and indirectly on return intention.	Samples are limited to the Malaysian context. It does not explore economic factors (prices) and the impact of the health crisis, specifically in the model.
3	(Doan et al., 2022)	Exploring the adaptation and recovery strategies of the homestay business in Vietnam during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.	Qualitative : semi-structured interviews with 17 homestay owners, theoretically analyzed.	Three main strategies: adaptation of operational protocols, modification of products/services, and restoration of experience authenticity. The resilience of a business is influenced by the family structure and the cognition of the owner.	Findings cannot be generalized (context-specific). The data is cross-sectional and only from the owner's perspective, without input from tourists or other stakeholders.
4	(Cavallini et al., 2023)	Examines the profiles, preferences, and conservation tendencies of dive tourists in three North	Quantitative case study: survey (n=123) with regression analysis.	Divers are predominantly beginners and domestic. Preferences vary based on experience level.	Small sample sizes limit generalization. Potential bias response to conservation issues. Only

		African destinations and their implications for sustainability.		Appreciation for natural beauty is positively correlated with a willingness to pay for conservation.	focus on divers, not other marine users.
5	(Virglero vá et al., 2021)	Examine internationalization factors (export costs, legal & tax differences, language & cultural differences) against the perception of market risk in MSMEs in V4 countries (Czech, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary).	Quantitative: Survey of 1,585 MSMEs, analyzed using a linear regression model.	Only 30.2% of MSMEs internationalize. Language & cultural differences have the greatest positive influence on the perception of market risk, followed by export costs. Legal and tax differences do not have a significant effect.	The data was collected before the COVID-19 pandemic, so it does not reflect the conditions of the crisis. Samples are limited to the V4 state, reducing generalization. Focus only on risk perception, not on mitigation strategies or actual performance impacts.
6	(Pham, 2025)	Investigate the influence of modern technologies (<i>online reviews, virtual reality/VR, and AI chatbots</i>) on hotel booking intent and willingness to pay a tourist's deposit for the first time in a rural Vietnamese destination, mediating a	Quantitative: Survey of 425 Vietnamese tourists, analyzed with SEM.	Third, technology acts as a stimulus that affects a sense of presence and trust. Online reviews are the strongest trust drivers. VR is most effective at creating a sense of presence. <i>AI chatbots</i> support both mediation variables. A sense of presence and trust	Focus on intention, not actual behavior. Samples were limited to Vietnamese tourists and used <i>the convenience sampling method</i> . Only test three technologies, without considering other technologies

		sense of presence and trust.		significantly mediates the influence of technology on order intent and willingness to pay deposits.	or moderation variables (e.g., demographics).
7	(Bianchi, 2022)	Exploring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism and hospitality MSMEs in developing countries (Chile) and identifying service innovation strategies implemented to survive.	Qualitative : A case study with in-depth interviews with 20 MSME owners/managers in Chile.	The pandemic led to a drastic decline in demand and revenue, as well as employee layoffs, with minimal government support. MSMEs develop four service innovation strategies: (1) Surviving in the midst of a storm (short-term/low-scope); (2) Exploiting emerging markets (short-term/high-scope); (3) Exploiting market changes (long-term/low scope); (4) Envision the future market (long-term/high scope).	The findings are contextual (Chilean) and cannot be generalized. The data was collected in the first year of the pandemic, so it did not capture the dynamics of long-term adaptation. Only from the perspective of MSME owners.
8	Stuart et al. (2026).	Inbound internationalization homestay in Gili Llampu	Qualitative Interpretive	Will explore the process of becoming and the meaning of the perpetrator	Filling the gaps: the Indonesian context, homestay focus, interpretive approach

Research Position (Novelty)

Based on the literature review above, the position of this research can be formulated as follows: (1) Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of the concept of *Inbound Internationalization* (Bianchi, 2024) by using interpretive paradigms to explore the process of *becoming*. How actors understand, interpret, and experience transformation in their journey to become service providers for international tourists. (2) Contextually, this study fills the gap in the study of *Inbound Internationalization* in Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia. The context of islands with characteristics of coastal communities offers new perspectives that previous studies have not reached. (3) Thematically, this study synthesizes three domains that have been running separately: the literature on the internationalization of SMEs, the study of digital platforms, and the study of community-based tourism, with homestay as the unit of analysis. (4) Methodologically, this study responds to the call for (Bianchi, 2024) to conduct qualitative research that can capture the complexity of processes in *Inbound Internationalization*.

