

การวิเคราะห์คำวิจารณ์ของนักท่องเที่ยวที่ใช้บริการสปาในเมืองท่องเที่ยวหลัก
AN ANALYSIS OF SPA TOURIST REVIEWS IN MAJOR TOURISM CITIES

อัศวิน แสงพิกุล

Aswin Sangpikul

สาขาการท่องเที่ยวและการโรงแรม มหาวิทยาลัยธุรกิจบัณฑิต
Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Dhurakij Pundit University

บทคัดย่อ

ด้วยงานวิจัยที่รวบรวมข้อมูลทุติยภูมิเกี่ยวกับการใช้บริการธุรกิจสปาของนักท่องเที่ยวต่างชาติ ยังมีอยู่อย่างจำกัด งานวิจัยนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์การวิจัยเพื่อวิเคราะห์คำวิจารณ์ของนักท่องเที่ยวที่ใช้บริการธุรกิจสปาโดยจำแนกออกเป็นหัวข้อ (subjects) ประเด็น (themes) และโครงสร้างคำวิจารณ์ (constructs) เพื่อให้ได้ข้อมูลอันเป็นประโยชน์ต่อผู้ประกอบการธุรกิจสปา และดำเนินการวิจัยโดย 1) สำรวจธุรกิจสปาประเภท day spa ที่จดทะเบียนกับกระทรวงสาธารณสุข เพื่อเป็นหลักในการค้นหาคำวิจารณ์ 2) กำหนดหลักเกณฑ์ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล 3) ค้นหาคำวิจารณ์ของนักท่องเที่ยวที่ใช้บริการธุรกิจสปาจากแหล่งข้อมูลทุติยภูมิ และ 4) ใช้การวิเคราะห์เนื้อหา (content analysis) ควบคู่กับความถี่และร้อยละ เพื่อจำแนกคำวิจารณ์ออกเป็นเชิงบวกและเชิงลบ

ผลการวิจัย พบว่า คำวิจารณ์ของนักท่องเที่ยวเกี่ยวกับการให้บริการของธุรกิจสปาในเมืองท่องเที่ยวหลักของประเทศไทย สามารถแบ่งออกเป็น 13 หัวข้อหลัก (subjects) และจำแนกออกเป็นเชิงบวกและเชิงลบได้อย่างละ 10 ประเด็น (themes) ทั้งนี้หากนำคำวิจารณ์ทั้งเชิงบวกและเชิงลบมาจัดกลุ่มในลักษณะของการวิเคราะห์องค์ประกอบหรือโครงสร้าง (constructs) เพื่อให้เกิดแนวคิดและเห็นองค์ประกอบหลักชัดเจนขึ้น สามารถแบ่งออกได้ 3 โครงสร้างที่คล้ายกันทั้งคำวิจารณ์เชิงบวกและเชิงลบ ซึ่งได้แก่ 1) พนักงานและการบริการ 2) สภาพแวดล้อมทางกายภาพ และ 3) ประเด็นด้านการตลาด ผลการวิจัยในครั้งนี้ได้ขยายองค์ความรู้ในเรื่องธุรกิจสปาเพื่อการท่องเที่ยวเชิงสุขภาพ อีกทั้งยังให้ข้อเสนอแนะที่เป็นประโยชน์ต่อผู้ประกอบการธุรกิจ สปาทั้งในด้านคำวิจารณ์เชิงบวกเพื่อรักษาจุดแข็งเอาไว้ และคำวิจารณ์เชิงลบเพื่อพัฒนาการให้บริการแก่ลูกค้า

คำสำคัญ : สปา การท่องเที่ยวเชิงสุขภาพ คำวิจารณ์ของนักท่องเที่ยว

ABSTRACT

Given the limited studies of secondary data regarding using spa services from foreign tourists, this study, therefore, has the research objectives to analyze tourist reviews regarding spa services, and categorize them into major subjects, themes and constructs. The study was conducted by 1) selecting registered day spas with the Ministry of Public Health 2) setting the criteria 3) searching for tourist reviews based on the registered day spas from the major secondary source and 4) employing a content analysis to analyze and categorize the reviews to positive and negative themes and constructs.

According to the findings, the study found that spa tourist reviews can be grouped into 13 major subjects, and categorized into 10 positive and negative themes. If further categorized into constructs, they can be grouped into 3 constructs: 1) services & staff 2) physical elements and 3) marketing related issues. Overall, the findings of this study expand the limited literature related to spa business and also provide useful recommendations for Thai spa establishments regarding maintaining the positive reviews and improving spa services with negative reviews.

Keywords : Spa, Health Tourism, Tourist Reviews

INTRODUCTION

Spa business has been gaining popularity in the past decade (Han, Kiatkawsin, Kim & Lee,

2017) due to the increasing demands of consumers to pursue a better quality of life and well-being

(Quintela, Costa & Correia, 2016). Spa business is directly associated with wellness tourism in that tourists spend some of their free time (or leisure time) to receive the services enhancing their physical and mental well-being. Spa business offers specific water-based facilities which may include health, relaxation and beauty services (Hashemi, Jusoh, Kiumarsi, & Mohammadi, 2015). Spa market in Thailand has been rapidly grown for decades due to the increasing health-conscious consumers among Thais and internationals (Kiatkawsin & Han, 2017) as well as the fame for high quality services, welcoming hospitality and inexpensive cost of living (Ministry of Public Health, 2014). This phenomenon consequently makes Thailand being one of the largest spa destinations in the Asia Pacific region (Kiatkawsin & Han, 2017). Today, wellness tourism is one of the target tourism products under Thailand 4.0 policy promoted by the government with the aims to accelerate Thailand's future economic growth and to earn higher incomes (Klaysung, 2016; Ministry of Public Health, 2014).

