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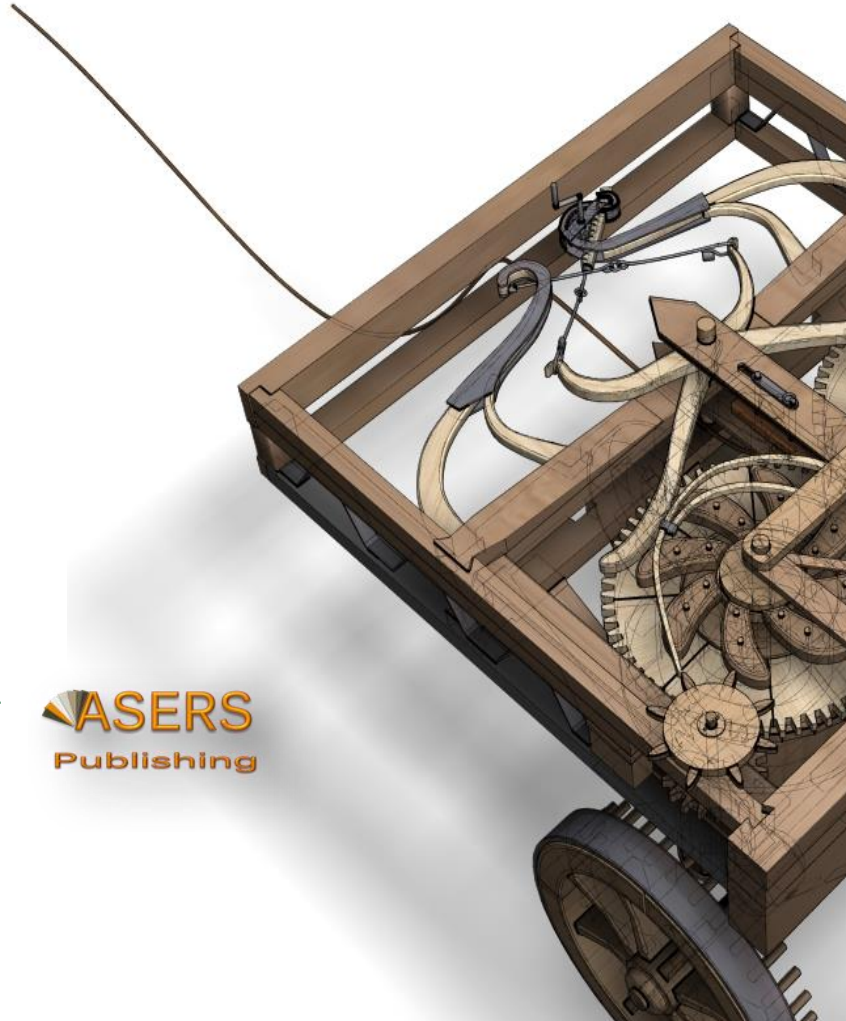
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Journal of Environmental Management and Tourism

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Creating Service with Thai Hospitality: What Does Service Providers Highlight for Hotel Service in Thailand?

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Abstract: This study aims to explore service components in Thai hospitality which are prepared and provided by the service providers in order to creating impressive service in the hotel sector in Thailand and are presented to tourists as the core value of Thai hospitality. The mixed methods were employed using interview and questionnaire survey. Samples were the frontline hotel service providers to obtain valuable opinions and various perspectives regarding service and its practice in hotel. Data were collected from 11 interviews and 320 questionnaires. The interview thematic analysis and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) were the main analysis of the research. Results showed seven service components which could be the core value in Thai hospitality included professional traits, the senses of service (intangibility), workplace culture and skills, service tangibility, Thai service providers, Thai nurture and practices and hotel ambience. The service components founded in Thailand can support the strong bond between Thai culture, service offerings and service providers. These also can help the hotels to gain more advantage in their businesses and lift up the competitiveness of Thai hospitality in hotel service.

Keywords: service; hotel; hospitality; Thai hospitality; Thailand.

JEL Classification: L83; L84; O14

Introduction

COVID-19's impact on the global economy has been unprecedented. The hospitality sector is gearing up to regain its normal momentum by aligning itself to the new emerging trends, and by taking certain measures to respond, recover and thrive in the coming times (Bacon and Santos 2021). It is imperative that the service firms compete with each other by improving excellent service to customers. However, it is challenging to improve service quality as a quality-of-service standard is rising, high competition and customers get more experience. It has been very challenging in Asia with the sign of widespread improvements of Asian hospitality and further investments in the region (Jones Lang LaSalle 2021). Entrance of international brands in Asian markets and the success of Asian branding has built and emerged due to the reputation of the hospitality and pleasurable experiences in destinations (Noonan and Vaidya 2011; Jones Lang LaSalle 2021; Radojevic, Stanic, and Stanic 2019). Local Asian brands have become globally recognised and maintained their service quality as the results of Asia-ness because of Asian culture and service orientation (Fakfare *et al.* 2019; Piuchan and Pang 2015). To illustrate, Japan and Thailand were mentioned as the favourable service and being attractive for hotel investment (Berendt and Tanita 2011; Wan and Chon 2010; Jones Lang LaSalle 2021). This is a good signal and question of what contribute the Asian hospitality standing among the global competitions.

