

การยกระดับประสบการณ์ของลูกค้าในการออกแบบเส้นทางการให้บริการแขก: การศึกษาเชิงคุณภาพของแผนกห้องพัก ในโรงแรมที่ให้บริการแบบเต็มรูปแบบ ในประเทศไทย

The enhancement of customer experience in guest service journey design: A qualitative study of the room division department in a full-service hotel in Thailand

ธฤตวัน เจริญพร¹, ชนินทร์ อุปย์เพชร², เอกกิริ์ วินิจเขตคำนวน^{1*}

Tarittawan Chareanporn¹, Chanin Yoopetch², Ekawee Vinitkhatkumnuen^{1*}

Received: 13 July 2024

Revised: 21 October 2024

Accepted: 31 October 2024

บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้ใช้การวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพและการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก เพื่อให้ได้ข้อมูลเชิงลึกที่เป็นประโยชน์เกี่ยวกับจุดสัมผัสของการบริการลูกค้า และนำเสนอสู่สาธารณะสำคัญที่จำเป็นสำหรับการพัฒนาประสบการณ์ของลูกค้า การศึกษามุ่งเน้นไปที่การดำเนินงานของแผนกห้องพักในโรงแรมที่ให้บริการแบบเต็มรูปแบบ การเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลเริ่มต้นด้วยการสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งโครงสร้าง โดยมุ่งเน้นที่จุดสัมผัสของการบริการลูกค้า ซึ่งเป็นขั้นตอนสำคัญที่มีผลต่อความพึงพอใจของลูกค้าในระหว่างเส้นทางประสบการณ์การรับบริการ ดังนั้นจึงใช้วิธีการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพเพื่อทำความเข้าใจเส้นทางประสบการณ์ของแขกในธุรกิจโรงแรมที่ให้บริการแบบเต็มรูปแบบ การจำแนกผู้ให้ข้อมูลสำคัญในภาคธุรกิจโรงแรมที่ให้บริการแบบเต็มรูปแบบในประเทศไทย ใช้การเลือกกลุ่มตัวอย่างแบบเจาะจงและแบบลูกโซ่ ผู้ให้ข้อมูลมีจำนวนทั้งสิ้นสามสิบคน ประกอบด้วย ผู้อำนวยการและผู้จัดการแผนกห้องพัก แผนกต้อนรับส่วนหน้า และแผนกแม่บ้าน รวมทั้งพนักงานระดับบริหารอีก 7 คน ที่เกี่ยวข้องกับเส้นทางประสบการณ์การรับบริการของลูกค้า โดยผู้ให้ข้อมูลที่เลือกมานั้นเป็นตัวแทนจากที่พักที่หลากหลายในแหล่งท่องเที่ยวหลัก ได้แก่ เชียงใหม่ กรุงเทพ พัทยา และภูเก็ต รวมถึงความหลากหลายของโรงแรมในเครือแฟรนไชส์และสถานประกอบการอิสระที่ได้รับการจัดระดับการให้บริการแบบ 4 ถึง 5 ดาว การตรวจสอบความสมเหตุสมผลของผลการศึกษาใช้การตรวจสอบข้อมูลแบบสามเส้า และการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลเนื้อหาและข้อมูล

¹ สำนักวิชาการจัดการ มหาวิทยาลัยแม่ฟ้าหลวง

² หลักสูตรการเงินองค์กร วิทยาลัยการจัดการ มหาวิทยาลัยมหิดล

Email chanin.yoo@mahidol.ac.th

¹ School of Management, Mae Fah Luang University.

² Corporate Finance Program, College of Management, Mahidol University.

Email chanin.yoo@mahidol.ac.th

* Corresponding author; E-mail: tarittawan.cha@mfu.ac.th, ekawee.vin@mfu.ac.th.

เชิงคุณภาพได้ใช้ซอฟต์แวร์ในการวิเคราะห์ ผลการศึกษาพบว่ามีช่วงเวลาสามช่วงหลักของจุดสัมผัสถandard บริการลูกค้าในบริการแผนกห้องพัก ได้แก่ ช่วงก่อนการให้บริการ ช่วงระหว่างการให้บริการ และช่วงหลังการให้บริการ นอกจากนี้ยังพบว่ามีสิบสามจุดสัมผัสด้วยที่สำคัญตลอดเส้นทางประสบการณ์ของลูกค้า ในช่วงก่อนการให้บริการประกอบด้วยสามจุดสัมผัส ในช่วงระหว่างการให้บริการประกอบด้วยแปดจุดสัมผัส และในช่วงหลังการให้บริการประกอบด้วยสองจุดสัมผัส ทั้งนี้ผลการศึกษายังพบว่ามีกลุ่มสาระสำคัญ สี่กลุ่มที่จำเป็นสำหรับการพัฒนาประสบการณ์ของลูกค้าในแผนกห้องพักของโรงแรมที่ให้บริการแบบครบวงจรในประเทศไทย นอกจากนี้การศึกษายังให้ข้อเสนอแนะและผลกระทบจากการวิจัย โดยเสนอ แนวทางการออกแบบประสบการณ์ของลูกค้าเชิงนวัตกรรมและสามารถนำไปปฏิบัติได้จริงในธุรกิจ

