

**การรับรู้คุณภาพบริการ ส่วนประสมทางการตลาด และส่วนประสมรูปลักษณ์การบริการ ของ  
นักท่องเที่ยวต่างชาติ กรณีโรงแรม 5 ดาว เมืองพัทยา จังหวัดชลบุรี**  
**The Perception of Service Quality, Service Marketing Mix, and Appearance Mix  
of International Tourists: A Case of Five-Star Hotels, Pattaya Chonburi**

ไอรดา แดงประเสริฐ<sup>1</sup> ตินิกานต์ สังข์สุวรรณ<sup>2\*</sup> อภิญญา อิงอาจ<sup>3</sup>  
Airada Dangprasert Tinikan Sangsuwan Apinya Ingard

**บทคัดย่อ**

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาการรับรู้คุณภาพบริการ ส่วนประสมทางการตลาดสำหรับธุรกิจบริการ และส่วนประสมรูปลักษณ์การบริการของนักท่องเที่ยวต่างชาติ กรณีโรงแรม 5 ดาว เมืองพัทยา จังหวัดชลบุรี การวิจัยเป็นการวิจัยเชิงปริมาณ เพื่อเปรียบเทียบข้อมูลประชากรศาสตร์ การรับรู้ต่อคุณภาพการบริการ ส่วนประสมทางการตลาดสำหรับธุรกิจบริการ และส่วนประสมรูปลักษณ์การบริการ ในการตัดสินใจเลือกบริการโรงแรมระดับห้าดาว กลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นนักท่องเที่ยวต่างชาติจำนวน 405 คนที่เคยมีประสบการณ์ใช้บริการโรงแรมระดับ 5 ดาวในเมืองพัทยา จังหวัดชลบุรี

ผลการวิจัย 1) การรับรู้คุณภาพการบริการของนักท่องเที่ยวต่างชาติที่เลือกใช้บริการในโรงแรมระดับ 5 ดาว อยู่ในระดับต่ำ (3.38) 2) ส่วนประสมทางการตลาดสำหรับธุรกิจบริการของนักท่องเที่ยวต่างชาติที่เลือกใช้บริการในโรงแรม 5 ดาว อยู่ในระดับต่ำ (3.43) 3) อายุ สถานภาพสมรส และรายได้เฉลี่ยต่อเดือนที่แตกต่างกันมีความสัมพันธ์กับการรับรู้ส่วนประสมรูปลักษณ์การบริการของนักท่องเที่ยวต่างชาติ ในการตัดสินใจเลือกใช้บริการโรงแรมระดับ 5 เมืองพัทยา จังหวัดชลบุรี 4) การรับรู้ปัจจัยด้านคุณภาพการบริการมีความสัมพันธ์กับการรับรู้ต่อส่วนประสมรูปลักษณ์การบริการ ในการตัดสินใจเลือกใช้บริการโรงแรมระดับ 5 ดาวในระดับปานกลางอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ ( $r = .735$ ) ที่ระดับ 0.05 5.) การรับรู้ด้านส่วนประสมทางการตลาดสำหรับธุรกิจบริการ มีความสัมพันธ์กับการรับรู้ส่วนประสมรูปลักษณ์การบริการในการตัดสินใจเลือกใช้บริการโรงแรมระดับ 5 ดาวในระดับปานกลางอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ ( $r = .763$ ) ที่ระดับ 0.05

**คำสำคัญ:** คุณภาพการบริการ ส่วนประสมทางการตลาด ส่วนประสมรูปลักษณ์การบริการ

**Abstract**

The research studied the causal relationships between the perceptions of service quality, service marketing mix, and the appearance mix of international tourists staying at five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi. Quantitative research was implemented using a sample of 405 international tourists who experienced five-star hotel service.

