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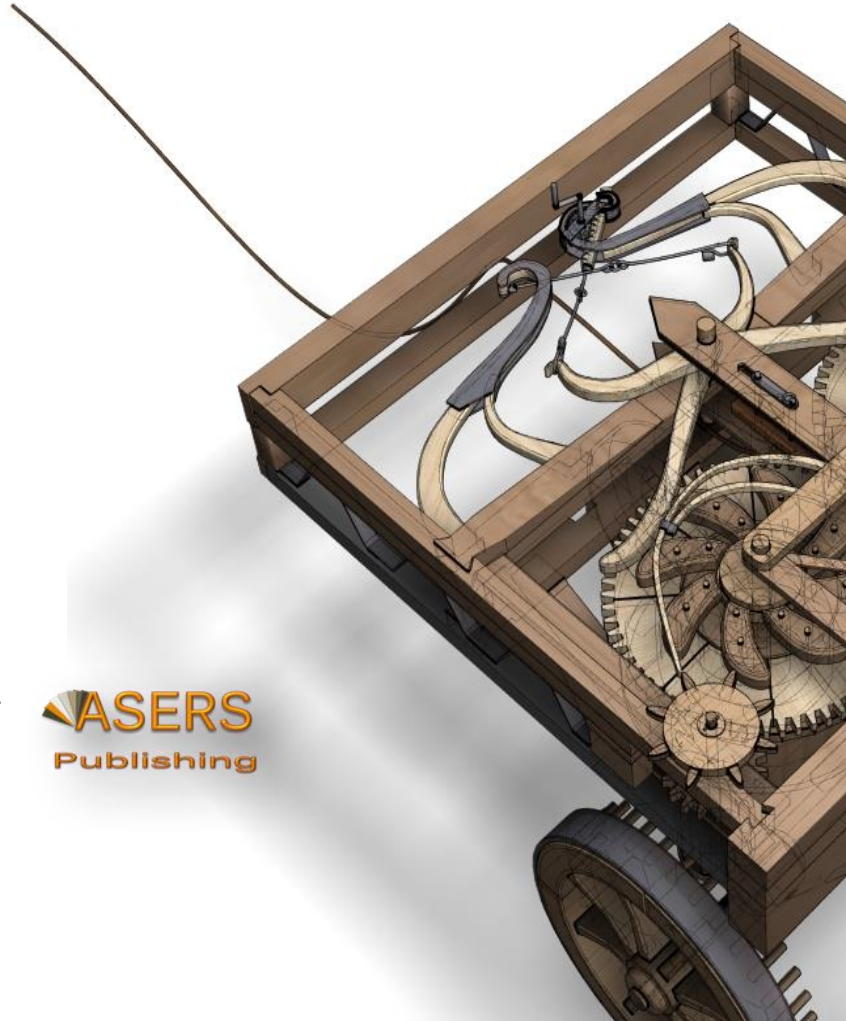
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Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism is an interdisciplinary research journal, aimed to publish articles and original research papers that should contribute to the development of both experimental and theoretical nature in the field of Environmental Management and Tourism Sciences.

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Tourists' Hotel Booking Preferences Changed by the COVID-19 Outbreak

Sauwane RODYU

School of Management, Walailak University, Thailand
sauwane.ro@wu.ac.th

Onanong CHEABLAM

School of Management, Walailak University, Thailand
conanong64@gmail.com

Nuttapachya NANTAVISIT

School of Management, Walailak University, Thailand
nuttapachya.na@wu.ac.th

Yang LING

School of Economic, Shanghai University, China
chieseyl@i.shu.edu.cn

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Abstract:

This study aims to identify the characteristics and behaviors of Thai tourists during the pandemic, to investigate the marketing factors in tourism affecting their hotel reservations during the pandemic, and to analyze which marketing factors in tourism have affected their decisions on hotel reservations during the pandemic. Online questionnaires were used to collect data from 385 people. The data was analyzed by descriptive statistics and a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), while the hypotheses were tested by inferential statistics. The results indicated that Thai tourists considered significant factors in tourism marketing. It included hotel products, room rates, reservation channels, promotions, personnel, features, and services. Furthermore, the hypothesis test indicated that Thai tourists had different hotel reservation behaviors during the pandemic. Gender, age, region, occupation, monthly income, travel goal, accommodation type, length of stay, travel companion, and reservation channel played a statistically significant role at 0.05. Therefore, this study will support hoteliers in planning their strategy to handle situations during the pandemic and prepare for another health crisis in the future. Furthermore, it will benefit the hotel industry by showing ways to develop and improve their products and services to meet tourist demand during a pandemic.

Keywords: Thai tourist; tourist behavior; hotel booking; COVID-19 pandemic; marketing factor in tourism.

JEL Classification: Z32; C19.

Introduction

Since the end of 2019, the world has faced a deadly virus called COVID-19. Many countries across the globe have implemented lockdown policies to reduce the spread of the virus in their own countries (Gössling, Scott and Hall 2020). Traveling domestically or abroad, dining out, and working away from home are all prohibited as a result, and only bare necessities can be afforded (Thams *et al.* 2020). The virus was first identified in China (Hao, Xiao, and Chon 2020; World Health Organization 2020) before spreading around the world. This COVID-19 not only poses a high health risk but also has a significant impact on the global economy, particularly the hospitality

and tourism industries (AHLA 2020; Pahrudin, Chen, and Liu 2021; Thams *et al.* 2020). In the face of COVID-19, developing countries need to restructure their economies as fast as possible (Soliku *et al.* 2021).

