การวิเคราะห์เชิงเปรียบเทียบการประเมินคุณภาพการบริการของธุรกิจโรงแรมในบริบทประเทศไทยกับต่างประเทศ

A Comparative Analysis of Service Quality Measurements in the Hotel Industry between Thai and International Contexts

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บทคัดย่อ

นักวิชาการชาวไทยส่วนใหญ่มักคุ้นเคยกับการประเมินคุณภาพการบริการของธุรกิจโรงแรม โดยใช้โมเดล SERVQUAL เป็นหลัก ซึ่งประกอบด้วยมิติคุณภาพการบริการ 5 ด้าน ได้แก่ ความน่าเชื่อถือ การตอบสนอง การเอาใจใส่ ความไว้วางใจ และความเป็นรูปธรรม อย่างไรก็ตาม มีข้อสังเกตว่านักวิชาการชาวต่างชาติเริ่มมีการประเมินคุณภาพการบริการของธุรกิจโรงแรมในบริบทที่แตกต่างกันและหลากหลาย และอาจไม่จำเป็นต้องใช้โมเดล SERVQUAL ครบทั้ง 5 ด้านเสมอไป ทั้งนี้เพื่อความเข้าใจอย่างลึกซึ้งในปรากฏการณ์ดังกล่าว งานวิจัยนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์การวิจัย เพื่อศึกษาและเปรียบเทียบงานวิจัยในเรื่องการประเมินคุณภาพการบริการของธุรกิจโรงแรมในบริบทของประเทศไทยกับต่างประเทศ โดยเป็นการวิจัยเชิงเอกสารและเก็บข้อมูลจากฐานข้อมูลออนไลน์ และใช้สถิติเชิงพรรณนา (ความถี่และร้อยละ) ในการนำเสนอผลการวิจัยให้มีความชัดเจน

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า นักวิชาการชาวไทยนิยมใช้โมเดล SERVQUAL เป็นหลัก พร้อมกับมิติคุณภาพการบริการทั้ง 5 ด้าน เพื่อประเมินคุณภาพการบริการของธุรกิจโรงแรม ในขณะที่นักวิชาการชาวต่างชาติหลายคนได้เริ่มพัฒนาหรือดัดแปลงมิติคุณภาพการบริการของธุรกิจโรงแรมที่แตกต่างกันออกไป เช่น มิติการให้บริการอาหารและเครื่องดื่ม มิติการมีปฏิสัมพันธ์ระหว่างพนักงานกับแขก มิติด้านกายภาพ/สิ่งแวดล้อม และมิติด้านผลลัพธ์หลังการใช้บริการ เป็นต้น นอกจากนี้ งานวิจัยนี้ยังได้จัดกลุ่มโมเดลที่ใช้ประเมินคุณภาพการบริการในธุรกิจโรงแรมออกเป็น 3 รูปแบบ ได้แก่ 1) Original Model 2) Extended Model และ 3) Modified Model อย่างไรก็ตาม หากวิเคราะห์ในรายละเอียด พบว่า ข้อคำถามที่สอบถามผู้ใช้บริการเพื่อประเมินคุณภาพการบริการของธุรกิจโรงแรมจากทั้ง 3 รูปแบบข้างต้นนั้น ต่างก็เกี่ยวพันกับมิติคุณภาพการบริการทั้ง 5 ด้านของโมเดล Original SERVQUAL เพียงแต่นักวิชาการบางท่านอาจดัดแปลงมิติคุณภาพการบริการที่แตกต่างกันออกไปบ้าง เพื่อให้ตอบโจทย์วัตถุประสงค์การวิจัยและประเภทหรือลักษณะของโรงแรมที่ศึกษา งานวิจัยนี้ได้ให้ข้อเสนอแนะที่เป็นประโยชน์ต่อวงการวิชาการและภาคธุรกิจ

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Abstract

Most Thai scholars are familiar with the assessments of hotel service quality through the 5 original SERVQUAL dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, and tangibles. However, many international scholars had assessed hotel service quality in different models, and did not necessarily use the whole 5 SERVQUAL dimensions. To gain a better understanding about this phenomenon, this research had the objective to examine and compare past studies regarding the assessments of hotel service quality between Thai and international contexts. It was conducted through a documentary-research method by collecting data from secondary data sources, and descriptive statistics (e.g. frequency and percentage) were used to describe the findings.