<sup>1</sup> นิสิตปริญญาโท สาขาการจัดการการท่องเที่ยวระหว่างประเทศ คณะบริหารธุรกิจ มหาวิทยาลัยบูรพา

<sup>2</sup> อาจารย์ประจำ คณะบริหารธุรกิจ มหาวิทยาลัยบูรพา

<sup>3</sup> อาจารย์ประจำ คณะเทคโนโลยีสารสนเทศและการสื่อสาร มหาวิทยาลัยศิลปากร

\* Corresponding Author e-mail: tinikan@go.buu.ac.th

The major findings were as follows. 1) The perception of service quality in five-star hotels was at a low level (3.38). 2) The perception of service marketing mix in five-star hotels was at a low level (3.43). 3) Age, marital status, and average monthly income were significantly related to the perception of appearance mix in five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi. 4) The perception of service quality was significantly related to the perception of appearance mix in the decision to select five-star hotels at a moderate level ( $r = .735$ ). 5) The perception of service marketing mix was significantly related to the perception of appearance mix in the decision to select five-star hotels at a moderate level ( $r = .763$ ).

**Keywords:** Service Quality Service Marketing Mix Appearance Mix

## Introduction

The growth of the hotel business is highly dependent on the expansion of transportation to cater for the continual increase in the number of tourists. In 2016, the number of medium to small-sized hotels in Thailand rose by 14.7% compared to the previous year, and competition for customers also increased, while the Thai Hotels Association announced a 10% increase in revenue and higher average occupancy in 2017 than during the previous year.

Pattaya, one of the districts in Chonburi Province in Thailand, is well known as a tourist paradise for both Thais and foreigners due to its beautiful scenery and landscapes close to urban lifestyle areas. The tourism business in Pattaya has mushroomed with attractions such as beaches, temples, parks, and museums.

The hotel business is causally related to tourist movement, and various tourist attractions compel travelers to stay overnight or for several days to visit and enjoy all the tourist areas. Tourist movement mediates between travelers and tourism activities and is the key to success for the whole tourism business. Different price settings for each type of accommodation can also stimulate the local economy, and tourists can choose the service that best suits their personal preferences and needs (Wells & Prensky, 1996). Therefore, this research investigated the current situation and condition of the hotel business in Pattaya and determined how demographics influenced the selection of accommodation by international tourists in Pattaya. The results can be used as a guideline to develop Thai hotel business services to meet the diverse needs of guests and become competitive on an international level.

## Research objectives

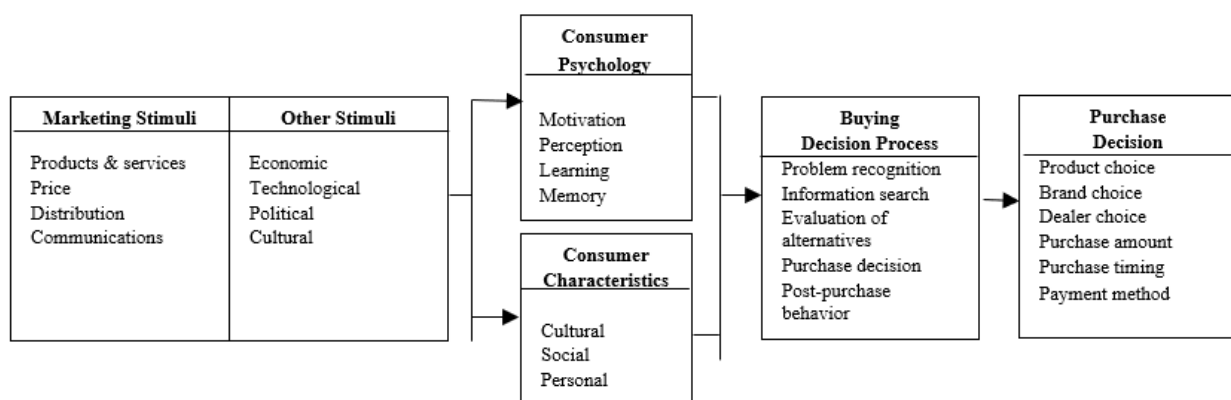
The three research objectives were to:

1. Compare the perception of the appearance mix of international tourists to select five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi.
2. Investigate the perception of service quality related to the appearance mix of international tourists to select five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi.
3. Investigate the perception of service marketing mix factors related to the appearance mix of international tourists to select in five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi.