A growing market of wellness tourism (including spa market) has motivated international scholars to pursue a wide range of related research in this area. A review of literature indicates that there is an abundance of studies related to wellness tourism (including spa business) both in Thai and international contexts (Chieochankitkan & Sukpatch, 2014; Han et al., 2017; Hashemi et al., 2015; Tsai, Suh, & Fong, 2012). However, past research regarding online customer reviews seems to heavily concentrate on negative customer complaints about hotels and restaurants rather than examining both positive and negative customer feedback in other sectors of tourism related businesses (e.g. spa business). This study, therefore, will seek out another approach (perspective) by using the secondary data source to deeply understand spa tourist reviews from tourists' experiences and their perceptions of using spa services in Thailand's major tourism cities. The actual customers' experiences through their online reviews will be an important and effective tool to inform the service providers about their service performance; leading to better guest services and higher satisfaction (Dawson & Titz, 2012; Memarzadeh & Chang, 2015).

Given the above background, the current research aims to fulfill the research gaps and has the objectives to analyze tourist reviews regarding spa services, and categorize them into major subjects, themes and constructs. The benefits of the study will generate contributions for spa service providers in Thailand by better understanding

about the online spa reviews and their constructs (ideas).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Spa definition and types of spas

Spa generally is referred to water-based facilities that offer diverse types of treatments and cares for health, relaxation and beauty. Spa business or usually called "day spas" are the establishments who provide services related to health promotion. Day spas usually provide customers with clam and nurturing environment to receive a personal service. Their main services are massages, facial treatments, and body treatments. People use the services of day spas to revitalize their physical and mental health. Day spas are a subsector of wellness tourism which is mainly concerned with physical and mental well-being.

According to International Spa Association (2012 cited in Quintela et al., 2016), there are 7 different types of spas: day spa, club spa, medical spa, mineral spring spa, resort & hotel spa, cruise ship spa, and destination spa. Day spa, one of the most popular types for tourists, is a business that offers a variety of professionally administered spa services to day-use clients. Day spa is open to the public and offer a la carte spa service to customers who can enjoy one or two individual treatments or a full day treatment. Day spa is the focus of this study because it is the spa establishments that are widely found in major tourism cities and many tourists may have the experience of using the services of day spas. Learning what tourists review in websites will greatly benefit spa service providers.

The importance of online reviews

The widespread application of the Internet has led to a phenomenon known as eWOM or electronic word of mouth (Dawson & Titz, 2012, 67). According to Stauss (2000), eWOM may be defined as any positive or negative statement made by actual or former customers regarding a product or service, which is made available to a multitude of people via the Internet. The eWOM can take place in many ways such as customer reviews, web-based opinion platforms, discussion forums, news groups, blogs and other social media channels (Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004). An issue of concern for the tourism businesses is that the online reviews can be made anonymously and easily by anyone (Dawson & Titz, 2012). Thus, the online reviews can be made and spread the word-of-mouth without fear of identification (Black & Kelley, 2009). Generally,

online reviews can be mixed with positive and negative messages about a specific service or product (Xie, Miao, Kuo, and Lee, 2011). In spite of negative comments by customers, the online reviews can be valuable tools for service providers (e.g. spa business) to improve their services and correct service failure as well as to enhance company performance internally (Wagner, 2008 cited in Dawson & Titz, 2012). In addition, tourism businesses can use positive reviews as a marketing tool to increase sales and boost company reputation (Dawson & Titz, 2012). As there is a source of online reviews about spa business, it would be a great value to make the existing reviews more useful for spa business sector through an analysis of tourist reviews.

Previous literature about spa industry

A review of literature indicates that previous literature about spa industry may be classified into 2 groups: 1) empirical studies and 2) conceptual papers.

Regarding the empirical studies, most scholars used questionnaire surveys to deeply investigated common spa topics such as customer motivation, satisfaction, and perception. For example, Mak, Wong, & Chang (2009) examined the factors motivating travelers to search for spa experiences in China. The study revealed the 4 important factors pushing travelers to go for spas which are: relaxation/relief, escape, self-reward, health/beauty. The study also disclosed that tourists with different backgrounds had different perceptions of spa experiences. For example, European tourists perceived spa mainly for curative or therapeutic purposes while Americans perceived spa experience as a means of self-reward, and Chinese tourists used spa for the purposes of relaxation and escape motivations. Tsai, Suh, & Fong (2012) explored behaviors of male spa customers in Hong Kong and found that most respondents patronized a hotel spa due to relaxation purpose by mainly using body massage. The study revealed that Hong Kong hotel spas had performed up to customer expectation, except for the price of spa services, staff communication skills and knowledge, and security measures. Among the five services of spa hotels in Hong Kong, (environment, reliability, service experience, value and augmented service), the environment dimension was the important factor that significantly influenced respondents' satisfaction with hotel spa services.

For the conceptual papers, scholars recently reviewed the concepts of health tourism and wellness tourism literature in order to better

understand the concepts of these key terms. For instance, Quintela et al. (2016) reviewed the concepts of *health*, *wellness*, and *medical tourism* and classified them for future literature or research discussions. Health tourism is traveling both nationally and internationally to places and facilities, such as hospitals, clinics, day spas, bathing facilities, fitness centers and spa/wellness resorts with the purposes to maintain or enhance ones' well-being in mind and body through the experiences of health-promoting activities or services (Fernandes & Fernandes, 2013). With this regard, Quintela et al. (2016) addressed that there are two important issues under health tourism: wellness tourism and medical tourism. Wellness tourism (or recreational point of view) focuses on relaxation, leisure, escape from the routine environment whereas medical tourism (or therapeutic point of view) is associated with surgery and/or therapeutic treatments for cure and for preventing diseases. The authors concluded that wellness and medical tourism are integrated within the overall context of health tourism which is associated with preventive and curative health approaches.