The word 'hospitality' has a similar root as 'hospital' for which a common meaning is taking care of patients and expanding to non-hospital organisations in which employees interact directly with customers, later calling customers 'guests' as a metaphor of hospitality (King 1995). A recent study defines hospitality as the duty of providing care to strangers, which also remains similar to a traditional denotation (Wattanacharoensil, W, Kobkitpanichpol, B. and Chon 2014; Fakfare *et al.* 2019). To date, hospitality cannot be clearly explained in a single definition due to its abstract nature (*i.e.* diverse experience and different product categories in a hospitality sector) (Nankervis 2000). Asian hospitality is derived from Asian culture in service offering and people

involvement (Ueltschy *et al.* 2009). That this constructs the concept of Asian hospitality is difficult to demonstrate because of various ethnicities and varying cultural beliefs as well as a host of different customs, and religious and languages issues (Hobson 1994). Generally, Asians are collectivist in nature while their cultures exhibit the importance of group relationships and high power distance where a hierarchy is acceptable (Ueltschy *et al.* 2009). The notable aspects of Asian hospitality such as tangibilizing the intangible by creating the physical image of service offer and adding physical evidence which can be seen from Asian service offering (Wan and Chon 2010). Those heterogeneous aspects undoubtedly affect the service orientation in Asia.

Apart from Asian, Thailand and Thai culture rank globally in the number of award-winning properties in hotels (International Hotel Award 2020). Thai hospitality is strongly embedded with its unique social culture, value and history (Radojevic, Stanasic, and Stanic 2019). Hotel brands located in Thailand also gain increasingly extensive flavour in blending of international and Thai hospitality arena. In a highly competitive and dynamic tourism and hospitality industry, hotels today are developing various strategies to ensure customer satisfaction which the notion of 'service experience' becomes an essential element in understanding customers/tourists. Research on the service quality, service experience has much studies from the customer viewpoint (Adhikari and Bhattacharya 2016; Bueno *et al.* 2019; Lipkin and Heinonen 2022). However, service providers are also the important role for offering memorable service. Today, it is challenging for service-oriented employees to interact with customers to offer value propositions which can create favourable service experiences. Moreover, service experience also influence customers' affective reactions during hotel stays (Lajante, Ladhari, and Massa, 2022) which included both tangible and intangible elements of hotels that influence experience and suggested hotel professionals to be more effective in the management (Kim, Lee, and Han, 2023). So, this current research would like to investigate key service touchpoints that hotel service providers have prepared to delivery these key service to their customers, pinpointing Thai hospitality as Thailand is the area of a study. This research mainly highlights service components that the hotel service providers are pressed as the essences of service offering in Thailand. It intends to explore the essences of creating service in the hotel sector as the core value of Thai hospitality.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Culture and Hospitality

Culture can be expressed through both tangible and intangible items such as food, architecture, clothing, art or other unarticulated elements such as knowledge, beliefs, and behavioural patterns, it is the full range of learned human behaviour patterns (Korjala 2012). Each culture leads one to the guidelines to behave in a socially accepted ways and becomes the main force tightening people together. The concept of culture is defined as the influence on human interaction by providing the overall learning process of their modes of thought, emotions, behaviour and communication in connection with their environment and the awareness of their culture (Burnard and Naiyapatana 2004; Runglertkengkrai and Engkaninan 1987). Culture is not innate; it is a shared-value system and socially constructed which can be learned through socialisation (Guzley 1992). In hospitality, culture becomes an implicit theory to shape the service providers in their service performance. The hotel is the stage of human interactions, reflects the values and cultural rules of a society. Asian brands embody their traditions and cultures in their service practices (Wan and Chon 2010; Fakfare *et al.* 2019)

The key to understand Asian hospitality is to understand the Asian people and their vast diversity of culture that reflects on the Asian hospitality. Many studies indicated that there are some difficulties to define the Asian hospitality (Ueltschy *et al.* 2009; Wattanacharoensil, Kobkitpanichpol, and Chon 2014; Sucher and Cheung 2016; Piuchan and Pang 2015) which can be summarised that Asians are more service driven from their heart, senses and flexible service orientation. Cultures had been transferred into service by the service providers. There are many good examples of implementing culture in hospitality. For example, with the shared characteristics of high power distance and keep formality in working environment, service providers reflect their cultures of keeping distance during service delivery from service providers and creating formality atmosphere to respect customers that matches well with customers' preferences (Ladhari *et al.* 2011; Witkowski and Wolfenbarger 2001). Witkowski and Wolfenbarger (2001) studied about formality in Asian hospitality defined it as the verbal and nonverbal communications that express courtesy and proper etiquette and maintains social distance. This study also mentioned that language (as verbal communication) introduced the formality by addressing customers by titles or surnames, and the degree of formality could be translated into body posture (as nonverbal communication). Asian hospitality is likely to be a more formal culture in body posture such as the way of greeting customers with 'Wai' (Thailand) and 'Bowing' (Japan) with the different degree of bow (30-45-90 degrees, deeper and longer bow indicates more respect) and considers some informal body posture to be rude (*i.e.* putting feet on desk). It

seems that the high-power distance and formality, such Asian cultures, are more appreciated in the service delivery as they simply accept the inequalities among individuals.