The study found that Thai scholars mainly employed the 5 original SERVQUAL dimensions to measure hotel service quality, whereas most international scholars had extended or modified their dimensions to evaluate hotel service quality in different contexts, for instance, food & beverage dimension, staff & guest interaction, environmental quality, and outcome quality. With the comparative analysis, the study identified the three models of service quality which had been employed in Thai and international studies, namely, “Original Model”, “Extended Model”, and “Modified Model” However, although the three models had been employed in many studies, most of their measurement items were still fallen under the 5 SERVQUAL dimensions. Implications are discussed to provide the proper implementation of service quality measurements for the hotel industry.

Keywords: Service Quality, SERVQUAL, Service Measurement, Service Model, Hotels

Introduction

Hotel industry is one of the highly service-oriented businesses because their main products are the services which are intangibles by providing customers with the services through accommodation, food & beverage, and other facilities (Sangpikul, 2021). In order to provide these services to customers, there are service encounters or direct interaction between employees and customers at the hotels. Most of these services are delivered by employees and their performances to offer the services as customers expect, for example, prompt check-in, friendly & helpful staff, a comfortable and clean room, and a good service restaurant with tasty food (Sangpikul, 2021). Customers usually judge the quality of these services from what they expect and what they actually receive from service providers (Ali, 2015; Lai & Hitchcock, 2016). According to the literature (Ali, 2015; Lai & Hitchcock, 2016; Lo, Wu, & Tsai, 2015; Sangpikul, 2019), if customers perceive the services delivered to them are better than what they expect, they are likely to be satisfied with the services. In contrast, if the delivered services are lower or poorer than what they expect, this may lead to customer dissatisfactions, and may affect their intention to repurchase. With these matters, it is mainly concerned with a concept of service quality.

Service quality is a service concept used to measure customers’ perceived service performances from a service provider in terms of expectation and perception (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). If customers perceive the delivered service higher than what they expect, this leads to customer satisfaction and future repurchase. Service quality, therefore, is important for the hotel industry because it is a management tool to gain the competitive advantage

over the competitors and leads to the success of the business (Lai & Hitchcock, 2016; Lo et al., 2015; Sangpikul, 2021b). Due to the importance of service quality, international scholars have widely used it to obtain the useful feedback from hotel guests by employing a service measurement, which is called 'SERVQUAL' consisting of 5 dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, and tangibles. The SERVQUAL has been widely used in various fields during the past decades such as banking, consulting firms, event & entertainment businesses, health care industry, and tourism industry (Sangpikul, 2021b). Hotel business, one of the important sectors in the tourism industry, also highly relies on the service quality because the hotels need to deliver the services to meet customer expectations (Sangpikul, 2021a; Wu & Ko, 2013). Given the contributions of service quality in the hotel industry, there were a number of service quality studies conducted both in Thai and international contexts.

In relation to Thai context, the review of literature indicates that most Thai scholars widely use the SERVQUAL model (with 5 dimensions) in their research to provide the useful implications for Thailand's hotel industry (e.g. Chaisaengpratheep, 2018; Dhiratanuttidlok, 2017; Mongkhonvanit & Chattiwong, 2018; Sittichai, Kun-oon, & Hathaiwasiwong, 2017). However, it is also interesting to learn that international scholars tend to use the modified SERVQUAL model to measure hotel service quality in different contexts. For example, Mohsin & Lockyer (2010) used 3 important service areas of the hotel (front office, room service, and restaurants) to measure service quality in New Delhi hotels. Ali (2015) investigated hotel service quality by using 5 modified service dimensions (hotel ambience, food & beverage products, staff knowledge, reservation services, and overall value for money) to evaluate service quality in Langkawi and Penang hotels. A recent study by Cevik & Simskek (2017) used 4 quality dimensions to examine service quality in theme-park hotels in Turkey, namely: program quality, interaction quality, physical environment, and outcome quality.

With the above evidences, it is obvious that Thai and international scholars are likely to use different service quality measurements to evaluate hotel service quality. This may lead to a doubtful academic phenomenon of such issue, and worthy of further investigation to find out appropriate answers for Thai scholars and hotel practitioners. The measurement of service quality in the hotel industry is important because it is concerned with customers' evaluation on hotel performance and their employees, which is regarded as the crucial factor for the success of the hotel business, and also being the key management tool to enhance customer satisfactions (Ali, 2015; Sangpikul, 2021c; Wu & Ko, 2013). Therefore, this research has the following objectives 1) to examine and compare past studies regarding the assessments of hotel service quality between Thai and international contexts and 2) to analyze how the service models being employed are different from the SERVQUAL dimensions. The research will be conducted through a documentary method to explain such phenomenon. It is expected that the findings will yield a better understanding about the differences of using hotel service quality assessments, and will also provide proper implementations for Thai scholars and hotel practitioners. They may apply the knowledge from the current study to modify and measure hotel service quality more appropriately.

