AN ASSESSMENT OF SERVICE QUALITY BY THAI SAPPAYA SPA CUSTOMERS: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The Thai Sappaya Spa industry has become a major player in the holistic health service sector in Thailand. The purpose of the present research is to investigate the assessment service quality of Thai Sappaya Spa customers. The population consists of 610 customers attending Thai Sappaya Spa services, and who volunteered to participate in this research in Thailand. A questionnaire was used to collect data using convenient sampling techniques by online survey. Structural equation modeling was applied to analyze the data. The results indicate that the service quality of the Thai Sappaya Spa has a significant and direct influence on wellness values and customer satisfaction. Moreover, the service quality of a Thai Sappaya Spa has an indirect influence on intention to revisit through wellness values and customer satisfaction. In these findings, the information provided by this research can be used when designing marketing strategies to improve wellness value and customer satisfaction, both of which increase the intention to revisit spas of the Thai Sappaya Spa industry in Thailand.

Keywords: Service Quality, Wellness Value, Customer Satisfaction, Intention to Revisit, Thai Sappaya Spa.

INTRODUCTION

The service sector in several countries makes the most of the underlying economic potential (World Bank, 2018). Therefore, in a recent study on global spa sectors shows the quality of service is critical to survival and profitability. In traditional service quality, general quality dimensions for services have been defined by the customer's perceptions about quality which is based on long-term and overall evaluation of performance (Parasuraman et al., 1985, 1990, and 1993). Some study of the Thai Sappaya Spa industry has been carried out. This is an industry that is expanding in most parts of Thailand and Asia (Thongkern, 2016). Still, few types of research have been carried out regarding Thai Sappaya Spa, even though it is an important industry for the holistic health of many people. Thus, for this study, the Thai Sappaya Spa refers to a place that focuses on providing holistic services such as body, mind, and mood using water, Thai herbs and Thai massage. These are integrated with five methods consisting of substantial tastes, smells, sounds and touches to achieve relaxation and balance. This specific section concerns customers' perceptions of quality so as to understand the nature of quality within the Thai Sappaya Spa industry. This is a general approach, especially in the service literature (Parasuraman et al., 1985). This assessment includes three dimensions: spa climate and physical environment quality, relaxation and wellness of the mind, and the excellence of spa service

support and providing the direct experience during the consumption of the Thai Sappaya Spa service. It has an outcome that is expressed in two dimensions that are wellness value and customer satisfaction. It is related to the lasting effects that the spa customer experiences after the actual consumption have ended, and is related to intention to revisit. The purpose is to assess the service quality of the Thai Sappaya Spa implications for the three aforementioned specific dimensions.

Research Objectives

H_1 *To study the influence of service quality of Thai Sappaya Spa on its wellness value.*

H_2 *To study the influence of service quality of Thai Sappaya Spa on customer satisfaction.*

H_3 *To study the influence of wellness value on intention to revisit.*

H_4 *To study the influence of customer satisfaction on intention to revisit.*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Service Quality

Service quality is generally viewed as the output of the service delivery system, especially in the case of a service sector (Mmutle, 2017). Moreover, service quality is linked to consumer satisfaction (Rai et al., 2018). Service quality is a perception of the customer. However, the customer forms opinions about service quality not just from a single reference but from a host of contributing factors (Awoke & Wollo, 2015). In several studies, service qualities were defined by Parasuraman (Khan & Tabassum, 2010). These elements are, in turn, assessments based on specific dimensions such as interaction quality, physical environment quality, and outcome quality (Brady & Cronin, 2001). From the above-mentioned review, it seems that service quality is a multi-dimensional concept that means different things to different people. Moreover, defining quality is a difficult task owing to its generic nature. Even though standards for the definition of quality may be set, these standards vary from phenomenon to phenomenon, culture to culture, and across time. Numerous researchers are interested in this study of the service quality of the Thai Sappaya Spa which adopts these three dimensions, namely: the spa climate and physical environment quality, relaxation and wellness of mind quality, and the excellence of spa service support and provider quality (Gronroos, 1978; Lehtinen & Lehtinen, 1982; Brady & Cronin, 2001).