Theoretical Lens of Research

This study uses an interpretive approach that does not aim to test hypotheses, but rather brings three concepts as "lenses" to read phenomena in the field, namely (1) About Usep Inbound Internationalization (Bianchi & Stoian, 2024); It is used to understand the phenomenon of homestays becoming international without leaving the island, with a focus on process and meaning. (2) Mediated Interaction Platform Concept (Deng et al., 2021; Pham, 2025): Used to understand how digital platforms are present in the daily lives of actors and shape their experience interacting with foreign tourists. (3) Konsep Community-Based Tourism (Conte et al., 2025; Pradhan, 2024): Used to understand the dynamics of homestays as a community-based business that brings together local values with global demands. These three concepts are used as "glasses" that help researchers to be sensitive to certain aspects, but researchers remain open to new themes that emerge from the field in the spirit of the interpretive paradigm

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study employed an interpretive paradigm with a qualitative case study approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the subjective experiences of homestay SME actors in Gili Lampu regarding the process of inbound internationalization. The interpretive paradigm was chosen because the research focused on how homestay actors understand and interpret their experiences of "becoming international" despite geographical and resource limitations. The study was conducted in Gili Lampu, Sambelia District, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara, from December 2025 to February 2026. The location was purposively selected due to its strong marine tourism potential, the presence of community-based homestays serving international tourists, and the gap between tourism potential and digital management capacity.

The research subjects were homestay SME actors who had experience hosting foreign tourists. Informants were selected using purposive sampling

based on several criteria: homestay owners or managers who had operated for at least one year, had hosted foreign guests at least three times within the previous year, used digital platforms such as Airbnb, Agoda, Booking.com, or social media for promotion and management, and were willing to participate in in-depth interviews. The number of informants was determined flexibly using snowball sampling until data saturation was achieved, with an estimated target of 8-12 participants. In addition to the main informants, supporting informants such as community leaders, local tourism managers, and village officials were also involved to enrich perspectives and strengthen data triangulation.

Data collection was conducted through three main techniques: semi-structured in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted at the homestay locations, lasted approximately 45-90 minutes, and were recorded using digital voice recorders with the informants' permission. Participatory observation involved observing homestay management activities, interactions with guests, the use of digital platforms, and community dynamics. Documentation included homestay profiles on digital platforms, guest reviews, photographs of homestay activities, guest books, and other supporting documents. In this study, the researcher acted as the primary research instrument, supported by interview guidelines, digital recording devices, cameras, field notes, and observation matrices.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of research on the inbound internationalization process experienced and interpreted by homestay MSME actors in Gili Lampu, Sembelia East, Lombok, NTB. The data presented was obtained through in-depth interviews with 8 informants who were selected with a four-point criterion, as mentioned in the subjects and informants of the research above. Participatory observation was carried out for two months, and various kinds of documentation were needed, both from digital platforms and direct documentation. This discussion was organized to answer four research questions that have been formulated in chapter 1, namely: (1) How do actors understand and interpret 'being international' in the midst of geographical and resource limitations; (2) How digital platforms present and shape their experiences; (3) Negotiate what meaning happens when local values meet global expectations; (4) What transformation was experienced during the process of becoming international. Using an interpretive paradigm, this chapter not only presents a description of the findings but also offers an in-depth interpretation of the meanings constructed by the actors in their daily lives. Each sub-chapter will present a dialogue between empirical findings, theoretical concepts that have been discussed in Chapter 2, as well as researchers' reflections on the unique dynamics that occur in the context of coastal communities of Gili Lampu.