During January–October 2020, international tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) declined by 72% during the same time the previous year (UNWTO 2020). This has impacted the development of Thailand, which is the major economy depending on the tourism sector. Thai tourism contributed 21.60% of Thai GDP in 2018 before Thailand was hit by COVID-19 at the end of 2019 (Long Tun Man 2020). The first COVID-19 patient was found in Thailand on January 12, 2020 (The standard Team 2021). After that, the COVID-19 pandemic peaked in the middle of Much 2020 affecting Bangkok's entertainment industry and boxing business (Thairat News 2020). To mitigate the pandemic, many countries are implementing social distancing, quarantines, curfews, and states of emergency (Chamnina 2020). This includes prohibiting crowded activities, for instance, closing schools and universities, sports events, concerts, and festivals (Folinas and Metaxas 2020; Gössling, Scott and Hall 2020). Such policies strongly affect tourism, yet the Thai government wanted to increase domestic tourism by promoting various strategies, such as the Travel Together campaign. This campaign motivated domestic tourism in Thailand; 40% of the hotel room rate would be subsidized by the government (TAT Intelligence Center 2020b). Consequently, the tourists were able to make a reservation in any 5-star hotel at a low rate and spent more money than usual. This campaign was predicted to be quite successful. Moreover, since few people traveled during the pandemic, some Thai hotel brands applied a new strategy to increase hotel reservations by developing self-quarantine packages in Bangkok and Pattaya hotels (Folinas and Metaxas 2020).

The negative impact of the COVID-19 crisis is greater than that of the SARS and MERS diseases in 2003 and 2015, respectively, with the majority of the hotel industry affected (García-Gómez *et al.* 2021). Hotel reservation behavior has changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tourists exercise extra caution about hotel selection; they not only consider beautiful hotels or low prices but also pay more attention to the hotel protection plan from the COVID-19 outbreak. For example, the hotel industry in China invests in technical support: self-check-in systems, cleaning machines, food delivering robots, kiosks, smart controls (lighting, air conditioning via mobile applications), and digital payments (Hao, Xiao, and Chon 2020). During the pandemic, people lead a new normal lifestyle: having less interaction and contact, wearing masks, and regularly washing their hands. These are the ways tourist behaviors have changed during the pandemic. Consequently, the objective of this study is to identify the changing characteristics and behaviors of Thai tourists during the pandemic, to investigate the marketing factors in tourism affecting hotel reservations during the pandemic and to analyze which marketing factor in tourism has affected their decisions on hotel reservations during the pandemic. The benefit of this study will support hoteliers in planning their strategy to handle situations during the pandemic and prepare for another health crisis in the future. Furthermore, it will benefit hotel industries by showing ways to develop and improve their products and services to meet tourist demand during the pandemic.

1. Literature Review

Tourist Behavior

Consumer behavior is the process of deciding whether to purchase a product or service or not. In this process, consumers consider the questions of what, when, why, and how before consuming products and services (Chatchakul 2008). This concept is linked to tourist behavior, and it is possible to conclude that tourist behavior is the process of deciding to purchase tourism products. Both pull and push travel motivations were found to be significant predictors of overall satisfaction. In addition, the direct effects of pull travel motivation on revisit intention and willingness to suggest were discovered which influenced revisit intention more than willingness to suggest (Bayih and Singh 2020). During the crisis, the consumption and financial status of consumers can be significantly affected by increased COVID-19 crisis perception (Hasan *et al.* 2021). Moreover, the study of Larios-Gómez *et al.* (2021) posited that these effects are due to confinement and social distancing. In addition, these are the factors that influence the purchase decision. Consumers in countries such as Mexico, Colombia, and Ecuador have adapted to online and home delivery through social innovations, local consumption, and consumer attitudes. Therefore, there are reasons for companies to adopt online channels and create sales strategies in the face of the pandemic.

However, unlike normal products, tourism products include hotel businesses, transportation businesses, entertainment businesses, food and restaurant businesses, and sport and recreation businesses, some of which are intangible. Sometimes tourists have never seen the actual products or services before purchasing them; they only see the pictures or obtain some information from various channels, such as the internet, word of mouth, and magazines (Chatchakul 2008). In particular, people from Generation Y search for information about tourism

products through digital tools, for example, tourism webpages, online travel agencies, and online reviews. Their perceptions of trust are influenced by online hotel reviews (Sparks and Browning 2011). The consumption behavior of tourists and travelers' overall experiences are captured by mobile AR apps and this objectively proves the usefulness and significance of such mobile applications in inducing impulse purchases (Do, Shih, and Ha 2020). Van Vuuren and Slabbert (2012) discovered that there were numerous motivators influencing people to travel, including leisure and relaxation, exploration and learning experiences, sport and tourist activities, personal value, and social norms. Analysis of Pandemics, Tourism, and Global Change: A Rapid Assessment of COVID-19 concluded that hotel businesses were being closed due to a dramatic decline in the number of tourists and that hotel shareholders lowered the number of employees in the hotel industry (Gössling, Scott, and Hall 2020).

Thailand Tourism Situation during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Final Report of Thailand concluded that during the COVID-19 pandemic only 53.25% of Thai tourists had planned to travel by the end of 2019 due to their concern about the pandemic and lack of confidence in COVID-19 preventive measures at tourist destinations, for example, while using public transportation and having a meal at a restaurant. Furthermore, they were worried about spending money during the pandemic. This was linked with the report of the Tourism Economic Review in the first quarter of 2020, which announced that Thai tourism was hit hard by the pandemic. The number of Thai tourists decreased by 37.77%, and their spending dropped by 31.53% compared to the same period in the previous year (Tourism Economic Review 2020). Furthermore, an average occupancy rate of 52.39% in Thailand during the first quarter of 2020 was reported. Bangkok had the highest rate of 58.72%, followed by the southern region and the western region of Thailand at rates of 52.91% and 52.16%, respectively. It showed that the occupancy rate had decreased by an average of 26.16% compared to the same time last year (Tourism Economic Review 2020). However, the COVID-19 pandemic crisis is predicted to have a significant negative impact on Thailand's economy in the next nine months, resulting in a decrease in international tourist arrivals. A decrease in tourist arrivals in Thailand, however, has a positive effect on Thailand's environmental quality (Laeq Razzak Janjua *et al.* 2021).