Wellness Value

A number of studies on perceived value have been conducted. The value construct of perceived value has generally received relatively little attention in the spa services marketing literature, especially in the perceived spa wellness value literature. However, studies indicate that perceived value may either lead directly to the result of the perceptions of a product, or to service performance (McDougall & Levesque, 2000; Caruana & Fenech, 2005). Customer perceived value is the difference between the prospective customer's evaluation of all the benefits and all the costs of an offering, versus the perceived alternatives (Kotler & Keller, 2006). Perceived value of service comprises five dimensions: quality, emotional response, monetary price,

behavioral price, and reputation (Petrick, 2002 & 2004). In this research, the researcher attempts to find that marketers could benefit from multidimensional wellness value by allowing them to compare the relative importance of each dimension and identifying the dimensions that performing gives. This is in relationship to the specific direction as to the outcomes for holistic health and emotional response; but excludes monetary price, behavioral price, and reputation.

Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is one of the most important outcomes of service activity (Gronroos, 1978; Lehtinen & Lehtinen, 1982; Parasuraman et al., 1985; Brady & Cronin, 2001). Based on this element, researchers are paying increased attention to the improvement of service quality (Gupta et al., 2005). However, high quality of service can lead to positive results that relate to customer satisfaction, and that can increase intention to royalty (Kumar et al., 2009). It is a judgment that a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provides a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment. The definition of satisfaction means that this satisfaction is the customer's evaluation of a product or service in terms of whether that product or service has met their needs and expectations (Oliver & Swan, 1989). The customer satisfaction literature shows that expectation is the most direct determinant of satisfaction, followed by perceived performance.

Intention to Revisit

Intentions are subjective judgments about how a person will behave in the future, and usually serves as dependent variables in many service research and satisfaction models (Boulding et al., 1993; Soderlund & Ohman, 2003). Rust et al. (1995) argue that intentions to revisit and actual revisiting patterns are not necessarily the same. Butcher (2005) agreed that intention to revisit is regarded as a sound service outcome that is measurable. While Soderlund & Ohman (2003) consider intentions to revisit as intentions-as-expectations, defined intention to revisit as *"the individual's judgment about buying again a designated service from the same company, taking into account his or her current situation and likely circumstances"*.

Relationship between Service Quality, Wellness Value, Customer Satisfaction, and Intention to Revisit

Service quality and service management in the health-care sector have attracted significant research attention in recent years, and most studies have focused on traditional health care. Nevertheless, even in traditional health care, experiential factors such as sensory perceptions have been shown to be important. A Thai Sappaya Spa establishment could be viewed as a holistic health spa service. It is a place that focuses on providing holistic services such as body, mind, and mood; by using water, Thai herbs and Thai massage. These would be integrated with the five-method approach consisting of substantial tastes, smells, sounds and touches to promote relaxation and balance. Thus, the research highlights the importance for multi-service organizations to consider the customer-perceived overall quality because it determines the overall satisfaction (Bigné et al., 2003). Service quality, wellness value and customer satisfaction have been shown to influence behavioral intentions in the spa industry (González & Brea, 2005). The service quality of the Thai Sappaya Spa industry is composed of the spa climate and the quality of its physical environment quality, relaxation and wellness of

mind quality, and the excellence of spa service support and provider quality (Grönroos & Ravald, 2011). First, the spa climate and physical environment quality refers to the physical elements, the facility, comfort, and security system of the overall spa area that affects the physical body, mind and emotions. Relaxation and wellness of mind quality refers to the reflection of the spa service treatment process during and after a spa service that the customer receives for their physical body, mind and emotions. Finally, excellence of spa service support and provider quality refers to the performance of receptionists and spa therapists that is outstanding, with spa service excellence and skillfulness in the specific area of service. Spa climate and physical environment quality can also have an impact on mental health impression, customer satisfaction, and intention to revisit. Similarly, the surrounding tangible physical environment quality can affect the customer's overall perceptions of service quality. Prior research reveals that climate and physical environment can reduce stress by lowering the stress hormone cortisol. Further, it also makes one immune to related problems such as hypertension and tachycardia. Relaxation and wellness of mind quality is one of the wellness maintenances factors that are absolutely crucial to the wellbeing of living humans. Therefore, it is important for everyone to achieve optimal wellness in order to subdue stress and reduce the risk of illness. The spa service treatment process is the releasing of stress, and the enhancement of relaxation and rejuvenation. Relaxation is related to wellness value and customer satisfaction. The excellence of spa service support and the provider quality of service staff improves service outcomes and long-term relationships. From the aforementioned literature review, the following hypotheses were postulated:

