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Statistically Validated Component- and Indicator-Level Requirements for Sustainable Thai Homestay Businesses

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Abstract: This research proposes an updated version of homestay indicators for 10 existing component-level homestay requirements. The updated indicators were aimed to replace the decade-old original indicators for Thai homestay businesses. Besides, the 31 original homestay indicators were not statistically validated. In this study, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to determine the statistical relevancy between the updated homestay indicators and the components. The SEM analysis involved two steps: exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The EFA statistically regrouped the 31 updated indicators by six new homestay components. The six components and 31 updated indicators were further validated by CFA to determine the factor loadings and statistical reliability of the components and indicators. The factor loadings indicate the levels of importance that homestay guests attach to different homestay components and indicators. Therefore, Thai homestay operators should give priority to the components and indicators with high factor loadings.

Keywords: homestay; indicator standard; validation; tourism management



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1. Introduction

Tourism and hospitality are a major contributor to Thailand's economy, with tourism revenue accounting for 17.7% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2019). Thailand is renowned for unique cultures, traditional cuisine, and beautiful nature [1]. Homestay is a form of hospitality and lodging where guests or visitors are afforded with opportunities to observe and experience local culture and ways of life, in addition to accommodation and basic amenities [2].

Homestay tourism offers visitors the opportunity to learn and experience local ways of life and cultures (Oranratmanee [3]. To be attractive and sustainable, homestay operation should be of small scale, flexible, and run by local community members. The determinants of the success and sustainability of homestay businesses include, e.g., homestay host family, authenticity, safety, location, accommodation, and activities [4].

According to Kontogeorgopoulos, Churyen [5], homestay is a means to monetize unused space in places of residence for economic return. In addition, homestay is a form of accommodation that combines the experiences of a family member's home and conventional lodging facilities. A study by Takran, Chartrungruang [6] found that a majority of native homestay operators failed to meet the minimum requirements or standards of homestay business due to limited access to relevant information sources.

Homestay tourism contributes to local economic betterment and strengthens social capital of the local community [7]. From the perspective of homestay guests, homestay tourism provides them with opportunities to learn and experience firsthand local cultures, customs, and livelihoods. According to Jiang [8], local cultures and ways of life play an essential role in homestay tourism development.

Cultural resources are part of the cultural heritage of destinations and are largely related to customary practices, livelihoods, and local identity [9]. Meanwhile, tourism is

largely viewed as a leisure-related activity separate from local culture and traditional ways of life [10,11]. However, recent decades have witnessed the convergence of culture and tourism (i.e., culture-oriented homestay tourism) as cultural heritage has been increasingly used as unique selling propositions to attract travelers to the tourist destinations [11].

Homestay tourism is a source of income for local community members, especially in destinations with unique attractions or cultures [12]. Homestay tourism increasingly emphasizes the preservation of local ecosystems and ways of life of community members [13]. Besides, homestay tourism satisfies the unique needs of travelers who prioritize quality over quantity. Travelers increasingly attach more importance to local culture and ecosystem [14]. Active participation of local community members in homestay tourism operation and management contributes to inclusive local economic development [15].

However, if improperly regulated, homestay tourism could have negative impacts on local communities and the environment [16,17]. As a result, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand in 2011 introduced the homestay requirements or standards for Thai homestay businesses. The homestay requirements are instrumental for preservation of local ways of life and the environment [18]. The standards also provide homestay operators with guidelines to streamline the operation and administration of homestays [19,20].

The success and sustainability of homestay businesses are largely determined by the extent to which the homestay operators meet the basic requirements or standards, such as authenticity, safety, location, activities. As a result, the standards for homestay businesses would serve as a guideline for homestay operators with regard to basic requirements and expectations of homestay guests. The standards also promote collaboration between diverse groups of stakeholders [21,22].

The homestay standard of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports consists of 10 components and 31 indicators. However, the existing indicators were not statistically validated to determine their relevancy to the components. As a result, this research proposes updated homestay indicators, and statistical validation was carried out by using exploratory factor analysis. The homestay components and indicators were further validated by confirmatory factor analysis to determine the factor loadings and statistical reliability. In this research, factor loadings indicate the levels of importance that homestay guests attach to different homestay components and indicators.