On the other hand, more than 83.78% of domestic tourists in Thailand mentioned that they felt safe traveling in Thailand due to the proper cleaning policy of each tourist destination. The study of Laparojkit and Suttipun (2021) showed that the trust, loyalty, and repurchase intentions of local Thai tourists differed significantly between the East and West coasts of Thailand. During the COVID-19 crisis in Thailand, customer trust and loyalty had a significant impact on local tourists' repurchase intentions in coastal tourism. This study shows that the Thai tourism industry needs to focus on developing and improving its local customer loyalty and trust because these factors positively influence customer repurchase intentions. Furthermore, vaccines were developed and provided to some people in the tourism industry. In addition, tourism businesses participated in the government travel campaign, resulting in American tourists traveling to Thailand in four to six months who, nevertheless, paid attention to the COVID-19 preventive measures and risk from tourist destinations (Kelleher 2020). The study poll called Americans Are Wary About Traveling After COVID-19 Cure Flattens found that US domestic travel patterns shifted because of the pandemic. The purpose for travel was more for leisure than for business because more people work from home. Because of social distancing rules, American tourists preferred traveling alone to having family or couple trips. Therefore, to meet this tourism demand, the shareholders of tourism businesses needed to prepare for COVID-19 preventive measures in their business (Kelleher 2020).

Exchang Wire (2021) reported that the number of flight searches represented tourism demand, indicating that flight searches had a significant relationship with the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the number of people searching for tourist destinations in Southeast Asian countries decreased at the beginning of the pandemic in Southeast Asia around the end of 2019, while the number of flight searches in European countries decreased in February 2020 when the pandemic hit Italy. It also reported that hotel reservation behavior has changed because of the pandemic. The tourists took their time searching for more information before confirming their trip, meaning that their trip would probably take place next year. However, it was anticipated that the trend would continue and that the lead time for hotel reservation behavior would be shorter than that in the past due to the current situation. Only 18% of tourists felt comfortable staying at a hotel in a city where there were very few COVID-19 cases, and only 14% of them preferred eating at restaurants (Gursoy and Chi 2020). The tourism pattern has shifted, as has the tourist behavior, during the pandemic, and this would probably affect tourist behavior after the pandemic. This is supported by the research of Pahrudin, Chen, and Liu (2021) who posited that local visitors will always utilize non-pharmaceutical interventions and health protocols, such as keeping social distance, wearing a mask, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle while visiting the local destination in the short and medium term due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, Soliku *et al.* (2021) reported that in the current situation,

hospitality facility management must implement COVID-19 safety protocols and reorganize their services. COVID-19 has an enormous negative impact on hotel stock prices, more than the SAR and MERS crises (García-Gómez *et al.* 2021).

2. Methodology

This study employed the quantitative method. The data were collected from an online questionnaire from October to December 2020. As the exact number of Thai tourists was unknown, sampling was conducted by applying the formula of W.G. Cochran (Cochran 1977), and the result was 385 Thai tourists who traveled during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The questionnaire was tested by an index of item-objective congruence (IOC) (from 3 experts). The standard testing score was 0.67 or more for every question, and the reliability of the questionnaire was 0.86.

Part 1 of the questionnaire concerned personal characteristics, including gender, age, region, occupation, and monthly income. Part 2 inquired about tourist behaviors, such as travel purpose, accommodation type, length of stay, travel companion, reservation channel, and vehicle. Part 3 examined the factors influencing the marketing factors in tourism, including hotel products, room rates, reservation channels, promotion, personnel, features, and services.

Descriptive statistics, such as frequency, mean, standard deviation, and percentage, were employed to analyze the general information of the respondents as well as the behavior of Thai tourists, such as demographic characteristics and behaviors of Thai tourists. To examine their opinions influencing the marketing factors in tourism, this study employed a rating scale where a scale of 1 referred to the least important, 2 referred to slightly important, 3 referred to important, 4 referred to very important, and 5 referred to the most important (Spector 1992).

Objectives and hypotheses are tested in the following stage. As a statistical method employed in this research, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is used in this study's marketing mix qualifying process. CFA using continuous observable variables, and this study's positive component analysis supports the hypothesis that a particular observed variable may be used to quantify the built-in latent variable (Brown and Moore 2012). The findings of this study will show which aspects of the marketing mix are most important.

Finally, t tests, F tests, and least significant difference (LSD) tests were employed as independent variables to analyze the marketing factors in tourism affecting the hotel reservations of Thai tourists during the COVID-19 pandemic. If the result of the hypothesis test was less than 0.05, it meant that it was statistically significant, and this hypothesis was accepted.

3. Result

3.1 Characteristics of Tourist Behavior Regarding Selecting Hotels during COVID-19

The results indicated that 51.90% of Thai tourists who traveled during the COVID-19 pandemic were female, 48.10% were male, 27.30% were in the age range of 25-34, 34.30% were from the central region, 27.80% were office employees, and 24.40% earned a monthly income over THB 35,000 (USD 1,167).