Likewise, Stara & Peterson (2017) reviewed the wellness literature (including spa topics) in order to identify the theoretical conceptualizations of wellness and current wellness tourism practices, as well as the future market opportunities. The authors reviewed the related wellness articles and thematically categorized them based upon how the articles conceptualized wellness. The reviews disclosed five main conceptualization of wellness: 1) wellness as a state of well-being 2) wellness as a process of personal or self-improvement 3) wellness as an approach to professional care 4) wellness as a matter of community 5) wellness as a global topic. The authors addressed that understanding the meaning of wellness helps management of wellness businesses to position themselves on the wellness market by choosing to which demands they will respond with which services and products.

To conclude, given the examples of the literature review, although there is related literature about wellness and health tourism in terms of empirical studies and conceptual papers, the international literature still lacks of the analysis or discussion of secondary data that are available in terms of spa tourist reviews. These reviews mainly came from foreign customers who shared, reflected or commented about their experiences or perceptions about the spa services they used. *Unfortunately*, international scholars overlook the benefits of these existing secondary data to the spa service sector.

This study, therefore, aims to analyze the existing spa reviews for the greater benefits to spa industry.

METHODS

Online customer reviews regarding spa services in Thailand were the focus and the population of this study. These reviews came from customers (mainly tourists) who had used or experienced with spa services. After the services, they may wish to make a review by telling, sharing or reflecting their experiences or perceptions about the spa services in a travel related website. Before analyzing the reviews, spa business (spa establishments) was needed to be identified. In this study, spa business has to be registered with the Ministry of Public Health. These registered spas are the ones that have met certain standards required by the Ministry of Public Health, and they should be promoted for wellness tourism in Thailand. In order to increase data reliability, spa establishments in Bangkok (capital) and other major tourism cities in Thailand were included in the analysis. They were Chiang Mai (north), Nakhon Ratchasima (northeast), Pattaya (east), and Phuket (south).

Data collection was conducted during March - April 2018. Researcher as well as graduate students were employed to help to collect the data. Spa tourist reviews were collected through the secondary sources (e.g. Trip Advisor or other related review websites if available). Trip Advisor, a famous travel review website (based in USA), is regarded as the important and useful travel review website because it provides the reviews of travel-related products around the world (Memarzadeh & Chang, 2015). However, the data from secondary sources may have some limitations when compared to a questionnaire survey method in terms of complete information, therefore, the criteria for data collection (selecting samples) in this study were set and based on previous studies (Au, Buhalis, & Law, 2014; Memarzadeh & Chang, 2015).

1. Name of the registered day spas should be found in the travel review websites.

Only those found in these websites will be taken for data collection.

2. Day spas with 5 or more foreign customer reviews will be collected to provide reliable data.

3. The reviews in travel review websites will be collected for a maximum of 1-year period based on past studies' conduct due to sufficient information.

After gathering the data, the reviews (consisting of several comments/sentences) were firstly analyzed and identified (through content analysis) into an individual comment. It should be noted that, generally, one tourist will write one review about his/her spa experience. Inside one review, it may contain several comments (issues or subjects). This particular comment would be counted for one frequency, and would be later grouped into major subjects. Secondly, each individual comment was further analyzed and classified into the positive and negative issues. Thirdly, these positive and negative issues were categorized into different themes relating to spa services. Finally, several themes were grouped to establish a meaning construct. In addition to the content analysis, descriptive statistics were used to describe the data in terms of frequency and percentage.

FINDINGS

General information of spa tourist reviews

According to the Department of Health Service Support (2017), Bangkok (central region) has the highest number of registered day spas with 128 day spas, followed by Phuket (south) with 26 day spas, Pattaya (eastern) with 18 spas, Nakhon Ratchasima (northeast) with 7 day spas, and Chiang Mai (north) with 4 day spas. Given the 5 major tourism cities in Thailand, there is a total of 183 registered day spas. However, only 130 (71%) day spas met the study's criteria. Based on 130 day spas, there was a total of 723 spa reviews (tourists who wrote reviews) which were later taken into data analysis.

Table 1: Spa reviews categorized by major subjects

Major subjects	Frequency
1. Services of staff & spa therapists	660
2. Staff hospitality	524
3. Products & treatments	501
4. Rest & relaxation experience	428

Table 1: Spa reviews categorized by major subjects

Major subjects	Frequency
5. Decoration & environment	355
6. Spa facilities	329
7. Recommendations & non-recommendations	314
8. Prices	213
9. Language & communication	197
10. Complimentary services	136
11. Location & accessibility	119
12. Booking & reservation	67
13. Marketing & management	59
14. Others	21
Total	3,923

According to Table 1, an analysis of 723 spa reviews (scripts) produced 3,923 comments (incidents) regarding spa services. Following Memarzadeh & Chang (2015) using a frequency analysis, this frequency analysis was conducted to rank these 3,923 comments in terms of how frequently they were cited. These comments were later categorized into 13 major subjects: 1) services of staff & spa therapists, 2) staff hospitality, 3) products & treatments, 4) rest & relaxation experience, 5) decoration & environment, 6) rooms and facilities, 7)

recommendations, 8) prices, 9) language & communication, 10) complimentary services, 11) location & accessibility, 12) booking & reservation, 13) marketing & management. In addition to the major subjects, other minor issues may be, for example, payment and tips.