2. Research Methodology

Table 1 tabulates the component- and indicator-level standards or requirements for homestay businesses in Thailand by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports. There are 10 component-level requirements and 31 related indicator-level requirements (i.e., original indicators). The 10 components include accommodation and amenities; food and beverage; safety to life and belongings; hospitality of host and family members; travel information and tour guide; natural resources and the environment; cultural heritage and livelihood; addition of value to local merchandise; homestay operation and management; marketing communication and promotion.

The original homestay indicators have been in use for nearly a decade (since 2011). Given rapid technological advancements and changes in travelers' preferences over the past decade, modifications are necessary to remain relevant. Moreover, no statistical validation was carried out on the 31 original indicators to determine their relevancy to the 10 components.

As a result, this research proposes an updated version of homestay indicators (31 updated indicators) for 10 component-level requirements (Table 1). In the study, the updated indicators were transformed into a 31-question questionnaire (Appendix A) and validated with 337 Thai and international guests of homestays across Thailand. The questionnaire respondents were guests of a random sample of 12 homestays, all of which met the ministry's homestay standards. According to Dawson, Peppe [23], a proper sample size should be at least 10 times the total number of questions. Given that the number of questions was 31, the sample size was thus 337 homestay guests. The data collection was

conducted by homestay operators between March and May 2018, which coincided with Songkran water festival in Thailand. Songkran marks the beginning of the traditional Thai New Year and the celebration covers a period of three days: 13–15 April.

In data collection, respondents were asked by homestay operators for their views on the importance of different updated indicators for the success of homestays, based on a 5-point Likert scale where 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, respectively, denote unimportant, of little importance, moderately important, important, and very important. According to Bayraktar, Tatoglu [24]; Na-nan, Chaiprasit [25]; Ismail Salaheldin [26]; Thanvisitthpon, Shrestha [27], a measure scale could be used with self-assessment questions.

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to determine the statistical relevancy between the updated homestay indicators and the 10 component-level requirements. The SEM analysis involved two steps: exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). In this study, the EFA statistically regrouped the 31 updated indicators by six new homestay components rather than by the original 10 components (Tables 2 and 3).

The six new components and 31 updated indicators were further validated by CFA to determine the factor loadings and reliability of the components and indicators (Table 4). Factor loadings indicate the levels of importance that homestay guests attach to different homestay components and indicators. A high factor loading suggests that the component or indicator plays an important role in the success and sustainability of homestays.

Table 1. Component- and indicator-level requirements for Thai homestay businesses by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand.

Component-Level Requirements/Indicator ID	Indicator-Level Requirements		References Pertaining to Updated Indicators
	Original/Existing Indicators	Updated/Revised Indicators	
Component 1: Accommodation and amenities			
A1	Functionality focused accommodations and basic amenities	In addition to functionality and provision of basic amenities, guests' privacy should be taken into consideration in the accommodation layout	[28,29]
A2	Cleanliness and accessibility	Cleanliness, accessibility, and guest-centered hospitality	[30–32]
A3	Proper sanitation and sewage management	Proper sanitation procedure and ecologically friendly sewage management	[5,31,33]
A4	Common area on the premises for guests' relaxation	Common area on the premises where homestay guests could observe or partake in traditional ways of life of the local community, in addition to relaxation.	[5,32,34]
Component 2: Food and beverage			
F1	Types of dishes and cooking ingredients	Types of dishes and cooking ingredients	[35]
F2	Provision of clean drinking water	Provision of clean drinking water and appliances for modern living	[5,33,35,36]
F3	Clean food containers and tableware (e.g., dishware, glassware, cutlery)	Environmentally friendly and clean food containers and tableware	
F4	Clean food preparation area and kitchen utensils	Provision of traditional cooking utensils and local condiments (with instruction), in addition to clean food preparation area and modern kitchen utensils	[33,35,37]
Component 3: Safety to life and belongings			
S1	Availability of first aid kit	Availability of first aid kit	
S2	Provision of security for guests and their belongings	Provision of security for guests and their belongings	[29,38–40]
Component 4: Hospitality of homestay host and family members			
R1	Warm and cordial reception by homestay host and family members	Warm and cordial reception by homestay host and family members as well as by local community members for the long-term sustainability of homestay business	[19,30,32,34]
R2	Activities initiated by homestay host to promote local culture and traditional ways of life	Multisector collaboration (i.e., homestay host, other local businesses and community members) to create activities that promote local culture and traditional ways of life	[19,30,41,42]
Component 5: Travel information and tour guide			
T1	Travel information and local destination highlights with community consensus	Travel information and local destination highlights with community consensus and seasonal updates	[41,43]
T2	Local community oriented travel activity	Local community oriented travel activity that respects traditional ways of life	[32,41,42]
T3	Provision of tour guides with knowledge of local community	Provision of tour guides with knowledge of local community. The aim is to create economic opportunities for community members, including developing new skills, finding jobs, and starting new businesses.	[14,41,44]

Table 1. Cont.