Meaning to be International

This section presents a discussion of the research findings on the inbound internationalization process experienced and interpreted by homestay MSME actors in Gili Lampu. In accordance with the interpretative paradigm used, this

discussion does not test hypotheses but builds a deep understanding of the journey of MSME actors to become international in the midst of geographical and resource limitations.

The Spectrum of Meaning of Being International

The findings of the study reveal that the meaning of being international by homestay actors in Gili Lampu is not single, but stretches across a multi-layered spectrum of meanings. Thematic analysis identified three layers of meaning that emerged in stages as their experiences progressed, which are presented in the table as follows:

Table 2. Spectrum of the Meaning of "Becoming International" for Gili Lampu Homestay Actors

Pencil meaning	Main focus	Representative quotes	Implications
Economic meaning	Business income, additional income	"The important thing is that there is an income, if the local guests often bid, but if they can pay immediately" (Mr. Lalu Hendra)	Internationalization is a survival strategy.
Social meaning	Community recognition, status, and confidence	"Now the neighbors see me differently, they ask how I always get white guests, I share stories, and I'm proud to be able to do that" (Mrs. Baiq)	Internationalization as social capital
Cultural significance	Cultural learning, expansion of global insights, and connections	"I came to know, Germans like bitter coffee, French people like bread. My world is wider than Gili Lampu." (Mr. Candra)	Internationalization as self-transformation

These findings expand the definition of *Inbound Internationalization* (Bianchi & Stoian, 2024), which focuses more on organizational capabilities. In the context of Gili Lampu, internationalization is not just a business process, but rather a process. Existential phenomena that touch economic, social, and cultural aspects simultaneously. This is in line with the view (Conte et al., 2025) that homestay as CBT always brings a cultural dimension, but this study adds that the cultural dimension itself is transformed into a cultural dimension. Source of meaning that encourage sustainable motivation.

"Going International" as a Heroic Achievement

Interestingly, geographical limitations and resources actually shape the narrative of Heroic Achievements among the perpetrators. Expressions such as "We're here, at the end of there, but the guests can get there." (Mrs. Lisa) reflect how distance and remoteness are constructed as backgrounds that reinforce a sense of pride. This heroic narrative serves as a coping mechanism, at once a source of legitimacy. In the midst of limited infrastructure and access, the success of

attracting foreign guests is proof that they are "capable" of competing at the global level. This creates a new identity as a "winner" in the midst of limitations. These findings enrich the literature on *Inbound Internationalization* by showing that geographical limitations are not always an obstacle, but can be symbolically constructed as part of a success narrative. This opens up space to rethink the assumptions in the Uppsala Model (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009) about "psychological distance" as a progressive obstacle.

Digital platforms: between "blessings" and "burdens."

Answering how digital platforms are present and shape the experiences of the actors, the researcher captures the implicit message that the MSME homestay actors want to convey in Gili Lampu as follows:

Digital Platforms as Enablers and Constraints

Digital platforms are perceived by homestay actors as key enablers that provide access to international markets. However, beyond their facilitating role, platforms also introduce structural dependencies due to limited transparency in algorithmic systems. This duality reflects the ambivalent nature of platform-mediated internationalization. This metaphor is important because it shows that digital platforms are not understood as neutral tools, but rather as a transformative agent. *"In the past, we could only wait for guests to come individually. Now, as soon as there is a 'booking in' notification, I immediately know there is a guest from Europe next week. It's like having friends abroad who help put up ads."* Reveal Mr. Suyanto Suladi, the owner of the Gili Lampu tourist hut. Digital Platforms are creating a new reality where the absence of physical access to global markets becomes irrelevant. This strengthens Arguments (Tussyadiah & Pesonen, 2018) about the power of platforms in democratizing tourism access.

Review System: The Digital "Judge" That Shapes Practice

The review system emerged as the most influential element in the interaction of actors with the platform. Reviews are not just feedback, but "digital judges" who oversee and shape everyday practices.