Based on the 13 major subjects of spa services as shown in Table 1, they were further analyzed based on positive and negative reviews and later categorized into different themes (Table 2) and main constructs (Table 3).

Table 2: Analyzing and categorizing positive spa reviews into different themes

Themes	Frequency	Examples of statements
1. Good skills of spa therapists	418 (17.7%)	“The massage skills of the therapists I had were awesome” “The staff are extremely professional and the massagers and treatments are done with the utmost care”
2. Friendliness of staff	402 (17.1%)	“Receptionist staff were excellent and very accommodating” “Great welcoming and amazing consumer service”
3. Relaxing experiences	338 (14.3%)	“Massage is so relaxing for me” “I feel really relaxing and comfortable”
4. Cleanliness	306 (12.9%)	“The spa is spotlessly clean” “The facility is extremely clean”
5. Beautiful decoration & environment	302 (12.7%)	“The grounds/facilities are really beautiful and peaceful” “The place is nicely decorated”
6. Recommendations	180 (7.6%)	“I really recommend everyone to visit this place and you will never regret it” “Highly recommended as the place is super clean and new”
7. Complimentary services e.g. free refreshments, tea, snacks, desserts, and transportation	129 (5.4%)	“Their complementary mango sticky rice and tea offers to you at the end” “They provided a welcome drink for us” “Pick-up and drop-off at your hotel is also complimentary within the city”

Table 2: Analyzing and categorizing positive spa reviews into different themes

Themes	Frequency	Examples of statements
8. English language	109 (4.6%)	“Therapists here can speak and understand English well. I have no problem with the massage and foot spa” “The therapist can understand good English and did a great job for the massage”
9. Good services & operations	75 (3.2%)	“I was invited to sit and enjoy welcoming drink whilst my hostess ran through the procedures” “A big thanks to lady receptionist who helped to arrange my spa booking and transport to / from the spa”
10. Product knowledge	64 (2.7%)	“Receptionist was very knowledgeable and explained the various spa/massage packages” “Front staff tell me and explain about the different treatments which is very good”
11. Other subjects (e.g. compensation, marketing)	41 (1.8%)	“An apologetic gift was offered since we had waited for more than 20 minutes for our treatments” “We got free points for using next time” “There is a promotion for using 2 treatments together”
Total	2,364 (100%)	

According to Table 2, the first theme of positive spa reviews that were most cited is “good skills of spa therapists” (17.7%) while the second theme is “friendliness of staff” (17.1%) and the third theme is “relaxing atmosphere” (14.3%). The fourth dimension is “cleanliness” (12.9%), followed by the fifth theme “beautiful decoration

& environment” (12.7%), and the sixth theme “recommendations” (7.6%). The seventh theme is “complimentary services” (5.4%), while the eighth theme is “English language” (4.6%), followed by the ninth theme “good services” (3.2%), and the tenth theme “product knowledge” (2.7%).

Table 3: Main constructs of positive spa reviews

Main constructs & themes	Frequency
1. People & services (42.6%)	
1.1 Good skills of spa therapists (17.7%)	418
1.2 Friendliness of staff (17.1%)	402
1.3 Good English language (4.6%)	109
1.4 Good services (3.2%)	75
2. Emotional & physical elements (39.9%)	
2.1 Relaxing experiences (14.3%)	338
2.2 Cleanliness (12.9%)	306
2.3 Beautiful decoration & environment (12.7%)	302
3. Marketing related issues (17.5%)	
3.1 Recommendations (7.6%)	180
3.2 Complimentary services (5.4%)	129
3.3 Product knowledge (2.7%)	64
3.4 Others (1.8%)	41
Total	2,364

Table 3 presents 3 main constructs of positive spa reviews: 1) people & services (42.6%) 2) emotional & physical elements (39.9%) and 3) marketing related issues (17.5%). These 3 main constructs were emerged by grouping similar themes into main constructs. In

detail, the 2,364 reviews from Table 2 with 11 different themes were carefully sorted and classified based on similar contents; resulting in 3 appropriate constructs. Each construct was mainly labeled based on the common themes under it. A name of each construct will help to provide a

more meaningful and better understanding of spa services. Among the 3 constructs, people & services is the largest construct. Under the first construct (people & services), there are 4 related

themes while the second construct (physical elements) has 3 themes. There are also 4 themes under the third construct of marketing issues.