Component-Level Requirements/Indicator ID	Indicator-Level Requirements		References Pertaining to Updated Indicators
	Original/Existing Indicators	Updated/Revised Indicators	
Component 6: Natural resources and the environment			
N1	Availability of local attractions and/or nearby tourist destinations	Availability of local attractions and/or nearby tourist destinations that embody local culture and traditional ways of life	[1,9,41,43,44]
N2	Proper supervision and maintenance of tourist destinations	Proper supervision and maintenance of tourist destinations with emphasis on environmental conservation and long-term sustainability	[14,45,46]
N3	Strategic plans to mitigate the impacts of homestay tourism on local community and global warming	Strategic and action plans to mitigate the impacts of homestay tourism on the environment and ways of life and identity of the local community	[9,14,45]
N4	Implementation of the strategic plans to mitigate the impacts of homestay tourism on local community and global warming	Action plans to lessen the impacts of homestay tourism on local natural resources and environment with the goal to reduce global warming	[45,46]
Component 7: Cultural heritage and livelihood			
C1	Preservation of cultural heritage of local community	Incorporating local culture and traditions into homestay offerings and hospitality services	[19,44,47]
C2	Preservation of local livelihoods and ways of life	Action plans to preserve traditional livelihoods and local ways of life	[44,47,48]
Component 8: Addition of value to local merchandise			
V1	Availability of a wide selection of local merchandise for sale to visitors	Availability of a wide selection of local merchandise for sale to visitors, and the offerings should be diverse to minimize price competition.	[49,50]
V2	Addition of value to local merchandise	Procedure that engages local government and community members in value creation and addition to local merchandise	[19,49]
Component 9: Homestay operation and management			
M1	Forming a group of homestay operators	Forming an alliance of homestay operators with organizational structure and specific duties for representative members	[14,19,33,47,51,52]
M2	Establishment of board of directors (BOD) for the group	Establishment of board of directors (BOD) for the alliance, and the board should consist of representatives from the local community.	[33,51–53]
M3	Duties and responsibilities of BOD	Duties and responsibilities of BOD	[33,52]
M4	Economic gain from homestay tourism proportionately distributed among stakeholders (i.e., homestay operators, local community members, local administration in the form of taxes)	Inclusive distribution of economic gain from homestay tourism in proportion to effort and contributions	[12,33,53,54]

Table 1. Cont.

Component-Level Requirements/Indicator ID	Original/Existing Indicators	Indicator-Level Requirements	References Pertaining to Updated Indicators
		Updated/Revised Indicators	
M5	Homestay reservation and cancellation policy	Creating an online hub where visitors are able to make reservations for a variety of services offered by local community businesses (e.g., local transport, tour guide, tourist attractions), in addition to accommodation reservation.	[19,52,55]
M6	Itemized price list of offerings and services	Itemized price list of offerings and services to minimize dispute and build trust	[33,54,55]
Component 10: Marketing communication and promotion			
P1	Availability of print marketing or promotional material	Adoption of offline and online media platforms for marketing communication to promote homestay tourism and tourist destinations in the local community	[14,43,47]
P2	Distribution of print marketing or promotional material	Marketing communication strategy that emphasizes inclusivity (i.e., all stakeholders contribute to the strategy formulation) and evaluation of the strategy effectiveness	[42,47,56]

Table 2. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of the updated indicators and component-based factor weight scores.