## Literature review

### Customer behavior

Kotler's Consumer Behavior Model (Figure 1) was constructed based on consumer motivation for decision-making in purchasing products and services (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Stimulus, as the consciousness of the consumer, leads to the purchasing decision known as a buyer's black box. This refers to customer interaction with past experiences when making a buying decision. This process can be influenced by various factors. Dara Teepapal (2003) stated that consumer behavior refers to actions that are not directly related to any consumer assortment. The decision-making process toward purchasing action for products and services depends on their uses and needs.



**Figure 1** Consumer behavior model

Source: Kotler and Keller (2012)

### Appearance mix

#### Room quality

Room quality refers to delivering the room at a suitable time, place, style, and psychological characteristics depending on the consumers' needs and expectations of the service to meet high satisfaction. High satisfaction of consumers can lead to repeated visits and an expanded reputation which can positively impact the image of service. Gronroos, C. (2001) defined room quality as customer perception when assessing the quality of the room by comparing the needs or expectations with the actual services. Consistent room quality is required to earn a good reputation.

#### Food and beverage

Food and beverage refers to the service related to food and drinks for customers. Some hotels offer a buffet for customers to select food from a table arranged by category or type of food. Kuhn, V., Benetti, A., Anjos, S., & Limberger, P. (2018) stated that food and beverage service also refers to hotels with a wide selection as well as the quality of food, the number of dishes, food service standards, variety of dishes, presentation of food and the speed and quality of staff

service in general. A study by Kevin Nield (2000) found that food service was an important contributor to tourist satisfaction for hotel selection, with significant differences in satisfaction levels depending on food and beverage service among Eastern and Western Europeans and Romanian tourists. Rakesh Dani (2018) confirmed that the satisfaction of guests toward food and beverage service plays a very important role in the hotel and tourism industry.

### **Facilities**

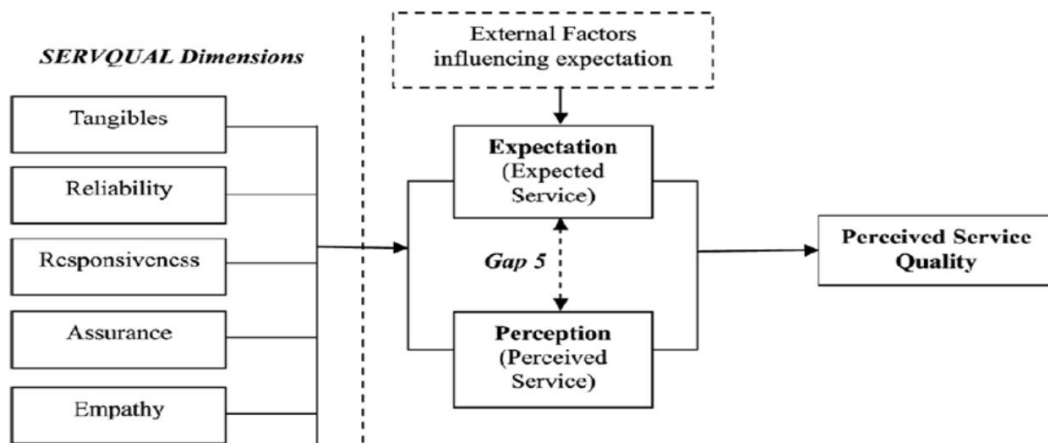
Products designed for the convenience of customers using hotel rooms create and add value to the hotel. Facilities differ in terms of relaxation convenience and may include various styles of restaurants with excellent chefs, a swimming pool, a fitness center, and a spa that relax the body and mind. The service perception of customers can also be influenced by the atmosphere created as a result of the interior and exterior facility features (Heung et al., T. 2012).

### **Service quality**

Perceived quality is defined as the customer's perception of the overall quality or superiority of a product or service with respect to the intended purpose relative to alternatives. This perception cannot necessarily be objectively determined because perception is a subjective concept. Perceived quality is an intangible overall feeling about a brand that is generally based on underlying dimensions regarding reliability and performance. Aaker (1991) identified five dimensions of perceived service quality as (1) tangibles, (2) reliability, (3) responsiveness, (4) assurance, and (5) empathy (Figure 2).