คำสำคัญ: ประสบการณ์ลูกค้าเชิงนวัตกรรม, การออกแบบบริการ, แผนกห้องพัก, โรงแรมที่ให้บริการแบบเต็มรูปแบบ, ประเทศไทย

Abstract

This study employs qualitative research and in-depth interviews to provide practical insights into customer service touchpoints and proposes essential themes for enhancing customer experience development. The focus is on the room division department operations in full-service hotels. Data collection began with semi-structured interviews, concentrating on customer service touchpoints as critical stages influencing customer satisfaction during their experience journey. A qualitative approach was used to understand the guest experience journey in the full-service hotel business. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques identified key information sources within Thailand's full-service hotel sector. Thirty key informants, including Directors and Managers of Rooms Division, Front Office, and Housekeeping, as well as other management-level staff involved in the customer service journey, were interviewed. The selected informants represent diverse accommodations in major tourist destinations such as Chiangmai, Bangkok, Pattaya, and Phuket, including franchised chains and independent establishments rated 4 to 5 stars. Data triangulation was used to validate the data, and content and qualitative data analysis software were employed. The study identified three main periods of customer service touchpoints in room division services: pre-service, in-service, and post-service periods. Thirteen critical touchpoints were identified: three in the pre-service period, eight in the in-service period, and two in the post-service period. Four critical themes were proposed for enhancing customer experience development in the room division department of full-service hotels in Thailand. The study also provides research implications and recommendations, offering innovative and practical customer experience design strategies.

Keywords: Innovative customer experience, service design, room division department, full-service hotel, Thailand

Introduction

According to Krungsri Research (2024), the hotel industry is anticipated to experience continued improvement from 2024 to 2026, bolstered by ongoing government support and a rebound in annual foreign arrivals to nearly pre-pandemic levels of 38-40 million by 2025. Domestic tourism is also projected to reach 200 million trips annually by 2025. To address labor shortages and meet the evolving demands of digital consumers, large hotel operators are expected to invest more in technologically driven services and environmentally friendly hotels, with significant expansion in major tourist destinations. The national occupancy rate is forecasted to remain above 70% in 2024. The easing of the pandemic in 2022 initiated a recovery in the tourism industry, with relaxed restrictions in both Thailand and tourists' home countries, leading to a revival in hotel operations. Typically, 65-70% of hotel revenue comes from room charges, while around 25% is from food and drink sales, with higher-end hotels earning a larger share from these sales compared to smaller hotels. Agreeing with Statista (2024) forecasts that Thailand's hotel market will see substantial revenue growth, reaching an estimated \$1.58 billion by 2024 and growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 3.02% to reach \$1.78 billion by 2028. The number of users is expected to rise to 10.61 million by 2028, with user penetration increasing from 13.1% in 2024 to 14.7% by 2028. The average revenue per user (ARPU) is projected to be \$167.50, and 78% of total hotel market revenue will come from online

sales by 2028. Globally, the United States is expected to lead in hotel market revenue, with a projected \$110.5 billion in 2024. In response to the trend towards sustainable tourism, many hotels in Thailand are adopting eco-friendly practices to attract socially-conscious travelers. Furthermore, Mordor Intelligence Private Limited (2024) reports that the Thai hospitality industry is set for continued growth, driven by an increasing number of young travelers, both domestic and international. The Thai government's enhanced focus on tourism is a critical factor in this expansion, with Thailand ranking as the ninth most visited country globally. Key performance metrics for hotels include visitor revenue and tourism-related income, with a rise in hotel projects significantly driving market momentum. In addition, the Daily Lodging Report (2024) also supports that the Thai hotel industry expects to fully recover from the pandemic by the end of the year's second half. The Thai Hotel Association predicts Phuket will remain the top tourist destination during the current high season until March 2024. The average occupancy rate of Thai hotels in 2023 was 60%, down from 75% in 2019, but a surge in tourist arrivals in the second half of the year is attributed to new direct international flights to Phuket and visa-free entry for visitors from China, India, Kazakhstan, and Taiwan, as well as an extension of the visa-free stay for Russian nationals from 30 to 90 days.

Nevertheless, Krungsri Research (2024) highlights potential challenges to the anticipated recovery in foreign tourist arrivals

and demand growth due to geopolitical conflicts. For instance, ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas could lead to higher crude oil prices, increasing transportation costs and negatively impacting the global economy, thus slowing foreign tourism growth. Additionally, if China's economic performance remains weak, Chinese tourists may favour domestic travel, limiting growth in the Chinese tourist market.