Indicator ID	Common Factor	Component-Based Factor Weight Scores *					
		Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4	Component 5	Component 6
A1	0.589	0.778					
S2	0.876	0.932					
T2	0.874	0.927					
C2	0.945	0.967					
M4	0.813	0.896					
P2	0.837	0.905					
A2	0.481		0.666				
S1	0.662		0.774				
T1	0.693		0.831				
C1	0.886		0.933				
M3	0.788		0.879				
P1	0.731		0.836				
R1	0.745			0.858			
T3	0.826			0.903			
V1	0.917			0.949			
M1	0.758			0.864			
M5	0.752			0.858			
A3	0.579				0.749		
F1	0.848				0.909		
F3	0.879				0.919		
N2	0.815				0.897		
N4	0.801				0.872		
A4	0.549					0.691	
F2	0.887					0.927	
F4	0.881					0.917	
N1	0.846					0.902	
N3	0.706					0.820	
R2	0.876						0.923
V2	0.867						0.927
M2	0.894						0.941
M6	0.779						0.876
Initial Eigenvalues		6.186	4.610	3.997	3.645	3.251	2.666
% of Variance		19.955	14.872	12.894	11.758	10.487	8.599

* EFA statistically regrouped the 31 updated indicators by six homestay components rather than by the original 10 components.

Table 3. Descriptions of the EFA-validated components and indicators.

Descriptions of Components	Indicator ID	Factor Weight Scores	Descriptions of Updated Indicators
Component 1: Congruence with local ways of life and inclusive local economic development Homestay businesses are required to make available safe facilities and basic amenities for guests [61]. In addition, the establishment of homestays minimally disrupt local ways of life and traditions [33,62]. Homestay tourism should also attach importance to inclusive local economic development where the majority of community members benefit from the scheme to guarantee the success and sustainability of the business [63,64].	A1	0.667	In addition to functionality and provision of basic amenities, guests' privacy should be taken into consideration in the accommodation layout.
	S2	0.914	Provision of security for guests and their belongings
	T2	0.904	Local community oriented travel activity that respects traditional ways of life
	C2	0.993	Action plans to preserve traditional livelihoods and local ways of life
	M4	0.879	Inclusive distribution of economic gain from homestay tourism in proportion to effort and contributions
	P2	0.884	Marketing communication strategy that emphasizes inclusivity (i.e., all stakeholders contribute to the strategy formulation) and evaluation of the strategy effectiveness
Component 2: Homestay operation and hospitality management Homestay guests are entitled to basic amenities during their stay and should be afforded with opportunities to observe traditional ways of life or partake in local activities [65]. Homestay operation should preserve and promote local culture and ways of life. In addition, active participation from community members should be encouraged in the operation and management of local homestay tourism [33].	A2	0.554	Cleanliness, accessibility, and guest-centered hospitality
	S1	0.673	Availability of first aid kit
	T1	0.787	Travel information and local destination highlights with community consensus and seasonal updates
	C1	0.953	Incorporating local culture and traditions into homestay offerings and hospitality services
	M3	0.880	Duties and responsibilities of BOD
	P1	0.834	Adoption of offline and online media platforms for marketing communication to promote homestay tourism and tourist destinations in the local community
Component 3: Roles of local stakeholders in homestay tourism longevity Active participation and contributions from local community members and other stakeholders play a crucial role in the success and sustainability of homestay tourism [42,66,67]	R1	0.817	Warm and cordial reception by homestay host and family members as well as by local community members for the long-term sustainability of homestay business
	T3	0.908	Provision of tour guides with knowledge of local community. The aim is to create economic opportunities for community members, including developing new skills, finding jobs, and starting new businesses.
	V1	0.982	Availability of a wide selection of local merchandise for sale to visitors, and the offerings should be diverse to minimize price competition.
	M1	0.779	Forming an alliance of homestay operators with organizational structure and specific duties for representative members
	M5	0.811	Creating an online hub where visitors are able to make reservations for a variety of services offered by local community businesses (e.g., local transport, tour guide, tourist attractions), in addition to accommodation reservation.

Table 3. Cont.

