THE IMPACT OF SERVICE FACTORS ON TOURISTS' SATISFACTION WITH THE HOMESTAY EXPERIENCE IN MOC CHAU, SON LA PROVINCE: AN SEM APPROACH

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Abstract: ***This study analyzes the impact of service factors on tourist satisfaction with homestay experiences in Moc Chau, Son La province. Data were collected from 200 valid questionnaires and analyzed using one-level SEM. The measurement model met the requirements for fit (CFI = 0.959; TLI = 0.951; RMSEA = 0.047; SRMR = 0.055), reliability, and validity (Cronbach's α = 0.776–0.859; CR = 0.779–0.860; AVE = 0.502–0.607; HTMT < 0.85). The structural model results show that all four factors have a positive impact on satisfaction, with local experience having the strongest impact (β = 0.425), followed by service attitude (β = 0.391), perceived value (β = 0.264), and facilities (β = 0.182). The model explains 55.2% of the variation in satisfaction. The managerial implications emphasize prioritizing the upgrading of local experiences, standardizing service attitudes, increasing perceived value, and maintaining the quality of facilities.***

• Keywords: *fhomestay; local experience; satisfaction; SEM; Moc Chau.*

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1. Introduction

In the time of the booming experiential tourism industry, homestays are becoming increasingly important due to their ability to create differentiated value through host-guest interaction, the level of "living with the locality," and the feeling of authenticity in the experience. As competition among destinations and accommodations increases, tourist satisfaction becomes a key outcome variable, reflecting a comprehensive assessment of post-consumption service evaluation and serving as a basis for quality improvement and enhanced competitiveness.

International studies show that satisfaction is simultaneously influenced by components related to authenticity, level of participation, and experience evaluation; these relationships can be effectively tested using the SEM model (Lu et al., 2015). In the context of homestays, service and experience factors (especially when linked to sustainability) have been shown to significantly influence satisfaction, indicating that SEM is a suitable method for quantifying the relative impact between groups of factors (Basak et al., 2021). Furthermore, analysis of online reviews of shared accommodations also shows that satisfaction/dissatisfaction stems from attributes very "closely related to operations" such as service attitude, responsiveness, hygiene, amenities, and information transparency - important suggestions for scale design in homestay research (Ding et al., 2021). The role of perceived value is also reinforced as a foundation for promoting satisfaction and behavioral outcomes in tourism (Qiu et al., 2024).

In Vietnam, research on homestays has increased, but research gaps remain clear in three areas. Firstly, quantitative evidence for testing the structural model of homestay customer satisfaction is limited for Moc Chau (Son La) - a destination rich in potential and cultural identity. Secondly, many studies emphasize individual groups of factors, while lacking integrated models that incorporate easily manageable factors such as service attitude, facilities, perceived value, and local experience to determine the relative impact on satisfaction. Thirdly, some recent studies in Vietnam adopt a qualitative approach, helping to identify factors but limiting the quantification of impact and the full testing of the measurement model - the structural model (Quang et al., 2024).

Stemming from these gaps, this study proposes and tests a single-level SEM model to assess the impact of four groups of factors: Service Attitude (ATT), Facilities (FAC), Perceived Value (VAL), and Local Experience (EXP) on Tourist Satisfaction (SAT) regarding homestay experiences in Moc Chau, Son La province. The expected results provide empirical evidence for the Moc Chau context and suggest priority improvements for the factors with the strongest influence on satisfaction.

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2. Theoretical Basis, Research Overview, and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Service Attitude and Satisfaction (ATT → SAT)

In homestays, the interaction between guests and hosts/staff is the "touchpoint" that determines the emotional experience. Positive service attitudes (politeness, friendliness, attentiveness, timely support) help guests feel respected, reduce uncertainty during their stay, and increase positive post-experience evaluations; therefore, they can increase satisfaction (Ding et al., 2021; Quang et al., 2024).

H1: ATT has a positive impact on SAT.

2.2. Facilities and Satisfaction (FAC → SAT)

Facilities (hygiene, amenities, space, safety) are fundamental conditions for accommodation quality. When rooms are clean, amenities are well-functioning, the space is comfortable, and safety is ensured, guests tend to have higher satisfaction; Conversely, deficiencies in room conditions/amenities are often a source of dissatisfaction (Ding et al., 2021; Quang et al., 2024).

H2: FAC has a positive impact on SAT.

