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Causal Relationship Model of Customer Loyalty Using Massage Therapy for Relaxation in the Upper Northern Region, Thailand

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Abstract

The objectives of this research on the causal relationship model of customer loyalty who came to use massage therapy for relaxation in the upper northern region were: 1) to study the opinions on the causes of customer loyalty for relaxation health massage, 2) to develop the causal relationship of customer loyalty to relaxation health massage, and 3) to confirm the coherence of the causal relationship of customer loyalty to the relaxation health massage in the Upper North with a mixed research method. It consisted of quantitative research by using a sample questionnaire. The sample group consisted of 450 people who used Thai massage for health massage in the upper northern provinces of Thailand. The data were analyzed by descriptive statistics to find percentage, mean, standard deviation. Inferential statistics analyzed correlational influence by AMOS program and qualitative research which is an in-depth interview with health massage users to relax 15 people in the relaxation health massage establishments in the northern region of 8 provinces in Thailand. The data were analyzed by interpretation to confirm the validity of the results of the analysis and to synthesize the study results.

The results of the research revealed the influence of the perceived quality of service recipients, recognition of the value of the service recipient customer satisfaction, Word-of-mouth talked as a link between customer expectations and customer loyalty. The structural causal relationship model confirmed with empirical

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data $\chi^2 = 345.420$, $df = 1.117$, $\chi^2 / df = 345$, $GFI = .066$, $CFI = .948$, $RMR = .019$, $RMSEA = .016$. The perceived quality of service recipients had no direct influence or little influence on perceived value of service recipients with a route coefficient of 0.162.

Keywords: Customer Loyalty, Massage Therapy for Relaxation, Perceived quality, customer satisfaction, Word-of-mouth

Introduction

Thailand has high potential in the business of providing health promotion services (Health Promotion Services such as spa services, Thai traditional massage, and beauty businesses, etc.). The policy of developing Thailand into an international health center (Medical Hub) has been contained as an important policy of the government and the Ministry of Public Health since 2004 to focus on raising the quality and standard of health services to be a strength in both international service standards, skilled personnel in advanced technology, reasonable price, and beautiful natural resources. This makes the number of foreigners come to receive health services in Thailand more and more. It can generate income for main and related industries. In addition, Thailand is recognized on the world stage as a leader in the field of Medical Hub, as evidenced by the number of foreign service recipients in 2013 totaling 1.4 million visits (International Health Division, 2014).

According to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports indicated that there are tourists doing tourism activities in Thailand both Thais and foreigners in 2018 were 192,474,950 people, earning 2,698,310 million baht from tourism, while in the upper northern provinces of Thailand, 8 provinces are Chiang Rai, Nan, Phayao, Chiang Mai, Mae Hong Son, Phrae, Lampang, and Lamphun. There are 15,426,245 tourists engaged in tourism activities, and tourism revenue is 153,099 million baht (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2019: online) to some extent. In 2019, there were 33,635 service providers in the establishments of health care with more than 12,200 locations in Thailand. There are 2,053 businesses that have been certified by the Ministry of Public Health, 531 of which are health spas, 1,217 massages for relaxation and 305 for beauty massages, generating income up to 35 billion baht (Thongthab, 2019)

In the upper northern provinces of 8 provinces, there are currently 803 operators (Information from the Ministry of Health at the April 2019) and the number of service providers 4,341 people, while massage service providers still face many problems both in terms of lack of basic education, knowledge of anatomy, Thai traditional medicine theory Knowledge, understanding and skills in various massage techniques, prohibitions and practices in health services, verbal communication, foreign language communication, physical expression, facial expressions, eye expressions, service manners, and service responsibilities, morality and ethics towards service recipients including taking care of the cleanliness of the body, clothes, clothing (Thammasanae,

2017), while a higher level of service than expected by the recipient will result in such service quality. This will make the service recipients satisfied and very impressed with the service received (Srirak, 2019). However, service providers will have to face very high competition and still have problems in many aspects that may affect customer satisfaction and it affects customer loyalty as well. Where Thai users pay attention to cleanliness in the shop, for foreigners it is important that the place is clean and sufficient. Moreover, both Thais and foreigners focus on good service. In addition, Thai people also attach importance to honesty and integrity of service providers, but foreigners focus on service providers must have knowledge and use the correct skills (Jadesadalug and Patchai, 2018). However, with the government's policy to promote health tourism in all 8 Northern provinces, the preparation of those involved in such activities is interesting.