Descriptions of Components	Indicator ID	Factor Weight Scores	Descriptions of Updated Indicators
Component 4: Cleanliness, infrastructure, and the environment In satisfying the needs of homestay guests, the impact of homestay tourism on the environment and local community should be minimized. The sustainability of tourist destinations is dependent upon environmental concerns and conservation of local stakeholders [42,68]. Construction of homestay accommodations and the operation should attach importance to eco-friendliness and long-term sustainability [69]. Moreover, use of locally-grown cooking ingredients in guests' meals should be encouraged to reduce transport-induced carbon footprint and global warming [70].	A3	0.718	Proper sanitation procedure and ecologically friendly sewage management
	F1	0.827	Types of dishes and cooking ingredients
	F3	0.971	Environmentally friendly and clean food containers and tableware
	N2	0.896	Proper supervision and maintenance of tourist destinations with emphasis on environmental conservation and long-term sustainability
	N4	0.775	Action plans to lessen the impacts of homestay tourism on local natural resources and environment with the goal to reduce global warming
Component 5: Local identity and carrying capacity of homestay Homestay tourism should go beyond basic amenities (e.g., electricity, clean water) to incorporate culture and ways of life of local community members [69,71,72]. Long-held local traditions, custom practices, and beliefs could be unique selling propositions to attract travelers (Edgell, et al. 2008). Moreover, local traditions and practices could be incorporated into homestay designs and offerings/services to promote the identity of local community [67].	A4	0.691	Common area on the premises where homestay guests could observe or partake in traditional ways of life of the local community, in addition to relaxation.
	F2	0.927	Provision of clean drinking water and appliances for modern living
	F4	0.917	Provision of traditional cooking utensils and local condiments (with instruction), in addition to clean food preparation area and modern kitchen utensils
	N1	0.902	Availability of local attractions and/or nearby tourist destinations that embody local culture and traditional ways of life
	N3	0.820	Strategic and action plans to mitigate the impacts of homestay tourism on the environment and ways of life and identity of the local community
Component 6: Stakeholder involvement strategy A collaborative alliance between homestay operators and other local community businesses should be forged to better satisfy the diverse needs of visitors and to develop local homestay tourism [42,67,73].	R2	0.923	Multisector collaboration (i.e., homestay host, other local businesses and community members) to create activities that promote local culture and traditional ways of life
	V2	0.927	Procedure that engages local government and community members in value creation and addition to local merchandise
	M2	0.941	Establishment of board of directors (BOD) for the alliance, and the board should consist of representatives from the local community.
	M6	0.876	Itemized price list of offerings and services to minimize dispute and build trust

Table 4. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of EFA-validated components and indicators.

Component (Latent Factors)	Homestay Indicators	R ² *	Validity of Homestay Components	
			Composite Reliability (CR) **	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Component 1 (Factor loading = 0.398)	A1	0.444	0.953	0.773
	S2	0.835		
	T2	0.883		
	C2	0.986		
	M4	0.773		
	P2	0.781		
Component 2 (Factor loading = 0.454)	A2	0.307	0.926	0.678
	S1	0.453		
	T1	0.620		
	C1	0.907		
	M3	0.774		
	P1	0.696		
Component 3 (Factor loading = 0.372)	R1	0.668	0.948	0.787
	T3	0.825		
	V1	0.965		
	M1	0.608		
	M5	0.658		
Component 4 (Factor loading = 0.449)	A3	0.515	0.940	0.759
	F1	0.684		
	F3	0.943		
	N2	0.803		
	N4	0.600		
Component 5 (Factor loading = 0.444)	A4	0.435	0.931	0.732
	F2	0.793		
	F4	0.961		
	N1	0.840		
	N3	0.551		
Component 6 (Factor loading = 0.338)	R2	0.873	0.955	0.841
	V2	0.798		
	M2	0.869		
	M6	0.731		

* R² indicates the reliability of homestay indicators, given that R² > 0.3 is statistically acceptable. ** CR indicates the reliability of homestay component, given that CR > 0.6 is statistically acceptable.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 2 tabulates the EFA results and component-based factor weight scores of the 31 updated homestay indicators. The updated indicators were regrouped by six EFA-validated homestay components. The 1st component consisted of six updated indicators: A1, S2, T2, C2, M4, and P2 with the factor weight scores of 0.762–0.976. The 2nd component consisted of six indicators: A2, S1, T1, C1, M3, and P1 (0.666–0.933), and the 3rd component comprised five indicators: R1, T3, V1, M1, and M5 (0.858–0.949). The 4th, 5th, and 6th components consisted of A3, F1, F3, N2, N4 (0.749–0.919); A4, F2, F4, N1, N3 (0.691–0.927); and R2, V2, M2, M6 (0.876–0.941), respectively. The descriptions of the updated indicators are provided in Table 1.

The factor weight scores of the 31 updated homestay indicators were greater than 0.3, given that a factor weight score > 0.3 is statistically valid [57–60]. The eigenvalues of the revised six components were 6.186, 4.610, 3.997, 3.645, 3.251, and 2.666, respectively, given that an eigenvalue > 1.0 is acceptable, with the corresponding percentage of variance of 19.955, 14.872, 12.894, 11.758, 10.487, and 8.599. Table 3 presents the six EFA-validated homestay components and indicators.