1. Tangibles: The appearance of employees, physical facilities being offered, and equipment that forms part of the service.
2. Reliability: The way the service is being delivered, that is, the ability to deliver the promised service precisely and consistently.
3. Responsiveness: Willingness to help customers, respond to their queries, and provide rapid service.
4. Assurance: Understanding and courtesy of the staff and their capability to inspire trust and confidence.
5. Empathy: Helpful and caring about the customers' requirements, while providing individualized attention with sympathy.

Al Khattab and Aldehayyat (2011) analyzed the importance of service quality for business performance through the direct effect on customer satisfaction and the indirect effect on customer loyalty. The importance of service quality and service quality measurement has long been recognized, but limited research has addressed the structure and antecedents of the concept for the hotel industry.



**Figure 2** The five dimensions of service quality  
(Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml, 1991)

### Service marketing mix (7Ps) of accommodation service

Kontis and Lagos (2015) examined a conceptual framework (as shown in Figure 3) to evaluate multichannel marketing mixes of city hotels. The factors and criteria for evaluating the performance of a marketing channel were designed for five-star hotels in Attica, Greece. To determine indicators of multi-channel marketing, the study conducted in-depth interviews with sales and marketing decision-makers.

Yelkur (2000) stated that the elements in the service marketing mix positively influenced customer satisfaction. Results showed that companies should pay attention toward their employees as well as their customers to increase both employee motivation and customer satisfaction, supporting the argument that there is a positive correlation between marketing mix and satisfaction.

The marketing mix is an important marketing tactic that a company uses to promote its brand or product. A marketing mix helps the company to understand which products or services can best be utilized to plan a successful marketing campaign. A correct marketing mix allows the company to place the right product in the right market.

Components of the service marketing mix include the 7P Product, Price, Place, Physical Evidence, Promotion, People, and Process. The marketing mix is utilized in service businesses to promote brands or products in the marketplace.

### Customer satisfaction

Satisfaction is an attitude or evaluation formed by the customer when comparing their pre-purchase product expectations to their subjective perceptions of actual performance (Oliver, 1980). Kotler (2000) defined satisfaction as a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to expectation, while Yi (1990) stated that customer satisfaction is a collective outcome of

perception, evaluation, and psychological reactions to the consumption experience with a product/service.

Customer satisfaction can be defined as the customer's evaluation of the service consumption experience. Customers have different levels of satisfaction relating to diverse attitudes and perceived performance from the product/service.

### Customer expectation

Customer expectation relates to a mindset of ideas about a product, service, or brand. Expectation is an uncontrollable factor that includes past experience, advertising, perception at the time of purchase, background, attitude, and product image. Expectations can be influenced by pre-purchase beliefs, word-of-mouth communications, individual needs, customer experiences, and other personal attitudes. Different customers have diverse expectations based on their knowledge of a product or service.