Factors contributing to customer satisfaction and loyalty in providing relaxation massage services for customers in the upper northern region of Thailand are still a trend to continue to increase and has attracted a lot of attention from investors or new entrepreneurs. As a result, the market value of the massage service business for relaxation is increasing steadily, especially in provinces that are crowded with tourists. As a result, the competition is quite high and makes it possible to choose from a variety of services. Therefore, if the customer does not have loyalty This will result in loss of revenue causing operational problems in the end. The researcher is therefore interested in studying the causal relationship to customer loyalty for a relaxing wellness massage in the upper northern region of Thailand in order to use the research findings as recommendations and information from important research findings as a guideline for creating strategies for improving the quality of massage services for relaxation in the upper north of Thailand and those who are interested in doing such business in the future.

Research Objectives

1. To study the opinions on the reasons for the loyalty of massage health customers to relaxation health massage service providers in the upper North.
2. To develop the causal relationship of customer loyalty towards relaxation health massage in the Upper North.
3. To confirm the coherence of causal relationship of customer loyalty to relaxation health massage in the Upper North.

Literature Review

Relaxing health massage is a Thai heritage with a long history and unique characteristics and promote the country's economy under the growing popularity of returning to natural therapies. The government has established the Department of Thai Traditional and Alternative Medicine Development (Founded in 2002). This makes the massage have a standard set of massage providers, massage establishment as well as spa business

to be accepted and upgraded to the international level. The thing that must be considered is service quality which is a concept derived from the assessment of the service recipient by comparing the expected service and the actual service perceived by the service recipient or is a service that meets the expectations of the service recipient. If the service provider makes the recipient satisfied with the service, the customer decides and is willing to pay the price to achieve that satisfaction. There may be several ways especially creating new experiences to customers at all times. Establishing standards and creating added value for services by creating satisfaction in service to customers is an important factor in a situation where the market has many competitors and there is fluctuation from the imbalance of supply and demand coupled with changing customer behavior. (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman., 1996)

However, customer loyalty arises from the confidence, recall, and satisfaction of consumers until repeat purchases occur continuously. Customer retention by motivating and creating customers' satisfaction is therefore the most valuable. When customers have a good attitude and long-term relationship this will result in consistent repeat buying behavior, word-of-mouth behavior, and joint protection of goods or services self-satisfied and loyal by word-of-mouth of customers. It is about building a relationship with the service recipient in order to create a positive word-of-mouth that arises from the experience of the service recipient (Henning-Thurau & Klee, 1997). The advantages and main features of the service are easily spread through word of mouth from recipients to others (Anderson and Sullivan, 1993), and drive both positive and negative trends and can create a wave of confidence (Kundu and Rajan, 2017).

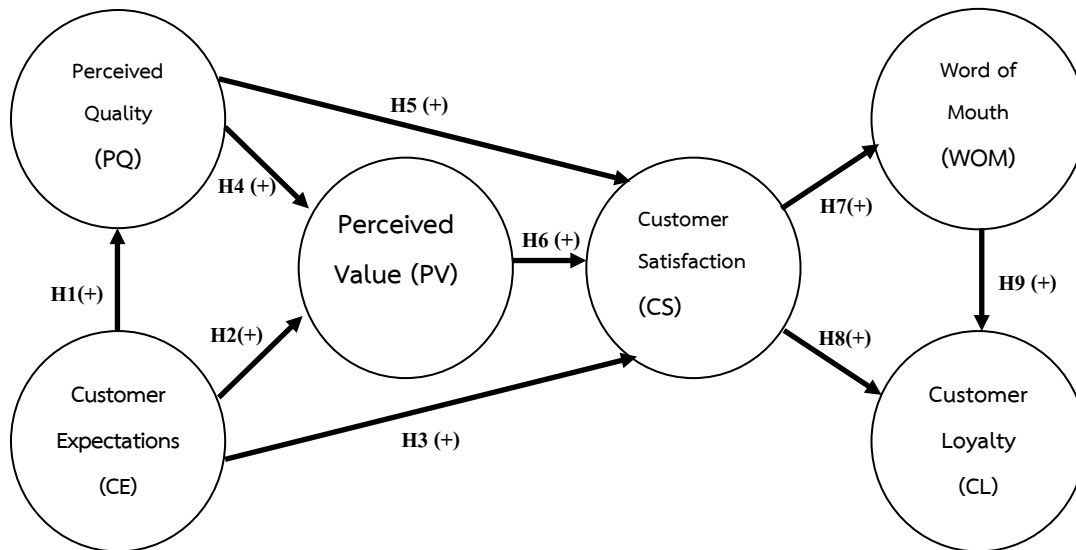
This research is developed from the ACSI model which is essential to create a competitive advantage by meeting customer needs for maximum satisfaction. Satisfaction results in complaint behavior, word of mouth, repeat buying behavior, and customer loyalty which the researcher wants to study communication in order to create awareness of service, recall, and recognition leading to building loyalty in service caused by customer satisfaction, trust, and ultimately decision to use the service. This is a result of comparison based on customer interactions with highly influential services in Talk and Share, especially through group chat rooms, message board, and social network web created in today's world. The influence of social media can also communicate information by word of mouth electronically (Electronic-Word-of-Mouth) both the positive and negative aspects of distributed services in the form of stars more quickly and in less time (Navavongsathian, 2018).