2.3. Perceived Value and Satisfaction (VAL → SAT)

Perceived value reflects the degree of "worth the money" between the benefits received and the costs incurred (Zeithaml, 1988). When tourists see that the price matches the quality, fee information is transparent, and the choice offers good value compared to alternatives, satisfaction increases; this result is also observed in the context of community homestays and tourist destinations (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2016; Qiu et al., 2024).

H3: VAL has a positive impact on SAT.

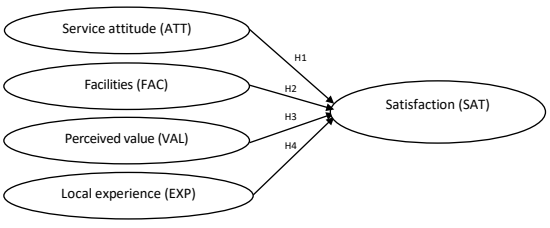
2.4. Local Experience and Satisfaction (EXP → SAT)

Local experience (indigenous culture, experiential activities, service/destination connections, authenticity) is a distinct advantage of homestays. When tourists experience authentic experiences and deeply participate in local activities, the quality of the experience and satisfaction tend to increase (Lu et al., 2015; Basak et al., 2021).

H4: EXP has a positive impact on SAT.

2.5. Proposed Research Model

Figure 1: Research model



A one-level SEM model is used to test the impact of ATT, FAC, VAL, and EXP on SAT in the context of homestays in Moc Chau, Son La.

3. Research Methods

3.1. Research Design

This study uses a quantitative design based on a cross-sectional survey to test the model of the impact of service factors on tourist satisfaction (SAT) with homestay experiences in Moc Chau, Son La. The model was tested using single-level SEM with 4 independent variables (ATT, FAC, VAL, EXP) and 1 dependent variable (SAT). The observed variables were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree… 5 = Strongly agree).

3.2. Survey Subjects, Sampling and Data Collection

The survey subjects were tourists who had used or were currently using homestay services in Moc Chau (Son La) during the survey period. Data was collected through structured questionnaires distributed directly at homestays. The sampling method applied was convenient and appropriate to the context of reaching tourists at the destination.

The final sample size used in the analysis was N = 200, meeting the minimum requirements for SEM at a moderate model level and with a not excessively large number of estimated parameters; while also ensuring the stability of the estimates in CFA/SEM according to the recommendations in the SEM methodology research.

3.3. Scales and Research Variables

The scales were inherited and adapted to the homestay context in Vietnam (translation-semantic correction), then reviewed for language and preliminary testing. The structure, number of observed variables, descriptions, and sources are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Structures, number of observed variables and scale sources

Factor	No of observed variables	Description	Sources
Service attitude (ATT)	4	The level of courtesy, friendliness, attentiveness, and timely support from the owner/staff	Parasuraman et al., 1988; Ding et al., 2021; Quang et al., 2024
Facilities (FAC)	4	Cleanliness, amenities, comfort, and sense of safety of the accommodation	Ding et al., 2021; Quang et al., 2024
Perceived value (VAL)	4	Value for money: balance of benefits and costs, cost transparency, and comparative value	Zeithaml, 1988; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2016
Local experience (EXP)	4	Local cultural experience, experiential activities, service/destination connections, and authenticity	Lu et al., 2015; Basak et al., 2021
Satisfaction (SAT)	3	Overall satisfaction, level of expectation fulfillment, and assessment of making the right choice	Bhattacherjee, 2001; Zeithaml, 1988

Source: Compiled by the author

3.4. Data Analysis Process

Data was processed in a four-step process:

Data screening: checking for missing data, outliers, and descriptive distribution; eliminating invalid observations according to criteria.

Descriptive statistics and correlation: calculating Mean, SD, and Pearson correlation coefficient between structures.

Evaluating the measurement model: (i) Scale reliability using Cronbach's alpha; (ii) Convergent validity using CR and AVE; (iii) Discriminant validity using HTMT.

CFA and SEM: (i) Performing CFA to test the fit of the measurement model before testing the structural model; (ii) Performing SEM to estimate the effector coefficient (normalized β), test hypotheses H1–H4 ($p < 0.05$), and report R^2(SAT); (iii) The indicators suitable for the reporting model include χ^2/df, CFI, TLI, RMSEA, SRMR; the reference thresholds for evaluation are CFI/TLI ≥ 0.90 and RMSEA/SRMR ≤ 0.08.