Table 3. Effect of the Review System on Homestay Practices

Practical Aspects	Response to reviews	Transformational impact
Hygiene	"I once got a comment that the pillow is a bit damp; now every time there are guests, I go to dry all the pillows."	Transformational impact
Communication	"The guests said 'friendly but difficult to understand English'. I now learn every night from YouTube."	Enhanced capabilities
Authenticity	"Some people say, 'You want to see us cook traditionally'. I now offer impromptu cooking classes."	Feedback-based product innovation

The review system creates a disciplinary mechanism that is more effective than formal regulations. Homestay actors voluntarily change their practices

because they realize that digital reputation is the most valuable asset. This shows internalization of global standards through technology. This study adds a new dimension to the digital platform literature by showing that in rural contexts with weak formal oversight, the review system serves as a substitute governance mechanism. These findings broaden understanding (Minghetti & Buhalis, 2010) about the adoption of the platform by demonstrating the post-adoption consequences that shape the practice in depth.

Algorithm darkness: When the platform becomes a burden

However, not all interactions with the platform are positive. Algorithm darkness (*Algorithmic Opacity*) emerged as a new source of anxiety and burden. *Suddenly, the booking is quiet. I checked, and my homestay in the app didn't show up on the first page. I don't know what's wrong. Maybe a bad photo? Maybe the price will go up? I was confused myself.*" Mrs. Baiq is the manager of Lila Homestay. Lack of understanding of how algorithms work creates blind dependence. They can't control the visibility of their own homestays because the platform's logic remains a "black box". These findings confirm concerns in the digital divide literature (Minghetti & Buhalis, 2010) that the adoption of platforms without algorithmic literacy can create **new helplessness**. This is the dark side of the *Platform-mediated internationalization* that has not been explored much in previous studies.

Negotiation Of Meaning: Art Balances Local Values and Global Demands

Negotiation is interpreted as a liaison activity between the two parties where each party behaves and acts in accordance with the agreement to balance the interests of the two parties.

Negotiation Strategy: Front Stage and Back Stage

Thematic analysis revealed that homestay actors developed sophisticated negotiation strategies to balance local authenticity with global expectations. Using Goffman's dramaturgical lens, the findings show a clear division between the front stage and the back stage.

Table 4. Negotiation strategies in homestay practice

Domain	Front stage (for guests)	Backstage (for families)	Strategic meaning
Culinary	Food is served in small portions, not too spicy, and is served using cutlery.	The family still eats by hand, spicy side dishes, in a separate kitchen	Adaptation without loss of identity
Privacy	Guest rooms are made separate, there are keys, and shower schedules are arranged.	Children are "conditioned" not to play in the guest area	Space compromise
Activities	Offers "shows" of weaving, fishing, and cooking	Actual daily activities are simpler	Controlled commodification
Relationship	Friendly, helpful, always available	The family still has their own time, sometimes "disappears."	Managed warmth

"If the guests are white, I serve taliwang chicken, but the pieces are small, not too spicy. Sometimes I give you a cutlery. But if it's a family, yes, we eat with our hands, and there's a lot of chili sauce. The important thing is that guests are happy, our culture is still running." *Speech of Mr. Pathul.* This strategy suggests that the performers are not simply passively "selling" their culture, but actively managing self-presentation. They understand that foreign guests are looking for an "authentic" experience, but with a certain standard of comfort. The ability to navigate these two seemingly contradictory demands demonstrates a cultural intelligence that has so far escaped the attention of literature.

Voltage Point: When Local Values Clash

Although negotiation strategies are successful in many ways, research identifies some points of tension where compromises are difficult to achieve.

Tension 1: Privacy vs. Hospitality

The Sasak culture places great emphasis on hospitality (*sambatan*), where guests are the "king". However, foreign tourists often want privacy and do not want to be constantly served. "I am confused. Sometimes I just stay at home for fear of disturbing guests. But the neighbors said I wasn't friendly. What should I do?" Said Mrs. Lisa.