Although the ACSI model has been used in the service business but in today's era, online communication in the form of word-of-mouth is very important. Therefore, this research adds this variable to the application of the ACSI model to add to the literature and benefit further studies.

From the literature review and related research made the researcher aware of the relationship of factors related to building loyalty to health massage services and the ACSI model was used as a model for

analysis to describe the behavior of customers who decided to use health massage services in the upper northern region as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Research Conceptual Framework



Hypothesis

H1: Customer expectations have a direct influence on the quality of service

H2: Customer expectations have a direct influence on the value of service

H3: Customer expectations have a direct influence on customer satisfaction

H4: The quality of service has a direct influence on the value of the service

H5: Quality of service has a direct influence on customer satisfaction

H6: The value of service has a direct influence on customer satisfaction.

H7: Customer satisfaction has a direct influence on customer word of mouth.

H8: Customer satisfaction has a direct influence on customer service loyalty.

H9: Customer word of mouth has a direct influence on customer service loyalty.

Research Methodology

Population and samples

The research methodology was a mixed research by 1) quantitative research from the closed-ended questionnaire data, the data subjects were 450 people who used massage therapy for relaxation in the upper northern provinces of 8 provinces of Thailand by sampling using probabilities by stratified random method, and

2) a qualitative research used semi-structured, in-depth interviews to cover the research by checking the completeness of data integrity with a triple check which is an interview with health massage service users for relaxation in the massage establishment for relaxation in the northern region of 8 provinces of Thailand for 15 samples by criterion sampling with an important criterion is having used massage services at least 3 times.

Research Tools

The research used a questionnaire which was a multiple-choice question with 30 questions consisting of six factors: 1) Customer Expectations 2) Perceived Quality 3) Perceived Value 4) Customer Satisfaction 5) Customer Word of Mouth 6) Customer Loyalty and using a 5-point Likert scale

Research Tools Development

It was a questionnaire which was examined for content validity by 5 expert academics by examining internal concordance with an Index of Item – Objective Congruence (IOC) of 0.76 and checking the instrument's confidence among 30 people with a coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha. A confidence score of 0.97 was obtained and the questionnaire was distributed in a public place at a relaxation massage service facility. The questionnaire was collected for 4 months between November 2020 and February 2021.

Statistical Techniques

Analysis of basic data such as number, percentage, mean, standard deviation, dispersion coefficient Pearson correlation coefficient by using the package program SPSS. Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Path Analysis were used by AMOS 23 program. Besides, qualitative research data were processed and obtained from the analysis of document content and taking notes of the interview results to write a concrete description of the situation as well as to draw conclusions from the results of the study and apply the information obtained from the interpretation to confirm the validity of the results of the analysis and to synthesize the study results

Research results and Discussions

Research results

1. The results of the analysis of the opinion level on the reasons for the loyalty of the massage health customers for relaxation to massage service providers for relaxation in the upper North as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviations regarding the level of opinions on the reasons for the loyalty of the massage health customers to the relaxation health massage service providers in the Upper North.

