

## การประเมินประสิบการณ์ในสปาของไทยโดยนักท่องเที่ยว

ประทีป เวทย์ประลิทธิ์

ดร., อาจารย์

คณะกรรมการและภารกิจท่องเที่ยว

มหาวิทยาลัยสงขลานครินทร์ วิทยาเขตภูเก็ต

drprateep@gmail.com

### บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อตรวจสอบการรับรู้ด้านการบริการเชิงคุณภาพของลูกค้าในธุรกิจสปาในประเทศไทย เพื่อกำหนดโครงสร้างปัจจัยของการรับรู้ในการบริการเชิงคุณภาพ และเพื่อตรวจสอบความสัมพันธ์ของตัวแปรต่างๆ ระหว่างการบริการเชิงคุณภาพ คุณค่าที่รับรู้ ความพึงพอใจของลูกค้า และผลกระทบต่อเจตนาเชิงพฤติกรรมโดยอาศัยโมเดลประยุกต์ของ SERVQUAL เป็นเครื่องมือประเมินความเห็นของนักท่องเที่ยวชาวต่างประเทศ ซึ่งรวมข้อมูลจากสถานบริการสปา จำนวน 50 แห่ง ในแหล่งท่องเที่ยวหลักทั้ง 5 ภาคทั่วประเทศไทยโดยใช้แบบสอบถาม มีการใช้วิธีการวิเคราะห์เชิงพรรณนา การวิเคราะห์ปัจจัย และการวิเคราะห์ทดสอบพหุคุณ และผลการวิจัยชี้ให้เห็นว่าลูกค้ามีความพึงพอใจในบริการเชิงคุณภาพระดับสูงมาก ตัวแปรด้านความน่าเชื่อถือ การเอาใจใส่ลูกค้า รูปธรรม และความสามารถ คือ ปัจจัยสำคัญที่ใช้อธิบายถึงความพึงพอใจของลูกค้าในสปา สำหรับผลการวิเคราะห์ทดสอบพหุคุณ ได้สรุปว่า ปัจจัยทางด้าน คุณค่าที่รับรู้ ความน่าเชื่อถือ การเอาใจใส่ลูกค้า รูปธรรม และความพึงพอใจมีผลกระทบอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ

ต่อเจตนาเชิงพุติกรรมของลูกค้า ซึ่งผลการวิจัยนี้ สามารถใช้เป็นประโยชน์ต่อผู้ให้บริการสปา เพื่อพัฒนาปรับปรุงปัจจัยหลักในการบริการเชิงคุณภาพและสมรรถนะของธุรกิจต่อไป

**คำสำคัญ:** การบริการเชิงคุณภาพ; คุณค่าที่รับรู้; เจตนาเชิงพุติกรรม; ความพึงพอใจของลูกค้า; สปา

## Evaluation of Tourists' Spa Experiences in Thailand

Prateep Wetprasit

Ph.D., Lecturer

Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism,  
Prince of Songkla University, Phuket Campus  
drprateep@gmail.com

### Abstract

The purpose of the study is to examine customers' perceptions of service quality in the Thai spa industry. The aims are to determine the factor structure of service quality perception, using the modified SERQUAL model and to investigate the relationship between the service quality of the spa, the perceived value, customer satisfaction and their impact on behavioral intention. A modified SERVQUAL scale was used to access service quality perceptions from the perspective of international tourists. Data were collected in 50 spa operators, particularly in five main tourist destinations of Thailand, using a self-administered questionnaire. Descriptive statistical analysis, exploratory factor analysis, and multiple regression analysis (MRA) were employed. The study results indicate the rather high expectations of spa customers regarding service quality. 'Reliability', 'customer care', 'tangibility', and 'competence' are the key factors

that best explained customers' expectations of spa service quality. The MRA results showed that 'perceived value', 'reliability', 'customer care', 'tangibility', and 'customer satisfaction' significantly impacted on customers' behavioral intentions. Thus, the findings can be used as a guide for spa operators to improve crucial quality attributes, and enhance service quality and business performance.

**Keywords:** Service quality; Perceived value; Behavioral intention; Customer satisfaction; Spa

## Introduction

The spa industry plays a critical role in Thailand's economic growth and has a significant role in the hotel and tourism industry (Krungsri, 2005). At present, Thai spas are very popular with travelers as is evidenced by the key findings of the Spa Industry Surveys & Spa Consumer Surveys conducted by the Global Wellness Institute (2014) which show the following statistical data. In 2013, about 2,053 Thai spas (MOPH, 2016) attracted a total of 22.5 million visits, contributing over US\$3 trillion revenue, up nearly 16% from 2012 and the highest in seven years. In 2015, Thai spas continued to grow exponentially which generated around US\$990 million in revenue and exceeded the original target by nearly 8% (DITP, 2016). Over the past decade, spa revenues accounted for 1.1-1.6% of Thailand's total tourism revenue and constituted approximately 0.1% of Thailand's Gross Domestic Product (Schweder, 2016).