### Conceptual framework

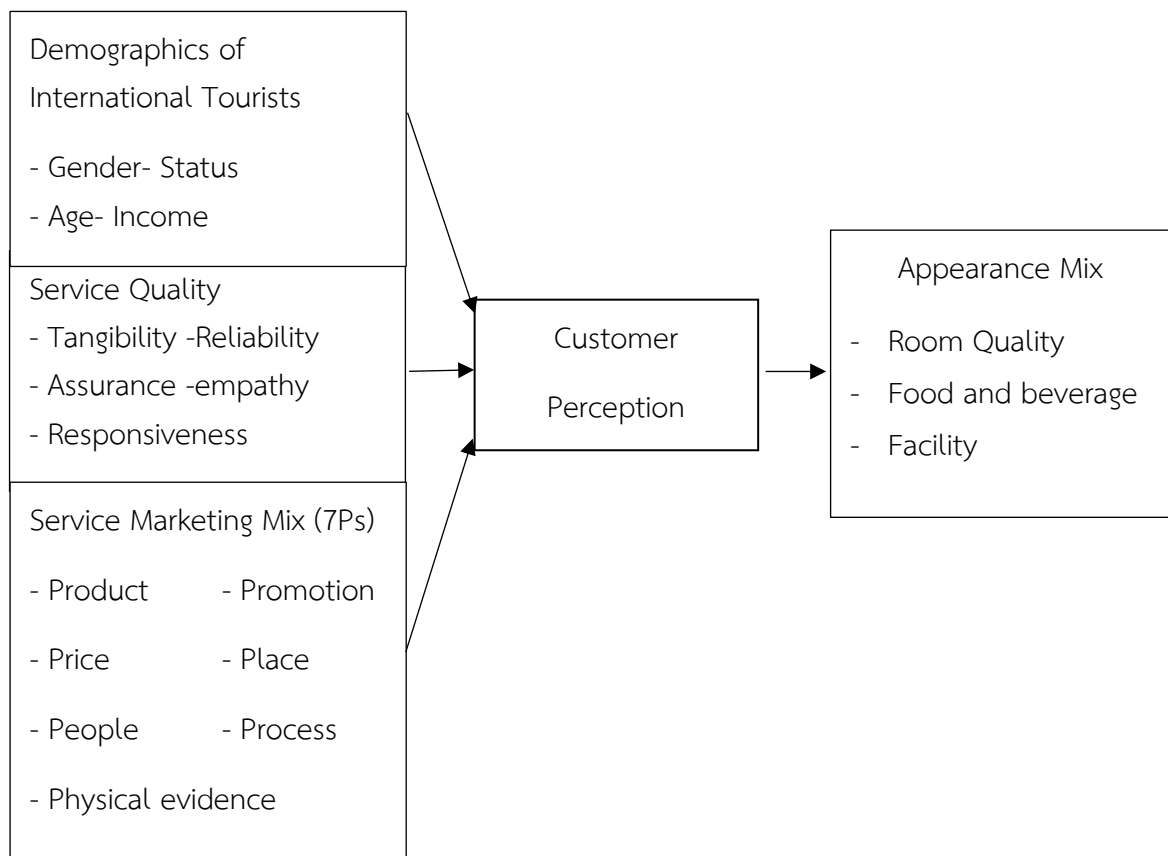


Figure 3 Conceptual framework

## Research hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: International tourists with diverse demographics have different perceptions toward appearance mix in the decision to select five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi.

Hypothesis 2: The perception of service quality influences the appearance mix in the decision to select five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi.

Hypothesis 3: The perception of service marketing mix influences the appearance mix in the decision to select five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi.

## Research methodology

A quantitative method was employed to assess the perception of service quality, service marketing mix, and appearance mix by international tourists in a case study of five-star hotels in Pattaya, Chonburi.

The study population comprised international tourists who had experienced five-star hotel service in Pattaya. The sample group was based on an unknown population, with data assumed to be a normal distribution. The sample group size was determined using Cochran's variance, defined as the maximum level of variance  $p = 50\%$  or  $0.5$  and  $q = 50\%$  or  $0.5$  at a  $95\%$  confidence level, and a  $5\%$  sampling tolerance was acceptable Cochran (1963).

The result of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) was between  $0.67$  and  $1.00$  for all items and aspects. According to Ong-lam and Wichitwetphaisan (2018), the index for IOC should be greater than  $0.5$  to be considered consistent. Thus, the results indicated that the tools were consistent and could be used to collect data.

A pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents. Results showed that the total Cronbach's alpha of the construct was  $.939$ , with a range of  $0.8$  to  $1.00$ , indicating very good reliability (Pallant, 2013). Hence, the questionnaire was used for collecting data.

The study instrument was distributed as a questionnaire to participants as an online survey and divided into six parts as follows:

Part 1 Demographic information, gender, age, education, occupation, income, and media.

Part 2 Behavior of international tourists.

Part 3 Perception of service quality expected when using product and service facilities provided by five-star hotels in Pattaya.

Part 4 Perception of the service marketing mix as the 7P's; Product, Price, Place, Physical Evidence, Promotion, People, and Process.

Part 5 Perception of the appearance mix in decision-making to select five-star hotels.

Part 6 Comments/Suggestions.

### Statistics used in the data analysis

The methods used to test each hypothesis were analyzed by descriptive statistics and inferential statistics using SPSS as follows.

Hypothesis 1: International tourists with different demographics have different perceptions when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi.

1.1 The T-test was employed to analyze the perspectives of international tourists depending on gender for decision-making when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi.

1.2 One-way analysis of variance was employed to analyze the perspectives of international tourists of different ages toward appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi. The Least Significant Difference (LSD) test was applied to test each pair of variables, with significance level set at .05 or confidence level at 95%.