Issues	\bar{x}	S.D	Opinion level
Customer Expectations : CE	4.06	0.67	High
Perceived Quality : PQ	3.97	0.72	High
Perceived Value : PV	4.01	0.75	High
Customer Satisfaction : CS	3.95	0.71	High
Customer Word of Mount : WOM	3.83	0.76	High
Customer Loyalty : CL	3.70	0.87	High
Average	3.92	0.66	High

The result in Table 1 showed that the customer loyalty towards the massage for relaxation in the upper north was high. Overall, the average was at a high level. The mean was 3.92 and when analyzed by aspects, it was found that Customer Expectations: CE had the highest average at a high level, with an average of 4.06, followed by Perceived Value : PV having the highest average. The mean was 4.01, while Customer Loyalty: CL had the lowest mean at a high level with an average of 3.70.

2. From the model, it was found that the customer satisfaction variable and word of mouth of customers had the greatest influence on customer service loyalty, the route coefficients were 0.174 and 0.159, respectively.

3. Consistency of causal relationship of customer loyalty to relaxation health massage in the Upper North. The Confirm Factor Analysis: (CFA) results are shown in Table 2.

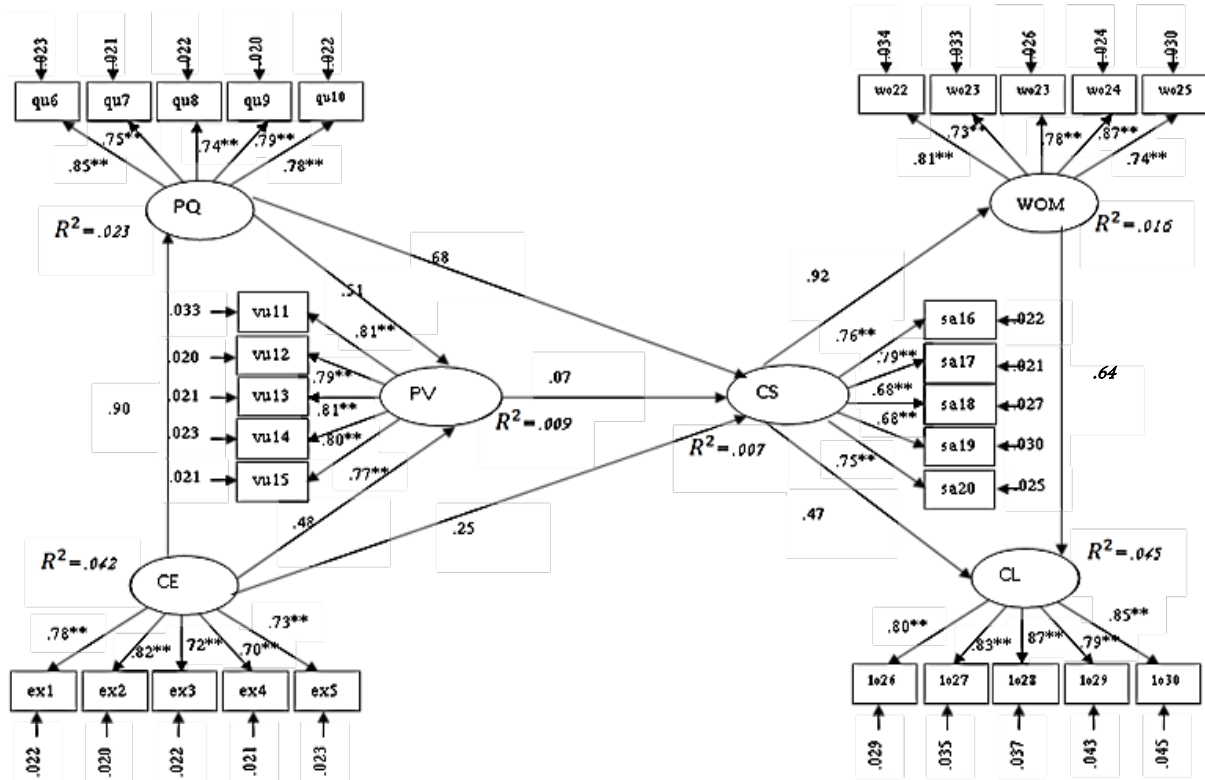
Table 2 Statistical values for the corroborative elements of the gauge model (alternative model)