H₁   *Service quality has a direct influence on wellness value.*

H₂   *Service quality has a direct influence on customer satisfaction.*

H₃   *Wellness value has a direct influence on intention to revisit.*

H₄   *Customer satisfaction has a direct on intention to revisit.*

Research Model

The present study sought to investigate the influence of service quality (SQ) on wellness value (WV) and customer satisfaction (CS) among Thai Sappaya Spa businesses (Figure 1).
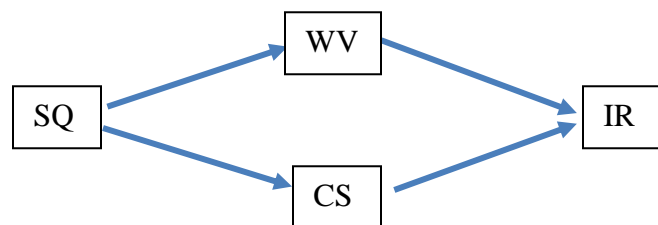
FIGURE 1
INFLUENCE OF SERVICE QUALITY AMONG THAI SAPPAYA SPA BUSINESSES

The variables were divided into three categories. The first category, service quality, included three dimensions as: (1) spa climate and physical environment quality; (2) relaxation

and wellness of mind quality; (3) and the excellence of spa service support and provider quality. Second, its studies spa service outcomes including wellness value and customer satisfaction. Third, in regards to the lasting effects that the spa customer experiences after the actual consumption have ended, it includes two dimensions: wellness value and customer satisfaction, which are related to intention to revisit.

Sample and Data Collection

This research collected the data using the instrument of online questionnaire surveys on the website: www.surveycan.com. It is appropriate because it is a widely-used method, current and suitable for Covid-19 situations as to social distancing, and demonstrates an effective, statutory approach for data collection customers. The population consisted of 610 customers attending Thai Sappaya Spa businesses, and who volunteered to participate in this research of Thai customers in Thailand. A sample size used the criteria of Hair et al. (2010) who specify that the ratio between the number of samples and the number of parameters should between 200 and 1000 cases to be sufficient for structural equation modelling. A questionnaire was used to collect data using convenient sampling techniques by online survey. Structural equation modeling was applied to analyze the data. The scale to measure the service quality questionnaire was adapted from 12 items. The questionnaire utilized the 5-point Likert Scale. Moreover, a Likert five-point interval scale, ranged from 1=strongly disagree, to 5=strongly agree. The AMOS program was used to test degree of congruence of the variables in the conceptual model.

Validity and Reliability Measurement

To assess the accuracy of the content, five experts within fields of business were utilized to perform the assessment. This research reaches content validity sufficiency by three experts' suggestions as distinguished scholars (González & Brea, 2005). The result of item-objective congruence (IOC) equals $0.64 \geq 0.50$, which is acceptable (Pérez-Rojo et al., 2019). The questionnaire quality was tested for reliability using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. As to service quality, the highest internal consistency level (0.99), was followed by customer satisfaction at 0.98, wellness value at 0.97, and intention to revisit at 0.95. All these factors have a reliability level of more than 0.70, which is acceptable. A test of non-response bias had no statistically significant differences between the two groups at a 95% confidence level (Armstrong & Overton, 1977). Scale verification was based on the concept of Fornell et al. (1996). Confirmatory factor analysis was applied to test whether the structural validity of each variable in the model was true, based on empirical evidence of the theory and its concepts. Statistical consistency was determined by Chi-square ($\chi 2$), chi-square/degrees of freedom ($\chi 2$/df), goodness of fit index (GFI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (Byrne, 2010). Table 1 shows the effectiveness of the composition from the loading values of standard factors for each item or observed variable. All the questions significantly correlated with structural theory because of the large factor loadings (> 0.50) with significance values at $p < 0.01$ (Table 1).

Composite reliability (CR) and average extraction difference (AVE) were calculated following the construction reliability test of Fornell et al. (1996) to verify the final measurement model. From Table 1, all the CR scores were above 0.60, while all the AVEs were greater than 0.50 (AVE > 0.50). Therefore, the measured convergence accuracy was sufficient for the measurement model and all the theoretical structures had acceptable psychological properties.