Literature review

Understanding service quality

Service quality is important to the hotel industry because the nature of the hotel products is the services which are intangibles. These intangibles are complex attributes for customers to judge about its quality when compared to consumer products. Moreover, hotel services are very experienced-oriented (Luo & Qu, 2016). This means that customers normally judge the quality of hotel services based on their experiences and personal feelings regarding the services delivered by hotel employees such as friendly and helpful front desk staff, a clean and comfortable room, a tasty and quality meal, or a well-organized meeting room (Luo & Qu, 2016; Sangpikul, 2021a). Similarly, according to the hotel literature, customers experience the hotel services, and judge the quality of these intangibles based on what they expect and receive from hotels and their employees (Ali, 2015; Mohsin & Lockyer, 2010; Luo & Qu, 2016; Sangpikul, 2021c). What customers experience from hotel services may result in both positive and negative outcomes (i.e. customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction), which can significantly affect customers' future repurchase and word-of-mouth communication (Mohsin & Lockyer, 2010; Luo & Qu, 2016). With these matters, it is concerned about the service quality which is one of the important factors for the hotel industry to professionally deliver the services to meet customers' expectation, and enhance their satisfaction.

In general, service quality may refer to an evaluation of the difference between expectations and performances along the quality dimensions (Parasuraman et al., 1988). In other words, service quality can be assessed by a comparison of expectations of a service with perceived performances (Lewis &Booms, 1983; Parasuraman et al., 1988; Lo et al., 2015). In particular, service quality is a management concept focusing on the evaluation of how well a delivered service meets customer expectations (Memarzadeh & Chang, 2015; Lo et al., 2015).

To measure hotel service quality, SERVQUAL instrument is widely applied as it is a multi-dimensional research tool designed to measure consumer expectations and perceptions of the service in terms of 5 dimensions (Parasuraman et al., 1988), which are: 1) reliability 2) assurance 3) tangibility 4) empathy and 5) responsiveness. The SERVQUAL instrument was created based on an expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm (Oliver, 1981) by measuring a difference or disconfirmation between customers' expectations of service performances and the actual service received. According to the literature, when performance is exceeded or better than expected, positive disconfirmation is the result (likely satisfactory). In contrast, when performance is less or lower than expected, negative disconfirmation occurs (less satisfactory). These five dimensions may be referred as RATER (an abbreviation from the first letter of each of the five dimensions), and each of them is as follows:

1. Reliability: employees' ability to perform or deliver the service correctly and/or to provide customers with the promised service

2. Assurance: courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence

3. Tangible: appearance of environment or physical surrounding, facilities, and amenities

4. Empathy: employees' ability to provide customers with personalized or individual service or attention

5. Responsiveness: employees' readiness to help customers and/or provide rapid services

Due to the importance of service quality in the hotel industry in terms of enhancing service improvement and leading to customer satisfaction (Cevik & Simskek, 2017; Mohsin & Lockyer, 2010; Wu & Ko, 2013), there were several studies examining this topic to enhance a greater understanding of hotels' service performances both in Thai and international contexts which will be addressed in the following topic.

Past studies about hotel service quality

Given the importance of service quality in the hotel industry as earlier mentioned, it has been observed that, through an analysis of past studies, Thai scholars mainly used the SERVQUAL instrument in their research to provide the useful contributions for Thailand's hotel industry. They usually employed the 5 dimensions of SERVQUAL, which originally are reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, and tangibles, to examine customers' perception or satisfaction on hotel service quality (e.g. Chaisaengpratheep, 2018; Dhiratanuttidlok, 2017; Mongkhonvanit & Chattiwong, 2018).

However, through the literature review, it is also interesting to learn that most international scholars tend to use the modified SERVQUAL instrument or different service dimensions as previously addressed (e.g. guest-staff interaction, environmental quality, food & beverage products, and overall value for money) to measure hotel service quality in various settings. For example, Wo & Ko (2013) used a 3 major service-dimension to examine hotel service quality in Taiwan. These 3 dimensions were 1) interaction quality 2) environmental quality and 3) outcome quality. In each dimension, there were specific characteristics of hotel service quality to be measured. For example, under interaction quality, it was measured about employee conduct, expertise, and problem-solving skill (see more detail in Wo & Ko, 2013). Likewise, Ali (2015) employed 5 different service dimensions to examine hotel service quality in Malaysia, which included hotel ambience, food & beverage products, staff knowledge, reservation services, and overall value for money. A recent study by Cevik & Simskek (2017) used 4 different service dimensions to examine service quality in theme-park hotels in Turkey which were 1) program quality 2) interaction quality 3) physical environment quality, and 4) outcome quality.