In the highly competitive spa business, service is called the backbone of the industry ensuring the growth and development of this economic area. Increasing competition in the service industry has led many companies to consider service quality as a strategic tool. Service quality is the key to measuring user satisfaction. Satisfaction is particularly important in relation to organisations that deliver services, rather than goods (Nicholls, Gilbert, & Roslow, 1999). Therefore, the measurement of service quality has increasingly created an interest among service providers and scholars (Sharma & Mehta, 2005). Hence, measuring the customer satisfaction and the quality of services provided to customers by spa operators is one of the topics that carry high importance in the management arena, particularly in dealing with business organisations that value quality services. Lytle

and Timmerman (2006) showed that a service focus is the path which adds value to the customer and creates satisfaction. From a management standpoint, managers should systematically examine current services from their customers' perspectives and redesign their service products and the environment in which their services are delivered to their target customers.

This study has several objectives. The first objective is to determine the level of perceived service quality in Thai spas. The second aim is to establish the key determinants of perceived service quality in the Thai spa industry, using the modified SERQUAL model. Finally, the third objective is to investigate the relationship between the service quality of the spa, the perceived value of the spa experience, customer satisfaction and their impact on behavioral intention.

## **Literature Reviewed**

### **1. Service Quality**

Quality is one of the drivers that consumers look for in an offer, of which service happens to be one (Solomon 2009). Quality can be defined as the totality of features and characteristics of a product or services that bear on their ability to satisfy stated or implied needs (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Service quality in the management and marketing literature is the extent to which customers' perceptions of service meet and/or exceed their expectations; for example, as defined by Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry (1990), cited in Bowen & David, (2005: 340). Thus, service quality tends to be the way in which customers are served in an organization which could be good or poor. Parasuraman defines service quality as "the differences between customer expectations and perceptions of service" (Parasuraman,

1988).

Later in 1988, Parasuraman et al. (1988) developed the SERVQUAL scale which is an advanced model for measuring service quality. The five dimensions of SERVQUAL are: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Subsequently, the SERVQUAL model was investigated by many researchers for over a decade and which can be said to be the most tried and tested instrument (Bryslan & Curry, 2001). Moreover, this instrument has been widely recognized and become well-known in service quality testing and customer satisfaction (Chang & Chen, 2009).

In the hospitality industry, contact employees' performance is crucial to customer perceptions of the service offering (Jang & Namkung, 2009). Nicolich and Sparks (1995) stated that perceived service quality highly relies on the contact between customers and the employee performance of the service provider. Therefore, performance during service delivery may be a great factor influencing customers' cognitive responses (Jang & Namkung, 2009). Previous researches demonstrated that service quality appeared to be a significant predictor of perceived value (Jang et al., 2012).

## 2. Perceived Value

In consumer research, a better understanding of the conceptual framework of what contributes to perceived value and its relationships with service quality and satisfaction will help product and service providers to attract and retain customers and to predict purchase behavior and future behavioral intention. Many researchers have suggested that value is a multidimensional construct. Value is a function not only of cost to the customer, but also of the result

gained by the customer (Heskett, Sasser, & Schlesinger, 2003). Grewal, Monroe, and Krishnan (1998) suggested that transaction and acquisition values can be attained through the purchase and consumption of tangible products. Transaction value focuses on the pleasure and psychological satisfaction that customers obtain from finding and taking advantage of price deals, whereas acquisition value focuses on the perceived net gains that are associated with the products or services acquired, or, in other words, good value for money. Al-sabbahy, Ekinci, and Riley (2004) applied the acquisition and transaction value scales in their study of hotel and restaurant customers and found that perceived acquisition value, rather than transaction value, to be a valid construct for the evaluation of hotel and restaurant services, and suggested that acquisition value has a considerable influence on the intention to purchase and recommend during the post-consumption stage.

### 3. Customer Satisfaction

The concept of customer satisfaction is one of the main themes in business scholarship and practice because it links the process of purchasing and consumption with post purchase phenomena (Li, Mansori, & Huei, 2014) and is essential to long-term business success (Nam, Ekinci, & Whyatt, 2011). Qiu, Ye, Bai, and Wang (2015) suggested that customer satisfaction in hospitality can be defined “as the extent of overall pleasure or contentment felt by the customers, resulting from the ability of the hotel experience to fulfill the customer's desires, expectations and needs in relation to their hotel stay.” In the tourism industry, various studies show the strong relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty or intention

to revisit and recommend the destination to other people (eg, Jeong, Oh, & Gregoire, 2003). Yee, Yeung, and Cheng (2010) found that service quality has a significant and direct impact on customer satisfaction and that the relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty is also highly significant. Since customers play a vital role in the success of an organization (Krajewski & Ritzman, 2005), they should be placed first in management priorities. If poor customer service is realized at any time in a business, especially in spa operations, it will lead to customer dissatisfaction. If more customers are retained at an increased rate, a business could realize profits that increase by 25% on an average scale (Griffin, 1995).