Table 4: Analyzing and categorizing negative spa reviews into different themes

Themes	Frequency	Examples of statements
1. Poor skills of spa therapists	258 (22.7%)	“The massage quality is not properly trained” “The therapists are not up to standard, the service is bad” “They couldn’t follow my instructions and did not respond to my requests”
2. Poor behavior or etiquette of spa therapists	224 (19.7%)	“Etiquette of the therapists were not good” “I got a different masseur and she was extremely rude, not smile, and rush to finish her work. I did not enjoy my massage this time” “The therapist was rude from beginning to end, no smile at all, no attention to details, the massage was rough and without passion”
3. Non-recommendations for using spa services	134 (11.8%)	“Would not suggest this place at all unless you don’t have a choice” “I would not recommend this pricy spa” “Can't recommend this place and will not be returning”
4. Noise disturbance	109 (9.6%)	“The masseur is very noisy, always talking to her co-worker on the other room, so it’s very irritating” “The two ladies kept talking with each other for the whole time, making it a bit hard to relax completely” “Another bad thing is the masseurs talk a lot among themselves while giving massage which is very irritating at times”
5. Weak English language	88 (7.7%)	“The staff at this spa didn’t understand English” “Receptionists don't appear to speak much English” “The two therapists we encountered hardly know English so we gave up to explain to them”
6. Poor staff/receptionists	76 (6.7%)	“The lady at the front desk was condescending and rude” “The attitude of the receptionist put me off this place for life” “The lady at the reception was a little rude and unwelcoming and mostly interested in getting the money and that's it”
7. Poor facilities and atmosphere	68 (5.9%)	“The atmosphere of the spa is cold” “Room too cold and the music too loud” “Bath and shower did not work very well” “The treatment room, ceiling and walls were full with molt”
8. High price	59 (5.2%)	“It is more pricy than the street spas and also worse than those, against our expectation” “The price was super expensive too for 1 hour service” “The spa is over price with ordinary service”
9. Poor products	56 (4.9%)	“We also feel the aroma oil used is not in good quality” “Facial cream and mask are not good quality products” “I don’t know what massage oil they use, smells very awful”
10. Uncleanliness	47 (4.2%)	“The toilet had bad smell” “Bathrooms and shower need some improvements” “Towels are smelly and some spots on it”
11. Others (e.g. limited products, marketing)	16 (1.4%)	“No choice of massage oil at all” “The manager tries to sell a high price package for me” “Front desk did not offer any discounts even we buy 3 packages”
Total	1,135 (100%)	

With regard to Table 4, the first theme of negative spa reviews that were most cited is “poor skills of spa therapists” (22.7%) while the second theme is “poor behavior or etiquette of spa therapists” (19.7%) and the third theme is “non-recommendations for using services” (11.8%). The fourth theme is “noise disturbance” (9.6%), followed by the fifth theme “weak English

language” (7.7%), and the sixth theme “poor staff/receptionists” (6.7%). The seventh theme is “poor facilities and atmosphere” (5.9%), while the eighth theme is “high price” (5.2%), followed by the ninth theme “poor products & treatments” (4.9%), and the tenth theme “uncleanliness” (4.2%).

Table 5: Main constructs of negative spa reviews

Main constructs & themes	Frequency
1. People & services (66.6%)	
1.1 Spa therapists (56.7%)	
1.1.1 Poor skills of spa therapists (22.7%)	258
1.1.2 Poor behavior or etiquette of spa therapists (19.7%)	224
1.1.3 Noise disturbance from spa therapists (9.6%)	109
1.1.4 Weak English language (4.7%)	53
1.2 Front desk staff (9.9%)	
1.2.1 Poor services of front desk staff (6.7%)	76
1.2.3 Weak English language (3.2%)	35
2. Marketing related issues (23.3%)	
3.1 Non-recommendations (11.8%)	134
3.2 High price (5.2%)	59
3.3 Poor spa products (4.9%)	56
3.4 Others (1.4%)	16
3. Physical elements (10.1%)	
3.1 Poor facilities & atmosphere (5.9%)	68
3.2 Uncleanliness (4.2%)	47
Total	1,135

Table 5 presents 3 main constructs of negative spa reviews: 1) people & services (66.6%) 2) marketing issues (23.3%) 3) physical elements (10.1%). The names of negative constructs are similar to those of the positive constructs, and they were emerged by grouping similar themes into main constructs. In detail, the 1,135 reviews from Table 5 with 11 different themes were carefully sorted and classified based on similar contents; resulting in 3 appropriate constructs. Like the positive construct, each negative construct was mainly labeled based on the common themes under it. A name of each construct will help to provide a more meaningful and better understanding of spa services. Among the 3 constructs, people & services is the largest construct. Under the first construct (people & services), there are 2 key components which are spa therapists and front desk staff. Each component has sub-themes. Whereas, the second construct (marketing issues) is comprised of 4 sub-themes, while there are 2 sub-themes under the third construct of physical elements.

It should be noted that the constructs of positive and negative reviews were found to be

similar to each other by containing the 3 common constructs: people & services, physical elements, and marketing issues. The findings of the positive and negative constructs are similar to each other because spa customers will perceive and experience an overall spa service in one single visit. What meet their expectation and satisfaction will be produced positive feedback. In contrast, what are below standard and do not meet their expectation and satisfaction will be produced negative feedback. Therefore, the positive and negative feedback could be established into a similar spa construct depending on how customers will perceive the spa services positively or negatively during service encounter.

DISCUSSIONS

Based on the findings, the major subjects based on spa reviews were about services of staff, staff hospitality, products & treatments, and rest & relaxation experience. These subjects are common reviews for customers to talk about when they use spa services because they are the core components of spa experiences through the spa service process starting from selecting a product or treatment,

receiving the services by spa personnel, and feeling relaxed during the spa services. For the most cited reviews regarding the services of staff & therapists, this suggests that spa personnel (especially spa therapists) may be regarded as one of the key success factors and most important attribute for spa industry because they are the key persons who directly deliver spa experience to customers. Customers who are happy or satisfied with spa services will mainly depend on spa therapists or masseurs who provide direct services. This finding is consistent to previous empirical studies indicating that spa personnel are the most important attribute for spa industry. For example, Lo et al., (2015) found that professional therapists were the most important attribute in providing spa service quality in China. Likewise, the quality of spa therapists were placed with high expectations from customers in Thailand (Chieochankitkan & Sukpatch, 2014).