Regarding Thai tourist behavior in selecting hotel reservations during the COVID-19 pandemic; 98% made a trip for leisure and recreation, and the majority of them (98.40%) preferred staying at a hotel. Furthermore, it was found that some tourists made a reservation for some different types of accommodations, such as private villas, air BNB, and others, at the same percentage of 2.10%. During the pandemic, 51.40% stayed for two nights, and 35.60% preferred traveling with their lover. However, 13% preferred to travel alone. The results also indicated that 61.80% preferred making a hotel reservation through online travel agencies, such as booking.com and Traveloka, and 74.30% traveled by private cars, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Thai Tourist Behavior regarding Selecting Hotels during the COVID-19 Pandemic (n=385)

Factor	Description	Tourists	
		Frequency	Percentage
What is the purpose of your stay?	Traveling/Leisure	379	98.40
	Meeting/Seminar	1	0.30
	Business	3	0.80
	Visiting Relative	1	0.30
	Others	1	0.30
What type of accommodation did you stay in?	Hotel	172	44.70
	Resort	129	33.50

Factor	Description	Tourists	
		Frequency	Percentage
	Bungalow	4	1.00
	Homestay	30	7.80
	Room for Rent	10	2.60
	Camping	15	3.90
	Private Villa	8	2.10
	Air BNB	8	2.10
	Family or Relative's House	1	0.30
	Others	8	2.10
How long did you stay in the hotel?	1 Night	161	41.80
	2 Nights	198	51.80
	3 Nights	15	3.90
	More than 3 Nights	11	2.90
With whom did you travel?	Alone	50	13.00
	Lover	137	35.60
	Family	113	29.40
	Friends	79	20.50
	Others	6	1.60
How did you make a hotel reservation?	Online Travel Agency (Agoda, Traveloka, etc).	238	61.80
	Direct Call to Hotel	103	26.80
	Direct Reservation on Hotel Website	10	2.60
	Walk-In	25	6.50
	Others	9	2.30
What type of accommodation did you stay in?	Hotel	172	44.70
	Resort	129	33.50
	Bungalow	4	1.00
	Homestay	30	7.80
	Room for Rent	10	2.60
	Camping	15	3.90
	Private Villa	8	2.10
	Air BNB	8	2.10
	Family or Relative's House	1	0.30
Others	8	2.10	
Which vehicle did you take for traveling?	Private Car	286	74.30
	Private Motorcycle	32	8.30
	Public Transport	56	14.50
	Others	11	2.90

3.2 Marketing Factors in Tourism Affecting Hotel Reservation of Thai Tourists during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The marketing factors in tourism affecting the decision on hotel reservations during the COVID-19 pandemic included hotel products, room rates, reservation channels, promotions, personnel, features, and services, as presented in Table 2 below on a scale from 1 (the least important) to 5 (the most important).

Hotel products (P1) scored an average of 4.25. The most important reason in this category was the application of alcohol spray while cleaning the guest room (4.50), followed by the implementation of the COVID-19 preventive measures in the hotel (4.28), the information on the current situation and measures taken in the guest room (4.25), the room variety (4.12), and the brand image (4.09).

The hotel room rate (P2) scored an average of 4.35. The most important reason in this category was the reasonable room rate combined with the hotel facilities (4.40), followed by the prominent display of the room rate and cancellation policy (4.39), the value compared to other hotels (4.38), the display of room rate detail (4.30), and the room quality compared to the rate (4.20).

The hotel reservation channel (P3) scored an average of 4.11. Reservations were mainly made through online channels due to social distancing (4.39). However, some Thai tourists used both online and offline

channels (4.36), while some made a direct phone call (4.03). In addition, some of them made reservations at the events organized by the relevant government agencies to promote domestic tourism (3.67).

Hotel promotion (P4) scored an average of 4.28. The lowered room rate during the pandemic is the most important reason in this category (4.38), followed by the incentive offer (4.37), the advertising on website and/or Facebook Fan Page (4.24), free masks and hand sanitizer for guests during the stay (4.22), and the discount (4.18).

Hotel personnel (P5) scored an average of 4.49. The most important reason in this category was lack of a double standard for all guests of any nationality (4.51), followed by the knowledge and preparation on how to provide good service during the pandemic (4.48), problem solving skill in the event of a COVID-19 patient in the hotel (4.46), and good and timely service provision (4.46).

Hotel features (P6) scored an average of 4.34. The most important reason in this category was the well-ventilating environment (4.52), followed by the initial COVID-19 screening measure (4.42), the limitation on the number of guests using the hotel facilities at the same time (4.39), and the proximity to a hospital (3.95).

Hotel service (P8) scored an average of 4.39. An accurate and reliable reservation system is the most important reason in this category (4.47), followed by various channels for direct contact (4.44), various payment methods (4.41), existing social distancing policies, and a sufficient number of available hotel personnel (4.31).

Table 2. Average Score of Marketing Factors in Tourism Affecting Hotel Reservation during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Factors	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	Total
P1	1	.671**	.510**	.607**	.638**	.611**	.631**	-
P2	.671**	1	.509**	.522**	.468**	.559**	.582**	-
P3	.510**	.509**	1	.422**	.403**	.388**	.432**	-
P4	.607**	.522**	.422**	1	.628**	.642**	.632**	-
P5	.638**	.468**	.403**	.628**	1	.728**	.734**	-
P6	.611**	.559**	.388**	.642**	.728**	1	.792**	-
P7	.631**	.582**	.432**	.632**	.734**	.792**	1	-
Mean	4.25	4.35	4.14	4.28	4.49	4.34	4.44	4.33
S.D.	0.522	0.605	0.631	0.605	0.564	0.757	0.671	0.622
Rank	6	3	7	5	1	4	2	-

Remark: Very low importance = 1.00-1.80, Low importance = 1.81-2.60, Moderate importance = 2.61-3.40, High importance = 3.41-4.20, and Very high importance = 4.21-5.00

P1 = Hotel Products, P2= Hotel Room Rate, P3 = Hotel Reservation Channel, P4= Hotel Promotion, P5= Hotel Personnel, P6 = Hotel Feature, and P7= Hotel Service

3.3 Reliability and Validity Analysis

This paper analyzes confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the reliability and validity of market factor measurement models using the Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation method with AMOS. In the analysis process, it gives important statistical values. For example, correlation, chi-square (χ^2), parameter, loading factors, mean, and variance of the variables in the model. Moreover, this study also examined the conformity of the model (Goodness of Fit Measures) using the results of three statistical groups: Estimates, Modification Indices, and Model Fit (Byrne 2016; Hair Jr *et al.* 2014; Lomax and Schumacker 2016).