Tension 2: Religious Values vs. Traveller Expectations

As a community with strong Islamic values, some tourist practices (e.g., underdressing, alcohol consumption) cause anxiety. "There was once a German guest wearing a bikini in front of the house. I don't feel good with my neighbors. I said politely, 'I usually wear a sarong here when outside'. He was angry, saying it was his right. I'm going to keep quiet, but I'm sad." Said Mr. Hamzah.

Dialogue with Theory: These findings deepen the discussion in the CBT literature on cultural commodification (Zulkefli et al., 2021). Unlike conventional concerns about "cultural washing", this study shows that value tensions are actually becoming a Learning Arena where the perpetrator is constantly negotiating boundaries that can and cannot be compromised. This indicates that the CBT homestay does not lose its identity, but rather strengthens identity awareness through the process of negotiating with the "stranger".

This study introduces the concept of Boundary Negotiation as the key dimension in *Inbound Internationalization* homestay. The process of becoming international involves not only technical capabilities (Bianchi & Stoian, 2024) but also negotiating cultural capabilities to balance potentially conflicting values.

Self-Transformation: The Journey to Becoming the "Other."

Traces of Transformation: From Ordinary Citizens to "Cultural Ambassadors."

This section captures the essence of the *process of becoming* that is the focus of the research. The informants not only improve their skills, but undergo a fundamental transformation of identity.

Table 5. Dimensions of Self-Transformation of Homestay Actors

Dimensions	Before	After	Quotes
Self-Identity	"I'm an ordinary fisherman"	"I'm the host of the bule" / "Village Ambassador."	"Now, when there are guests, I feel that I do not only represent

	/ "I'm a housewife."		<i>my family, but the village, even Indonesia." (Mr. Suladi)</i>
Confidence	Shy to talk to strangers	Dare to take initiative, explain the culture	<i>"In the past, I saw the bule immediately stepping aside. Now I'm the one who says hello first." (Pak Gede)</i>
Knowledge	Limited to local	Knowing the geography, culture, and food of the world	<i>"I know Berlin is in Germany. Know Paris. I used to only hear names." (Then Ahmad)</i>
Aspirations	Survival	Developing, sending children to higher school	<i>"My son is now taking English lessons. I want him to be able to help with the homestay, maybe be a guide." (Mrs. Baiq)</i>
Cultural Awareness	Cultural practices as habits	Cultural practices are assets that need to be preserved	<i>"I used to ask my grandmother about cooking. So I can tell you about the guests." (Yumiarti, 25 yrs)</i>

Critical Moments: Turning Points in the Journey

Transformation does not occur linearly, but is triggered by *critical junctures* that change the perspective of the perpetrator.

Moment 1: First Five-Star Interview

"When I got the first 'excellent' review from a Dutch guest, I cried. I called my husband, 'Bang, we can do it!' It feels like the world is recognized." Said Mr. Gede. This moment marks a shift from "trial and error" to "confident that I can". External recognition becomes a mirror that reflects a more competent self-image.

Moment 2: Guest Becomes Friend.

"There are guests from Switzerland, still sending news via WhatsApp. Last Christmas, he sent a video of his son saying thank you. I don't think it's a business, it's a family." Said Mr. Hamzah. This relationship that goes beyond commercial transactions changes the meaning of homestay from just an economic venture to a bridge of cross-cultural friendship. It reinforces the commitment to continue serving with heart.

Moment 3: Cultural Conflict That Forces Reflection.

"When the guest was wearing a bikini, I discussed it with Mr. Kades. Finally, we made rules, not to prohibit them, but to inform. I have come to understand that we need to educate guests, not just accept them as they are." Said Mr. Lalu Hendra. Conflict is not always negative. In these cases, conflict triggers collective awareness and the birth of initiatives to manage relationships more proactively.