#### 4. Behavioral Intention

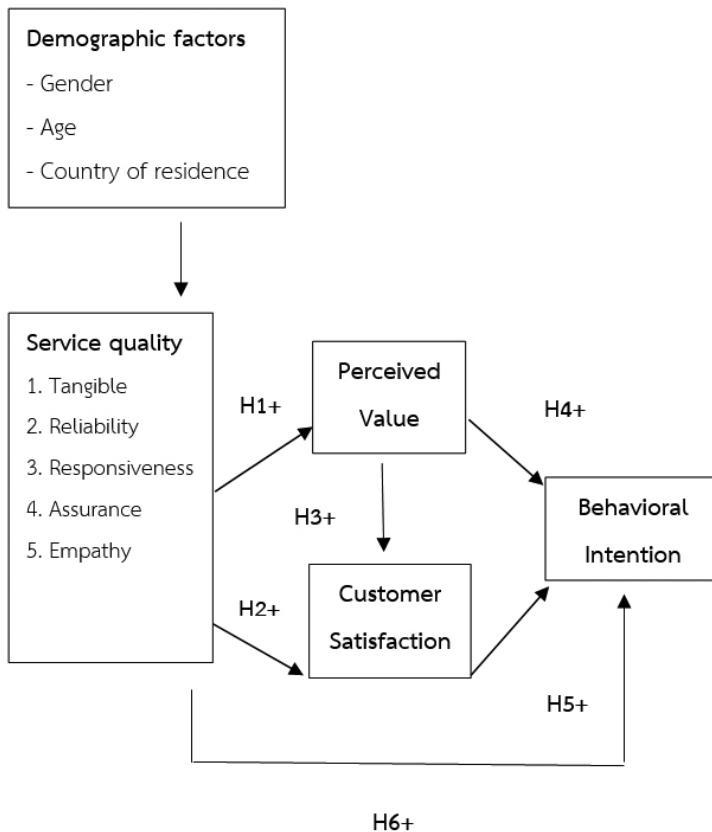
The ultimate goal for service providers is to ensure that customers come back to make purchases, which is one of the characteristics of loyal customers. A favorable behavioral intention is associated with a service provider's ability to encourage its customers to say positive things about the service provider; recommend the service provider to other customers; remain loyal and continue to repurchase from the service provider; spend more with the service provider; and pay more (Zeithaml et al. 1996).

In the field of tourism and leisure research, the behavioral intention scale that was developed by Zeithaml et al. (1996) was widely adopted and adapted. For example, Baker and Crompton adopted the scale in a study of festival visitors using four items to operationalize behavioral intention, four items to measure behavioral and attitudinal loyalty, and two items to measure willingness to pay more. In their study of the relationship between service quality, satisfaction, and

behavioral intention among wildlife refuge visitors, Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Wilson (2002) used three items to operationalize behavioral intentions, including the likelihood of re-patronage, saying positive things to other people, encouraging friends and relatives, and paying higher prices.

## 5. Relationship between Variables

Service quality and satisfaction researchers have different views of the relationship between service quality and satisfaction. Service quality researchers believe that service quality is superordinate to satisfaction. For example, Bitner (1990), who conceptualized satisfaction as a transaction-specific construct, found that satisfaction precedes perceived quality. Satisfaction researchers, in contrast, have suggested that service quality contributes to satisfaction. Cronin and Taylor (1992) conceptualized satisfaction as an aggregated construct and asserted that perceived quality is antecedent to overall satisfaction. Quality, perceived value, and satisfaction all have been shown to be good predictors of behavioral intentions (Petrick, 2004). Service quality is therefore assumed to directly and significantly influence satisfaction and perceived value. According to support from past studies, perceived value has a positive influence on overall satisfaction (Cronin et al. 2000; Petrick & Backman, 2002), and both satisfaction and perceived value appear to be the direct antecedents of behavioral intentions (Cronin et al., 2000; Petrick & Backman, 2002; Tam, 2000). A conceptual relationship model of this study was proposed (see Fig. 1).



**Noted:** Adopted from Kuo, Wu, and Deng's research model (2009)

Figure 1 Research Framework

From the above figure, hypotheses can be proposed as following:

Hypothesis 1: Service quality is positively related to the perceived value of the spa experience.

Hypothesis 2: Service quality is positively related to customer satisfaction of the spa experience.

Hypothesis 3: Value perception from the spa is positively related to customer satisfaction of the spa experience.

Hypothesis 4: Value perception from the spa is positively related to the behavioral intention to the spa.

Hypothesis 5: Customer satisfaction of the spa experience is positively related to the behavioral intention to the spa.

Hypothesis 6: Service quality is positively related to the behavioral intention to the spa.

### **Research Method, Data Collection and Analysis**

A self-administrated questionnaire survey was conducted to collect empirical data from international customers in each area of Thailand as shown in Table 2 between March–May 2013. Five major spa destinations—Chiang Mai, KhonKaen, Phuket, Pattaya, and Bangkok—were selected to represent the North, North East, South, East, and Central regions of Thailand, respectively. However, for the South of Thailand, Samui in Surat Thani was included because it is one of the major spa destinations as well. Eight copies were distributed in each selected spa. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed. However, 318 usable responses were obtained after removing incomplete samples, yielding a respond rate of 79.5%.

A list of well-known spas located in each afore-mentioned spa destination was obtained from the data source of Department of

Business Development, Ministry of Commerce (2014). To minimise any bias and ensure a greater level of representation, a stratified simple random sampling method was utilized for each sampled spa. Different nationalities were divided into sub-groups. Spa customers who finished their visitation at the spa service provider were asked for their willingness to take part in the survey. Having given a yes answer, they were then asked to complete the questionnaire. However, permission was granted from the spa manager at each site prior to data collection.