Given the above evidences with the different use of hotel service quality measurements between Thai and international scholars, this academic phenomenon is important to further investigate because it is concerned about the service quality which is widely regarded as one of the important tools for the success of hotel industry (Mohsin & Lockyer, 2010; Sangpikul, 2021a; Wu & Ko, 2013). The findings are expected to yield an important implication for Thai scholars and hotel practitioners to appropriately measure hotel service quality.

Methodology

In this study, the subjects being examined were studies related to hotel service quality by comparing 2 groups between Thai and international studies. They had to be full published articles available online during the past ten years (2010 –

2020). A 10-year period is argued to be sufficient to understand the mentioned phenomenon with a preliminary investigation about the studies on hotel service quality in Thai and international contexts.

To explore Thai studies, the author used "Google Scholar" as the database because it was tested and had yielded more satisfactory result when compared to other online channels available through university library. One of the obvious advantages of using Google Scholar is that it can provide a direct link to a wide coverage of TCI articles with full texts (peer reviewed articles). For international studies, the authors used "Tourism and Hospitality Complete", available through university library, as the database which is a well-known source for international studies in tourism and hospitality. This database is also directly linked to a wide coverage of peer reviewed articles with full texts (e.g. Scopus articles). All studies were searched through a set of key words for Thai and English versions such as service quality, hotel service quality, hotel (resort) and service quality, service dimensions, and SERVQUAL.

Only the studies examining about service quality in the hotel industry (including all types of accommodation) were taken in the analysis. Major information was recorded in an analysis form (instrument) to record the necessary information such as research titles, authors, research framework, variables, and key findings. Main analysis involved research variables, framework, and findings to comprehend how the studies examined hotel service quality. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the data in terms of frequency and percentage.

Results

Table 1 Number of studies about hotel service quality categorized by type of scholars

Type of scholars	Number of studies
Thai scholars	33 (53%)
International scholars	29 (47%)
Total	**62 (100%)**

It should be noted that Tables 1 – 4 are the findings based on research objective # 1 while Table 5 represents the findings from research objective # 2. According to Table 1, it was found that there were a total of 62 Thai and international articles published on hotel service quality. Among them, Thai scholars had produced articles with slightly higher proportion (53%) than international scholars (47%). Most Thai scholars conducted their research about tourists' perception or satisfaction on hotel service quality while international scholars were interested in various topics such as tourists' perception on hotel service quality, relationships between service quality and other variables, and expected & perceived service quality in the hotel industry.

Table 2 Number of studies employing the original SERVQUAL dimensions and different service dimensions categorized by type of scholars

Type of scholars	Number of studies employing the 5 original SERVQUAL dimensions	Number of studies employing different service dimensions	Total
Thai scholars	32 (97%)	1 (3%)	33 (100%)
International scholars	9 (31%)	20 (69%)	29 (100%)

Table 2 presents interesting findings by revealing that most Thai scholars (97%) mainly employed 5 original SERVQUAL dimensions to examine hotel service quality, except one study (3%) which had developed the extended SERVQUAL dimensions. This exceptional study used factor analysis to derive 6 dimensions to better understand hotel service quality in another perspective in Koh Samui, Surat Thani (Sittichai, Kun-oon, & Hathaiwasiwong, 2017).

The 6 dimensions were named as trust, assurance, responsiveness, servicescape, willingness, and empathy. Overall, Thai scholars seem to be familiar with 5 original SERVQUAL dimensions (i.e. reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, and tangibles), and mainly applied them to examine hotel service quality in similar ways.

However, for the international studies, even though there were some international scholars (31%) used the 5 original SERVQUAL dimensions in their research but the majority (66%) had employed different service dimensions to examine hotel service quality. Among the majority, some international scholars had extended certain SERVQUAL dimensions or differently modified them in their research. Tables 3 & 4 will provide more detail by presenting Thai and international studies which used different service dimensions to measure hotel service quality. These 2 tables will help to gain a better understanding about the measurements of service quality in wider scope.