Findings about this self-transformation significantly contribute to the concept of *Inbound Internationalization* (Bianchi & Stoian, 2024). Their studies focus on organizational capabilities as *Input* from internationalization. This study shows that internationalization itself is a formative process that generates new capabilities, including reflective capabilities, the ability to see oneself and one's own culture in a new way through the eyes of others.

Transformation Ambivalence: Loss and Gain

Transformation is not always experienced seamlessly. Some informants expressed ambivalence, a mixed feeling between pride and loss.

"This house used to be quiet. Now, sometimes I miss the times when there are no guests, being able to sit back and relax without having to get ready. But yes, the money is decent, and I'm happy to meet new people." Said Mrs. Baiq.

"My kids now prefer to watch YouTube rather than play on the beach. They see the lifestyle of the white guests as perhaps influential. I'm worried, but what's the point?" Said Mr. Pathul

This ambivalence is the price of transformation. Being international means opening oneself to global influences that cannot always be controlled. However, it is precisely this awareness of ambivalence that shows that the perpetrator does not lose identity, but lives in a productive tension between the local and the global.

By uncovering this ambivalent dimension, this study offers a more nuanced perspective on the impact of CBT that sees internationalization as a one-way process towards linear progress. This study shows that transformation always involves a dialectic between loss and gain, between nostalgia and aspiration.

Conceptual Model: The Process of Inbound Internationalization of Homestays in Gili Lampu

Based on the overall findings and discussion, this study proposes a conceptual model of the *inbound internationalization* process that occurs in the Gili Lampu homestay. This model illustrates how the perpetrators travel from local to international.

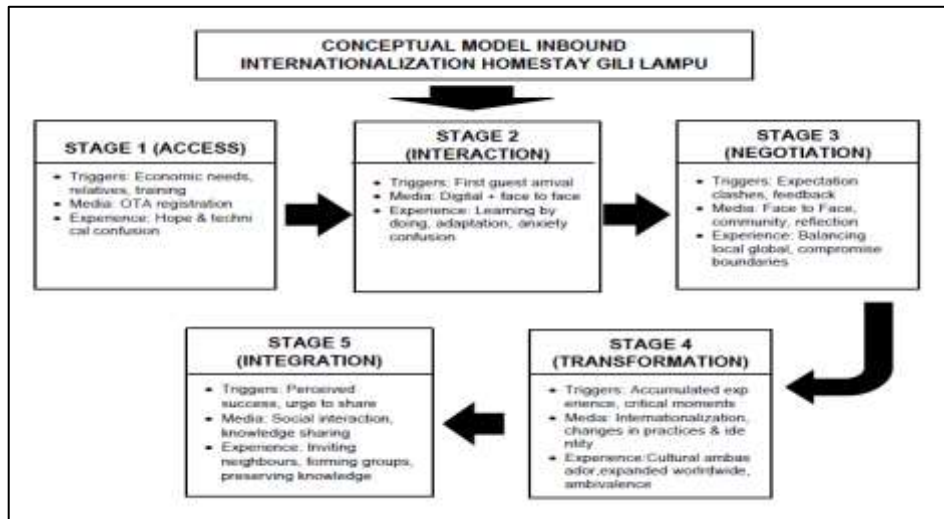


Figure 1. Inbound Internationalization Process Model of Homestay Gili Lampu

CONCLUSIONS

This study explores the *process of inbound internationalization* experienced and interpreted by homestay MSME actors in Gili Lampu, West Nusa Tenggara. Using an interpretive paradigm with a case study approach, this study yields four main conclusions:

First, the meaning of "becoming international" for homestay actors is multidimensional, including three layers of meaning: (1) economic meaning; internationalization as a survival strategy with more stable income; (2) social significance; the success of attracting foreign tourists to become social capital that increases status and confidence in the community; and (3) cultural significance; Interaction with foreign guests opens up worldviews and transforms the way we look at our own culture. Geographical limitations are actually constructed as a heroic narrative that reinforces a sense of pride.