Furthermore, Statista (2024) notes that Thailand's hotel market is experiencing significant growth amid the country's tropical beauty and rich culture. Key factors include: First, customer preferences: There is a growing demand for unique, experiential accommodations that offer authentic local experiences, leading to an increase in boutique hotels, eco-friendly resorts, and luxury villas. Second, market trends: The market increasingly focuses on sustainable practices and eco-friendly initiatives, with hotels adopting green technologies, reducing plastic use, and promoting local conservation efforts. Third, local special circumstances: Thailand's blend of traditional hospitality and modern amenities, diverse landscapes, vibrant cities, and renowned cuisine attracts a wide range of travellers, fueling growth across various hotel segments. Fourth, underlying macroeconomic factors, Government policies, infrastructure development, and global economic trends significantly influence the hotel market. A stable political environment, strategic marketing campaigns, and infrastructure investments have bolstered the tourism sector. Aligning with Krungsri Research (2024), this is to describe the

challenges to the hotel industry's growth from 2024 to 2026, including the First, intensified competition: Increased investments in major tourist areas will heighten hotel competition from operators and external investors. Second, technological competition: Major operators will compete by upgrading to 'smart hotels' to better meet consumer needs better, enabling visitors to control room features through internet-enabled devices and smartphones. Third, sustainability goals: Business strategies focusing on sustainability will increase overheads and investment costs, particularly in developing green hotels. The global market for green tourism is expected to grow significantly. Fourth, tightened safety regulations: Stricter safety regulations for accommodation services, especially concerning required safety systems in hotels, are necessary as a broader range of building types are now used for hotel services.

As Samniang (2022) mentioned, during the Covid-19 pandemic, tourist behavior shifted significantly from pre-pandemic trends, with a growing emphasis on health and hygiene tourism and the use of digital technology for travel. However, the marketing strategies employed post-Covid-19 pandemic included focusing on niche markets, health and hygiene, and digital trends. Next, the hospitality firms diversify revenue streams and mitigate seasonal fluctuations. Next, the firms should enhance value-added tourism and develop high-end products and advertising strategies to attract new target markets and increase traveller spending. Lastly, it is crucial to collaborate

with local communities and promote local travel packages. Thus, this study integrates the service design concept into developing innovative customer experience design in the room division department at a full-service hotel in Thailand. Full-service hotels are typically mid-range, upscale, or luxury establishments that offer amenities such as a restaurant, lounge areas, and meeting spaces, along with basic services like bell service and room service. These hotels generate revenue from food and beverages, providing a variety of dining options. A hotel with even a modest café or lounge can be considered full-service, as can those with multiple restaurants, banquet halls, and catering services. While these hotels offer the convenience of on-site dining for guests, managing them requires the expertise of a knowledgeable and experienced owner or management team. Furthermore, full-service hotels typically have more rooms and provide extensive amenities such as full-service restaurants, spacious and luxurious rooms, laundry services, security, shuttle services, spas, fitness centres, room service, concierge, and staff to assist with luggage. These hotels are generally more expensive than limited-service hotels due to the more extensive staff required to provide these services. Guests at full-service hotels expect not to incur additional significant costs and anticipate a higher level of attentive and quality service given their higher prices. While the operational costs for full-service hotels are higher, these amenities and services allow them to attract more selective customers and charge higher rates. Guests choose full-service

hotels for the additional amenities and superior service levels (Elder, 2024; Crystal Investment Property, 2023; Omland Hospitality, 2021).

In addition, an empirical study by Veloso and Gomez-Suarez (2023) mentioned that customer experience encompasses various dimensions and is characterized as a holistic, multidimensional, and subjective mental response involving sensations, emotions, thoughts, and behaviours to stimuli from a hotel brand. It engages customers at multiple levels throughout their journey, from pre-purchase expectations to post-purchase evaluations, including searching for information, purchasing, consuming, and evaluating products. This experience results from a unique blend of responses to both the physical environment, such as hotel location, ambience, and attributes, and human interactions, including staff and guest interactions. Situational factors influence the interpretation of these experiences.

The main focus of this current study is also about service design. Generally, service design focuses on the experiences of all stakeholders, including service receivers and providers, throughout the entire service process. Effective service design is believed to result from the collaboration of stakeholders at every step (Lin et al., 2020; Lu et al., 2020). In addition, service design involves multidisciplinary concepts, making it impossible to define through a single discipline (Stickdorn et al., 2018; Buchanan, 2001). It is based on human-centred design, aiming to solve users' problems using research and design

competencies. The field has continuously evolved to provide the best experience to all involved, beyond just consumers (Skooldio, 2021). Various tools are used in service design, and experts suggest that strict adherence to tool guidelines is unnecessary, as it contradicts the principles of flexible problem-solving and improvement methods. Service designers can adapt tools to meet project-specific goals (Lin et al., 2020). Moreover, service design tools include customer journey maps, stakeholder mapping, personas, service blueprints, service safari, shadowing, contextual interviews, mobile ethnography, expectation maps, idea generation, design scenarios, storyboards, Agile development, service roleplay, customer lifecycle maps, and business model canvas. Among these, the customer experience journey is viral as it illustrates consumer decision-making processes, from pre-customer stages to becoming a customer, and helps develop service experience design (Lin et al., 2020). Consequently, this research investigates customer service touchpoints and proposes themes for enhancing customer experience development of the room division department in a full-service hotel in Thailand.