The questions in the questionnaire were designed based on a review of the literature and specific characteristics of the spa industry. All items of the first four parts were measured by a 7-point Likert-type scale, from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The questionnaire was pre-tested and revised to ensure content validity. Using SPSS Version 24, the result of Cronbach's Alpha was 0.967, indicating a good-level of internal consistency. The questionnaire consisted of five sections. Section 1 of the questionnaire dealt with the measurement of service quality with 20 items. Section 2 dealt with the measurement of perceived value with 7 items. Section 3 dealt with satisfaction measurement with 2 items (satisfied and pleased). Section 4 dealt with the measurement of behavioral intentions with 4 items. Finally, Section 5 reported respondent information with 3 items including gender, age, and country of residence.

Table 1 Sampled Spas in Main Tourist Destinations in Thailand

Major Spa Destinations	Sampled Spas (4%)	# of Survey
Bangkok	15	120
Pattaya	4	32

Major Spa Destinations	Sampled Spas (4%)	# of Survey
KhonKaen	6	48
Phuket+Samui	16	128
Chiang Mai	9	72
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>400</b>

For the service quality, the Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) of the 20 items of the anti-image correlation matrix revealed that most of the MSA were well above the acceptable level of 0.50 (Coakes & Steed, 2007), and the original variables were reduced to 18 variables. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin MSA result was higher than .60, indicating factorability assumed (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014). The inter-correlations among measurement variables in the conceptual model were shown in Appendix 1. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to specify the structure between observed indicators and latent constructs, and test the validity of the measurement model.

## Empirical Results

In the respondents' profile, 55.3% are female customers and about 65.8% were aged between 30 - 49 years old. Moreover, the younger group (18 - 29 years old) totaled around one-third of the spa customers. For the country of residence, 58.8% of respondents were from Russia (27.4%), Western Europe (20.4%) and Eastern Europe (11.0%).

Furthermore, it was revealed that spa tourists' perception in the dimensions of service quality were all at the "very high" level with an average mean of customer care (6.02), average mean of competence

(5.79), average mean of tangibility (5.78), and average mean of reliability (5.72), respectively. Therefore, the overall grand mean of service quality dimensions was 5.82, just 0.01 higher than the grand mean from original data (5.81). The findings also revealed that within 20 statements in the questionnaire, “the employees are well groomed” received the highest mean of 6.14 while “the employees deliver prompt service” got the lowest mean of 5.47. However, they all received at the level of “very high” satisfaction or “agreed” upon each statement. This is important information for the spa operators in detecting the weak points of services and designing the service to meet or exceed tourists’ satisfactions. Development would force the spas to improve their services into the level of “strongly satisfied” or “strongly agreed”.

The finding of perceived value, overall satisfaction, and behavioral intention shows that tourists were at the “very high” level with an average mean of overall satisfaction (5.65), average mean of perceived value (5.49), and average mean of behavioral intentions (5.70). Looking at the details of behavioral intentions, the grand mean was higher than other two variables. This indicated that the spa visitors were very satisfied with the spa services and intend to return back to the spas if they have the chance to visit Thailand again.

The factor analysis (FA) with Varimax rotation produced new constructed four core factors for further analysis namely: Reliability, Customer Care, Tangibility, and Competence. Factors 1, 2, 3, and 4 accounted for 22.83%, 19.98%, 14.66%, and 7.23% of the variance, respectively. All the four factors together explained 64.70% of the variance in service quality. Further, these four factors generated the value of a grand mean of 5.82 for the derived service quality

dimensions. Further, it showed that the factor loadings of all observed variables or items were adequate, ranging from 0.63 to 0.88. The reliability coefficients for each of the four dimensions were .89 (Reliability), .78 (Customer Care), .66 (Tangibility), and .76 (Competence). This indicates that all of the constructs conform to the construct validity test which means that all items belonged to the specified core values.

**Table 2 Factor Analysis Results of Service Quality of Spa**

Service Attributes		Factor Loading	Eigen Value	V %	Alpha
Factor 1 Reliability	The employees perform the service right the first time	0.884	7.91	22.83	0.899
	The employees are always willing to help customers	0.799			
	The employees know what my needs are	0.797			
	Customers feel safe in their transaction	0.754			
	The employees clearly explain charges for the services	0.703			
	The spa has my best interests at heart	0.686			
Factor 2 Customer Care	The employees deliver prompt service	0.679			
	The products used are of good quality (natural ingredients or trust worthy brands etc.)	0.757	2.163	19.98	0.778

Service Attributes		Factor Loading	Eigen Value	V %	Alpha
	The employees are well groomed.	0.744			
	The employees are polite	0.696			
	The spa offers a good variety of treatments which cater to different types of guests	0.653			
	The music and sound used in the spa are appropriate to the type of service provided	0.728	1.652	14.66	0.655
Factor 3 Tangibility	The spa has a comfortable environment	0.785			
	The appearance of the physical facilities is in keeping with the types of services provided	0.636			
	The employees clearly explain the types of services provided	0.653	1.151	7.23	0.759
Factor 4 Competence	When the employees promise to do something by a certain time, they do so	0.635			
	The employees are professional in providing service	0.788			
	The employees have the knowledge to answer customers' questions	0.659			