Table 3 An analysis of Thai studies examining hotel service quality

Studies	Types of accommodation	Service dimensions being employed	Category of service quality model
1. For example, Chaisaengpratheep (2018); Dhiratanuttidlok (2017); Mongkhonvanit & Chattiwong (2018)	3-5 stars hotels	reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, and tangibles	Original Model 32 studies (97%)
2. Sittichai, Kun-oon, & Hathaiwasiwong (2017)	luxury resorts	trust, assurance, responsiveness, servicescape, willingness, and empathy	Extended Model 1 study (3%)

According to Table 3, the findings show the service dimensions which were employed by Thai scholars to examine hotel service quality. It was found that most Thai scholars (32 studies) focused on using the 5 original SERVQUAL dimensions (i.e. reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, and tangibles) while there was only 1 study employing the extended model. This study (Sittichai et al., 2017) used the extended model with 6 dimensions (i.e. trust, assurance, responsiveness, servicescape, willingness, and empathy) to measure hotel service quality by arguing that the original dimensions may not be adequate to specifically respond to their research objectives.

It should be noted that we categorized a study with "**Original Model**" when the 5 original SERVQUAL dimensions were employed whereas any studies employing 3 or more similar dimensions to the original SERVQUAL model will be called as "**Extended Model**". Table 4 will have another category of service quality model which is called "**Modified Model**" because the names of service dimensions were relatively different from the original SERVQUAL dimensions (e.g. front office, technology, food & beverage products). A reason to call such three models is to separate and categorize the overall studies into 3 groups to gain a better understanding about the different measurements of hotel service quality.

Table 4 An analysis of international studies examining hotel service quality

Authors	Types of accommodation	Service dimensions being employed	Category of service quality model
1. For example, Grobelna & Marciszewska (2013); Keith & Simmers (2013)	3-5 stars hotels	reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, and tangibles	Original Model 9 studies (31%)
2. For example, Lai & Hitchcock (2016) Kurtulmusoglu & Pakdil (2017) Priporas, Stylos, & Vedanthachri (2017)	luxury hotels lodging industry Airbnb accommodation	tangible, reliability, assurance, empathy, environment, technology, and entertainment assurance & responsiveness, tangibles, features of rooms & housekeeping, communication & accessibility, reliability, equipment, and food assurance, tangibles, convenience, understanding & care, and adequacy service supply	Extended Model 7 studies (24%)
3. For example, Mohsin & Lockyer (2010) Wu & Ko (2013) Ali (2015) Padlee, Thaw, & Zulkiffli (2019)	luxury hotels luxury hotels resorts Business hotels	front office, room service, and restaurants employee conduct, expertise, problem-solving, atmosphere, room quality, facilities, design, sociability, outcome, and waiting time hotel ambience & staff courtesy, food & beverage products, staff presentation & knowledge, reservation services, and overall value employee behavior, room amenities, physical evidence, and food quality	Modified Model 13 studies (45%)

According to Table 4, the findings show the service dimensions which were employed by international scholars to examine hotel service quality. It was found that a number of international scholars (45%) employed the modified models to measure hotel service quality while 31% used the original model, and 24% employed the extended models.

In regard to the modified model, for example, Mohsin & Lockyer (2010) employing 3 service areas of the hotels to examine hotel service quality in India which were 1) front office 2) room service, and 3) restaurants. They argued that most hotels' services were delivered (occurred) in these service areas, and therefore, were appropriate to examine through the 3 dimensions (functions). However, Priporas et al., (2017) employed the extended model with 5 dimensions to examine service quality of Airbnb accommodation in Thailand. These dimensions were 1) assurance 2) tangible 3) convenience 4) understanding & care, and 5) adequacy of service supply. They argued that the extended model seemed to be more suitable for this type of lodging because Airbnb accommodation provided different services from the business hotels.

In order to further understand how the service models being employed are different from the original SERVQUAL dimensions among international studies, Table 5 will provide an in-depth analysis about this issue.

Table 5 An analysis of international studies using different service dimensions and SERVQUAL dimensions

Model category and their service dimensions	**Reliability**	**Responsiveness**	**Empathy**	**Assurance**	**Tangibles**	**Additional dimensions**
1. Original model	√	√	√	√	√	-
Grobelna & Marciszewska (2013); Ogunjinmi & Binuyo (2018)	√	√	√	√	√	-
2. Extended model						
Kurtulmusoglu & Pakdil (2017): assurance & responsiveness, tangibles, features of rooms, housekeeping, communication & accessibility, reliability, equipment, and food	√	√	√	√	√	1. adequacy of service supplies 2.food specialty
Priporas et al. (2017): assurance, tangibles, convenience, understanding & care, adequacy service supply	√	√	√	√	√	1.adequacy of service supply
3. Modified Model						
Wo & Ko (2013): Conduct, expertise, problem-solving, atmosphere, room quality, facility, design, location, sociability, valence, waiting time	√	√	√	√	√	1.socialability 2.service outcome