Research Objectives

1) The authors aim to investigate the customer service experience touchpoints of the room division department in a full-service hotel in Thailand

2) The paper attempts to propose themes for the enhancement of customer experience development of the room division

department in a full-service hotel in Thailand

Literature Review

Customer Experience Management (CEM)

Customer Experience Management (CEM) is essential in marketing communication, significantly influencing the success of marketing efforts by ensuring positive customer perception and reception of marketing messages. CEM involves all customer interactions with an organization at every touchpoint, creating a comprehensive experience. This total experience is vital in forming the customer's bond with the organization, helping it withstand competitive pressures (Danthanongkon & Udon, 2006). The Total Experience, which represents overall positive feelings towards the organization, is central to emotional attachment, binding customers to the business in the short and long term. Touchpoints such as physical locations, automated services, websites, and sales materials contribute to this Total Experience, influencing customer loyalty (Danthanongkon & Udon, 2006). CEM involves two main steps: 1) Integrated Customer Experience Management Model and Influencing Components: This model includes the organization's response to its products, services, processes, and environment, covering rational and emotional responses. Crucial factors for users to perceive value include Communication, Product, People, Process, and Price (Limmanon, 2007). Six components influence customer experiences: Feel, Think, Inform, Act, Sense, and Competition.

These components manage customer experiences by creating perceptions, emotions, and thoughts that lead to behaviors through sensory inputs like sight, smell, sound, and touch. This process aims to create experiences that enable customers to compare the competitiveness of products and services (Limmanon, 2007). 2) CEM Process: Achieving ultimate satisfaction through a holistic experience involves five steps (Danhanongkon & Udon, 2006): 1. Identifying Touchpoints: Explore all communication channels between users and the organization, including main offices and branches, to determine where interactions occur. 2. Evaluating Customer Experiences: Assess experiences at each touchpoint, focusing on those with the highest interaction volume and covering the entire user experience from pre-contact to post-contact. 3. Designing Unique Experiences: Create distinctive, branded experiences using the gathered data, involving personal interactions, service behavior, attention to detail, and consistency. 4. Operations and Performance Measurement: Systematically design plans and continuously evaluate user experiences to enhance the organization's distinctive experience. 5. Enhancing Experiences into Beautiful Memories: Create mechanisms that help users remember their positive experiences with the business, emphasizing memorable initial and final interactions.

In addition, Veloso and Gomez-Suarez (2023) explain that while customers across different accommodation types may initially appear to expect the same basic services,

such as clean rooms and comfortable beds, there are notable differences in the attributes valued. For example, accommodations based on the sharing economy, such as Airbnb rentals, offer distinct experiences that emphasize home-like benefits, personalized service, social interactions, and authenticity, which set them apart from hotels. The concept of "experience" is discussed in various contexts, such as consumer, service, shopping, and brand experiences, yet there is no consensus on its definition or dimensionality. Although multiple efforts have been made to define customer experience (CX), the literature remains fragmented, with inconsistent views on its definition, antecedents, variables, measurements, and impacts.

In their empirical study, Veloso and Gomez-Suarez (2023) found that the academic literature supports the coexistence of multiple dimensions for measuring customer experience in the context of interactions. Specifically, within the hotel industry, various measures have been applied, identifying 17 antecedents and 31 consequences of customer experience. Their study highlights the factors that make hospitality unique, illustrating which variables are most critical in shaping customer experience.

Moreover, Rahimian et al. (2021) proposes a four-stage framework for customer experience management (CEM) in the hotel industry, developed through a systematic literature review and interviews. The framework includes the stages of customer identification, customer experience design, customer

experience implementation, and customer experience measurement. Each stage is implemented through key organizational factors, such as culture, structure, leadership, human resources, and technology. This framework offers practical insights for hotel managers to enhance customer experience management and provide superior, memorable experiences.

The design phase involves several steps, including strategy development, service design, touchpoint journey design, prioritization, and customer journey mapping. Customer interactions with the organization are crucial in shaping the overall experience. Touchpoints are created and integrated during the implementation stage to deliver a memorable experience. These touchpoints support branding, brand awareness, service delivery, customer interaction, and co-creation, ultimately leading to brand activation and personalized customer experiences.

Service Design Concept

Service design prioritizes the experiences of all stakeholders, including recipients and providers, involving them at every stage to create effective services. It is characterized by its interdisciplinary nature, integrating diverse methods and tools, preventing a singular definition and fostering various concepts and ideas (Buchanan, 2001; Lin et al., 2020; Stickdorn et al., 2018). According to the Thailand Creative and Design Center (Israsena Na Ayudhya & Treerattanaphan, 2015), service design has evolved through several stages: Service Marketing, Service Engineering,

Service Management, Service Science, and finally, Service Design. This comprehensive approach considers all stakeholders, aiming to enhance service value and efficiency.