Regarding the themes of positive spa reviews, the top three themes which were most cited are 1) good skills of spa therapists 2) friendliness of staff and 3) relaxing atmosphere. These three positive themes are similar to the above discussion because they are related to people (spa personnel) and their services. As noted, spa personnel, particularly spa therapists, may be regarded an essential factor who directly deliver spa experience (rest & relaxing experience) to customers. They are the key person who spends most of time interacting (servicing) with customers (high service encounters). Therefore, it could be common that spa tourists may wish to review (criticize) about the skills and services of spa therapists rather than other issues. This finding is also consistent with other studies indicating that services of spa therapists were the top concern when using spa services (Mak et al., 2009; Tsai et al., 2012).

Meanwhile, the top three negative themes were about 1) poor skills of spa therapists 2) poor behavior/etiquette of spa therapists and 3) non-recommendations for using spa services. Since the services of spa therapists are the core (true) element of spa experiences and relaxing emotions (Lo et al., 2015; Tsai et al., 2012), it is very

common that customers (tourists) may expect to receive favorable services from spa service providers. Once this element cannot meet their expectations, they may feel unfavorable or less satisfied with the spa service providers (spa therapists), and may want to give their feedbacks or complaints to spa establishments through the review websites. In addition, other services provided by spa staff (for example, reservation, reception, staff hospitality, and extra requests) are also perceived by customers during the service encounters. These minor services together with the core services provided by spa therapists may contribute to the overall customer satisfaction because all of these services are the essential parts of the service quality in spa industry (Chieochankitkan & Sukpatch, 2014; Lo et al., 2015). Any poor services occurring during pre-services, during services and post-services may be possible to be reviewed or shared in the review websites. And if overall spa performance is below customer expectations or poor spa standards, customers may have the post-purchase behavior (or feeling), and finally decide not to revisit nor recommend patronizing that spa establishment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are 2 sub-sections under recommendations: 1) positive review recommendations and 2) negative review recommendations.

Positive review recommendations

It is clearly evident that a proportion of positive reviews were much higher than the negative ones. This indicates that the overall performances of Thai spa establishments are doing very good. They do their jobs better or superior than customer expectations; leading to customers' favorable experiences, admirations and recommendation as shown in the findings. The current findings will help spa establishments to get in-depth information of what customers (tourists) positively reviewed and appreciated about their services. Table 6 (based on 3 constructs) presents positive review recommendations for spa establishments to *keep* or *maintain* their strengths (good points) in order to stay competitive in the market.

Table 6: Positive review recommendations

Main constructs	Recommendations
<p>1. People</p> <p>1.1 Good skills of spa therapists</p> <p>1.2 Friendliness of staff</p> <p>1.3 English language</p> <p>1.4 Good services</p>	<p>There are 4 issues for people construct:</p> <p>1.1 The most cited positive theme was about the good services of spa therapists (skillful and professional staff). This construct is regarded as the core element of spa experience. People use spa services for the benefits of wellness and relaxing experiences which should be delivered by skillful and professional spa personnel. Based on the finding, many tourists appreciated about the skills of therapists/masseurs and their understanding of guests' needs. In order to maintain this strength, spa establishments should develop consistent quality services (staff and procedures) combined with a customized and personal experience to make the spa experience superior (Wisnom & Capozia, 2012).</p> <p>1.2 Many tourists appreciated and admired about the friendliness of spa staff (e.g. front desk staff, spa therapists). Thailand is claimed to be "The Land of Smiles" and is famous for its friendly hospitality (Sangpikul, 2018). Since spa industry is a service-based business focusing on high interaction between customers and service providers, spa establishments should maintain this strength in providing friendly customer service process including pre-consumption stage (guest arrival), a consumption stage (during service), and post-consumption stage (guest departure) (Chieochankitkan & Sukpatch, 2014). A recruitment of service-minded staff and a training program regarding customer services could help to develop the friendliness of spa staff.</p> <p>1.3 In relation to English language, spa tourists also admired about English language of Thai spa staff (e.g. receptionists and spa therapists). Since many spa customers are foreign tourists, English language therefore is important to the spa services. Regular English trainings and recruitment of employees with good skills of English should be concentrated in order to increase good communication skills and customer satisfaction.</p> <p>1.4 Based on the findings, several spa tourists positively cited about the services and operations of support staff (i.e. front staff/receptions) in terms of warm welcome, caring manner, and customer services. Support staff (especially front desk agents and receptions) is an important element to keep a spa working effectively, and contributes to customer satisfaction because they are the first and last point with direct guest contact. A well trained and skilled front desk staff should be carefully recruited by the spa establishments.</p>
<p>2. Emotional & physical elements</p> <p>2.1 Relaxing experiences</p> <p>2.2 Cleanliness</p> <p>2.3 Beautiful decoration & environment</p>	<p>There are 3 issues for emotional & physical elements:</p> <p>2.1 Regarding the relaxing experiences, this is an important element of spa experience because it may be regarded as an outcome of the spa service because customers can feel rest, relax, and pleasant during and after the spa services. As noted, many people go to spa for relaxing experience. Based on the spa tourist reviews, there are several factors to provide this relaxing experience. They may include peaceful environment, professional services, smell of spa products, music sound, light and staff noise. Spa establishments should keep these things in mind in order to provide guests with relaxing experiences. A regular check with guests and spa facility management may help to maintain the relaxing atmosphere (Wisnom & Capozia, 2012).</p> <p>2.2 In relation to cleanliness, many tourists favored about the cleanliness and hygiene of Thai spa establishments. Since spa is selling a pleasant and relaxing experience to promote people's health and wellness, spa establishments should maintain their hygiene and sanitation. A standard operating procedure (SOP) can help to promote hygiene and sanitation by indicating what procedures should be done for cleaning tasks (Wisnom & Capozio, 2012).</p> <p>2.3 For the beautiful decoration & environment, many foreign spa tourists admired about the beautiful decoration and environments of Thai spa establishments. Some appreciated about Thai styled spas with unique decoration. Spa establishment is a place where customers come to experience a pleasant and relaxing atmosphere. A well designed spa and layout may help to enhance the beautiful decoration & environment (Wisnom & Capozia, 2012).</p>