In the first step, considering the suitability of the composition analysis by using the correlation coefficient between the 7 observed variables, it was found that the correlation coefficient of all pairs of variables was positive in the range of 0.388 to 0.792 (Significant at the 0.01 level) as in Table 2 and a value of not more than 0.90 indicates that all variables are suitable for further factor analysis (Aroian and Norris 2005).

In the second step, all the analyses had Bartlett's test of sphericity significantly different from zero at the 0.01 level, a Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) index greater than 0.5, an approach value of 1 (= 0.896) and measures of sampling adequacy (MSA) greater than 0.5 (= 0.870–0.949). The observable correlation matrix is not an identity matrix, and there is enough correlation between the variables to be able to analyze confirmation elements to verify their structural validity (Kerlinger and Lee 2000).

This result indicated that the outcome of the χ^2 value was statistically substantially different from zero; hence, the measurement model had construct validity. This finding is consistent with the confirmation composition analysis results for all variable measurement models in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of Consistency index

Consistency index	Criteria	Marketing Factors		Test Results
		Before	After	
χ^2	$P > .05$	0.000	0.246	Pass
χ^2/df	< 2	9.266	1.272	Pass
GFI	> 9.05	0.903	0.992	Pass
NFI	> 9.05	0.923	0.993	Pass
TLI	> 9.05	0.895	0.997	Pass
CFI	> 9.05	0.930	0.999	Pass
RMSEA	< 0.05	0.147	0.027	Pass
RMR	< 0.05	0.018	0.006	Pass

According to Table 3 for the third step, the confirmatory factor analysis findings on marketing factors indicated the following model consistency check index: $\chi^2 = 0.246$, $df = 9$, $\chi^2/df = 1.272$, $GFI = 0.992$, $NFI = 0.993$, $TLI = 0.997$, $CFI = 0.999$, $RMSEA = 0.027$, and $RMR = 0.006$. The index result satisfies the following criteria: χ^2/df is less than two, GFI NFI TLI CFI is greater than 0.95, and RMSEA RMR is less than 0.05 (Byrne 2016; Lomax and Schumacker 2016; Hair Jr *et al.* 2014; Kline 2015). Therefore, it is shown that the measurement model of the marketing variables in this work is consistent with the empirical data.

The values of indicators in their loads that showed the minimum or surpassed the required value of 0.70 were kept. Two indicators should be removed: Hotel Products and Hotel Reservation Channel, both of which have loads less than 0.70. Similarly, we kept the indicators with a Cronbach's Alpha of more than or equal to 0.70, which indicates dependability and validates the scales' internal consistency (Hair Jr *et al.* 2014; Nunnally ly Bernstein 1994). However, the composite reliability (CR), which must be larger than 0.70 (Bagozzi and Yi 1988), is regarded a superior indicator of internal consistency; we kept the scales that surpassed this threshold. In each of the scales, the extracted mean-variance index (AVE) was more than 0.050 (Fornell and Larcker 1981), indicating that the variance of the construct derived from its indicators is appropriate. Table 4 displays the study's findings.

Table 4. Results of Confirmatory Factors Analysis

Variable	Factors loading matrix				Reliability R2	Cronbach's Alpha >0.70	CR >0.70	AVE >0.050
	λ	b	SE	t value >1.96				
Hotel Products	0.677**	0.702	0.051	13.830	0.459**	.956	.901	.571
Hotel Room Rate	0.749**	0.901	0.055	16.388	0.562**			
Hotel Reservation Channel	0.493**	0.619	0.064	9.734	0.243**			
Hotel Promotion	0.754**	0.937	0.056	16.728	0.568**			
Hotel Personnel	0.853**	0.957	0.049	19.421	0.728**			
Hotel Feature	0.843**	1.000			0.711**			
Hotel Service	0.854**	0.985	0.041	24.014	0.729**			

Finally, the results of confirmatory factor analysis on the measurement model in terms of the latent variable of marketing factors, as shown in Table 4, found that the standard factor loading (λ) of all seven variables is positive and statistically significant at the 0.01 level. As the order of standard factor loading ranges from high to low value, the factor loadings of Hotel Service, Hotel Personnel, Hotel Feature, Hotel Promotion, Hotel Room Rate, Hotel Product, and Hotel Reservation Channel are 0.854, 0.853, 0.843, 0.754, 0.749, 0.677, and 0.493, respectively. Additionally, each observed variable can describe the variance of attitude toward the behavior, accounting for 72.9, 72.8, 71.1, 56.8, 56.2, 45.9, and 24.3 percent, respectively, with statistical significance at the .01 level. Therefore, it can be concluded that the observed variables or indicators of all variables in this work theoretically correspond to the empirical data and can be used to analyze hypotheses.

3.4 Hypothesis Test

According to the hypothesis test, the characteristics and behaviors of Thai tourists affecting marketing factors in tourism on hotel reservations during the COVID-19 pandemic are explained as follows.

The characteristics affecting marketing factors in tourism on hotel reservation during the pandemic are presented in Table 5, demonstrating that Thai tourists of different genders considered different factors when making a hotel reservation during the pandemic, which was statistically significant at 0.05. Such marketing factors in tourism included hotel products, promotions, and personnel.

Thai tourists from different age ranges considered different factors when making a hotel reservation during the pandemic, which was statistically significant at 0.05 in terms of hotel personnel. After multiple comparisons of ages using the LSD test, it was found that Thai tourists up to 55 years of age were most concerned about hotel personnel when making a hotel reservation during the pandemic, with a statistically significant score of 0.05. This contrasts with those in the age ranges of 15-24, 25-34, and 35-44, which somehow did not consider this factor significant.

Thai tourists from different regions were considered differently. The hotel features scored significantly at 0.05. After multiple comparisons using the LSD test, the result indicates that Thai tourists from the northern region considered hotel features the most important.

