

Relations between Service Quality, Overall Satisfaction, and Word-of-Mouth in Hotel Industry

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Abstract - This study focused on relation between service quality, overall satisfaction and word-of-mouth of domestic tourists at 4-5 stars hotel located in Phuket, Thailand. The study aimed to explore the effect of service quality to overall satisfaction and investigated association between overall satisfaction affected to positive word-of-mouth (WOM). The questionnaire was used as a research tool. Data were conveniently collected from the domestic tourists who stayed at 4-5 stars hotel located in Phuket, Thailand. Data analysis was done by using on multiple regression analysis. Research results outline five dimensions of service quality: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, confidence, and communication. The results showed that the communication has only a positive impact on overall satisfaction. Furthermore, the overall satisfaction directly had a positive and significant impact on WOM. The conclusion, implication and future research issues discussed in the paper.

Keywords - Hotel Industry, Service Quality, Word-of-Mouth, Overall Satisfaction

I. INTRODUCTION

Thailand tourism has been attracted a large number of tourists a few years. As noted by [1], a total of 159 million tourists arrived during the year, which showed an increase of 9.35% when compared with the previous year. The revenue had consistently grown to 541,656.41 million baht in year 2016. This is because Thailand has many attractions including natural resources, heritage, and culture. Therefore, Thailand is one of the most popular tourist destinations.

In the case of tourism and hospitality industry, especially hotel business, ability of hotel manager has become a competitive advantage to achieve service quality that customers are expected in the middle of a high competition of service providers [2], [3]. Hotel administrators need to seek for new approaches to manage service quality due to the different nature of the hospitality services being offered. Service quality has become a key performance indicator for hotel business. Quality of accommodations is reflected to be improving the competitiveness and the development of marketing's guideline for the hotel market [4]. According to [5], service quality has become a great

differentiator and the most powerful competitive advantage which may bring to leading service. Ensuring service quality does not only guarantee customer satisfaction but also result in decreased costs, increased profitability, and positive word-of-mouth [6], [7]. From the customers' perspective, these services are basic elements of lifestyle. In order to achieve competitive advantages, it is imperative for hotelier to become successful. When the hotel industry has increasingly become more competitive, the hotel needs to retain the customers with their service quality [8].

Customer satisfaction has been important to the hotel industry. High service quality and improving customer satisfaction are widely realized as important factors leading to the success of hotel [7], [9], [10]. If customers are satisfied, they are more likely to have positive word-of-mouth [11], [12]. The relationship between overall satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth has been researched for many years [11], [13]. This study extended the research to examine the previous effects of overall satisfaction as well as the effect of service quality on overall satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth, and how it relates to positive word-of-mouth.

This study focused on elevating research in hotel satisfaction by investigating the role of service quality in overall satisfaction mediated to positive word-of-mouth. The overall objective of this study was to examine the level of customer satisfaction and the main factors contributing customer satisfaction. Specifically, the significance of hotel satisfaction is scrutinized with suggestions on how to target various customer segments for hotel. The research findings are expected to offer valuable insights, implications, and applications to hotel practitioners, government officers, and academic researchers.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature on service quality. Numerous discussions and theories of service quality have been suggested by scholars and researchers. Based on the role of service quality in the overall satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth, the literature review presents



contents related to them in this section. The researcher attempts to achieve by capturing a small number of service quality (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, confidence, and communication). It would be easy and directly predict the overall satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth.

Service quality was an increasingly important element that differentiates competing services [14]. The delivery of high service quality is one of the most important and most difficult tasks that any service organization faces. Problems in service quality measurement arise from a lack of clear and measurable parameters for the determination of quality. It is not the case with product quality since products have specific and measurable indicators like durability, number of defective products and similarity, which make it relatively easy to determine the level of quality. Even though the number of research on service quality is huge, the dimensions of service quality have been identified for a variety of industries such as the telecommunication, education, health care, retailing, tourism, technology, transport and recreational sports sectors using a hierarchical model as a framework. There is no agreement about what service quality is and how it should be measured. Assessment of quality in service industries, become more complicated as it is not a function of statistical measures of quality, including physical defects or managerial judgments [15].