Table 6: Positive review recommendations

Main constructs	Recommendations
<p>3. Marketing issues</p> <p>3.1 Recommendations</p> <p>3.2 Complimentary services</p> <p>3.3 Product knowledge</p>	<p>There are 3 issues for marketing construct.</p> <p>3.1 Many spa tourists cited about recommendations and repeat visits. In fact, based on the findings, the proportion of recommendations was much higher than those of non-recommendations. This implies that most spa tourists were satisfied with the services of Thai spa establishments due to excellent spa therapists (their skills, professionalism), good customer services, friendliness of staff, and worth the money. Satisfied customers are more likely to positively spread their word-of-mouth to others and review it on the web. These can be seen from the travel related websites (e.g. Trip Advisor). The current findings can help Thai spa establishments to concentrate on these strengths and regularly maintain them.</p> <p>3.2. For the complimentary services, many spa tourists positively mentioned about the complimentary services such as free refreshments, tea, snacks, desserts, and transportation. Normally, many spa establishments serve welcoming refreshment and after service drinks. But some also provide more extra complimentary services such as snacks or healthy desserts which create a value to the spa services. Some spa establishments also provide customers with free transportation both pick-up and return. Given a good spa service combining with the extra complimentary services could reinforce customers' word-of-mouth to others as well as sharing their good experiences in the related websites. However, it depends on the policies of each spa establishment to manage and offer these complimentary services.</p> <p>3.3 Many tourists also admired about staff's knowledge about spa products and services, especially front desk staff who advise customers about the products/services that meet their needs and wants. Generally, customers will expect front desk staff to be a key person who can correctly advise them about spa products and services. It is important for spa establishments to regularly train their front desk staff to be knowledgeable and informative person to advise customers about all products and services in spa services.</p>

Negative review recommendations

Although the negative reviews have small proportion when compared to the positive ones but these negative reviews are a good source of secondary data (or mirror) to inform Thai spa establishments about their weaknesses or poor services based on the perceptions of foreign customers (foreign tourists). Due to the increasing

importance of online reviews in services-based businesses (including spa business), spa establishments should pay their attentions to these weaknesses to improve their services and meet customer expectations. The following recommendations for negative reviews are based on the 3 main constructs: people, physical elements, and marketing issues.

Table 7: Negative review recommendations

Main constructs	Recommendations
<p>1. People</p> <p>1.1 Spa therapists</p> <p>1.1.1 Poor skills of spa therapists</p> <p>1.1.2 Poor behavior or etiquette of spa therapists</p> <p>1.1.3 Noise disturbance</p> <p>1.1.4 Weak English language</p> <p>1.2 Front desk staff</p> <p>1.2.1 Poor services</p> <p>1.2.2 Poor behavior or etiquette of front desk staff</p>	<p>There are 2 issues for people construct: spa therapists and front desk staff.</p> <p>1.1 Spa therapists</p> <p>1.1.1 Most cited negative reviews were about poor skills of spa therapists. As early noted, one of the top concerns for spa customers is the quality of therapists which relates to their friendliness, product knowledge, and spa skills. In particular, most customer complaints were about the skills or expertise of therapists (e.g. not well trained staff, less skilled, not understanding customers' needs/requests). In-house training programs may be required for less skilled staff. In order to understand customers' needs or specific requests (e.g. more pressure, less pressure), communicating with customers regarding their needs or preferences can help therapists to provide appropriate services (Brown, 2018; Tarver, 2015).</p>