This study also scrutinized the occupations of Thai tourists and found that during the pandemic, those of different occupations made different decisions when selecting a hotel. It revealed that Thai tourists who were business owners, retired, and worked in other occupations paid the most attention to hotel personnel.

An analysis of variance by income found that the monthly income of Thai tourists affected their decision toward their hotel options during the pandemic. This included hotel room rates, promotions, and personnel. This aspect achieved a statistically significant rate of 0.05, meaning that their income level affected their decision when making a hotel reservation during the pandemic. Multiple comparisons revealed that Thai tourists with different income levels considered different factors when making a hotel reservation during the pandemic. Thai tourists who have monthly income between THB 25,001 and 35,000 (USD 833-1,167) and up to THB 35,000 (USD 1,167) paid the most attention to the hotel room rate.

Table 5. Characteristics of Thai tourist affecting marketing factors in tourism on hotel reservation during the COVID-19 pandemic

Variable	Hotel products	Hotel room rate	The hotel reservation channel	Hotel promotion	Hotel personal	Hotel features	Hotel service
Gender	0.008*	0.102	0.063	0.008*	0.004*	0.760	0.299
Age	0.327	0.178	0.320	0.107	0.047*	0.248	0.600
Region	0.300	0.381	0.900	0.108	0.678	0.030*	0.181
Occupation	0.641	0.251	0.323	0.115	0.017*	0.097	0.090
Monthly income	0.057	0.003*	0.088	0.004*	0.004*	0.034	0.15

*It was statistically significant at 0.05.

The behaviors of Thai tourists affecting marketing factors in tourism on hotel reservations during the COVID-19 pandemic are presented in table 6. The results indicated that Thai tourists with different behaviors have different preferences for hotel reservations during the pandemic. Their behavior included travel purpose, length of stay, travel companion, reservation channel, and vehicle type.

The travel purpose had an effect on Thai tourists when selecting the hotel during the pandemic. Hotel services achieved a statistically significant rate of 0.01, meaning that when making a hotel reservation, Thai tourists only considered hotel services.

When selecting the accommodation type, Thai tourists also considered other marketing factors in tourism; hotel promotions, features, and services achieved a statistically significant rate of 0.01 and 0.05, meaning that when selecting the accommodation type, Thai tourists took hotel promotion, features, and services into account.

Different lengths of stay had an effect on Thai tourists when making hotel reservations during the pandemic. Only the hotel product achieved a statistically significant rate of 0.05. After multiple comparisons of length of staying and hotel products by using LSD test, it was indicated the Thai tourists who stayed at the hotel for 2-3 nights considered the hotel product when making a hotel reservation.

Traveling companions affected Thai tourists when deciding on hotel selection during the pandemic. The hotel reservation channel achieved a statistically significant rate of 0.05. After multiple comparisons of traveling companions and reservation channels using the LSD test, it was found that Thai tourists traveling alone and with

their lover, family, or friends considered hotel reservation channels differently. Furthermore, the multiple comparisons of traveling companions and hotel features indicated that Thai tourists traveling with families used significantly different hotel reservation channels than those traveling alone and with friends, meaning that those traveling with families paid more attention to the hotel features to fulfill their families' needs.

An analysis of the variance of the hotel reservation channel and product indicated that the hotel products, room rates, promotions, personnel, features, and services were significantly different, presenting statistical significance at 0.01 and 0.05. After multiple comparisons of reservation channels and products, it was found that Thai tourists making hotel reservations by direct calls, walk-ins, and other channels were not significantly different, but those making hotel reservations through online travel agencies achieved a statistically significant rate of 0.05. Furthermore, the multiple comparisons of reservation channel and room rate by using the LSD test indicated that Thai tourists making a hotel reservation by direct call, walk-in, and other channels achieved the significant rate of 0.05, meaning that the different hotel reservation channels were required to compare room rates, and those making a hotel reservation by direct call and those with no reservation were charged differently.

Thai tourists with no hotel reservation and those making a hotel reservation through other channels considered the promotion differently. Those making a hotel reservation through online travel agencies and by direct call placed high value on hotel promotion, achieving a statistically significant rate of 0.05. The multiple comparisons of hotel reservation channels and personnel using the LSD test revealed a significant difference at 0.05, meaning that Thai tourists with no hotel reservation and those making a hotel reservation through online travel agencies considered hotel personnel differently.

The results of multiple comparisons of hotel reservation channels and features using the LSD test indicated that Thai tourists with no hotel reservations and those making a hotel reservation through other channels considered the hotel features differently. Furthermore, it was reported that those with no hotel reservation and those making a hotel reservation by direct call considered the hotel feature differently, achieving a statistically significant rate of 0.05.

The results of multiple comparisons of hotel reservation channels and services using the LSD test revealed that Thai tourists with no hotel reservations and those making hotel reservations through other channels considered hotel services differently, presenting statistical significance at 0.05. In addition, those with no hotel reservation and those making a hotel reservation by direct call considered the hotel service differently, presenting statistical significance at 0.05.

Finally, an examination of the relationship between tourist vehicles and marketing factors in tourism on hotel reservations revealed that the vehicles used by Thai tourists during the pandemic had no effect on their decision of whether to stay at a hotel.

Table 6. Behaviors of Thai tourist affecting marketing factors in tourism on hotel reservation during the COVID-19 pandemic

Variable	Hotel products	Hotel room rate	The hotel reservation channel	Hotel promotion	Hotel personal	Hotel features	Hotel service
Travel purpose	0.479	0.053	0.656	0.603	0.222	0.405	0.000**
Accommodation tryp	0.266	0.108	0.596	0.000*	0.060	0.040*	0.006*
Length of stay	0.013*	0.254	0.553	0.114	0.079	0.443	0.162
Travel companion	0.518	0.209	0.005*	0.092	0.192	0.017	0.097
Reservation channel	0.000**	0.000*	0.152	0.000**	0.050*	0.001**	0.000**
Vehicle	0.768	0.879	0.211	0.183	0.852	0.644	0.988

*It was statistically significant at 0.05 and ** 0.01.