The original of "SERVQUAL" These models have gone a long way to unravel the undertones associated with service quality. There were ten dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, competency, courtesy, credibility, security, accessibility, communication, and understanding. Service quality could be defined through ten dimensions [16]. Many researches in tourism and hospitality were reduced to five dimensions: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy and have used the five dimensions SERVQUAL instrument [17], [18]. However, service quality was complicated and multi-dimension [19]. Services quality is not homogeneous and made a distinction between whether or not individuals or organizations are receiving service [20]. For example, service quality measured customer satisfaction in recreation and sport complex. Mention to [21], they identified "CERM CSQ" that was four components: core services, staff quality, general facility, and secondary services. A broader perspective has been adopted by [22] who argues that service quality in sport complex in South Korea should develop to "QUESQ". The "QUESQ" has 11 factors: ambiance, employee attitude, employee reliability, information availability, program offered, personal considerations, price, privilege, ease of mind, stimulation, and convenience. According to [23] points out six factors: show time, staff, comfort, sport venue,

luxury, and information, to construct the customer expectation at basketball.

Service quality can be viewed from many different perspectives. Lodging industry needs to consider various multidimensional of the service quality [24]. From the various decision, hotel managers should support and operate the work with quality concern in order to increase quality and customer satisfaction [25], and these can bring the huge benefit back to the hotel [26]. The first systematic study of service quality in hotel was reported by [27], that "LODGSERV" was 26 indicators. According to [28] was develop "HOLSERV" that tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy measured service quality in hotel. In another major study, [19] found that Lodging Quality Index (LQI) comprised of five components: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, confidence, and communication.

In the lodging industry, several studies have investigated hotel attributes that customers may find an importance when evaluating the performed service quality. The LQI instrument was specifically the dimensions of service quality within the lodging industry [19]. The dimensions were adjusted instrument that was limited by the other dimensions and better reflected the unique nature of the lodging industry. The difference of service quality on individual quality dimension can be used as the basis for evaluating the relative performances of each hotel. The LQI was produced a quality perception scale that can be modified to the individual lodging and could be examined to pinpoint potential problem area. Moreover, LQI will offer exact customer feedback in order to monitor quality attempts throughout the organization.

What we know about service quality is largely based upon empirical studies that investigate how service quality related to overall satisfaction and customer loyalty [29]. Particularly, lodging industry has to create customer satisfaction that links to his return and loyalty [30]. It should be noted that according to some authors, service quality is related to satisfaction and that they have a causal ordering. Service quality has been accepted as an antecedent of customer satisfaction [2], [31]. Establishing a linkage between service quality and customer satisfaction is an important task for researchers and practitioners, subsequently it is evidence for the value of service quality research. Furthermore, the relationships between specific service quality dimensions and overall satisfaction are not yet clear in the lodging industry, due to the different service quality models used and the different contexts of the published studies [32]. In numerous researches, they have been found that quality of service affected the customer satisfaction. From the results of [33] suggest that hotel managers can focus their efforts to provide quality service and facilities that international tourists perceive as being important in determining their overall service quality of

the hotels. This view is supported by [34] who wrote that service quality related to customer satisfaction and loyalty. As a result of [11], it was consistently found that service quality has positive significant relationship with tourist satisfaction. This indicates a need to understand the various perceptions of service quality that exist among overall satisfaction.

Hypothesis H_{1a}: Tangibility has a positive effect on the overall Satisfaction

Hypothesis H_{1b}: Reliability has a positive effect on the overall Satisfaction

Hypothesis H_{1c}: Responsiveness has a positive effect on the overall Satisfaction

Hypothesis H_{1d}: Confidence has a positive effect on the overall Satisfaction

Hypothesis H_{1e}: Communication has a positive effect on the overall Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction has previously been found to mediate the effect of service quality on a range of customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth. There are many researches which support relationship between satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth. For example, in study of [35] found that tangibility, responsiveness and reliability dimensions were determined as the moderate estimators of the positive word-of-mouth. A recent study by [36] indicated that customer satisfaction is another important factor constructing the word of mouth. As an overall satisfaction investigation, [37] found that satisfaction fully mediated the effect of service quality on positive word-of-mouth. Therefore, this present study puts forth the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis H₂: Overall satisfaction has a positive effect on the word-of-mouth

III. METHODOLOGY

TABLE I: RESPONDENTS' DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

	No.	Percent
Gender		
Male	181	45.2
Female	219	54.8
Age		
16-25 years	85	21.2
26-40 years	208	52.0
Above 40 years	107	26.8
Status		
Single	159	39.8
Married	186	46.4
Divorce	43	10.8