Model category and their service dimensions	Reliability	Responsiveness	Empathy	Assurance	Tangibles	Additional dimensions
Ali (2015): hotel ambience & staff courtesy, food & beverage products, staff presentation & knowledge, reservation services, overall value	√	√	√	√	√	1. food & beverage 2. service value
Padlee, Thaw, & Zulkiffli (2019): Employee behavior, room amenities, physical evidences, food quality	√	√	-	√	√	1. food quality

Table 5 deeply analyzes how the extended and modified models are different from the 5 original SERVQUAL dimensions. To analyze this, there are certain steps to explain. Firstly, the 5 original SERVQUAL dimensions (reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance, tangible) were established as a benchmark. SERVQUAL can be recognized as the benchmark or the standard of service quality which allows other service models to be compared with because it is original and widely accepted across the disciplines including tourism and hospitality research (Ali, 2015; Priporas et al., 2017; Sangpikul, 2021b; Wo & Ko, 2013). Secondly, the international studies were examined and compared to the 5 SERVQUAL dimensions. Thirdly, all of the measurement items from international studies were carefully examined in detail and determined if they were relevant and fallen into any dimension of SERVQUAL. For example, in a study of Kurtulmusoglu & Pakdil (2017), a measurement item in a questionnaire like “rapid restaurant services” was taken under responsiveness dimension with a sign (√) or “error free for check-in and check-out process” was classified into reliability dimension with a sign (√). Only the item that is not relevant to any dimension of SERVQUAL, it will be grouped in an additional dimension which was labeled (named) based on that study. For instance, “provision of adequate amenities in guest room” was not matched with any 5 SERVQUAL dimensions, therefore, this item consequently was grouped into the additional dimension under name “adequacy of service supplies” dimension which was labeled by Kurtulmusoglu & Pakdil (2017) as shown in Table 4.

Similarly, in a study of Wu & Ko (2013), a measurement item in a questionnaire like “the room size is adequate” was taken under tangible dimension with a sign (√) or “the behavior of hotel employees allows me to trust their services” was classified into assurance dimension with a sign (√). The item “I am provided with opportunities for social interaction while staying in the hotel” was not matched with any 5 SERVQUAL dimensions, therefore, this item was grouped in the additional dimension under name “sociability” dimension which was labeled by Wu & Ko (2013).

According to Table 5, it is evident that although past studies used different service dimensions to examine hotel service quality in different contexts. However, it was proved that most measurement items from past studies were fallen under the 5 SERVQUAL dimensions. This implies that the SERVQUAL dimensions are still applicable and relevant to the

measurement of hotel service quality. Overall, the above analysis implies that most international scholars still used similar measurement items in accordance with the 5 original SERVQUAL dimensions but they may prefer to extend or modify some specific/special items or dimensions to measure hotel service quality differently due to their research objectives and hotel characteristics. Reasons for using different service dimensions will be further discussed in the following section.

Discussion

To discuss, this section will discuss the major findings in Tables 4 & 5 regarding the reasons why international scholars employed the extended or modified service models to examine hotel service quality. Even though the SERVQUAL model (with 5 dimensions) have been widely employed in service industries including the hotel industry, however, the model has been often criticized about its weaknesses in several aspects (Ali, 2015; Mohsin & Lockyer, 2010; Luo & Qu, 2016; Sangpikul, 2021c). This may be one of the major reasons why international scholars tended to extend or modify the SERVQUAL model to measure hotel service quality in different contexts, and it will be the main discussion to justify the above findings.

Firstly, scholars argue that the SERVQUAL model presents the general quality dimensions for service industries (from banking to tourism industry) but it does not include specific dimensions for each business category (Kurtulmusoglu & Pakdil, 2017). It may not be fully applicable to all service industries including the tourism industry (Ali, 2015; Tamagni, Micheli, & Zanfardini, 2003; Wu & Ko, 2013). The SERVQUAL model was originally developed in other service industries (e.g. finance & banking), not the hotel industry (Olorunniwo, Hsu, & Udo, 2003). Its implementations, therefore, may be not fully applicable to the hotel industry as well because the hotels have different service characteristics from others (Sangpikul, 2021a; Wu & Ko, 2013). Moreover, the hotel industry offers a wide range of services to cater customers such as accommodation, food & beverage, recreation facilities, and MICE services. Therefore, it is properly arguable that the original SERVQUAL may not be fully covered all aspects of hotel services.