Conclusion

This section contains the conclusion and discussion of the research findings based on the research purpose. This study is an analysis of the factors affecting the decision made by Thai tourists on hotel reservations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Characteristics and Behaviors of Thai Tourists during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The results of the study indicated that more than half of Thai tourists were female; most tourists were in the age range of 25-34; were from the central region; were office employees; and earned monthly income over THB

35,000 (USD 1,167). This was in accordance with what the Tourism Economic Review reported during the first quarter of 2020 that most Thai tourists were from the central region. According to the Tourism Authority of Thailand's final report on domestic travel during the COVID-19 pandemic, more than half of Thai tourists were female; most of them were single and in the age range of 25-34, and 33.8% held a bachelor's degree, earning monthly income in the range of THB 15,001-30,000 (USD 500-1,000) and were office employees. These people are considered as Generation Y (TAT Intelligence Center 2020a). These findings are similar to what was reported in Chuaikrut, Phusanam, and Dejmanee (2020) that most Thai teenager tourists were female and single in the age range of 21-25, and undergraduate students who earned a monthly income lower than 10,000 baht.

The main travel purpose of Thai tourists during the COVID-19 pandemic was leisure, and their preferred option was hotels and resorts. Most Thai tourists stayed for 2 nights, followed by travel with their partner. Furthermore, more than half of Thai tourists made hotel reservations through online travel agencies, and most of them preferred private cars to public transportation. Most of the travel purposes of Thai tourists traveling domestically during the pandemic were leisure, followed by gaining experiences and memories and leaving a legacy for themselves. Their preferred accommodation type was hotel and resort (TAT Intelligence Center, 2021). Chuaikrut, Phusanam, and Dejmanee (2020) reported that Thai teenagers planned to travel at least once a month and searched for all information about their destinations online. Their travel purposes were leisure and having meals at restaurants. Most of them preferred traveling with friends and used their own vehicle.

Marketing Factors in Tourism Affecting Hotel Reservation during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The confirmatory factor analysis revealed that marketing factors may be quantified using the following seven variables: hotel service, hotel personnel, hotel feature, hotel promotion, hotel room rate, hotel product, and hotel reservation channel. Moreover, the study revealed that the variable hotel service is the most important (has the greatest factor loadings), while the hotel reservation channel is the least important (lowest factor loadings).

The results of the study indicated that Thai tourists considered marketing factors in tourism when making a hotel reservation during the COVID-19 pandemic, including hotel products, room rates, reservation channels, promotions, personnel, features, and services. Thai tourists rated hotel personnel as the most important factor, followed by services, room rates, features, promotions, products, and reservation channels.

Regarding hotel products, the results indicated that Thai tourists considered room facilities to be the most important factor. Information on COVID-19 preventive measures for hotels should be provided, while the application of alcohol sprays when cleaning guest rooms should be on a regular basis, and the face-to-face interaction between hotel personnel and guests should be limited. The B2B News reported that notifying guests of the current situation and preventive measures in the hotel represented the level of care provided to guests (Klussmann 2020). The Marriott, Hilton, and Hyatt chains have introduced new technology to reduce the face-to-face interaction between hotel personnel and guests, such as electrostatic sprayers, electronic check-ins and check-outs, and food ordering through mobile applications (Garcia 2020). Moreover, Kamata (2021) revealed that communication with hoteliers was the most important factor to consider after the pandemic, while Sparks and Browning (2011) indicated that the growth of online shopping provided more options for tourism products and that tourists searched for electronic word of mouth when making a hotel reservation.

The results showed that Thai tourists were concerned about the value of money when making a hotel reservation, meaning that the room rate and other service charges were prominently displayed with full details of the cancellation and refund policy. Furthermore, the room rate should be consistent with the facilities and accommodation type and valuable compared to that of other hotels. These findings are similar to what was reported in Chuaikrut, Phusanam, and Dejmanee (2020) that the room rate was the most significant factor for Thai teenagers when making a hotel reservation after the pandemic. The room rate, physical appearance of the facility, word of mouth and advertising were considered by tourists when making a hotel reservation (Chow, Garretson, and Kurtz 2008).

Thai tourists significantly considered making a hotel reservation through an online travel agency or direct calls to the hotel to reduce face-to-face interaction with hotel personnel. The results also indicated that online reservations were more convenient than other channels. Klussmann (2020) reported that the most important distribution channel was through the network with online travel agencies. Furthermore, Thai tourists paid attention to online advertising on Facebook due to good promotions and offers during the pandemic; the lowered room rate and free masks and hand sanitizer to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 were good incentives. The most important factor influencing online hotel reservations was purchase intention based on information on online travel agency websites (Liu and Zhang 2014). In contrast, most hotels' responses to the COVID-19 disaster in 2022 focused on rebuilding efforts, and the data indicates the direct influence of emotional assessment and

mental exertion on customer happiness. Customer satisfaction was found to be affected by both affective assessment and cognitive effort, implying that hotels' crisis response techniques played a role (Yu *et al.* 2022).

Thai tourists expected hotel personnel to exercise new normal policies; for example, they were required to wear masks at all times, provided accurate service on time, and had sufficient knowledge regarding how to manage the situation in the event of a COVID-19 patient in the hotel. Therefore, less face-to-face interaction between hotel personnel and guests was crucial during the pandemic. This matter is related to the consumer preference to avoid direct contact with hotel personnel by using new technology, such as online reservations, check-ins and check-outs, and payments (China Hospitality Association 2020). However, Quang *et al.* (2020) reported that the salary of hotel personnel was lowered and that they were allowed to work from home during the pandemic.