Table 7: Negative review recommendations

Main constructs	Recommendations
<p>1.2.3 Weak English language</p>	<p>1.1.2 The second most negative reviews were related to poor behavior or etiquette of spa therapists. In spa services, customers not only focus on the skills of spa therapists but they also concern on therapists' friendliness, hospitality and behavior. Spa Therapist is a key person who provides a real spa experience, and interacts with customers during their services. Unfriendly character, poor hospitality, or improper behavior may cause customer dissatisfaction or disappointment. Based on the findings, these issues were frequently cited in the reviews. In order improve behavior or etiquette of spa therapists and front desk staff, a proper in-house training may be required. In addition, a customer survey may be conducted at the reception before guest departure to assess spa staff/therapists.</p> <p>1.1.3 Next was about noise disturbance from spa therapist. As the main purposes of most spa tourists is to have pleasant and relaxing experiences (Lo et al., 2015). Noises from staff talking to each other can negatively affect customers' relaxing atmosphere when using spa services. Spa establishments should set rules for therapist and masseurs to keep their noises as minimal as possible during guest services. Mobile phones should not be allowed during guest services (Brown, 2018; Tarver, 2015).</p> <p>1.1.4 Regarding weak English language, even though English language may be a common issue for many Thai employees working in the tourism and hospitality industry, but it can be improved. Many spa tourists in Thailand are foreigners, and they use English to communicate with Thai spa staff. There are several spa technical terms used in English. It is a job of the spa establishments to provide appropriate in-house English training for their staff. In particular, receptionists and spa therapists should have good knowledge of English because they are in direct contact with customers. A recruitment of spa personnel with good English skill could be another choice. These recommendations also apply to front desk staff as well.</p> <p>1.2 Front desk staff:</p> <p>1.2.1 Many complaints were found to be about poor services from front desk staff (receptionists) regarding their unfriendly or inhospitable services. It should be noted that the first contact or first impression occurs of spa services starts at the reception. Customers will first interact with front staff before they are escorted to the treatment rooms. Spa establishments should keep this in mind that a key person who creates the first impression is receptionists or front staff. Recruitment and in-house training may help to develop staff to have good attitude, service-mind and friendly characters.</p> <p>Topic 1.2.2 (poor behavior of front desk staff) and topic 1.2.3 (weak English) are already discussed together in 1.1.2 and 1.1.4</p>
<p>2. Physical elements</p> <p>2.1 Poor facilities and atmosphere</p> <p>2.2 Uncleanliness</p>	<p>There are 2 issues for physical elements.</p> <p>2.1 Many spa tourists cited about poor facilities and atmosphere in terms of room temperature and loud music. Since most spa treatments require customers to undress or almost nude in order to get the services, spa therapists may ask customers about the room temperature if it is too warm or too cold. Communicating with customer can help to relieve the problem. Also, spa music is one of the fundamentals to bring spa experience, and the music should promote calming and relaxing atmosphere with appropriate light sound (Brown, 2018). Spa manager may pay attention to these basic environment.</p> <p>2.2 Cleanliness is one of customer expectations when they patronize spa services. Customers will be less satisfied by if they experience dirty facilities or unsanitary equipment. Many negative reviews were related to bathroom, toilet and shower facilities as well as towels/sheets. A standard operating procedure (SOP) can help to solve the cleanliness problem by indicating what procedures should be done for cleaning tasks (Wisnom & Capozio, 2012). According to Blair (2017), for example, laundry must be done on a daily basis to have a plentiful stock of clean towels and sheets in service areas and changing rooms. Bathroom and shower facilities should be cleansed throughout the day, and trash must be thrown out throughout the day as well. In addition, spa equipment and supplies must be sanitized after use on each customer.</p>

Table 7: Negative review recommendations

Main constructs	Recommendations
<p>3. Marketing issues</p> <p>3.1 Poor spa products</p> <p>3.2 High price</p> <p>3.3 Non-recommendations</p>	<p>There are 3 issues for marketing construct.</p> <p>3.1 Some negative reviews were related to poor spa products. One of the important concerns for spa business is selecting quality spa suppliers. In order to maintain the quality of spa services, it is important for spa establishments to have reliable spa suppliers. In addition, several approaches may help to maintain the quality of spa products. For example, spa establishments may regularly check on the quality of their products before serving customers. Some products may require a higher level of sanitation such as facial and nail services (Blair, 2017).</p> <p>3.2 Spa tourists also negatively cited about the high price of spa services in several spa establishments. Most complaints were made about the high prices that were not worth the money. These complaints may imply that the services or benefits customers receive are less than what they should pay. In general, spa services are relatively high when compared to other products. This is because spa services are people-based services and relating to the benefits or improvement of people's health and wellness delivered in a private and peaceful environment. The spa services are mainly selling a pleasant and relaxing experience. Given the high priced products, spa establishments should provide customers with the best experience and exceed customer expectation. A survey of customer satisfaction could help the spa establishments to improve their services and respond to customers' needs and wants. Marketing promotion (e.g. special packages, discounts, complimentary services) is another approach to give customers more values.</p> <p>3.3 The last negative review was related to non-recommendations for using spa services. Many spa tourists reviewed their experiences at a particular spa establishment and finally not recommend patronizing it. The non-recommendation from previous customers may affect the reputation and trust of the spa establishments because many prospective customers may hesitate to visit the cited spa establishments. Based on the findings, most non-recommended issues were associated with customer dissatisfactions in the following matters: 1) high price but poor service 2) poor skills of spa therapists 3) lack of understanding customers' needs/wants and 4) unfriendliness/unhelpfulness of spa personnel. According to these findings, it seems that most problems are concerned with "people". In order to improve customer satisfactions, spa establishments should focus on the development of spa personnel (especially spa receptionists and therapists) which may involve several processes such as staff recruitment, in-house trainings, and human resources development. Careful attention to these matters may also help to relieve the problems.</p>

To conclude, this study provides both academic and managerial contributions. For academic contributions, the study yields the in-depth understanding of spa reviews and their constructs through the analysis of secondary contents. Most previous spa studies provide empirical or quantitative results by examining the relationships of independent and dependents variables in various aspects (e.g. spa tourist behaviors, spa tourist motivations, service quality, and loyalty). Yet, the spa industry is still suffering from the lack of qualitative approach to understand spa tourist reviews and their past experiences of using spa services. This study, therefore, contributes to the spa literature by revealing 10 positive and negative themes, and 3 main constructs. In particular, the 3

constructs (with their sub-themes) help the academics to better understand the important patterns of customer reviews regarding spa experiences in Thailand.

For business benefits, this study provides 2 sub-sections under managerial contributions: positive and negative review recommendations. With the 3 similar constructs of positive and negative spa reviews, the current study yields managerial recommendations by focusing on these 3 constructs and their sub-themes to help spa business to concentrate on key components, namely, people, emotional & physical elements, and marketing issues. It is hoped the current findings may assist spa establishments to improve and deliver better services to their customers.

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