(a) Obtained by factor analysis with orthogonal rotation

(VARIMAX) n= 318. (b) df = 153

(c) Cumulative Variance Explained= 64.695% (d) Bartlett's Test:

Chi-square = 5509.236 at p=0.000

## 1. Hypothesis Testing

In order to predict customer retention of a spa from an awareness of the service quality factor, perceived value, and customer satisfaction the Simple Linear Regression (SLR) and Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA) were used to examine the relationships. Table 4 reports the results of the hypothesis tests. In total, all six hypotheses were supported. Overall, Service Quality had significant positive relationships to Perceived Value, Customer Satisfaction, and Behavioral Intention to a spa. Results were the same among Perceived Value, Customer Satisfaction, and Behavioral Intention as well.

## 2. Regression Models

For the predictors of service quality and behavioral intention, using the regression equation model, results showed that Reliability, Customer Care, Competency, and Tangibility were significant predictors of Perceived Value, and Customer Satisfaction respectively. The regression coefficients, showed in Table 4, indicated that Reliability ( $\beta=1.3$ ,  $p=.00$ ) and Competence ( $\beta=.36$ ,  $p=.00$ ) had the most significant impact on overall satisfaction (H2), followed by Customer Care ( $\beta=.31$ ,  $p=.00$ ) and Tangibility ( $\beta=.26$ ,  $p=.00$ ). A similar result was on perceived value (H1) as well. However, the results of the impact of service quality dimensions on behavioral intention (H6) confirmed that Reliability ( $\beta=1.18$ ,  $p=.00$ ) had the strongest and most significant impact on the behavioral intention of spa customers, followed by Customer Care ( $\beta=.91$ ,  $p=.00$ ), and Competence ( $\beta=.33$ ,  $p=.00$ ). Meanwhile, Tangibility was not a significant factor on behavioral intention.

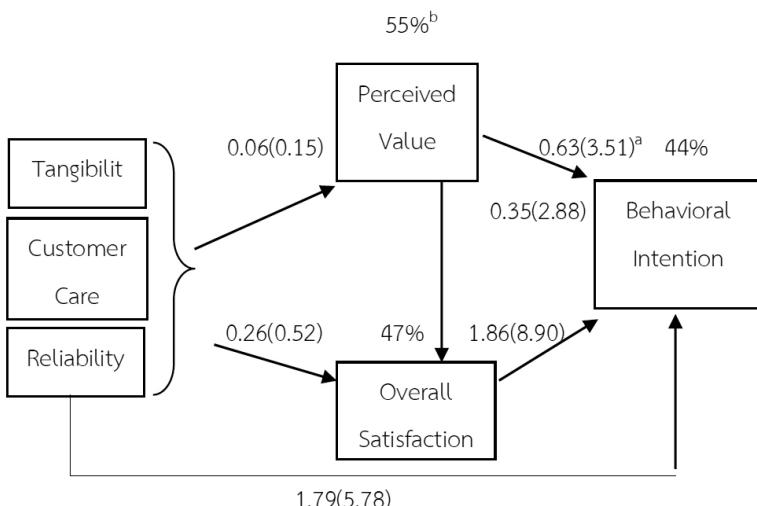
Table 3 Hypothesis Tests and the Final Model of Regression

Items	Regression Model	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	F-statistic	t-value	Test Result
H1: SQ->PV	Perceived Value = 0.06 + 0.73 Reliability + 0.42 Customer Care + 0.38 Competency + 0.27 Tangibility	0.54*	95.24	n/a	Support
H2: SQ->CS	Satisfaction = 0.26 + 1.3 Reliability + 0.36 Competence + 0.31 Customer Care+0.26Tangibility	0.46*	67.99	n/a	Support
H3: PV->CS	Satisfaction = 0.19 + 1.02 Perceived Value	0.74*	894.51	29.91	Support
H4: PV->BI	Behavioral Intention = 0.63 + 0.92 Perceived Value	0.72*	808.25	28.43	Support
H5: CS->BI	Behavioral Intention = 1.86 + 0.66 Satisfaction	0.52*	345.6	18.59	Support
H6: SQ->BI	Behavioral Intention = 1.89 + 1.18 Reliability + 0.91 Customer Care + 0.33 Competence	0.43*	60.37	n/a	Support
Final Model	Behavioral Intention = 1.79 + 1.05 Perceived Value + 0.57 Reliability + 0.51 Customer Care + 0.2 Tangibility +0.13 Satisfaction	0.76*	170.57	n/a	

\* $p < .05$

Finally, for the final regression model using MRA as shown in figure 2, it concluded that Perceived value, Reliability, Customer Care, Tangibility, and Customer Satisfaction were statistically significantly impactful on behavioral intentions in spa services whereas Competence was not statistically significant.