Table 1 CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS			
Item	Standardized factor loading	t-value	AVE and composite reliability (a)
Service quality (SQ) Model fit indices: χ2 = 0.847, df = 1.000, p - value = 0.359, RMSEA = 0.000, χ2/ df = 0.847, GFI = 0.999			
Spa climate and physical environment	0.928	0.859	CR = 0.935
Relaxation and wellness of mind	0.937	0.880	AVE = 0.874
The excellence of spa service support and provider	0.941	0.885	
Wellness value (WV) Model fit indices: χ2 = 0.000, df = 1.000, p - value = 0.999, RMSEA = 0.000, χ2/ df = 0.000, GFI = 0.000			
Body is relaxed	0.929	0.736	CR = 0.873
Feel refreshed and exhilarated	0.858	0.789	AVE = 0.717
Feel good mood	0.889	0.667	
Feel recovered from depression	0.817	0.677	
Customer satisfaction (CS) Model fit indices: χ2 = 0.3901, df = 1.000, p - value = 0.533, RMSEA = 0.000, χ2/ df = 0.391, GFI = 0.999			
Process of service	0.733	0.538	CR = 0.719
Outcome of healthy	0.706	0.507	AVE = 0.522
Intention to revisit (IR) Model fit indices χ2 = 1.196, df = 1.000, p - value = 0.275, RMSEA = 0.026, χ2/ df = 1.196, GFI = 0.996			
likely to use the service again	0.829	0.686	CR = 0.814
Intend to recommend, word-of-mouth, sharing social media.	0.981	0.962	AVE = 0.676
Likely to pay more and spend more time on your next visit.	0.733	0.538	
Interested in other services for spa	0.711	0.516	

RESULTS

Table 2 STATISTICAL INFORMATION						
Item	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max	Var	Meaning
Service quality						
Spa climate and physical environment	4.69	0.91	1.00	5.00	0.90	strongly agree
Relaxation and wellness of the mind	4.87	0.98	2.00	5.00	0.90	strongly agree
The excellence of spa service support and provider	4.79	0.98	2.00	5.00	0.90	strongly agree
Wellness value						
Body is relaxed	4.99	0.99	2.00	5.00	1.00	strongly agree
Feel refreshed and exhilarated	4.87	0.95	2.00	5.00	0.98	strongly agree
Feel good mood	4.72	0.97	1.00	5.00	0.98	strongly agree
Feel recovered from depression	4.65	0.91	1.00	5.00	0.98	strongly agree
Customer satisfaction						
Process of service	4.75	0.97	2.00	5.00	0.90	strongly agree
Outcome of healthy	4.97	0.99	2.00	5.00	0.99	strongly agree
Intention to revisit						
likely to use the service again	4.67	0.96	2.00	5.00	0.97	strongly agree
Intend to recommend, word-of-mouth, sharing social media	4.97	0.92	2.00	5.00	0.93	strongly agree
Likely to pay more and spend more time on your next visit	4.89	0.91	2.00	5.00	0.87	strongly agree
Interested in other services for spa	4.49	0.81	1.00	5.00	0.78	strongly agree

From the service quality dimension in Table 2, the variables used in all three dimensions averaged between 4.69 and 4.87. Meanwhile, the variance of all service quality dimensions was

found to be 0.9-0.90. The wellness value showed that the variables used in all four measurements averaged between 4.65 and 4.99. The level of awareness made a difference when considering that the variance of all wellness value factors was between 0.98 and 1.00. The customer satisfaction results indicate that the variables used for two measurements were 4.75- and 4.97 when considering the variance of customer satisfaction at 0.90-0.99. Furthermore, the variable measurements for intention to revisit factors were found to be in the range of 4.49-4.97, with variance of business strategy at 0.78-0.97.

The Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) Result

The Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) shows 12 measured items. The model fit results for the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) of 12 measured items show a good model fit to the sample data. All model fit indices are statistically significant at the 0.001 level and sufficiently satisfy their relevant recommended thresholds. Model modification was not required because the SEM had model fit indices that were more than satisfactory as reported in Table 3 (Hair et al., 2010; Thongkern, 2016).

| Table 3 GOODNESS-OF-FIT RESULTS FOR THE STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL	
Goodness-of-Fit indices	**Values**
Chi-square(χ^2)	358.489
Degree of Freedom (df)	12
Normed Chi-square (χ^2/df)	2.490
Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI)	0.89
Standardized Root Mean Residual (SRMR)	0.052
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.952
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0.923
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.069

The direct causal effects on each endogenous variable in the SEM and the results of the hypotheses assessments are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4 STANDARDIZED CAUSAL EFFECTS OF THE STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL AND HYPOTHESES ASSESSMENTS					
Determinants	**Outcomes**	**Standardized Coefficients Paths (β)**		**Hypotheses**	**Assessments**
		Direct Causal Paths	**Critical Ratios**		
Service Quality	Wellness Value ($R^2 = 0.37$)	0.418	7.871[***]	H:1	Supported
Service Quality	Customers satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.40$)	0.653	8.384[***]	H:2	Supported
Wellness Value	Intention to revisit ($R^2 = 0.30$)	0.290	7.209[***]	H:3	Supported
Customers satisfaction	Intention to revisit ($R^2 = 0.30$)	0.350	7.870[***]	H:4	Supported