4. Research Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

Table 2. Demographics of Respondents (n = 200)

Factor	Frequency	(%)
Gender		
Male	143	71,5
Female	57	28,5
Ages		
Under 30	76	38
From 30 to 45	98	49
More than 45	26	13
Occupation		
Student	48	24
Company workers/state servant	67	33,5
Other	85	42,5
Monthly income		
Below 10 million dongs	92	46
From 10 to 20 million	65	32,5
More than 20	43	21,5

Source: Author's calculations

The survey sample consisted of 200 tourists staying in homestays in Moc Chau. Regarding gender, males accounted for 71.5% and females 28.5%, indicating a gender imbalance that should be considered when generalizing the results. In terms of age, the 30-45 age group had the highest proportion (49%), followed by those under 30 (38%) and over 45 (13%), reflecting the majority of guests being of working age. Regarding occupation, self-employed/other workers accounted for 42.5%, factory workers/civil servants 33.5%, and students 24%, showing a diverse sample but leaning towards the employed group. Regarding income, those earning under 10 million VND accounted for 46%, 10-20 million VND 32.5%, and over 20 million VND 21.5%, suggesting the majority of guests belong to the middle-to-upper income range, consistent with the spending patterns of homestays.

4.2. Descriptive statistical analysis of factors

Table 3 shows that the average scores of the factors ranged from 2.820-3.311, with FAC being the highest (M = 3.311) and EXP the lowest (M = 2.820), implying that tourists rated the facilities relatively better than other aspects. The correlation matrix shows that SAT has a significant positive correlation with ATT ($r = 0.349$; $p < 0.01$), FAC ($r = 0.312$; $p < 0.01$), VAL ($r = 0.282$; $p < 0.01$) and EXP ($r = 0.392$; $p < 0.01$); the strongest correlation is EXP-SAT. Among the independent variables, the correlations were generally low to moderate, notably FAC-VAL ($r = 0.373$; $p < 0.01$) and ATT-FAC ($r = 0.140$; $p < 0.05$). Overall, the correlation coefficients were below the high threshold, suggesting that the risk of multicollinearity is not significant and is suitable for further CFA/SEM analysis.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix (N = 200)

Factor	Mean	SD	ATT	FAC	VAL	EXP	SAT
ATT	3.283	0.684	1.000				
FAC	3.311	0.814	0.140*	1.000			
VAL	2.857	0.739	-0.004	0.373**	1.000		
EXP	2.820	0.833	0.063	0.063	0.037	1.000	
SAT	2.870	0.712	0.349**	0.312**	0.282**	0.392**	1.000

*Note: * $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$*

Source: Author's calculations

4.3. Goodness of Fit Indexes of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Model

Table 4. CFA Model Fit Indices

Fit index	Value	Threshold	Assessment
χ^2(df)	204.123 (142)	–	–
CFI	0.959	≥ 0.90	Good
TLI	0.951	≥ 0.90	Good
RMSEA	0.047	≤ 0.08	Good
PCLOSE	0.076	≥ 0.05	Good
SRMR	0.055	≤ 0.08	Good

Source: Author's calculations

Table 4 shows that the Convergent Model (CFA) has a good fit to the data: CFI = 0.959 and TLI = 0.951 both exceed the recommended threshold ≥ 0.90. The approximate error index RMSEA = 0.047 and SRMR = 0.055 are both below the threshold ≤ 0.08, reflecting small bias and good model description of the data. The PCLOSE value = 0.076 ≥ 0.05 supports the hypothesis of small RMSEA (approximate fit). Although $\chi^2(142) = 204.123$ may be sensitive to sample size, the composite indices are consistent showing that the convergent model is satisfactory. Therefore, the model is eligible to continue with reliability/convergent validity assessment and structural model testing (SEM).

4.4. Reliability and convergence validity of structures

Table 5. Reliability and Convergence Validity

Factor	No of items	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
ATT	4	0.798	0.798	0.502
FAC	4	0.830	0.842	0.574
VAL	4	0.826	0.826	0.544
EXP	4	0.859	0.860	0.607
SAT	3	0.776	0.779	0.541

Source: Author's calculations

Table 5 shows that all scales achieved good reliability, with Cronbach's α ranging from 0.776 - 0.859 (all ≥ 0.70). The composite reliability CR of the constructs was in the range of 0.779 - 0.860, meeting the recommended threshold of ≥ 0.70. Convergent

validity was also ensured with AVE reaching 0.502 - 0.607 (all ≥ 0.50), indicating that the observed variables adequately explain the variance of the latent construct. Overall, the measurement model met the requirements for reliability and convergent validity, qualifying it for discriminant validity assessment and SEM testing.