Hotel Trends and Innovation in Thailand

Owners and entrepreneurs in tourism and hospitality face innovation challenges, especially in service innovations. Achieving business sustainability and long-term competitiveness requires creating unique innovations that are difficult to replicate. Innovation in tourism and services typically involves incremental rather than radical changes (Peters & Pikkemaat, 2005; Pechlaner & Innerhofer, 2016). Strategic management in this context involves integrating specific assets and skills to achieve a competitive edge, emphasizing the resource-based view (RBV) theory, which highlights the importance of organizational resources in gaining a competitive advantage (Pechlaner & Innerhofer, 2016; Aaker, 1989). The Thai hotel industry is expected to improve from 2024 to 2026, supported by government backing and the return of foreign arrivals to nearly pre-pandemic levels. Domestic tourism is also projected to increase. Large hotel operators are expected to invest in technology-driven services and eco-friendly hotels, with significant expansion in major tourist destinations. The national occupancy rate is anticipated to remain above 70% in 2024 (Krungsri Research, 2024). Challenges to growth include intensified competition, technological competition,

sustainability goals, and tightened safety regulations. The market is also influenced by customer preferences for unique and experiential accommodations, market trends toward sustainable practices, local special circumstances, and underlying macroeconomic factors (Statista, 2024).

Research Methodology and Data Collection Scope

This qualitative research utilized in-depth interviews to gather data, beginning with semi-structured interviews to collect essential information, investigate customer service touchpoints, and propose innovative customer experience development guidelines in Thailand's full-service hotel industry. Thirty key informants were room division service providers, including business owners, general managers, directors of room divisions, front office managers, executive housekeepers, and management-level staff involved in designing customer service experiences. These informants represented various accommodation enterprises in major tourist areas such as Chiangmai, Bangkok, Pattaya, and Phuket, including franchised hotel chains and independent establishments rated between 4 and 5 stars. Non-probability sampling techniques, specifically purposive and snowball sampling, were used to select informants based on specific criteria and referrals (Neuman, 2006; Yin, 2013).

The interviews included key informants from full-service hotel businesses in popular tourist destinations, representing a range of hotel types and service levels. The sample

size was estimated to be around fifteen to twenty-five informants or until data saturation was achieved (Chareanporn et al., 2020; Riley, 1995). Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Data analysis involved comparing themes across multiple cases using cross-case analysis (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). Thematic analysis, employing the constant comparative method, was used to identify and refine categories, ensuring data validity by cross-referencing statements from multiple sources. The study focused on the room division department within full-service hotel businesses in Thailand.

Research Findings

Based on the in-depth interviews, the results were transcribed and analyzed to summarize the insights from thirty informants in the hotel associate group. These informants described three main periods of customer service touchpoints in the room division services: pre-service, in-service, and post-service periods. The study identified thirty critical touchpoints within these periods: three in the pre-service period, eight in the in-service period, and two in the post-service period.

1. Pre-service Period: Key informants identified three customer service touchpoints: 1) Hotel advertisement procedures: Information is provided on the hotel website or social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), and YouTube. 2) Information transaction procedures: Customers seek more information on products or services and negotiate discount rates or special promotions via calls or online

chats. 3) Room reservation procedures: Customers reserve rooms after finding satisfactory information about rates, products, and services. Essential customer details and payment methods are handled at this stage, and reminders are sent three days before check-in. Thus, seven factors impacting customer experience were identified: advocacy and awareness creation, communication effectiveness, accurate product and service information, well-trained staff, user-friendly systems, credit card security, and guest history data synchronization.

2. In-Service Period: Eight touchpoints were identified: 1) Arriving and welcoming procedures: Personalized greetings, refreshments, and airport transfer services. 2) Checking-in procedures: Minimal paperwork for pre-booked customers, pre-authorization for unpaid bookings. 3) Escorting guest procedures: Staff escort guests to their rooms, explain amenities, and demonstrate facilities. 4) Reserving food and beverage service procedures: In-room dining service and reservation for special outlets. 3) Reserving hotel facilities: Scheduling for facilities like spa, gym, business center, etc. 6) Checking-out procedures: Coordination between front office and housekeeping for smooth checkout. 7) Bill settlement procedures: Pre-authorization during check-in and final payment before departure. 8) Airport transfer or limousine service: Providing transportation based on customer requests. Thus, factors impacting customer experience include special services, Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA)

compliance, guest history data synchronization, technology adoption, timely service, problem-solving effectiveness, communication effectiveness, empathy, and accurate bill settlement.

3. Post-service Period: Two touchpoints were identified: 1) Customer feedback and surveying: Collecting feedback through various methods like comment cards, online platforms, and travel agent websites. 2) Customer relation procedures: Sending special promotions and discounts to loyal customers for occasions like birthdays and anniversaries via email or messaging platforms. Thus, four factors impacting customer experience were identified: customer relation activities, guest history data synchronization, loyalty programs, and data analytics utilization.