Figure 2 Final Model of Regression Analysis for Spa Services



**Note:** 1) <sup>a</sup>Un-standardized regression coefficient with its t-value,

2) <sup>b</sup>The amount of variance explained (i.e.,  $R^2$ )

## Conclusions and Implications

The aim of this research was to find out about the service quality of spas in Thailand through the perception of tourists. The result showed that in general, consumers were at a “very high” level of happiness and satisfaction with all dimensions of service quality and would like to revisit the spas in Thailand. As mentioned earlier,

understanding the determinants of customer loyalty can facilitate management's focus on the major factors leading to customer retention. The study demonstrated that the service quality dimensions that most influence overall satisfaction and perceived value in the spa industry in Thailand were those of Reliability, Competence, Customer Care, and Tangibility. Besides that, the only dimension that was not found to play a significant role in predicting the behavioral intention of spa customers was that of Tangibility. This finding coincides with the study of Kheng, Mahamad, Ramayah, & Mosahab, (2010). They found that Tangibles have no significant impact on customer loyalty. The research from Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry (1990), as well, found that customers cared about tangibles only 11%. Or in other words, Reliability (32%) is the most important attribute that the customers care about. Also, prior research in the marketing literature suggested that reliability has been the most important determinant of customer satisfaction and repurchase intention (Lee, Kim, Ko, & Sagas, 2011). For the tangibles, Malleret (2018) predicted that conspicuous consumption of tangible wellness goods (luxury spa treatments, gym memberships, wearables, etc.) will be trumped by the consumption of more intangible wellness “goods” with more scarcity value (so, more cachet): like choosing a neighborhood that does not require a car, has a less polluted local environment or access to fresh food/nature. However, this finding was dissimilar to the report of Al-alak and El-refae (2012) who found that spa goers in Malaysia attached more importance to the physical and human aspects of the spa and wellness services than the dimensions of reliability, responsiveness, and assurance.

The findings showed that spa customers have loyalty to the spas

because of the service people, or therapists, and not to the hardware or physical decorations. In service quality, all dimensions are important to customers, but some more than others. Spa providers need to know which are which to avoid majoring in minors. At the same time, the spas should not focus on only one dimension and let the others suffer. However, the main issue in spas is the soft skills of the therapists. Research by Poretla and Thanassoulis (2005) showed that business soft skills influence organisational outcomes such as increasing sales profits and market share, enhanced corporate image and promote customer loyalty. Furthermore, Newman (2008) concurred that employee business soft skills are related to customer loyalty through repurchase. Thus, delivering quality service through professional business soft skills to customers is a must for success and survival in today's competitive business environment. Examples of soft skills include: communication, flexibility, leadership, motivation, patience, persuasion, problem solving abilities, teamwork, time management, work ethic (Doyle, 2018). Therefore, it is important to understand the factors that influence customer satisfaction and behavioral intention or customer loyalty in order to create good products or services to the organization. This means when customers have a positive perspective toward services, then they become repeat purchasers of a product or service and eventually provide positive word of mouth marketing.

Furthermore, this study provides some useful insights for managerial action. First, spa managers can rely on this scale in order to measure the service quality delivered to their customers. By examining the perceived score of each attribute within and across dimensions, improvement needs can be identified. Second, spa

managers can determine the relative importance of the five service quality dimensions in predicting customer satisfaction and customer intention. The managers can determine which service quality dimensions they should pay most attention to. Third, the managers can use the scale to evaluate the service quality delivered to customers. Fourth, managers can employ the service quality scale to identify distinct customer segments with varying perceptions about service quality. Segment profiles can provide valuable information on how to approach each segment for quality improvement initiatives. Finally, from a competitive standpoint, managers can use the existing scale to assess their strengths and weaknesses relative to competitors across service quality dimensions. Finally, Thailand may now be competing with new entrants of tourist destinations in the regional tourism industry such as Vietnam and Myanmar, and other countries such as Malaysia with its emerging tourism products that eventually increase its tourism diversity. Therefore, the spa industry could be one of the strengths to attract more tourists to visit Thailand.

### **Limitations and suggestions for future research**

The present study is elementary and general in nature. The study is focusing on the various possible dimensions of consumer perception for using spa services. Also, the awareness level of consumers was measured through some simple questions. The study was exploratory in nature and many variables were considered which have provided certain insights on consumer perception and behavioral intention levels for spa services, which can be undertaken at a micro level. Other explanatory variables may account for the findings. Therefore, they can be undertaken in future research. Another

limitation concerns the small sample size, compared to the large numbers of spas these days, which may not be able to give concrete findings of the service quality dimensions concerning international tourists during their spa visit. Thus, it cannot be generalized. However, this paper provided interesting findings which inspired the author to conduct in-depth research in the future. Therefore, for future research suggested in this paper, apart from quantitative techniques, qualitative techniques may be adopted in investigating tourists' physical and emotional engagement in activity experiences to elicit more in depth findings.

## References

- Al-Sabbahy, H. Z., Ekinci, Y., & Riley, M. (2004). An Investigation of Perceived Value Dimensions: Implications for Hospitality Research. *Journal of Travel Research*, 42(3), 226-234.
- Bitner, M. J. (1990). Evaluating Service Encounters: The Effects of Physical Surroundings and Employee Responses. *Journal of Marketing*, 54(2), 69-82.
- Bowen, R. & David, E. (2005). Service Quality. *Blackwell Encyclopedic Dictionary of Human Resource Management*, 340-341.
- Bryoland, A. & Curry, A. (2001). Service Improvements in public services using SERVQUAL. *Managing Service Quality*, 11(6), 389-401.
- Chang, H. H. & Chen, S. W. (2009). Consumer perception of interface quality, security, and loyalty in electronic commerce. *Information & Management*, 46, 411–417.
- Coakes, S.J. & Steed, L. (2007). *SPSS Version 14.0 for Windows: Analysis without Anguish*. India: Wiley-India.