1.3 One-way analysis of variance was employed to analyze the perspectives of international tourists with different marital status toward appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi. The Least Significant Difference (LSD) test was applied to test each pair with a significance level set at .05 or a confidence level at 95%.

1.4 One-way analysis of variance was employed to assess the perspectives of international tourists with different incomes toward the appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi. The Least Significant Difference (LSD) test was applied to test each pair with significance level set at .05 or confidence level at 95%.

Hypothesis 2: Pearson's correlation was applied to analyze the perceptions of service quality on the decision to select five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi. The Least Significant Difference (LSD) test was employed to test each pair with significance level set at .05 or confidence level at 95%.

Hypothesis 3: Pearson's correlation was applied to analyze the perceptions of service marketing mix on the decision to select five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi. The Least Significant Difference (LSD) test was employed to test each pair with significance level set at .05 or confidence level at 95%.

## Data analysis and results

General information was analyzed using frequency and percentage to identify the demographics of the survey participants.

**Table 1** Frequency and percentage of participant demographics

Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	117	28.9
Female	288	71.1
Age (years)		
Less than 20-20	53	13.1
21-30		



Demographics		Frequency	Percentage
	31-40	252	62.2
	41-50	79	19.5
		19	4.7
Marital status			
	Single	222	54.8
	Married	176	43.5
Education			
	Lower than bachelor's degree	71	17.5
	Bachelor's degree	285	70.4
	Master's degree	46	11.4
	Doctoral degree	3	.7
Occupation			
	Private employee	66	16.3
	Private business	98	24.2
	Government employee	138	34.1
	Student	84	20.7
	Housewife	14	3.5
	Unemployed	3	.7
	Other	2	.5
Income			
	Less than US\$ 2,000	232	57.3
	US\$ 2,001-4,000	154	38.0
	More than US\$ 4,001	15	3.7
Media used to select the hotel			
	Advertising on TV	12	2.8
	Advertising on radio	3	.7
	Advertising on phones/tablet	53	12.2
	Documents/brochures	63	14.5
	Friend/acquaintance	120	27.7
	Travel agency online	179	41.3

## Inferential statistical analysis

**Table 2** Comparison of gender influence on the decision of international tourists to select five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi (n = 405)

Appearance Mix in the decision to select five-star hotels						
	Gender	n	$\bar{X}$	SD	t	Sig.
Overall	Male	117	3.55	.55	-4.575	.000**
	Female	288	3.33	.39		

\*\* significance level 0.01

Results in Table 2 showed that international tourists had different perceptions of appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels for each gender. Thus, research hypothesis 1. International tourists with diverse demographics have different perceptions toward appearance mix, so the decision to select five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi was accepted.

**Table 3** Comparison of the influence of age on the decision of international tourists to select five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi (n = 405)

Appearance Mix in the decision to select five-star hotels						
		df	SS	MS	F	Sig.
Table (Continued) overall	Between-group	3	4.396	1.465	7.237	.000**
	Within-group	401	81.187	.202		
	Total	404	85.583			

\*\* significance level 0.01

Results in Table 3 showed that international tourists in different age groups had significantly different perceptions of the appearance mix in five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi ( $P=.000$ ). This supported the research hypothesis 1.2: International tourists of different ages have different perceptions toward appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi.

**Table 4** Comparison of the perception of appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi by age group (n = 405)

Age (years)	n	$\bar{X}$	Less than 20 - 20 years	21-30 years	31-40 Years	41-50 years
			3.23	3.37	3.54	3.63
Less than 20-20	53	3.23	-	0.14*	0.31*	0.40*
21-30	254	3.37		-	0.17*	0.26*
31-40	79	3.54			-	0.09
41-50	19	3.63				-

\* significance level 0.05

Results in Table 4 compared personal factors classified by age group and level of appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi. International tourists less than 20-20 years had significantly different perceptions toward appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi compared to the other age groups: 21-30, 31-40, and 41-50. years ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 5** Comparison of the perception of appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi by marital status (n=405)

Appearance Mix in the decision to select five-star hotels		df	SS	MS	F	Sig.
Overall	Between-group	2	1.467	.733	3.504	.031**
	Within-group	402	84.117	.209		
	Total	404	85.583			

\*\* significance level 0.01

Results in Table 5 showed that international tourists with different marital status had no differences in perception toward appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi ( $P=.031^{**}$ ). Hence, research hypothesis 1.2: International tourists with different marital status have different perceptions toward appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi was rejected.