4.5. Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

Table 6. Discriminant Validity

	ATT	FAC	VAL	EXP	SAT
ATT	**1.000**				
FAC	0.172	**1.000**			
VAL	0.091	0.447	**1.000**		
EXP	0.138	0.112	0.085	**1.000**	
SAT	0.439	0.396	0.352	0.481	**1.000**

Source: Author's calculations

Table 6 shows that the HTMT coefficients between pairs of structures range from 0.085–0.481, all lower than the threshold of 0.85, thus confirming the discriminant validity of the scale. The highest HTMT level is between EXP - SAT (0.481) and ATT - SAT (0.439), indicating that the structures are reasonably related but still clearly distinguishable. The remaining pairs have relatively low HTMT (e.g., VAL - EXP = 0.085), suggesting negligible conceptual overlap. Overall, the measurement model meets the requirements for discriminant validity and is eligible for SEM structural model testing.

4.6. Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

After the measurement model met the criteria for reliability and validity (CFA), the study proceeded to estimate the structural model (SEM) to test hypotheses H1 - H4. First, the overall fit of the SEM model was assessed through the indices χ^2/df, CFI, TLI, RMSEA, PCLOSE, and SRMR. The results of the model fit indices are presented in Table 7, serving as the basis for interpreting the impact coefficients and drawing hypothesis conclusions in Table 8.

Table 7. SEM Model Fit Index

Fit index	Value	Threshold	Assessment
χ^2(df)	204.123 (142)	–	–
CFI	0.958	≥ 0.90	Good
TLI	0.950	≥ 0.90	Good
RMSEA	0.047	≤ 0.08	Good
PCLOSE	0.625	≥ 0.05	Good
SRMR	0.055	≤ 0.08	Good

Source: Author's calculations

Table 7 shows that the SEM model achieved a good fit with the data: CFI = 0.958 and TLI = 0.950 both exceeded the threshold ≥ 0.90. The approximate error index RMSEA = 0.047 and SRMR = 0.055 are both lower than 0.08, reflecting a small bias and good model description of the data. PCLOSE = 0.625 ≥ 0.05 supports the hypothesis of small RMSEA, indicating a satisfactory approximate fit. Overall, the consistent indices confirm that the structural model is suitable and qualified to interpret the effector coefficients.

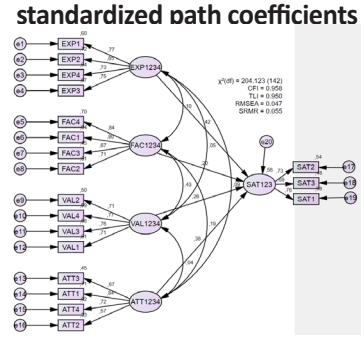
Table 8 shows that all four hypotheses H1–H4 are supported ($p < 0.05$), confirming that service factors have a positive impact on satisfaction. EXP → SAT has the strongest impact ($\beta = 0.425$; $p < 0.001$), followed by ATT → SAT ($\beta = 0.391$; $p < 0.001$) and VAL → SAT ($\beta = 0.264$; $p = 0.002$). The impact of FAC → SAT is the smallest but still significant ($\beta = 0.182$; $p = 0.029$), indicating that physical facilities remain an important condition for satisfaction. The R^2(SAT) value of 0.552 shows that the model explains approximately 55.2% of the variation in satisfaction, reflecting a fairly strong explanatory power. The results suggest prioritizing the enhancement of local experiences and service attitudes, while reinforcing perceived value and maintaining the quality of facilities.

Table 8. Structural Model Results

Hypothesis	Paths	β	S.E.	p-value	Conclusion
H1	ATT → SAT	0.391	0.057	<0.001	Support
H2	FAC → SAT	0.182	0.063	0.029	Support
H3	VAL → SAT	0.264	0.076	0.002	Support
H4	EXP → SAT	0.425	0.055	<0.001	Support
R^2(SAT) = 0.552					

Source: Author's calculations

Figure 2: Structural Equation Model (SEM) with standardized path coefficients



Note: The structural model was estimated using SEM in R (lavaan and lavaan. survey packages), and the diagram was visualized using IBM SPSS AMOS for clarity.