Secondly, according to Olorunniwo et al. (2003), the measurement items in the SERVQUAL model are global in nature. Thus, the outcome of using SERVQUAL instrument to different groups of customers from various service industries may be little value. In addition, the number of service dimensions and the measurement items should be industry specific (rather than general) or vary from one service industry to another. The modified or extended service dimensions, along with the assessment items, may be dependent on the nature or specific characteristics of the particular industry. This may be an important reason why international scholars had modified their service dimensions to be more specific for examining hotel service quality.

Thirdly, past studies revealed that certain dimensions of the SERVQUAL were not clearly perceived by customers (Llosa, Chandon, & Orsingher, 1998). Generally, customers may well perceive what are tangibles, empathy and responsiveness of the services. However, the terms like reliability and assurance seem to be unclearly perceived by many customers (Olorunniwo et al. (2003). For example, assurance could be differently interpreted by many customers and hotel practitioners. Consequently, certain dimensions of the SERVQUAL may be modified

or extended into more specific meaning, when appropriate.

Fourthly, several researchers argue that certain factors (e.g. authenticity, sociability) and special characteristics of service providers should be considered in the assessment of service quality as well (Cevik & Simskek, 2017; Yildiz, 2012). This is because certain dimensions of SERVQUAL cannot provide specific or sufficient information to assess the service quality of some aspects of hotels (e.g. recreation services, sport/wellness facilities, meeting/conference services). They argued that these special hotel services should be measured based on a separate dimension from the original SERVQUAL to provide deeper/sufficient information.

Finally, a number of scholars argue that the evaluation of service quality is multi-dimensional (Ekinci, 2002; Kurtulmusoglu & Pakdil, 2017; Wu & Ko, 2013), not limited to 1 or 2 dimensions. This suggests that measuring service quality should reflect various dimensions of the services being examined. By nature, the quality of hotel services comprising various aspects or dimensions, and requires more specific measurement. For example, the assessments of quality of restaurants, front desk services, and conference facilities, are usually different from guest rooms; suggesting multi-dimensional measurements from department to department. Furthermore, the criteria to judge the quality of budget hotels are certainly different from a truly wellness resort (e.g. Chiva-Som); suggesting using different service dimensions.

With the above arguments, international scholars, therefore, had employed various service models (dimensions) to suitably measure hotel service quality (likely tailor made) in their studies. In particular, scholars argue that the original SERVQUAL is a global-based perspective rather than the industry specific, and there is no universally accepted model for measuring service quality in a particular industry (Kurtulmusoglu & Pakdil, 2017; Wu & Ko, 2013). Researchers may be flexible to modify certain service dimensions when appropriate (Kurtulmusoglu & Pakdil, 2017; Wu & Ko, 2013).

Conclusion and implications

Conclusion

This study had the objective to examine and compare past studies regarding the assessments of hotel service quality between Thai and international contexts, as well as to analyze how the service models being employed are different from the SERVQUAL dimensions. The study was conducted through a documentary method by collecting data from secondary data sources, and descriptive statistics (e.g. frequency and percentage) were used to describe the findings.

According to the findings, the study found that Thai scholars mainly employed the original SERVQUAL model with the 5 dimensions to assess hotel service quality, whereas most international scholars had extended or modified their measurements and service dimensions to evaluate hotel service quality, for instance, service value, service outcome or quality dimensions. Through the comparative analysis, the study identified the three models of service quality which had been employed in Thai and international studies, namely, “Original Model”, “Extended Model”, and “Modified Model”. The study also found that although the three models had been employed differently in many studies, most of their measurement items were still fallen under the 5 SERVQUAL dimensions. Interestingly, the measurement items of the “Extended Model” and “Modified Model” were highly similar to those of the “Original Model”. This

implied that the 5 original SERVQUAL dimensions are still applicable and relevant to measure hotel service quality in various hotel setting. With the interesting findings, it is appropriate to provide the following implications for Thai scholars and hotel practitioners.

Implications

This part will provide the implications and recommendations for future research aiming to examine hotel service quality. Thai scholars and hotel practitioners may apply the knowledge from this part to develop the measurements of hotel service quality more appropriately.

1) With the empirical findings as shown in Tables 3 & 4, it is suggested that scholars may modify the measurement items (individual items in the questionnaire) and the dimensions of SERVQUAL, when appropriate, to purposively measure hotel service quality based on their research objectives and hotel characteristics being examined (e.g. business hotels, conference hotels, wellness resorts, hostels). They may use the 5 original SERVQUAL dimensions along with the extended or modified models to measure service quality of a particular hotel category. But the basic rule is that the measurement items should cover the 5 original SERVQUAL dimensions since they are still applicable and relevant to most services of the hotels (see Table 5). Whereas the additional dimension(s) may be added, when appropriate, and should be named differently from the original SERVQUAL dimensions to represent the exact service attributes the researchers particularly wish to examine. However, which models to be used, scholars should carefully employ it through the in-depth literature review (review of past studies) with appropriate academic argument.