In Figure 1, the factor loadings of six validated homestay components and 31 updated indicators were 0.338–0.454 and 0.554–0.993, respectively. According to Kim and Mueller [74], a factor loading greater than 0.3 is statistically significant.

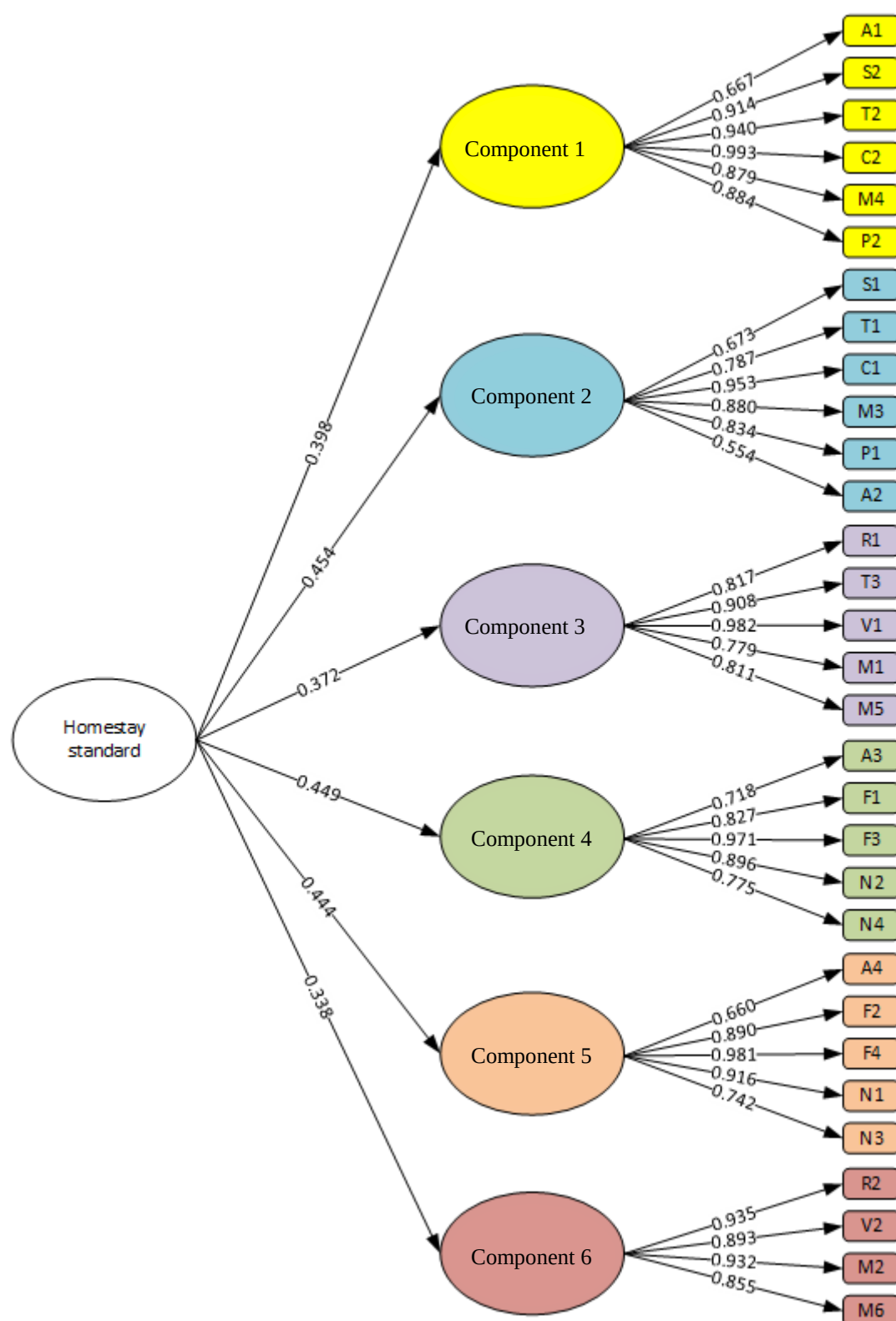


Figure 1. The factor loadings of six validated homestay components and related indicators.