Figure 2 illustrates the SEM model with normalized path coefficients, consistent with the results in Tables 7 and 8. The impact curves from EXP, ATT, VAL, FAC to SAT all have positive signs, with EXP → SAT being the strongest, followed by ATT → SAT, and FAC → SAT being the weakest. The model explains 55.2% of the variation in satisfaction (R^2(SAT) = 0.552), indicating a fairly good explanatory power.

5. Discussion

The SEM results show that the model has a good fit and explains 55.2% of the variation in satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.552$), implying that the four groups of service factors selected have a fairly strong explanatory power for the homestay experience in Moc Chau. Notably, Local Experience (EXP) has the strongest impact on satisfaction ($\beta = 0.425$). This result is consistent with the argument that the core differentiating value of homestays lies in the "local" experience and the sense of authenticity, the level of participation in local activities, thereby enhancing the overall experience quality (Lu et al., 2015; Basak et al., 2021). At the same time, the fact that EXP has the lowest average score among the factors

(M = 2.820) but has the strongest impact shows that it is an important "lever" for improvement: if the quality/attractiveness of the local experience is improved, the expected increase in satisfaction will be significant.

Attitude towards service (ATT) had the second strongest impact (β = 0.391), highlighting the role of human interaction in the homestay context. This finding is consistent with results from online review data: communication, support, and the behavior of hosts/staff are often sources of satisfaction (and also sources of dissatisfaction when weak) in shared accommodation (Ding et al., 2021). In the Vietnamese context, evidence from rural homestays also shows that positive experiences are closely linked to the attitude and hospitality of the host family (Quang et al., 2024). Thus, investing in service standards and the responsiveness of hosts/staff is a direct, relatively inexpensive but clearly effective approach.

Perceived Value (VAL) has a moderate impact (β = 0.264), supporting the view that satisfaction increases when tourists perceive it as "worth the money" and that costs are transparent (Zeithaml, 1988). This result is also consistent with evidence in the context of community homestays: perceived value is an important predictor of satisfaction (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2016). In Moc Chau, the average VAL is still relatively low (M=2.857), indicating significant room for improvement through price transparency, service packages, and enhancing "value-for-money".

Finally, Facilities (FAC) has the smallest but still significant impact (β = 0.182). This suggests that facilities play a background condition role: when acceptable, the marginal impact on satisfaction may be lower than that of experience and interaction; but if not, it can easily lead to a decrease in rating. Combined with the descriptive results (FAC had the highest average score), it can be understood that the "material" aspect was relatively stable, while the differentiating factors (EXP, ATT) had a stronger influence on satisfaction.

6. Conclusion and Implications

6.1. Conclusion

The study tested a one-level SEM model of service factors affecting tourist satisfaction (SAT) when experiencing homestays in Moc Chau (n=200). The results showed that all four factors had a positive and significant impact on satisfaction; the impact, in decreasing order, was Local Experience (EXP), Service Attitude (ATT), Perceived Value (VAL), and Facilities (FAC). The model explained 55.2% of the variation in satisfaction, reflecting its strong explanatory power and its potential for management application.

6.2. Management Implications

Prioritize upgrading the local experience (the strongest lever): standardize the "experience package" (local cuisine, agricultural/lifestyle activities, cultural exchange), increase authenticity, and design flexible activity schedules according to guest groups.

Standardize service attitudes: training in communication and feedback skills, quick support procedures, and hospitality standards; build "service commitments" and mechanisms for receiving and handling feedback on-site.

Increase perceived value: transparency of prices and surcharges, creating service packages according to budget levels, emphasizing specific benefits "received" (including accompanying experiences) to reinforce value-for-money.

Maintain facilities as a foundation: prioritize hygiene, safety, essential amenities, and conduct regular inspections; avoid allowing minor flaws to accumulate and diminish satisfaction.

6.3. Implications for Destination Management

Local management agencies/DMOs can support by: (i) developing minimum criteria for homestays (hygiene, safety, service procedures); (ii) developing local experiential products along routes/chains; (iii) Unified communication guidelines on "Moc Chau local experience" to improve overall quality and increase satisfaction.

6.4. Limitations and Directions for Further Research

The study used a non-probability sample and cross-sectional data, so the generalizability is still context-dependent; further studies could expand the sample size, compare by season/tourist group, add outcome variables such as intention to return or word-of-mouth, and test the mediating model (e.g., VAL or EXP mediating between service and satisfaction).

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