In this study, a survey questionnaire was developed with key measures related to service quality, overall satisfaction, and positive word-of-mouth based on previous literature. A self-administered questionnaire consisted of four main sections of the survey instrument. The first section was designed to assess the service quality: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, confidence, and communication. The importance of 26 items, these items were adapted from [19] after a survey of lodging quality index (LQI). The second section was designed to assess customer overall satisfaction. The third section assessed positive word-of-mouth. Items were primarily measured on 7-point Likert scales, where 1 represented lowest importance or unacceptable level with the statement and 7 represented highest importance or agreement. The last section was designed to gathering respondents' demographics, such as gender, age, status, education level, occupation, and salary.

Each item was checked for its face validity and relevance through several rounds of iterations. The original questionnaire was prepared in English and then translated into Thai to capture the database in the relation to the tourists' nationality. The translation process took several rounds of back translations and parallel translations with the assistance of tourism practitioners and academic researchers who were familiar with both languages. Also, the scale development should be considered. The aim of scale development is to create a valid measure of an underlying construction. It can be very helpful to do some preliminary pilot testing on moderately sized samples of convenience before launching a major scale development project. Thus, the pilot test with 50 tourists was conducted with satisfactory results.

	No.	Percent
Education levels		
Below bachelor's degree	65	16.2
Bachelor's degree	183	45.8
Above bachelor's degree	148	37.0
Occupation		
Government officer	116	29.0
Business owner	114	28.5
Private officer	113	28.3
Others	49	12.2
Salary		
Average (Thai Bath)	31,895.169	

Based on the suggestion that the ratio between the number of items and the sample size should be at least one to five, the research data were collected a target sample size minimum of 300. During the full-scale survey, trained student interviewers contacted travelers at a predetermined popular tourist attraction in Phuket, Thailand. The target tourist for this study was restricted to Thai tourists who are over 18 years old and stayed at least one night at four or five star hotels in Phuket. A total of 420 tourists were asked to participate in a study. As 400 respondents was completed useable giving a response rate of 95.2%. The respondents' demographic profile was shown in table 1.

Table 1 shows the respondents' demographic profile. Among respondents, 54.8% females and 45.2 males, while 52.0% between 26 and 40 years old. In regard to status, 46.4% married, follow by single (39.8) and divorce (10.8). A bachelor's degree represents the largest education level group (45.8%). In the matter of occupation, 29.0% is government officer, 28.5% is business owner, 28.3% private officer, and 12.2% others respectively. The average of salary Bath is 31,895.169.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Measurement model

The first step of analysis need to conduct a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to ensure the distinctiveness of the constructs rates by same source, namely the service quality (i.e., tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, confidence, and communication), overall satisfaction, and positive word-of-mouth. As shown the table 2, factor loadings and Cronbach's alphas are satisfactory that is considered acceptable as indication of reliability [38]. The results of the factor analysis provide a cleaner factor structure with relatively higher factor loadings on the appropriate factors. The results showed with loadings ranging from 0.660 to 0.975. Reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) was conducted to test reliability and internal consistency of each factor. The results showed that the alphas coefficients ranged from 0.744 to 0.923.

The measurement model provided an adequate fit to the data ($X^2 = 906.152$, $df = 356$, $p < 0.01$; $RMSEA = 0.064$, $CFI = 0.934$, $TLI = 0.925$, $SRMR = 0.037$). Although the Chi-square statistic was significant, all of other fit indices were appropriate. Additionally, there are quite a number of reasons, including correlations among variables, why the Chi-square statistic may become significant. In this aspect, [38] proposed using relative/normed Chi-square (X^2/df) as an alternative statistic. It has been proposed that a ratio less than 3 indicates as acceptable fit. Here, the relative X^2/df was 2.54 ($X^2 = 906.152$, $df = 356$), suggesting that the hypothesized model fit the data moderately well.

The means, standard deviations, and correlations among variables are shown in table 3. The service

quality was not significantly related to overall satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth. As hypothesized, the overall satisfaction was positive related to positive word-of-mouth.