Thirty informants indicated that room division services enhance customer experiences, which were classified into four themes: hotel employees' professionalism, guest data management, customer relations management, and customer value management. Key aspects include empathy, flexibility, problem-solving, communication effectiveness, timely service, well-trained staff, user-friendly systems, PDPA compliance, credit card security, data synchronization, analytics, personalization, strategic satisfaction plans, and accurate information.

Discussion and Conclusion

This research aimed to investigate customer service touchpoints and propose

themes for enhancing customer experience development in the room division department of full-service hotels in Thailand. The study adopted a service design concept approach to identify customer service touchpoints perceived as influential in customer satisfaction. Thirty cases included strong service providers in room division services, encompassing business owners, general managers, directors of room divisions, room division managers, front office managers, executive housekeepers, assistant front office managers, assistant housekeepers, and management-level staff involved in designing customer service experiences and policy initiation. These informants represented various accommodation enterprises in major tourist areas such as Chiangmai, Bangkok, Pattaya, and Phuket, including franchised hotel chains and independent establishments rated between 4 and 5 stars and aligned with the full-service hotel definition.

Incorporating the service design concept, this study selected customer journey maps as a service design tool to explore service touchpoints in the full-service hotel business in Thailand. According to the Thailand Creative and Design Center (TCDC), service designers should add flexibility and variety to service design processes based on context, duration, and existing resources (TCDC, 2015). This research adopted thinking processes developed from the Double Diamond Model, initiated by the British Design Council in 2005, which explains attitudes and work processes combining creative thinking and design. The

model consists of four steps: discover, define, develop, and deliver (TCDC, 2014). The results indicated that all full-service hotel businesses require customer service touchpoint development. The findings categorized the customer service journey into three periods: pre-service, in-service, and post-service. Thirteen critical customer service touchpoints were identified: three in the pre-service period, eight in the in-service period, and two in the post-service period. Stettler et al. (2018) emphasized the importance of service experiences in the service process as a critical component of service design. Based on the touchpoints in the customer journey map of the room division department in a full-service hotel in Thailand and the direction of key service design innovation derived from customer demand and expectations, it is possible to form an innovation design of opportunity points that fulfill customer needs.

The innovative design of opportunity touchpoints from the service design approach was mainly based on the service design process results. By analyzing the three main periods of service, customer service touchpoint innovation procedures were investigated and developed. 1) Pre-Service Period: Innovative design includes user-friendly websites, popular social media use, accurate and reliable information, and trained staff to handle information transactions and room reservations. Yoopetch (2018) highlighted the crucial influence of social media on service design across various industries. 2) In-Service Period: Innovative

design for arriving and welcoming procedures, check-in, escorting guests, reserving food and beverage services, hotel facilities, checking out, bill settlement, and airport transfers. Chareanporn et al. (2021) noted the challenge of the in-service period during the customer journey, as customers come with high expectations. Professional service providers should identify service touchpoints to create products, processes, or service innovations that exceed expectations. 3) Post-Service Period: Innovative design includes customer feedback, surveying, and customer relations procedures. Chareanporn et al. (2024) emphasized that the post-service period is crucial for customer loyalty. Feedback data can help improve service delivery systems and procedures, creating special promotions for repeat customers via email or online platforms. Yoopetch (2010) suggested that enhancing innovation in services requires increased awareness of knowledge management and the knowledge acquisition process to improve service development continuously.

The research findings classified four main themes to enhance customer experiences: 1) Professionalism of Hotel Employees: Empathy, flexibility, problem-solving effectiveness, communication, timely and efficient service, and well-trained staff are essential (Liasidou et al., 2023; Guliyev et al., 2019; Mekoth et al., 2023). 2) Guest Data Management: User-friendly systems, PDPA awareness, safety and security in credit card authorization, data analytics utilization, and

leveraging software-driven platforms (Shamim et al., 2021; Cheng et al., 2023; Oueslati et al., 2021). 3) Customer Relations Management: Personalized services, customer relations activities, strategic plans for increasing satisfaction and loyalty programs (Setiadi, 2023; Ozdemir et al., 2022). 4) Customer Value Management: Advocacy, awareness creation, accurate product and service information, technology adoption, and accuracy in bill settlement (Santos et al., 2020; Wang, 2022; Wang et al., 2023) see Figure 1.

Directions for future research and limitations

Further research should investigate more departments of full-service hotel businesses and apply a quantitative approach to increase the generalizability and reaffirm the study results. Nevertheless, this research was exploratory and investigated customer service touchpoints. It adopted a service design concept approach to identify customer service touchpoints that are perceived as influencing customer satisfaction. In addition, this study focuses only on the room division department. Lastly, the conceptual model was proposed based on the qualitative study and the researchers may collect the empirical data to further conduct the quantitative research to verify and highlight the significant roles of each theme and their effects on the customer experience development. The current research has achieved its objectives as proposed. However, the study has some limitations to be addressed. It was expected that this paper had the value of providing an analysis

of the crucial customer service touchpoints that adopted a service design approach to develop

a customer journey in customer service design in a full-service hotel in Thailand.

