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DECISION ON SPA SERVICE SELECTION OF FOREIGN TOURISTS IN KOH SAMUI

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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study were 1) to investigate the decision of foreign tourists in selecting spa service, and 2) to study marketing mix factors (7Ps) affecting on spa service selection of foreign tourists in Koh Samui. The research population for this research was 381,818 foreign tourists who traveled to Koh Samui, Surat Thani province. The samples were 400 foreign tourists selected by the accidental sampling technique. The data collection tool was the questionnaires. The reliability test of the whole questionnaire was 0.955. The data were analyzed by frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The study indicated that most respondents were females aging 30 – 39. They made their own decision of using spa services for relaxing and anxiety reduction, without a plan in advance. The study revealed that, in term of spa selection, the tourists mostly made a decision based on physical evidence, followed by the staffing, price, process, marketing promotion, location or distribution channel, and product respectively. Cleanliness was the highest point to influence them. The spa room should have an aroma scents. Service with integrity, special fare, available for advance booking, various levels of fare and services were also the important points for selecting spa service.

Keywords: Decision, Koh Samui, Spa Tourist

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, people start to take care of their health and beauty. Spas businesses are viewed at the most important position of health and wellness movement and essential service part for tourists. It is recognized for treatments providing relaxation to wellness therapies and beauty treatments (Chieochankitkan and Sukpatch, 2014). People use spa service for body relaxation, stress relief, and health management. The spa service may include massages, body scrubs, anti-aging skin care

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treatments, and steam baths. Hirankitti et al. (2009) stated that at first, spas were only to be found in 5-star hotels, but they have now mushroomed everywhere. Spas can be found at all the major tourist destinations in Thailand such as Bangkok, Pattaya, Chiang Mai, Phuket, and Koh Samui.

The spa and Thai massage businesses in Thailand have expanded enormously. In 2011, the revenue and number of spa establishments have consistently increased. Currently, 1,436 spa establishments legally registered throughout the whole nation and they are certified by the Ministry of Public Health (Chieochankitkan, 2013). Presently, the spa service in Thailand is an important element for hospitality businesses. The spa market in Thailand has a great deal of potential for growth. It helps to expand the opportunities for career, service, and business to many Thai people. Therefore, the quality of goods and services must be standardized to impress tourists. The spas operators have improved the standards of their service quality. They have also developed their own products, equipment, and techniques for holistic health care treatments such as a spa with various oils, spa massage at various points such as ears, hair, scalp, and feet (Klaysung, 2016).

The success of the businesses is crucially relying on the quality of services to meet the satisfaction of the customers. Service excellence can maximize customer satisfaction. However, customers have different perspectives and needs of various products and services from providers (Kandampully, 2002). The service quality needs responding to meet or exceed the customers' expectation. Reaching customer satisfaction is the primary goal for most companies. Customer satisfaction relies on a measure of how the product offered meets or exceeds customer expectations (Chieochankitkan and Sukpatch, 2014). Achieving customer satisfaction is the key aim of most spa service providers. Consequently, the competition is more serious. Some spa service providers are successful in the spa business and others are not. Therefore, in this study, the researcher studied the decision of foreign tourists on selecting spa service in Koh Samui, Surat Thani province, Thailand. The information from the study can be guidelines for spa service providers for strategies development for giving satisfying services to tourists.

The Purpose of the Research

The objectives of this research were:

- 1) To investigate the decision of foreign tourists on selecting spa service.
- 2) To study marketing mix factors (7Ps) affecting on spa service selection of foreign tourists in Koh Samui.

METHODOLOGY

The research design was implemented in steps by step as follows:

1. The research population for this research was 381,818 foreign tourists who traveled to Koh Samui, Surat Thani province, Thailand. The samples of the study were 400 foreign tourists. They were selected by the accidental sampling technique.
2. The 5-point-rating-scale questionnaire with a 0.955 reliability index was used for data collection. The quantitative research was done by using questionnaire as tool for data collection.
3. The frequency, percentage, mean (\bar{x}), and standard deviation (SD) were used to analyze the data.

RESULTS

The result showed that the respondents of this study were 400 foreign tourists. There were 280 females with 70.0% and 120 males with 30.0%. The ages were between 30 – 39 years old with 44.8%, as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	120	30.0
Female	280	70.0
Age		
20-29	95	23.8
30-39	179	44.8
40-49	64	16.0
50-59	54	13.5
more than 59	8	2.0

Table 2: Decision in selecting spa services

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Main reasons of using spa services		
For relaxing and anxiety reduction	247	61.8
For nourishing and maintaining beauty	106	26.5
For healing the disease	45	11.3
Decision of using spa services		
Self	234	58.5
Family member	71	17.8
Colleagues	63	15.8
Public relations media from spa shop	32	8.0
Time of using spa		
At convenient time, without a plan	233	58.3
After shopping	76	19.0
After completing the tour	59	14.8
First day after arrival	32	8.0

Table 2 shows that most of the respondents had the aim of using spa services for relaxing and anxiety reduction. They made their own decision of using spa services. The study revealed that the tourists used spa services at a convenient time, without a plan.