Regarding hotel features, Thai tourists paid more attention to well-organized hotels and public facilities, such as quick access time and the provision of hand sanitizer. The hotel's public areas should be well ventilated and secure. These findings are similar to what was reported in Spoerr (2020) that the most important factors for selecting a hotel in Germany were cleanliness and economic value.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Thai tourists expected hotels to have sufficient personnel to serve guests. On the other hand, they paid more attention to online payments through mobile applications to reduce face-to-face interaction with hotel personnel. Hoteliers should increase the service value provided to their guests, such as room upgrades (Spoerr 2020). During the pandemic, JW Marriott Phuket Resort and Spa added value to their service by providing the package of room, dinner set, spa gift voucher, and complimentary beer at the beach bar (JW Marriott Phuket Resort and Spa 2021).

In conclusion, when considering tourist behavior, we found that tourists will select hotels and make a trip for purposes of leisure and recreation. Most tourists preferred staying at a hotel for two nights with their partner or family. Significantly, Thai tourists preferred making a hotel reservation through online travel agencies, such as booking.com and Traveloka. Moreover, the pandemic has reduced bookings and changed booking patterns. These were accompanied by a temporal shift in booking behavior, with less anticipation and a decrease in intermediate bookings in the tourism supply chain as well (Deyá-Tortella, Leoni, and Ramos 2022).

The marketing factors affecting hotel booking during the COVID-19 pandemic were very high on average. Thai tourists considered, among all marketing factors in tourism, hotel products, room rates, reservation channels, promotion, personnel, features, and services to be the most important factors when making a hotel reservation during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it was clear that they prioritized COVID-19 preventive measures in the hotel, followed by the private environment. Therefore, hoteliers need to implement new service strategies, such as adding digital technology to improve their service. Lowering the room rate is no longer the only way to attract tourists but increasing the service value has become a crucial strategy to attract and maintain guests during the pandemic. Furthermore, during 2022, the logical appeal type had a greater favorable impact on hotel booking intentions, indicating that it is preferable for COVID-19-related messages. PSC had a negative impact on the low loyalty group's booking intentions, and brand loyalty remained essential even within the COVID-19 (Ju and Jang 2023). More importantly, the tourism and hospitality industries must play an important role in innovation and digital technology such as booking apps, food delivery apps, cleaning robots, digital signage, and payment in the future to overcome the COVID-19 crisis and other crises and protect the health of visitors and employees as well (Alotaibi and Khan 2022).

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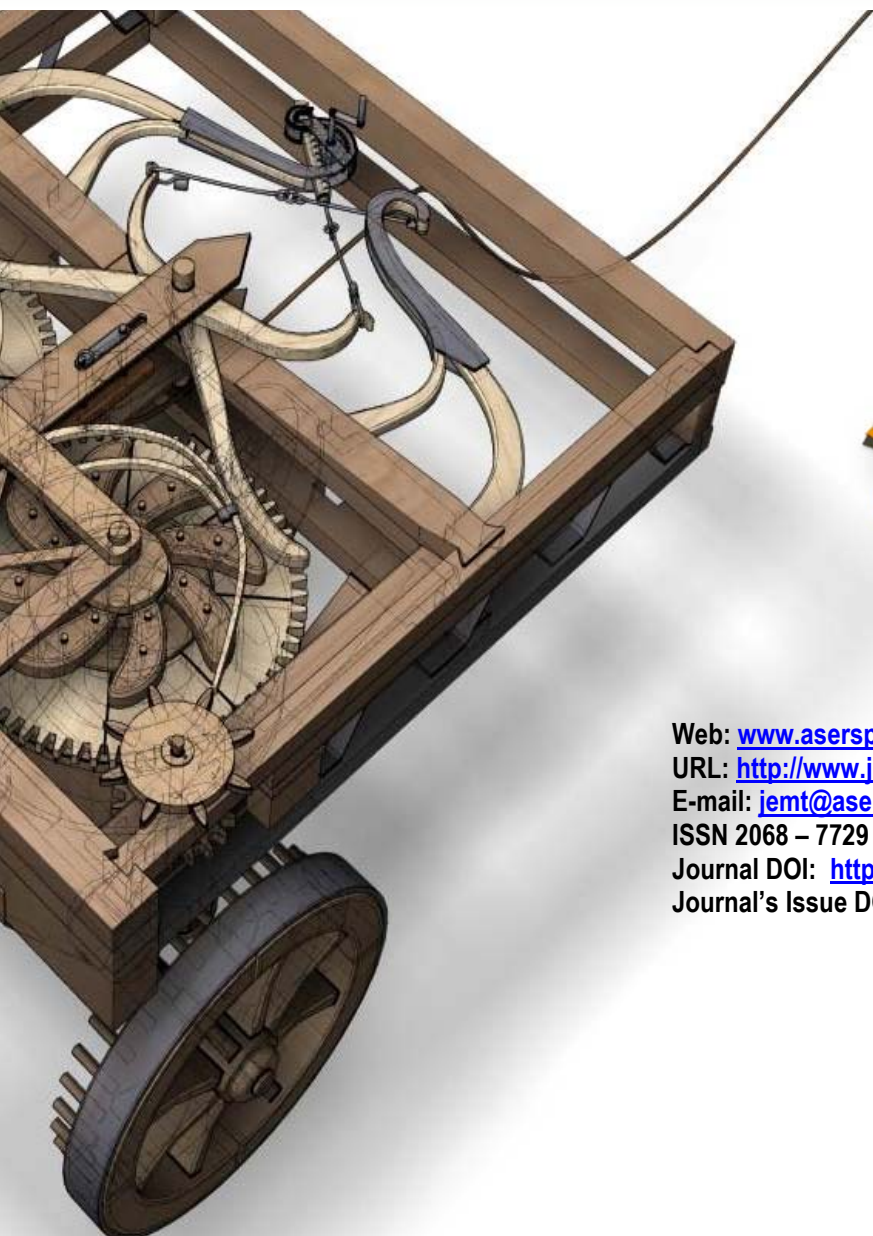
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