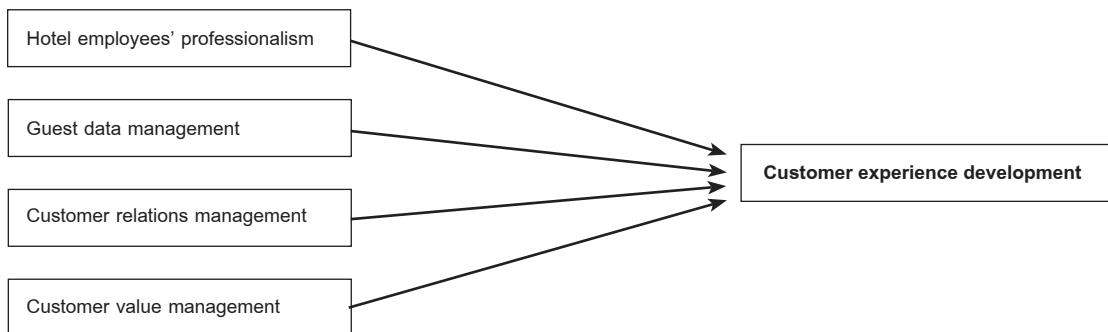


Figure 1 The conceptual model of customer experience development

References

Aaker, D. A. (1989). Managing assets and skills: The key to a sustainable competitive advantage. *California Management Review*, 31(2), 91-106. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41166561>

Buchanan, R. (2001). Design research and the new learning. *Design Issues*, 17(4), 3-23.

Chareanporn, T., Mingmalairaks, P., & Jongsureyaphas, C. (2020). Strategy implementation to organizational competency development in tourist accommodation in Thailand: An exploratory research with the McKinsey Seven S's (7S's) Approach. *Journal of Management Science Chiangrai Rajabhat University*, 15(1), 154-175.

Chareanporn, T., Suwanwong Rodbundith, T., & Boonbumroongsuk, B. (2024). The service experience designed factor affecting customer loyalty: A case study in the healthcare business in Thailand. *Connexion: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 13(1), 123-141. <https://so05.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/MFUconnexion/article/view/270581>

Chareanporn, T., Suwanwong Rodbundith, T., & Yoopetch, C. (2021). The innovative patient service design development: A case study in the premium healthcare business in Chiangrai, Thailand. *UTCC International Journal of Business and Economics (UTCC IJBE)*, 13(3), 43-58.

Cheng, Y., Park, S., Lee, I., Kim, C., & Sul, S. (2023). Brand fandom dynamic analysis framework based on customer data in online communities. *KSII Transactions on Internet and Information Systems*, 17(8). <http://doi.org/10.3837/tiis.2023.08.015>

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. P. (2011). *Mixed methods research*. SAGE.

Crystal Investment Property. (2023). *Full-service*. <https://crystalip.com/buyers/explore-investment-style/full-service/>

Daily Lodging Report. (2024). *Thailand and Vietnam set their tourism targets*. <https://dlr.skift.com/2024/01/04/thailand-and-vietnam-set-their-tourism-targets/>

Danthanongkon, W., & Udon, P. (2006). ชีวาร์อีม ชีวีอีม หยินหยางการตลาด [CRM CEM Yin-Yang marketing]. Vong-klom Publishing.

Edmonds, W., & Kennedy, T. (2017). *An applied guide to research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods*. SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071802779>

Elder, C. (2024). *U.S. hotel appraisals: Part 3 of 3: Full-service hotels*. <https://www.ushotelappraisals.com/services/hotel-asset-classes-full-service-hotels/>

Guliyev, G., Avci, T., Öztüren, A., & Safaeimanesh, F. (2019). Effects of professionalism on employee satisfaction and organizational commitment at five-star hotels in Baku. *Journal of East European Management Studies*, 24(3), 423-446.

Israsena Na Ayudhya, P., & Treerattanaphan, C. (2015). กระบวนการและวิธีการออกแบบบริการ [Service design process & methods]. Thailand Creative & Design Center (TCDC). <http://resource.tcdc.or.th/ebook/Service-Design-Book-Final.pdf>

Krungsri Research. (2024). *Industry outlook 2024-2026: Hotel business*. <https://www.krungsri.com/en/research/industry/industry-outlook/services/hotels/io/hotel-2024-2026>

Liasidou, S., Afxentiou, G., Malkawi, E., & Antoniades, G. (2023). Attesting to hotel employees' professionalism: Views and perceptions of managers. *EuroMed Journal of Business*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EMJB-04-2022-0075>

Limmanon, P. (2007). กลยุทธ์การบริหารลูกค้าสัมพันธ์ [Customer relationship management strategies] (3rd ed.). Parinas.