Table 3: Marketing mix factors (7Ps)

Variables	(\bar{x})	SD
Physical evidence	4.48	0.82
Service staff	4.34	0.77
Price	4.31	0.75
Service process	4.26	0.80

Variables	(\bar{x})	SD
Marketing promotion	4.20	0.89
Place / location or distribution channel	4.19	0.82
Product	4.10	0.86
total	4.27	0.82

Table 3 indicates that the overall opinion of the respondents toward the marketing mix factors (7Ps: product, price, place, promotion, service staff, service process, and physical evidence) in selecting spa service was at a high level (mean = 4.27, SD = 0.82). The seven high rated factors of the selection for spa service were physical evidence (mean = 4.48, SD = 0.82), service staff (mean = 4.34, SD = 0.77), price (mean = 4.31, SD = 0.75), service process (mean = 4.26, SD = 0.80), marketing promotion (mean = 4.20, SD = 0.89), place / location or distribution channel (mean = 4.19, SD = 0.82), and product (mean = 4.10, SD = 0.86) respectively.

Table 4: Opinion of the respondents toward the product factor

Variables	(\bar{x})	SD
1. Variety of services.	3.95	0.98
2. Provision of services.	3.83	0.90
3. Famous and popular spa massage.	3.80	0.87
4. Smell of massage oil and suitable for the skin.	3.85	0.93
5. Products used for massage.	3.93	0.90
total	4.10	0.86

Table 4 shows that the overall opinion level toward the product factor of customers was at a high level (mean = 4.10, SD = 0.86). It was found that a variety of services had the highest mean score (mean = 3.95, SD = 0.98).

Table 5: Opinion of the respondents toward the price factor

Variables	(\bar{x})	SD
1. Reasonable Price.	4.03	0.80
2. Clearly mark price for spa service.	4.25	0.80
3. Several spa rates.	4.06	0.84
4. Discount for regular customers.	4.01	0.94
5. Price is right for the product used.	3.88	0.94
total	4.31	0.75

Table 5 indicates that the overall opinion of the respondents toward the price factor was at a high level (mean = 4.31, SD = 0.75). ‘Clearly mark price for spa service’ was the highest point that influenced tourists’ decision on spa service selection (mean = 4.25, SD = 0.80). While ‘price is right for the product used.’ had the lowest mean score (mean = 3.88, SD = 0.94).

Table 6: Opinion of the respondents toward the place / location or distribution channel factor

Variables	(\bar{x})	SD
1. Online information is well interactive i.e., webpage, facebook.	3.99	1.11
2. Options of payment methods (cash, credit card, internet banking).	3.90	0.85
3. Advance reservation can be made.	4.20	0.89
4. Location of the spa can be reached easily.	3.86	0.84
5. Parking place is available.	3.87	1.02
total	4.19	0.82

As exhibited in Table 6, the opinion level toward the place/location or distribution channel factor of customers found that all the factors were considered high (mean = 4.19, SD = 0.82). ‘Advance reservation can be made.’ gave the highest mean

score (mean = 4.20, SD = 0.89). While ‘location of the spa can be reached easily.’ gave the lowest mean score (mean = 3.86, SD = 0.84).

Table 7: Opinion of the respondents toward the marketing promotion factor

Variables	(\bar{x})	SD
1. Promotion is advertised in newspaper, journal, radio, television, etc.	3.90	0.86
2. Discount for members.	4.25	0.90
3. Spa service is included in the travel package.	4.18	1.02
4. The promotion after the sales.	3.70	0.82
5. There are launch products.	3.99	0.97
total	4.20	0.89

Table 7 shows that the overall opinion level toward the marketing promotion factor of customers was at a high level (mean = 4.20, SD = 0.89). The opinion level toward the marketing promotion factor found that ‘discount for members’ was the highest point that influenced tourists’ decision on spa service selection (mean = 4.25, SD = 0.90). While ‘the promotion after the sales’ gave the lowest mean score (mean = 3.70, SD = 0.82).

Table 8: Opinion of the respondents toward the service staff factor

Variables	(\bar{x})	SD
1. Spa staff provide sufficient knowledge of product.	4.11	0.82
2. Spa staff clearly give consults on health and products before treatment.	4.13	0.88
3. Spa staff dress up smartly and clean.	4.06	0.90
4. Spa staff can speak many languages.	3.89	0.86
5. Spa staff offer high standard treatment while treated.	4.12	0.92
total	4.34	0.77

As illustrated in Table 8, the overall opinion level toward the service staff of customers was at a high level (mean = 4.34, SD = 0.77). The opinion level toward the service staff factor found that ‘spa staff clearly give consults on health and products before treatment.’ produced the highest mean score (mean = 4.13, SD = 0.88). This implies that staff members had knowledge and expertise. However, the finding found that ‘spa staff can speak many languages.’ gave the lowest mean score (mean = 3.89, SD = 0.86).