Note: *** Statistically significant at the 0.001 level

The exogenous variable, service quality, explains the 37% variance of the endogenous variable, which is wellness value. Service quality has a significant, total, and causal effect of

0.418 on wellness value and is statistically significant at the 0.001 level. The exogenous variable, service quality, explains 40% of the variance of the endogenous variable, customer satisfaction. Service quality has a significant total causal effect of 0.653 on customer satisfaction, and is statistically significant at the 0.001 level. The exogenous variables, wellness value and customer satisfaction, explain 30% of the variance in the endogenous variable, intention to revisit. The most important determinant of behavioral intentions is customer satisfaction which has a significant total causal effect of 0.350, followed by the causal effect of wellness value of 0.290 (Figure 2).
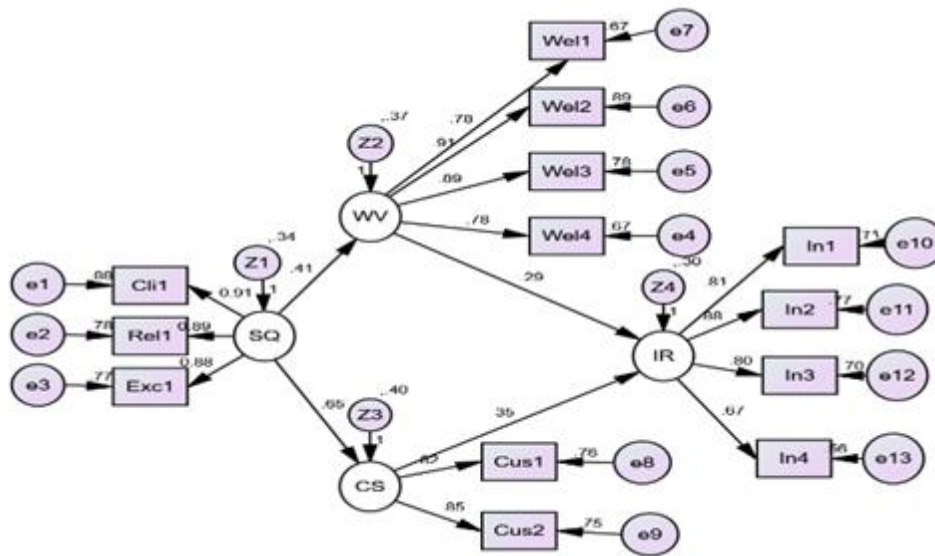
FIGURE 2
COEFFICIENT OF PREDICTION

DISCUSSION

Theoretical Implications

The structural model of the validation equation to the relation model corresponds to the theoretical concepts. The empirical results of this study also contribute to the marketing theory as they provide an improved understanding the assessment service quality of the Thai Sappaya Spa industry. The overall service quality dimension of the Thai Sappaya Spa model, such as spa climate and physical environment quality, relaxation and wellness quality, and excellence spa service support and provider quality have a significant and direct influence on wellness values and customer satisfaction. Moreover, service quality of the Thai Sappaya Spa has an indirect influence on intention to revisit through wellness values and customer satisfaction. Wellness values and customer satisfaction are both the driving forces for increasing intention to revisit.

Practical Implications

Firstly, the results provide relationships that exist among the constructs of service quality, wellness value, customer satisfaction, and intentions to revisit for practitioners in the spa

industry. Wellness value and customer satisfaction are both important drivers of intentions to revisit. Satisfying spa customers is crucial for the Thai Sappaya Spa industry to survive in a competitive environment. Secondly, Thai Sappaya Spa managers who aim to satisfy their customers need to focus on providing favorable industry factors as follows: relaxation and wellness quality, excellent spa service support and provider quality, and spa climate and physical environment quality. This is accomplished by understanding the needs and wants of their customer base. Thirdly, Thai Sappaya Spa managers need to recognize the importance of the service quality construct as a key driver of wellness value and customer satisfaction, as well as its importance in retaining customers over a longer period of time.

Research Limitations

First, limitations relate to the cross-sectional sample that was collected from spa customers who had experiences in Thai Sappaya Spa businesses in Thailand. This may limit the ability to generalize the results for Thai Sappaya Spa management in other countries. Secondly, limitations relate to the constructs examined. These are constructs that are also considered to be the determinants of intentions to revisit. These constructs may play direct roles in the relationships between service quality and intentions to revisit.

Future Research

First, future researchers may apply the approaches used in this current study to conceptualize and measure the perceptions of spa customers in different regions within other countries. Second, future research may extend the current study by testing the direct roles of service quality and improved understanding of the relationships among the intention to revisit construct.

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