Index	χ^2	χ^2/df	df	P-Value	GFI	CFI	RMR	RMSEA	Interpret
Alternative Model	1176.15	3.006	390	0.000	0.900	0.951	0.029	0.067	Accept

From Table 2, it was found that the overall statistical value of the ratio of Chi-square and Degree of Freedom (χ^2/df) was 3.006, the p-Value test statistic was 0.000, the statistical value of the Harmony Level Scale (GFI) was 0.900. Comparative Harmony Level (CFI) statistic was 0.951. Statistical value measured the error of the model as the root of the squared mean of the remainder in the form of a standard harmonization score (RMR) was 0.032. The accuracy value of the model in the form of the root of the squared mean of approximate error (RMSEA) was 0.034 and when the statistical value is compared with the criteria for determining the ratio of chi-square and Degree of Freedom (χ^2/df) should be less than 3. The p-value test statistic must not be statistically significant, the GFI and CFI should be greater than 0.90, the RMR statistic and the RMSEA statistic should be less than 0.05. As a result, the model fit was consistent with the theoretical model (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007).

Thus, it can be concluded that the consistency with a given theoretical model was at an acceptable level, it was found that the structural model was consistent with the empirical model (Model fit).

Figure 2 Structural and Empirical Model Test Results



Chi-square = 345.420, Chi-square/df = 1.117, df = 345, P = .066,

GFI = .948, CFI = .996, RMR = .019, RMSEA = .016

Figure 2 Empirical model of massage services for relaxation

Table 3 Correspondence values of the model and empirical data of massage services for relaxation

Index	χ^2	χ^2/df	df	P-Value	GFI	CFI	RMR	RMSEA	Interpret
Relaxing Healthy Massage Model	345.420	1.117	345	0.066	0.948	0.996	0.019	0.016	Accept

From Table 3, it was found that the overall statistical value of the ratio of Chi-square and Degree of Freedom (χ^2/df) was 1.117, the p-Value statistic was 0.066, and the statistical value of the Harmony Scale (GFI) was 0.948. The Comparative Harmony Level (CPI) statistic was 0.996. The model's error was measured as the root of the squared mean of the remainder in the form of a standard harmonization score (RMR) was 0.019. The accuracy of the model as the root of the squared mean of the estimated error (RMSEA) was 0.016 and

when the statistical values are compared with the criteria for determining whether the ratio of chi-square and Degree of Freedom (χ^2/df) should be less than 3. The p-value test statistic must not be statistically significant, the GFI and CFI values should be greater than 0.90. The RMR and RMSEA statistic should be less than 0.05, so the Relaxing Healthy Massage Model is harmonious with each other (Model fit) with the theoretical model (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). The service of massage for relaxation was harmonious with the established theoretical model was at an acceptable level.

Table 4 Hypothesis Test Results

Research hypothesis	Coef	t-test	Conclusion
H1: Customer expectations have a direct influence on the quality of service	0.069	15.966***	Support
H2: Customer expectations have a direct influence on the value of service	0.111	1.551***	Support
H3: Customer expectations have a direct influence on customer satisfaction	0.091	4.749***	Support
H4: The quality of service has a direct influence on the value of the service	0.162	0.412	Not support
H5: Quality of service has a direct influence on customer satisfaction	0.121	4.949***	Support
H6: The value of service has a direct influence on customer satisfaction.	0.123	2.317***	Support
H7: Customer satisfaction has a direct influence on customer word of mouth.	0.060	16.825***	Support
H8: Customer satisfaction has a direct influence on customer service loyalty.	0.174	3.688***	Support
H9: Customer word of mouth has a direct influence on customer service loyalty.	0.159	2.259***	Support

Note t-stat ≥ 1.96 indicates that the hypothesis was statistically significant at the level of 0.05**.
t-stat ≥ 2.59 indicates that the hypothesis was statistically significant at the level of 0.01***.

From Table 4, the hypothesis testing results of all the variables defined were mostly supportive except H4: the quality of service and the value of service were positively correlated, not supportive.

While the results of the qualitative data study, it was concluded that massage therapists for relaxation must maintain a relationship that fosters customer loyalty by following up with customers after a service use. It is an important strategy for building customer loyalty. This is one of the services that will help differentiate

itself under a large number of competitors that allow customers to try the service from new places. Therefore, it must create a positive impression that is consistent with their needs or expectation to be concreted in order to achieve satisfaction and recognition of value through experience by building and maintaining the best positive customer relationship.