Table 9: Opinion of the respondents toward the service process factor

Variables	(\bar{x})	SD
1. Providing service with integrity.	4.21	0.88
2. An evaluation of using service.	4.00	0.93
3. Providing fast and smooth service.	4.07	0.95
4. Paying attention to customers’ needs.	4.09	0.91
5. Understanding the specific needs of customers.	3.62	0.97
total	4.26	0.80

As exhibited in Table 9, the opinion level toward the service process factor of customers found that all the factors were considered at a high level (mean = 4.26, SD = 0.80). It was found that ‘providing service with integrity’ had the highest mean score (mean = 4.21, SD = 0.88). While ‘understanding the specific needs of customers’ had the lowest mean score (mean = 3.26, SD = 0.97).

Table 10: Opinion of the respondents toward the physical evidence factor

Variables	(\bar{x})	SD
1. Spa room has aroma scents.	4.25	0.91
2. Spa room is clean.	4.30	0.85
3. Spa room is beautiful.	4.18	0.89
4. Spa room is divided for private massage.	4.11	0.92
5. Unique beverage and services are offered.	4.15	0.85
total	4.48	0.82

Table 10 shows that the overall opinion of the respondents toward the physical evidence factor was at a high level (mean = 4.48, SD = 0.83). Cleanliness was the highest point that influenced tourists' decision on spa service selection. Aroma scents Spa room, nice design, offering unique beverage and services, and separate room were also considered for spa service selection.

Discussion and Conclusions

The results found that the foreign tourists' decision on spa service selection in Koh Samui, Thailand was at a high level. The study revealed that most of the respondents were females. Ages were between 30 – 39 years old. The reason for using spa services is for relaxing and anxiety reduction. The tourists made their own decision of using the spa services and they used spa services at a convenient time, without a plan. This is consistent with the research of Klaysung (2016) claimed that most of the spa consumers were aged 31 years to 40 years. This result is also aligned with Jantaro et al. (2016) that most respondents went to the spa once or twice a month and they made their own decision to have the spa for relaxing and anxiety reduction.

For this recent study, respondents rated that the spa room should have an aroma scents. Moreover, service with integrity, special fare, available for advance booking, various levels of fare and services were the important points for selecting spa service. This finding is aligned with Chieochankitkan and Sukpatch 's (2014) research. They confirmed that customers placed importance upon the service meeting their needs, as well as the following: spa services being value for money, the effort is taken to search for the establishment, location convenience, social elements, confidence, special-treatment benefits, and waiting time. Spa customers compared what they give and what they obtained and evaluated the two. According to Hirankitti et al. (2009) customers often judged the quality of the service they received largely on their assessment of the people providing the service.

Additionally, this study noted that 'spa staff should clearly give consults on health and products before treatment and offer high standard treatment while treated' were factors influencing the tourists' decision on spa service selection. Klaysung (2016) also agreed that a massage spa is influenced by customers' expectations of a massage from skillful employees. Spa staff should provide advice on services that fit the needs of the clients, including polite service and understanding customer needs. Thaithong et al. (2018) stated that staff can be considered as the heart of service delivery. Their knowledge and skills, good appearances, responsiveness, trustworthiness, and empathies can impress customers.

The results from this study indicated that marketing mix factors on physical evidence had the most effect on spa service selection of foreign tourists in Koh Samui, followed by service staff, price, service process, marketing promotion, place/location or distribution channel, and product, respectively. As Hirankitti et al. (2009) emphasized service process, service staff, physical evidence, place, product, price, and promotion were the important factors for spa operators in

terms of implementation of service marketing strategies and operational performance. This study found that the tourists considered on cleanliness, clearly mark price for spa service and reasonable price as the highest point that influenced the selection for spa service. As Warichwattana and Mongkol (2013) asserted that hygiene and clearly mark the price were factors of the product. Klaysung (2016) also mentioned that property's cleanliness, courteous service, no traffic issues, convenient location/parking, satisfying and affordable spa services, and customer care effected on the decision on spa service selection of customers.

Recommendations

The research found the problems of spa staff's English proficiency, standards, products, and prices. The study recommends that the sector urgently needs to develop personnel and service standards. the spa staff should be trained to improve their language skills. Proper education should be provided to enhance the spa staff's knowledge and skills to meet the standards of service and the needs of various customers. Spas should develop new, exciting and effective treatments for visitors and focus on providing more tailored treatments for different conditions and demographics. Spa service providers should set a clear pricing approach to create the same standard.

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