- Cronin, J. J., Brady, M. K., & Hult, T. (2000). Assessing the effects of quality, value, and customer satisfaction on consumer behavioral intentions in service environments. *Journal of Retailing*, 76(2), 193-218.
- Cronin, J. J., & Taylor, S. A. (1992). Measuring service quality; a re-examination and Extension. *The Journal of Marketing*, 56(3), 55-68.
- Department of Business Development, Ministry of Commerce (2014). *Annual Report 2014*. Retrieved on February 20, 2017 from [http://www.dbd.go.th/dbdweb\\_en/main.php?filename=index](http://www.dbd.go.th/dbdweb_en/main.php?filename=index)
- Department of international trade promotion. (2016). *Spa in Thailand*. Retrieved on January 15, 2017 from <http://www.ditp.go.th/ewtadmin/ewt/ditp/ebook/B0066/index.html>
- Doyle, A. (2018). Hard Skills vs. Soft Skills: What's the Difference? *The Balance*. Retrieved on March 20, 2018 from <https://www.thebalance.com/hard-skills-vs-soft-skills-2063780>
- Global Wellness Institute. (2014). *Global Wellness Tourism Economy Report*. Retrieved on February 18, 2017 from <https://www.globalwellnessinstitute.org/industry-research/>
- Grewal, D., Monroe, K. B., & Krishman, R. (1998). The effects of price-comparison advertising on buyers' perceptions of acquisition value, transaction value, and behavioral intentions. *Journal of Marketing*, 62(2), 46-59.
- Griffin, J. (1995). *Customer Loyalty: How to Earn It, How to Keep It*. New York, USA: Lexington Books.

- Hair Jr, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2014). *Multivariate Data Analysis*.7th Edition. London: Pearson Education Limited.
- Heskett, J. L., Sasser, E. W., & Schlesinger, L. A. (2003). *The Value profit chain: treat employees like customers and customers like employees*. New York: Free Press.
- Jang, S. & Namkung, Y. (2009). Perceived quality, emotions and behavioral intentions: Application of an extended Mehrabian-Russell model to restaurants. *Journal of Business Research*, 62(4), 451-460.
- Jang, S., Ha, J., & Park, K. (2012). Effect of ethnic authenticity: Investigating Korean restaurant customers in the U.S. *International Journal and Hospitality Management*, 31, 990-1003.
- Jeong, M., Oh, H., & Gregoire, M. (2003). Conceptualizing Web Site Quality and Its Consequences in the Lodging Industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 22(2), 161-175.
- Kheng, L. L., Mahamad, O., Ramayah, T., & Mosahab, R. (2010). The Impact of Service Quality on Customer Loyalty: A Study of Banks in Penang, Malaysia. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, 2(2), 57-66.
- Krungsri Bank Public Company. (2005). Economy benefits via service industry. *Economics Outlook*. Retrieved November 10, 2005 from [http://www.krungsri.com/PDF/ECONOMY/ANALYSIS/oct47\\_02.pdf](http://www.krungsri.com/PDF/ECONOMY/ANALYSIS/oct47_02.pdf)
- Kotler, P. and Keller, K. (2012). *Marketing management*.13th Ed. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

- Krajewski, L. J. & Ritzman, L. P. (2005). *Operations management: processes and value chains*. London: Pearson/Prentice Hall.
- Lee, J. H., Kim, H. D., Ko, Y. J., & Sagas, M. (2011). The influence of service quality on satisfaction and intention: A gender segmentation strategy. *Sport Management Review*, 14(1), 54-63.
- Liat, C. B., Mansori, S., & Huei, C. T. (2014). The Associations Between Service Quality, Corporate Image, Customer Satisfaction, and Loyalty: Evidence from the Malaysian Hotel Industry. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 23(3), 314-326.
- Lytle, R. S. & Timmerman, J. E. (2006). Service orientation and performance: an organizational perspective. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 20(2), 136-147.
- Malleret, T. (2018). *Will wellness become simpler in 2018?* Global Wellness Institute. Retrieved on January 2018 from <https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/global-wellness-institute-blog/2018/02/13/2018-2-13-will-wellness-become-simpler-in-2018/>
- Ministry of Public Health. (2016). *Spa operators in Thailand*. Retrieved on 20 January 16, 2017 from [http://203.157.7.49/securereport/myReportViewer.aspx?reportpath=/HSS\\_SPA\\_Report/Spa](http://203.157.7.49/securereport/myReportViewer.aspx?reportpath=/HSS_SPA_Report/Spa)
- Nam, J., Ekinci, Y., & Whyatt, G. (2011). Brand Equity, Brand Loyalty and Consumer Satisfaction. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(3), 1009-1030.
- Newman, S. (2008). Changing skill needs: What makes people employable? *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 29(6), 190-193.