Discussion

The results of the analysis of the opinion level of the operators in the word-of-mouth of the service recipients found that it was at a high level. especially the presentation of information of massage service providers for relaxation to various media and get a good experience in using a relaxing health massage service from a service provider This is consistent with the research on factors affecting the selection of spa business services among users in Chatuchak area. The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration of Chanthanawan and Fongthanakit (2019) said that this may be because it was a question from Thai people who are familiar with Thai culture and in using the service. The service users prefer to use the services that people refer to which affects the choice of service and when considering each item, The word-of-mouth of those who use the service has the highest average score.

Empirical data support research hypotheses on the factors of word of mouth that directly influence customer service loyalty. This is in line with the research on marketing mix factors affecting the decision-making process of choosing a Thai massage shop of consumers in Pathum Thani province by Phrommuang and Sawang (2018). Good service is essential to impress customers and generates word-of-mouth without any cost which customers focus on the good service of the massage service provider as well as all parts related to customer service and also supports the idea that the re-use of the service is that the recipient receives the service from the service provider and has done it again after using the service by the intention or will of a person with the need to return to use the service repeatedly from the same service provider that has used the service in the past. Then they are satisfied and come back to use the service again and has been told about the benefits or good experience about the service to others. It is also a reaction to certain needs of clients who are willing to return for the service in the future (Anderson, Fornell & Lehmann, 1994; Hellier, Geursen, Carr & Rickard, 2003; Cronin, Bradyand & Hult, 2000; Zeithmal, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996)

However, the quality of service did not have an impact to the service value of the service, it may be because respondents and informants view the two issues as the same. Therefore, research findings in these two areas are not supported. The quality of service can be measured concretely, but the perceived value of a service can be so abstract that it is difficult to measure which is consistent with the idea that service quality is perceived by customers. Real experiences that customers can evaluate by comparing their needs or expectations with the service that the customer actually receives from the service provider. Customers

concerned more about the benefit they will gain from the services in perceiving their value, rather than the amount of time. (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry 1985, 1988; Zeithaml, 1988)

Therefore, research on the causal relationship of customer loyalty to relaxation health massage in the Upper North as a link between customer expectations and customer loyalty, it was found that service quality, satisfaction, and word-of-mouth resulted in service loyalty.

Contributions

Engage relevant agencies formulate a master plan that is consistent with the policy and direction of massage services for relaxation to be more appropriate and efficient as well as formulating a policy to promote the strengthening of massage services for relaxation in the upper North to have the ability to compete at the international level by providing more business service training courses to make health massage professionals to relax and be alert. There is an exchange of experiences knowledge of each other in order to apply for further benefits. Government agencies should support potential or strong massage therapists. It can be developed to provide services that build national and international reputations because it will bring more national income into Thailand. Private sector especially the provincial chamber of commerce in the upper northern group should take the body of knowledge from this research be used to expand into a policy or strategy for the development of health massage service professionals in order to have a competitive edge. Therefore, entrepreneurs can use the research results as a guideline in planning marketing strategies to create guidelines that will lead to customer loyalty. As a result, businesses can create better competitiveness than competitors, increase market share, and produce good results for long-term business operations.

Conclusion

The results of the research can be summarized as follows. The respondents had a high level of opinion on all factors. The model generated is consistent with the empirical data. The customer satisfaction and word of mouth variables have a direct influence on customer loyalty. In order to provide the potential of providing a relaxing wellness massage service, providers need to focus on or should study the direction of providing massage therapy for relaxation and what strategies should be used that can make the service of massage for health and relaxation possible. The service providers should be able to adapt the service quality concept in order to maximize the satisfaction and make an impression. There should be a good image of the customer's eyes with the system. Effective management through the concept of creating an impression and word of mouth to build long-term loyalty.

Limitation and Future Research Directions

The conceptual framework of the structural equation should be applied according to the hypothesis of this research. By adjusting the variables based on other literature reviews. In addition to the expectation factor service quality, satisfaction and word-of-mouth, there are other variables that influences your loyalty to the service or not what's the difference for any reason.

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