Second, digital platforms are ambivalent. On the one hand as a "magic door" that democratizes access to global markets, with an effective review system shaping everyday practice through digital disciplinary mechanisms. On the other hand, "algorithmic *opacity*" creates blind dependence and anxiety when homestay visibility decreases without a clear understanding of the cause.

Third, negotiations between local values and global demands take place through a strategy of "boundary *negotiation*" by dividing the *front stage* for culturally commodified guests in a controlled manner and the *back stage* for families, where the original practice is still carried out. Tension points arise on the issue of privacy versus traditional hospitality and religious values versus the lifestyle of foreign tourists, but instead, it becomes an arena of collective learning that strengthens the awareness of cultural identity.

Fourth, the *process of inbound internationalization* brings a fundamental self-transformation in five dimensions, namely (1) Self-identity, from "ordinary citizens" to "international hosts" and "cultural ambassadors" (2) Confidence, from avoiding foreigners to being able to take initiative and explain culture (3) Knowledge, from being limited to the local to understanding the geography and culture of the world (4) Aspiration, from survival orientation to orientation long-term development (5) Cultural awareness, from cultural practices as habits to cultural practices as assets that need to be preserved. This transformation is triggered by critical moments such as the first positive review, relationships that go beyond commercial transactions, and cultural conflicts, but also brings an ambivalence between pride and loss.

Based on these findings, this study proposes a conceptual model of the *inbound internationalization process* consisting of three continuous stages: (1) access and interaction stages; digital platforms opening entrances to global markets; (2) the negotiation stage; there is intensive negotiation between local values and global demands that give birth to hybrid practices; and (3) the transformation and integration stage; International experience is internalized into new capabilities (including reflective capabilities and cultural negotiable capabilities) and transformative self-identities in these five dimensions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For homestay actors: (1) Important efforts to improve algorithmic literacy to reduce blind dependence on platforms; (2) Seek to develop a "cultural knowledge bank" about the preferences of guests from different countries; (3) Build a learning network among fellow managers; (4) Maintain the "back room" to maintain authenticity.

For local governments: (1) designing training that includes algorithmic literacy and cross-cultural negotiations; (2) strengthening the institution of the homestay community through associations or cooperatives; (3) developing ethical guidelines for host-guest relations that are sensitive to local values; (4) Prioritizing investment in supporting infrastructure.

For the next researcher: (1) Conducting longitudinal studies to understand the development of long-term transformations; (2) Conducting comparative studies between destinations; (3) Involving the perspective of foreign tourists; (4) Exploring more deeply about "algorithmic darkness" and algorithmic literacy; (5) Develop measurement instruments for new constructs such as cultural capabilities of negotiation and transformative ambivalence.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, this study is based on a qualitative case study in a single location, namely Gili Lampu. While this approach enables an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, the findings may not be directly generalizable to other tourism contexts with different socio-cultural and economic characteristics. Second, the study focuses primarily on the perspectives of homestay owners. The absence of perspectives from international tourists and other stakeholders (such as local government or tourism agencies) limits the comprehensiveness of the analysis. Third, the cross-sectional nature of the study captures the process of inbound internationalization at a particular point in time. As internationalization is inherently dynamic, longitudinal research is needed to understand how these transformations evolve. Fourth, while this study identifies the role of digital platforms, it does not deeply investigate the technical mechanisms of platform algorithms. As such, the concept of algorithmic opacity introduced in this study requires further empirical exploration.

Based on these limitations, future research is recommended in several directions. First, future studies may adopt a comparative approach across different tourism destinations to examine whether similar patterns of inbound internationalization emerge in varying contexts. Second, incorporating the perspectives of international tourists would provide a more holistic understanding of host-guest interactions and expectations. Third, longitudinal studies are needed to explore the long-term impacts of internationalization on identity, culture, and community dynamics. Fourth, further research can focus on developing and operationalizing constructs such as negotiative cultural capability and algorithmic literacy, enabling quantitative validation and broader generalization.

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