In addition, the chi-square = 10901.185, degree of freedom (df) = 465, $p = 0.000$, goodness of fit index (GFI) = 0.900, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.047, adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) = 0.963, NFI Delta1 = 0.943, confirmatory fit index (CFI) = 0.975, incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.975, Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = 0.967, and root mean square residue (RMR) = 0.034. According to Baumgartner and Homburg [75],

Gatignon [76] and Hooper, Coughlan [77], GFI, AGFI, NFI Delta1, CFI, IFI, and TLI should be close to 1, while RMSEA and RMR should not exceed 0.05.

Table 4 presents the CFA results of the six validated components and 31 updated homestay indicators. The reliability (R^2) of the indicators under the 1st component were 0.444–0.986, and those under the 2nd component were 0.307–0.907. The R^2 of the indicators under 3rd and 4th components were 0.608–0.965 and 0.515–0.943. The R^2 of the indicators under 5th and 6th components were 0.435–0.961 and 0.731–0.873, given that $R^2 > 0.3$ is statistically acceptable. The full descriptions of the updated indicators were provided in Table 3.

The composite reliability (CR) of component 6 (stakeholder involvement strategy) was the largest (0.955), followed by component 1 (congruence with local ways of life and inclusive local economic development; 0.953), component 3 (roles of local stakeholders in homestay tourism longevity; 0.948), component 4 (cleanliness, infrastructure, and the environment; 0.940), component 5 (identity and carrying capacity of homestay; 0.931), and component 2 (homestay operation and hospitality management; 0.926). The corresponding average variance extracted (AVE) was 0.678–0.841. According to Fornell and Larcker [78], the CFA construct component is statistically valid if $CR > 0.6$ or $AVE > 0.5$.

A high factor loading indicates the indicator that homestay guests attach considerable importance and thereby plays a crucial role in the success and sustainability of local homestay businesses. In Figure 1, the indicator C2 (action plans to preserve traditional livelihoods and local ways of life) under component 1 had the highest factor loading (0.993). Specifically, local ways of life and cultures of tourist destinations have been increasingly adopted as a differentiation strategy by many homestay businesses [33,62,64]. Culture-oriented homestay tourism helps promote local culture and traditions and is a potential source of income of local community, which in turn supports and strengthens cultural production and creativity [44,47,48].

The indicator V1 (availability of a wide selection of local merchandise for sale to visitors, and the offerings should be diverse to minimize price competition) under component 3 had the second highest factor loading (0.982). Culture-oriented homestay tourism promotes local traditions and also serves as a marketing tool to sell locally made crafts and services to visitors [66,79]. As a result, an increasing number of local tourist destinations integrate local cultures into their offerings and services to appeal to visitors' unique needs [49,50].

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

This research proposed an updated version of homestay indicators associated with 10 component-level homestay requirements to replace the 31 original indicators for homestay businesses in Thailand. The original indicators have been in use for nearly a decade, and no statistical validation was carried out to determine the relevancy to the 10 components. The existing 10 components were accommodation and amenities; food and beverage; safety to life and belongings; hospitality of host and family members; travel information and tour guide; natural resources and the environment; cultural heritage and livelihood; addition of value to local merchandise; homestay operation and management; marketing communication and promotion.

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to determine the statistical relevancy between the updated homestay indicators and the components. The SEM analysis involved two steps: exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). In this research, the EFA statistically regrouped the 31 updated indicators by six new homestay components instead of by the original 10 components. The six new homestay components were congruence with local ways of life and inclusive local economic development; homestay operation and hospitality management; roles of local stakeholders in homestay tourism longevity; cleanliness, infrastructure, and the environment; local identity and carrying capacity of homestay; stakeholder involvement strategy.

The six components and 31 updated indicators were further validated by CFA to determine the factor loadings and reliability of the components and indicators. A high

factor loading suggests that the particular indicator plays an important role in the success and sustainability of homestay tourism and local community. The CFA results revealed that the indicators C2 (action plans to preserve traditional livelihoods and local ways of life) and V1 (availability of a wide selection of local merchandise for sale to visitors, and the offerings should be diverse to minimize price competition) had the highest (0.993) and second-highest factor loadings (0.982).

The findings indicated that homestay guests attached considerable importance to both homestay indicators. As a result, Thai homestay operators should take into consideration local cultures and ways of life in the formulation and implementation of their business plans. Furthermore, the research findings are consistent with [33,62,64], who found that homestay businesses increasingly adopt the local ways of life and cultures as the differentiation strategy to attract visitors. The findings are also consistent with [44,47,48], who reported that culture-oriented homestay tourism helps promote local culture and traditions and is a potential source of income of local community.