B. Hypotheses Testing

Figure 1 shows the results of path estimate analysis. The measurement model provided an adequate fit to the data ($X^2 = 1023.768$, $df = 418$, $p < 0.01$; $RMSEA = 0.062$, $CFI = 0.933$, $TLI = 0.925$, $SRMR = 0.037$). In table 4 presents the resulting standardized parameter estimates and variables for hypotheses H_{1a} to H_2 . The research hypotheses raised in previous sections are proven, and the results are statistically significant. H_{1a} , H_{1b} , H_{1c} , and H_{1d} show that information gain was not significantly related to the overall satisfaction. While, H_{1e} was significantly related to overall satisfaction ($\beta = 0.257$, $t\text{-value} = 2.254$, $p < 0.05$). This finding supports previous research into this area which links communication and overall satisfaction. This result is in agreement with [39] findings which showed the reliability and the validity of the LQI's structure of five dimensions. The LQI scale is shown to be a reliable instrument to measure overall service quality and predict the satisfaction and behavioral intentions of hotel guests. Moreover, in terms of the importance of the five dimensions of LQI instrument, the study indicated that "tangibility" and "communication" are the most important to affect satisfaction and behavioral intentions [39]. These findings further support the idea of communication also has the highest correlation with other service quality dimensions [40]. Moreover, there are similarities between the overall satisfaction by communication in this study and those described by [41].

Furthermore, H_2 indicates that the overall satisfaction positive impacts on positive word-of-mouth ($\beta = 0.846$, $t\text{-value} = 39.369$, $p < 0.05$). In addition, the overall satisfaction directly mediates the effect of communication to positive word-of-mouth. This finding confirms the association between overall satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth. This result agrees with the findings of other studies, in which [42] that for satisfaction and word-of-mouth relationships supported the relevant role of WOM valence as a moderator. Moreover, [43] found that overall customer satisfaction had a significant positive effect on positive word-of-mouth. It's also affect positive word-of-mouth directly and indirectly through customer satisfaction [44]. However, the findings of the current study do not support the previous research. [45] explained service quality has no relationship with customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction has direct relationship with behavior intentions of the customer, but customer satisfaction has worked as a mediator between customer service quality and behavior intentions of the customer in the hotel industry.

TABLE II: CONSTRUCTS

Construct	Item	Standard loading	Alpha
Tangibility	The front desk of hotel was visually appealing.	0.721	.923
	The employees of hotel had clean, neat uniform	0.745	
	The atmosphere of hotel's restaurant was inviting.	0.774	
	The hotel's shops were pleasant and attractive.	0.774	
	The outdoor surroundings of hotel were visually attractive.	0.809	
	The hotel was bright and well lighted.	0.824	
	The hotel's interior and exterior were well maintained.	0.795	
	The hotel was clean	0.788	
Reliability	My reservation was handle efficiently	0.834	.903
	My guestroom was ready as promised	0.810	
	TV, radio, A/C, lights, and other mechanical equipment worked properly.	0.859	
	I got what I paid for.	0.845	
Responsiveness	Hotel's employees responded promptly to my requests.	0.819	.862
	Informative literature about the hotel was provides.	0.798	
	Hotel's employees were willing to answer my questions.	0.685	
	Hotel's employees responded quickly to solve my problems.	0.744	
	Room service of hotel was prompt.	0.721	
Confidence	Hotel's employees knew about local places of interest.	0.809	.908
	Hotel's employee treated me with respect.	0.789	
	Hotel's employees were polite when answering my questions.	0.855	
	The hotel provided a safe environment.	0.830	
	The hotel's facilities were conveniently located.	0.792	
Communication	I received undivided attention at the front desk.	0.850	.901
	Reservationists tried to find out my particular needs.	0.877	
	Hotel's employees anticipated my needs.	0.825	
Overall satisfaction	When hotel promises to provide a service, it does so.	0.660	.744
	Hotel shows dependability in handling service problems.	0.910	
Positive word-of-mouth	I will recommend this hotel to friends, family, and relatives.	0.975	.928
	I will say positively service regarding this hotel to friends, family, and relatives.	0.853	

 $\chi^2 = 906.152$, $df = 356$, $p < 0.01$; $RMSEA = 0.064$, $CFI = 0.934$, $TLI = 0.925$, $SRMR = 0.037$