2) Currently, most upscale hotels (e.g. 4-5 stars) have invested a lot in the development of technology and innovation in certain hotel services (e.g. online reservation, online registration, in-room technology, room service technology, and conference facilities). The technology dimension is likely to be more appropriate as an additional or new dimension of hotel service quality in upscale hotel categories (Lai & Hitchcock, 2016). Past studies indicated that technology and innovation can impact service quality because it can enhance the quality of services, and offer more efficiency and convenience in delivering the services to meet customers' expectation (Arshad & Su, 2015; Lai & Hitchcock, 2016; Santos, 2003). In addition, the assurance dimension (mostly about room cleanliness, guests' security & safety) may be further separated to establish a new dimension, for example, "hygienic/sanitary dimension" due to the current outbreak of COVID-19 to ensure customers about the health standard of the hotels. This hygienic dimension (new dimension) may be more important in the future even after the COVID-19 has been recovered because customers' behaviors and their awareness (or perceptions) about personal health issues have been changed.

3) According to Table 3, there are several researchers measured service quality based on major service areas of the hotels such as front office (Mohsin & Lockyer, 2010), guest rooms & housekeeping (Kurtulmusoglu & Pakdil, 2017), food & beverage services (Ali, 2015), and hotel facilities (Wu & Ko, 2013). It is suggested that future research may modify and employ major service areas to be the service dimensions to measure hotel service quality, for example, front desk services, guest room services, food & beverage services, and facility services. Conceptually, in each service area, it may contain the measurement items adapted from the 5 SERVQUAL

instrument when appropriate. This type of model (being more specific) may yield another interesting finding more relevant to employee performance in each major service areas of the hotel rather than the general 5 SERVQUAL dimensions as they are relatively too general.

4) According to past studies like Cevik & Simskek (2017) and Wu & Ko (2013), they added another dimension, 'outcome dimension', to measure hotel service quality. This dimension may be aimed to measure the overall services perceived by customers, for example, post-consumption opinions or overall experience after using the services. This dimension is regarded as an important element because hotel service quality is generally measured based on customer perception on the particular services (Cevik & Simskek, 2017; Ekinci, 2002; Wu & Ko, 2013). Most studies still lack the assessment of service quality in terms of the result of service transaction (Cevik & Simskek, 2017; Ekinci, 2002; Wu & Ko, 2013). In particular, hotel services are experienced-oriented, which should be assessed its result after the services are completely delivered (finished) (Ekinci, 2002; Luo & Qu, 2016). Furthermore, this dimension may help hotel manager to deeper understand whether the overall services a hotel offers or provides customers are worth for their money or beyond than their expectations (Alexandris, Kouthouris, & Meligdis, 2006; Wu & Ko, 2013). Future studies (e.g. business/convention hotels or wellness resorts) may consider this additional dimension if they wish to determine the service outcome and how well the hotels perform to meet overall customers' expectation. Understanding this may help to appropriately target the repeat customers or loyal customers.

5) According to Mohsin & Lockyer (2010) and Padlee et al., (2019), researchers may be flexible to modify and employ a particular set of service dimensions or framework to measure hotel service quality. For example, Padlee et al., (2019) intensively reviewed the literature and proposed to use only 4 modified dimensions (employee behavior, room amenities, physical evidence, and food quality) to evaluate hotel service quality. This suggestion may be appropriate when the researchers can intensively review the relevant literature and establish strongly theoretical framework.

6) Finally, it is argued that evaluation of hotel service quality is multi-dimensional (consisting of various dimensions), and the dimensions should be specific to the characteristics of different hotel categories (e.g. resorts, upscale hotels, conference hotels, guesthouses, homestay, ecolodges) (Ali, 2015; Ekinci, 2006; Kurtulmusoglu & Pakdil, 2017; Olorunniwo et al., 2003; Wu & Ko, 2013). In this regard, future studies may carefully modify the measurement items to be more relevant (important) and specific to particular hotel categories. For example, the measurement items of a resort may focus on beautiful and relaxing environment (tangible) while a guest house may concern on room cleanliness (assurance), and homestay may add a local or host interaction dimension which is a special characteristic and important element of homestay.

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