The research findings are expected to contribute to improvement in homestay operation in Thailand as the owners could refer to the resulting factor loadings to identify the requirements or standards that are currently inadequate or lacking in their homestay operation. The shortcomings could then be addressed by immediate and long-term action plans, with priority given to the homestay indicators with high factor loadings. Moreover, the statistically validated homestay indicators could be further developed into a standardized checklist to evaluate and grade homestay businesses in terms of the extent to which they satisfy the homestay standards.

In this current research, the homestay indicators were validated by using a sample of 337 homestay visitors who stayed in a homestay in the central region of Thailand. To address the issue of limited geography, future research will cover several geographical regions and longer periods of data collection (from three months to one year). In addition, future participating homestay operators will be offered a brief training session to avoid incomplete and incorrect data collection.

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Appendix A. Thai Homestay Business Indicator Satisfactions

Appendix A.1. Demographics and Generic Information

1.1. Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

1.2. Age (years)

1.3. Education level

- ☐ Below primary
- ☐ Primary school
- ☐ Lower Secondary
- ☐ Upper secondary
- ☐ University

1.4. Occupation

- ☐ Private company employee
- ☐ Self-employed
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Business owner
- ☐ Other

Appendix A.2. Thai Homestay Business Indicator Satisfactions

The Thai homestay business indicator satisfaction has an 5-point Likert scale, 1 represents not related, 5 strongly disagree, and 10 strongly agree.

Indicator ID	Description	1 Strongly Disagree and 5 Strongly Agree				
		1	2	3	4	5
A1	In addition to functionality and provision of basic amenities, guests' privacy should be taken into consideration in the accommodation layout.					
A2	Cleanliness, accessibility, and guest-centered hospitality					
A3	Proper sanitation procedure and ecologically friendly sewage management					
A4	Common area on the premises where homestay guests could observe or partake in traditional ways of life of the local community, in addition to relaxation.					
F1	Types of dishes and cooking ingredients					
F2	Provision of clean drinking water and appliances for modern living					
F3	Environmentally friendly and clean food containers and tableware					
F4	Provision of traditional cooking utensils and local condiments (with instruction), in addition to clean food preparation area and modern kitchen utensils					
S1	Availability of first aid kit					
S2	Provision of security for guests and their belongings					
R1	Warm and cordial reception by homestay host and family members as well as by local community members for the long-term sustainability of homestay business					
R2	Multisector collaboration (i.e., homestay host, other local businesses and community members) to create activities that promote local culture and traditional ways of life					
T1	Travel information and local destination highlights with community consensus and seasonal updates					
T2	Local community oriented travel activity that respects traditional ways of life					
T3	Provision of tour guides with knowledge of local community. The aim is to create economic opportunities for community members, including developing new skills, finding jobs, and starting new businesses.					
N1	Availability of local attractions and/or nearby tourist destinations that embody local culture and traditional ways of life					
N2	Proper supervision and maintenance of tourist destinations with emphasis on environmental conservation and long-term sustainability					
N3	Strategic and action plans to mitigate the impacts of homestay tourism on the environment and ways of life and identity of the local community					
N4	Action plans to lessen the impacts of homestay tourism on local natural resources and environment with the goal to reduce global warming					
C1	Incorporating local culture and traditions into homestay offerings and hospitality services					
C2	Action plans to preserve traditional livelihoods and local ways of life					
V1	Availability of a wide selection of local merchandise for sale to visitors, and the offerings should be diverse to minimize price competition.					
V2	Procedure that engages local government and community members in value creation and addition to local merchandise					
M1	Forming an alliance of homestay operators with organizational structure and specific duties for representative members					
M2	Establishment of board of directors (BOD) for the alliance, and the board should consist of representatives from the local community.					
M3	Duties and responsibilities of BOD					
M4	Inclusive distribution of economic gain from homestay tourism in proportion to effort and contributions					
M5	Creating an online hub where visitors are able to make reservations for a variety of services offered by local community businesses (e.g., local transport, tour guide, tourist attractions), in addition to accommodation reservation.					
M6	Itemized price list of offerings and services to minimize dispute and build trust					
P1	Adoption of offline and online media platforms for marketing communication to promote homestay tourism and tourist destinations in the local community					
P2	Marketing communication strategy that emphasizes inclusivity (i.e., all stakeholders contribute to the strategy formulation) and evaluation of the strategy effectiveness					

Any suggestion.

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