**Table 6** Comparison of personal factors classified by marital status and level of appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi (n = 405)

Marital status	n	$\bar{X}$	Single	Married	Divorced
			3.39	3.38	4.00
Single	226	3.39	-	0.01	0.60*
Married	175	3.38		-	0.61*
Divorced	4	4.00			-

\* significance level 0.05

Results in Table 6 compared the perception of appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi among international tourists to Thailand by marital status.

1. International tourists with single status had a higher level of perception toward appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi than the other groups, married and divorced, at a significance level of 0.05.

2. International tourists with married status had a higher level of perception toward appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi than the group with divorced status at a significance level of 0.05.

**Table 7** Comparison of the level of perception of appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi classified by income (n = 405)

Appearance Mix in the decision to select five-star hotels		df	SS	MS	F	Sig.
Overall	Between-group	2	11.280	5.640	30.513	.000**
	Within group	402	74.304	.185		
	Total	404	85.583			

\*\* significance level 0.01

Results in Table 7 showed that international tourists with different average monthly income had different levels of perception toward appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi at a significance level of 0.01. Thus, research hypothesis 1.4: International tourists with different income had different perceptions toward appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi was accepted.

**Table 8** Comparison of the perception of appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi classified by income (n=405)

Average monthly income			Less than US\$ 2,000	US\$ 2,001-4,000	More than US\$ 4,001
n	$\bar{X}$		3.29	3.48	4.03
Less than US\$ 2,000	232	3.29	-	0.18*	0.73*
US\$ 2,001-4,000	154	3.48		-	0.54*
More than US\$ 4,001	19	4.03			-

\* significance level 0.05

Results in Table 8 compared average monthly income and level of perception toward appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi. International tourists with average monthly income less than US\$ 2,000 had higher overall levels of perception than the other groups with an average monthly income of US\$ 2,001-4,000 and more than US\$ 4,001 at a significance level of 0.05.

**Table 9** Comparison of the relationship between service quality and perception of appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi (n=405)

Appearance Mix in the decision to select five-star hotels	Service quality		
	r	Sig	Level of relation
1. Tangibility	.753	.000**	Moderate
2. Reliability	.713	.000**	Moderate
3. Assurance	.743	.000**	Moderate
4. Empathy	.746	.000**	Moderate
5. Responsiveness	.720	.000**	Moderate
Overall	.735	.000**	Moderate

\*\* significance level 0.01

Results in Table 9 showed that there was a moderate level of positive relationship between service quality and perception to appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi, at a significance level of 0.05. Thus, research hypothesis 2: The perception of service quality influences the appearance mix in the decision to select five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi was accepted.

**Table 10** Comparison of the relationship between service marketing mix and perception to appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi (n=405)

Appearance Mix in the decision to select five-star hotels	Service marketing mix		
	r	Sig.	Level of relation
1. Product/service	.769	.000**	Moderate
2. Price	.779	.000**	Moderate
3. Place	.807	.000**	Moderate
4. Promotion	.713	.000**	Moderate
5. People	.811	.000**	Moderate
6. Process	.839	.000**	Moderate
7. Physical evidence	.624	.000**	Moderate
Overall	.763	.000**	Moderate

\*\* significance level 0.01

Results in Table 10 showed a moderate positive relationship between service marketing mix and perception toward appearance mix when selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi at a significance level of 0.05. Hence, research hypothesis 3: The perception of service marketing mix influences the appearance mix in the decision to select five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi was accepted.

## Summary of the findings

The study variables were as follows: 1. Demographics of international tourists in terms of gender, age, status, and income. 2. Service quality in terms of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. 3. Service marketing mix in terms of product, price, place, promotion, process, physical evidence, and people. 4. Perception of appearance mix in terms of room quality, food and beverage, and facilities in the decision-making process for selecting five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi.