TABLE III: CORRELATION MATRIX

	Mean	Standard Deviation	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1.Tangibility	5.98	.835						
2.Reliability	5.95	.895	.725**					
3.Responsiveness	6.02	.795	.746**	.771**				
4.Confidence	5.99	.835	.677**	.726**	.780**			
5.Communication	5.90	.981	.637**	.599**	.627**	.711**		
6.Overall satisfaction	5.17	1.298	-.046	-.061	-.078	-.069	.001	
7.Positive word-of-mouth	4.98	1.530	.006	-.047	.012	-.051	.005	.661**

** Sig at 0.01 level

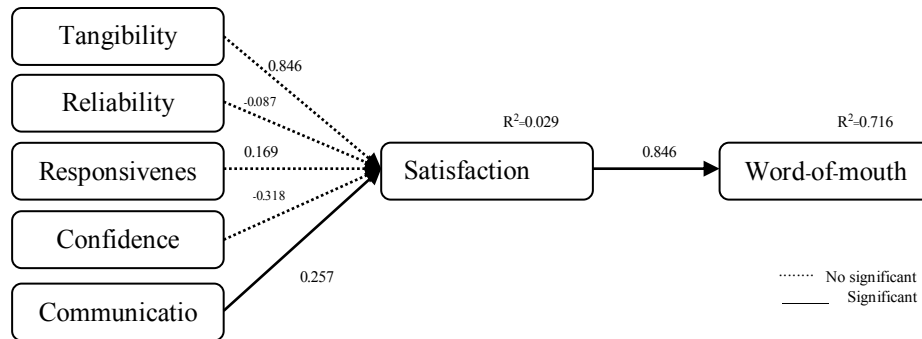


Fig. 1 Path estimate testing

TABLE IV: STANDARDIZE STRUCTURAL ESTIMATES AND HYPOTHESES TEST

Hypotheses	Path	Estimate	t-value	Results
H _{1a}	Tangibility → Overall satisfaction	-0.046	-0.349	Not Support
H _{1b}	Reliability → Overall satisfaction	-0.087	-0.493	Not Support
H _{1c}	Responsiveness → Overall satisfaction	0.169	0.536	Not Support
H _{1d}	Confidence → Overall satisfaction	-0.318	-1.519	Not Support
H _{1e}	Communication → Overall satisfaction	0.257	2.254	Support
H ₂	Overall satisfaction → Word-of-mouth	0.846	39.369	Support

V. CONCLUSTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, these results show that there is a linkage among service quality, overall satisfaction, and positive word-of-mouth. The result suggests that by identifying the service quality may improve quality to hotel. Hotel manager can be better to understand the role of service quality and design characteristics to enhance the hotel to the desirable customer segments. The present study adds insight into the infrequent literature by showing that tourist perceptions demonstrate different of interest in service quality in hotel. The results suggest that the likelihood of communication is higher than any factors.

From managerial perspectives, hotel managers should target perceive communication of service quality if they intend to produce growth in hotel effectively and efficiently. In summary, this study illustrates the significance of hotel and how various tourist segments may be differentiated based on service quality. It also supports to generate direct customer satisfaction, which could affect to positive word-of-mouth. The communication can be considered as auxiliary for increasing the customer's satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth. To accomplish this, the hoteliers should provide well-trained staff to improve the service quality and increase employee performance by emphasizing on working together for the benefit of the customer. It can help staff to provide service in a quick manner, treat customers fairly, and truly understand the customer needs. The customers will perceive the staff service during their communication with hotel staffs which lead to the customer satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth. Besides, the feedback of

customers is another crucial factor that the hotelier must take into account. The hotel management should also implement customer satisfaction analysis so that they can see positive and negative points in customer service. This tool can be very helpful for improving the service quality. If the hotel management can carry out as above mentioned, they will earn new and repeat customers.

The generalizability of these results is subject to certain limitations. For instance, the results of the current study have shed light on several important issues, some point needs to be examined in future research. Since this study was used to purposive sampling, results cannot be generalized. For example, the finding should be interpreted with caution when applied to difference types of the hotel. Further research should be done to investigate the proposed relationships in other types of hotels such as resort, boutique hotels or budget hotels etc. Moreover, future research should be concentrated on the investigation of qualitative method that involve in-depth interview of hotel manager and customer, in order to assess other possible dimensions and characteristics that can be more completely illustrate service quality dimension to hotel industry.

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