- Nicolich, M. A. & Sparks, B. A. (1995). The hospitality service encounter: the role of communication. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 19(2), 43-56.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1988). SERVQUAL: A multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality. *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12-40.
- Petrick, J. F. (2004). The Roles of Quality, Value, and Satisfaction in Predicting Cruise Passengers' Behavioral Intentions. *Journal of Travel Research*, 42(4), 397-407.
- Petrick, J. F. & Backman, S. J. (2002). An Examination of the Construct of Perceived Value for the Prediction of Golf Travelers' Intentions to Revisit. *Journal of Travel Research*, 41(1), 38-45.
- Poretla, M. & Thanassoulis, M. (2005). Interpersonal communication skills that enhance organizational commitment. *Journal of Communication Management*, 12(1), 51-72.
- Qiu, H., Ye, B. H., Bai, B., & Wang, W. H. (2015). Do the Roles of Switching Barriers on Customer Loyalty Vary for Different Types of Hotels? *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 46, 89–98.
- Schweder, I. R. (2016). *Thailand Medical & Wellness Tourism Trade & Media Familiarization Trip*. Retrieved on November 12, 2017 from <http://www.globalwellnesssummit.com/wp-content/uploads/Industry-Briefing-Papers/PDFs/Thailand-2013-Ingo-Schweder.pdf>
- Sharma, A. and Mehta, V., (2005). Service Quality Perceptions in Financial Services - A Case Study of Banking Service. *Journal of services research*, 4(2), 205-223.

- Solomon, M. R. (2009). *Consumer Behavior: Buying, Having, and Being*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Tam, J.L.M. (2000). The effects of service quality, perceived value and customer satisfaction on behavioral intentions. *Journal of Hospitality and Leisure Marketing*, 6(4), 31-44.
- Tian-Cole, S., Crompton, J., & Wilson, V. L. (2002). An Empirical Investigation of the Relationships Between Service Quality, Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions Among Visitors to a Wildlife Refuge. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 34(1), 1-24.
- Yee, R. W., Yeung, A. C., & Cheng, T. E. (2010). An Empirical Study of Employee Loyalty, Service Quality and Firm Performance in the Service Industry. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 124(1), 109–120.
- Zeithaml, V. A., Parasuraman, A., & Berry, L. L. (1990). *Delivering Quality Service: Balancing Customer Perceptions and Expectations*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Zeithaml, V. A., Berry, L. L., & Parasuraman, A. (1996). The Behavioral Consequences of Service Quality. *Journal of Marketing*, 60(2), 31-46.
- Zeithaml, V. A. (1988). Consumer perceptions of price, quality, and value: A means-end model and synthesis of evidence. *Journal of Marketing*, 52, 2-21.

## Appendix 1 Inter-correlations among measurement variables

	SQ	SQ	SQ	SQ	PV	PV	PV	PV	PV	SAT	SAT
1	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
SQ1	1										
SQ2	.78	1									
SQ3	.78	.76	1								
SQ4	.81	.69	.70	1							
PV1	.61	.53	.55	.55	1						
PV2	.65	.65	.66	.65	.71	1					
PV3	.54	.43	.50	.62	.67	.67	1				

	SQ	SQ	SQ	SQ	PV	PV	PV	PV	PV	SAT	SAT	SAT				
1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	BI1	BI2	BI3	BI4
PV4	.74	.56	.67	.70	.71	.75	.90	.1								
	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**								
PV5	.59	.29	.43	.48	.68	.62	.64	.76	1							
	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**								
PV6	.53	.30	.47	.63	.60	.75	.76	.82	.86	1						
	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**							
PV7	.57	.30	.45	.41	.71	.47	.46	.61	.90	.63	1					
	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**						
SAT	.67	.46	.45	.54	.78	.73	.69	.75	.70	.64	.62	1				
1	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**					
SAT	.61	.39	.40	.61	.72	.78	.80	.82	.75	.83	.56	.92*	1			
2	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**				
BI1	.55	.26	.35	.56	.63	.66	.68	.69	.77	.75	.65	.62*	.74*	1		
	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	*	*	*	

	SQ	SQ	SQ	SQ	PV	PV	PV	PV	PV	PV	SAT	SAT	SAT				
1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	BI1	BI2	BI3	BI4	
BI2	.61	.36	.59	.49	.53	.59	.65	.74	.74	.67	.72	.59*	.63*	.76	.1		
	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	*	*	**		
BI3	.49	.19	.30	.37	.47	.53	.59	.68	.80	.75	.70	.52*	.65*	.84	.83	1	
	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	*	*	**	**	
BI4	.50	.24	.34	.51	.49	.63	.67	.72	.76	.88	.56	.59*	.80*	.78	.73	.89	1
	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	*	*	**	**	
Mea	5.7	6.0	5.7	5.7	5.5	5.4	5.4	5.5	5.5	5.4	5.4	5.8	5.7	5.6	5.5	5.8	5.7
n	2	2	8	9	5	6	7	8	4	2	4	3	4	8	4	3	6
S.D.	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.9	1.1	0.8	1.0	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.7
	5	9	7	6	2	2	8	5	5	5	7	2	9	1.1	9	4	1.1

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).