Lin, M., Li, F. Y., & Ji, Z. (2020). How to innovate the service design of leisure farms: The innovation of sustainable business models. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, 6(3). <https://doi.org/10.3390/joitmc6030045>

Lu, P., Liao, H. T., & Lei, J. (2020). Applying service design in public services: A scientometric review for innovations in public health and administration. In *2020 Management Science Informatization and Economic Innovation Development Conference (MSIEID)* (pp. 381-384). IEEE. <https://doi.org/10.1109/MSIEID52046.2020.00081>

Mekoth, N., Thomson, A. R., Unnithan, A., & Anandakuttan. (2023). The mediating role of satisfaction on the relationship between professionalism and employee continuity in hospitality industry. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 24(4), 477-503.

Mordor Intelligence Private Limited. (2024). *Hospitality industry in Thailand market size (2024 - 2029)*. <https://www.mordorintelligence.com/industry-reports/hospitality-industry-in-thailand/market-size>

Neuman, W. L. (2006). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (6th ed.). Pearson Education.

Omland Hospitality. (2021). *What is the difference between a full service and a limited service hotel.* <https://www.omlandhospitality.com/blog/difference-between-full-service-and-limited-service-hotel>

Oueslati, H., Deparis, M., & Bennaghmouch-Maire, S. (2021). The franchisor–franchisee relationship and customer data management in the digital era. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 49(7), 977-998. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJRDM-10-2020-0411>

Ozdemir, S., Cakir, F. S., & Adiguzel Z. (2022). Examination of customer relations management in banks in terms of strategic, technological, and innovation capability. *Journal of Contemporary Marketing Science*, 5(2), 176-195. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCMARS-12-2021-0044>

Pechlaner, H., & Innerhofer, E. (2016). *Competence-based innovation in hospitality and tourism.* Routledge.

Peters, M., & Pikkemaat, B. (2005). Innovation in tourism. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 6(3-4), 1-6. https://doi.org/10.1300/J162v06n03_01

Rahimian, S., ShamiZanjani, M., Manian, A., & Esfidani, M. R. (2021). A framework of customer experience management for hotel industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 33(5). <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-06-2020-0522>

Riley, R. W. (1995). Prestige-worthy tourism behavior. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 22(3), 630-649. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(95\)00009-U](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(95)00009-U)

Samniang, S. (2022). *Marketing strategies analysis of Thai hotel during the COVID-19 pandemic situation (case study: Oceanfront Beach Resort and Spa)* [Master's thesis, Chulalongkorn University]. Chulalongkorn University Theses and Dissertations (Chula ETD).

Santos, A. C. O., da Silva, C. E. S., Braga, R. A., da Silva, J. E., & de Almeida, F. A. (2020). Customer value in lean product development: Conceptual model for incremental innovations. *Systems Engineering*, 23, 281-293. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sys.21514>

Setiadi, R. (2023). Social media marketing and customized customer relationship management: The implication for marketing performance of the budget hotel industry. *Indonesian Journal of Business and Entrepreneurship*, 9(3), 478-490. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17358/IJBE.9.3.478>

Shamim, S., Yang, Y., Ul Zia, N., & Shah, M. H. (2021). Big data management capabilities in the hospitality sector: Service innovation and customer-generated online quality ratings. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 121. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2021.106777>

Skooldio. (2021). *What is service design*. <https://blog.skooldio.com/service-design/>

Stettler, J., Rosenberg-Taufer, B., Huck, L., Hoppler, A. A., Schwarz, J., Yoopetch, C., & Huilla, J. (2018). A conceptual framework of commercial hospitality: Perception of tourists in Thailand and Switzerland. In *Contemporary challenges of climate change, sustainable tourism consumption, and destination competitiveness* (pp. 123-138). Emerald Publishing Limited.

Stickdorn, M., Hormess, M. E., Lawrence, A., & Schneider, J. (2018). *This is service design doing: Applying service design thinking in the real world*. O'Reilly Media, Inc.

TCDC. (2014). *Service design workbook*. <https://resource.tcdc.or.th/ebook/TCDC-Service-Design-Workbook.pdf>

TCDC. (2015). *Service design process and methods*. <https://resource.tcdc.or.th/ebook/Service-Design-Book-Final.pdf>

Veloso, M., & Gomez-Suarez, M. (2023). Customer experience in the hotel industry: A systematic literature review and research agenda. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 35(8). <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-04-2022-0517>

Wang, Y. (2022). Analysis model design of the intermediary role of psychological expectation in customer value proposition driven business model innovation against the background of big data. *Scientific Programming*, 2022(1). <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/6802518>

Wang, W., Wei, J., Xu, H., Miao, S., & Liao, Y. (2023). Social media marketing contributes to customer engagement. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, 51(8). <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.12532>

Yin, R. K. (2013). *Case study research: Design and methods*. SAGE.

Yoopetch, C. (2010). The model of knowledge acquisition: The study of SMEs in the Thai hospitality industry. *World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology*, 42, 351-354.

Yoopetch, C. (2018). The impact of social media on hospitality brand and image. *UTCC International Journal of Business and Economics*, 10(1), 139-150.