1. Results of the demographic data analysis showed that 71.1% of the participants were women and 62.2% were in the age group 21-30 years old. Most of the respondents were single (54.8%) and held a bachelor's degree (70.4%). Government officer/state enterprises were the most popular occupation (34.1%), with 57.3% of the participants having a monthly income of less than US\$ 2,000. Travel agency online was the most popular media used to select the hotel at 41.3%.

2. The perception of service quality of international tourists toward selecting five-star hotels showed that most international tourists who completed the questionnaire were at a neutral level ( $\bar{X}=3.38$ ). When considering each aspect, all five aspects were at a low level as follows: tangibility ( $\bar{X}=3.40$ ), reliability ( $\bar{X}=3.35$ ), assurance ( $\bar{X}=3.48$ ), empathy ( $\bar{X}=3.33$ ), and responsiveness ( $\bar{X}=3.35$ ).

3. The perception of service marketing mix by international tourists toward selecting five-star hotels showed that most were at a neutral level ( $\bar{X}=3.43$ ). All 7 aspects were at a low level as product ( $\bar{X}=3.39$ ), price ( $\bar{X}=3.34$ ), place ( $\bar{X}=3.42$ ), promotion ( $\bar{X}=3.46$ ), process ( $\bar{X}=3.37$ ), physical evidence ( $\bar{X}=3.37$ ), and people ( $\bar{X}=3.39$ ).

4. Results found that international tourists of different ages and average monthly incomes had diverse perceptions toward appearance mix in decision-making to select five-star hotels at a significance level of 0.05.

The factors of service quality and service marketing mix showed a significant relationship with the perception toward appearance mix in decision-making to select five-star hotels at a level of .05, while there was a positive relationship at a high level that allowed the research hypothesis to be accepted.

## Discussion

Based on the objectives, the results of hypotheses testing for factors affecting the perception of appearance mix in decision-making to select five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi were as follows:

International tourists who selected five-star hotels in Pattaya Chonburi were mostly women aged 21-30 years, with single status, and from Asia. Women were likely to pay more attention to service of five-star hotels based on the perception of appearance mix such as room quality, food and beverage, and facilities in the decision-making process.

Physical evidence was ranked as the third priority among the other aspects of the service marketing mix. Kannan, Pokharel, and Kumar (2009) stated that physical evidence depends on travel experience including comfort during the stay, particularly the beds of the hotels, while Sarker, Aimin, & Begum (2012) claimed that physical evidence had a direct relationship with tourist satisfaction. Lashley, Morrison, and Randall (2005) stated that physical evidence was a crucial factor in creating a memorable experience by providing an emotional dimension. Results revealed that service quality had a significant influence on the decision-making of international tourists to stay in five-star hotels in Pattaya, Chonburi.

The findings confirmed the concepts of previous research toward the hotel service marketing mix. Ali (2021). stated that hotel staff members are hotel brand representatives who always live up to customers' expectations and perceptions during the first visit. Having well-trained service staff provides an unforgettable, unique memory for the customers (Shaw et al., A. 2011), and people have the strongest impact on tourist satisfaction and become an important part of building that satisfaction (Keh & Li, 2013). Results revealed that marketing mix had a significant effect on the decisions of international tourists to select five-star hotels in Pattaya, Chonburi. The seven service marketing mix factors and each aspect of perception toward appearance mix in five-star hotels had a moderate influence on all aspects of perception toward marketing mix such as product, price, place, promotion, process, physical evidence, and people at a significance level of 0.01.

## **Recommendations, limitations, and future research**

The managerial implications provided in this study as well as the theoretical implications, should be considered for future research as follows:

1. Qualitative research, such as in-depth interviews and focus groups with questionnaires, should be conducted to collect more specific information for entrepreneurs to develop and improve the service to meet the diverse demands of international tourists.
2. Due to the limited time constraints of this research, marketing strategies were not studied. Future research can examine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and competitors to improve strategic planning and development.
3. Further studies can test the relationship between repurchasing behaviors and hotel service, with data analyzed for strategic planning to attract new customers and maintain repeat customers.
4. The perceptions of service quality, service marketing mix, and the appearance mix of international tourists highlighted in this study can be used as a guideline to develop services to meet the needs of various guests, and effectively compete in the hotel industry.

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