It can be seen that goods and services are no longer enough, and producers must differentiate their products by transforming them into deeper and more complex experience for achieving higher added value. Blending tradition and culture with hospitality is often mentioned in the way of local perspectives in Asia and demonstration, such as greeting for demonstrating local culture, smiling, eyes contact during service operations, are examined in favour (Winsted 1997; Witkowski and Wolfenbarger 2001; Piuchan and Pang 2015). The service quality largely depends upon employees' skills to express the desirable emotions and manner to customers. Service providers with positive mood condition naturally operate better service. However, it also depends on the culture they carry. In Asia, the difference in socio-cultural context has been greatly found to have culture-based generalisation across all Asian cultures. Literatures have illustrated that cultures are blended into Asian hospitality as the industry presently deals with people from various cultures between service providers and customers. Service providers become the important actors in presenting the host culture to customers which distinguish service experience in a specific country.

1.2 Thai Hospitality

Thailand is well-known in both destination and hospitality. Hospitality is the essence of Thai people in nature with the expression of 'nice people', 'friendliness' and 'service mind' (Piuchan and Pang 2015; Wattanacharoensil, Kobkitpanichpol, and Chon 2014; Fakfare *et al.* 2019). Panmunin (1993) defines Thai hospitality as Thai people themselves. This author indicates the smiles and warm greetings, graciousness and welcoming manner, and the willingness to care others offered by the country's citizens as the essential success of the Thai hospitality. Friendliness of Thai people, service-mind, willingness to help others as a reflection of Thai hospitality usually mentioned in the study of Thailand's destination image of various tourism category (Rittichainuwat, Qu, and Brown 2001; McDowall and Choi 2010). This indicates that people factor is one key essence of Thai hospitality.

The root of hospitality in Thai people might be the fact that the country is a constitutional monarchy and never lost its political autonomy which can imply that other Western philosophies are less adopted in the way of life and the mode of thoughts, its culture has developed without Western influence (Sucher and Cheung 2016; Runglertkengkrai and Engkaninan 1987). A Thai belief system, Buddhism, also reflects in social practices such as the respect for elderly in society and cultivates Thais' mindset of being goodness, kindness and compassion, creating harmony and peace of society and understanding others, Buddhism shapes the way of life of Thais (Sucher and Cheung 2016; Runglertkengkrai and Engkaninan 1987). Thai culture and etiquette in Thailand are strong hierarchical influences of a way Thai people creating service atmosphere and practices (Piuchan and Pang 2015; Fakfare *et al.* 2019; Wattanacharoensil, Kobkitpanichpol, and Chon 2014). Furthermore, Thais also communicate their emotions through visible facial expression such as smile (Witkowski and Wolfenbarger 2001). These characteristics would generally enable Thais to deliver the services with gentleness and avoid making customers feel down from their service delivery process, as well as caring of guest experiences. Furthermore, welcoming attitude of Thai people and value of money are the expressions of Thai hospitality because tourists receive experience in affordable price, luxury hotel stays, good service, fine dining, moreover, Thailand is justifiable renowned for its people's gracious manner in service (Panmunin 1993; Sucher and Cheung 2016).

Human touch and symbolic gestures are integrated in service features in Thai hospitality. Thai hotels present a family-like atmosphere and a warm welcome to customers while they stay in the hotel (Fakfare *et al.* 2019). Thai Wai and smile are not only cultural gestures but become symbols of graciousness toward guests (Piuchan and Pang 2015). In Thailand, a smile is often used for many different emotions. It may be an apology, a thank you, a greeting, or to show embarrassment. Thais are very proud of their cultural heritage and enjoy talking about it with visitors (eDiplomat 2022).

Thai hospitality demonstrates the characteristics of both tangible and intangible elements. Physical environment creates atmosphere of service through the Thai unique architecture and decorations in a specific culture which are important in hotel business. Moreover, the cultural touch is from music, lighting or Thai specific aroma in hotel public areas and contemporary Thai decoration creates atmosphere in hotel (Fakfare *et al.* 2019). Therefore, physical environment carries strong cultural characteristics of hotel in Thai hospitality as a tangible element.

1.3 Service Experience

Services are described by the certain characteristics such as intangibility, perishability, heterogeneity, inseparability, these make service non-storable, non-repeatable, non-standardised and labour-intensive

(Grönroos and Gummerus 2014; Sandström *et al.* 2008). Besides, it greatly relies on human interactions. Service experience has started widespread since initially introduced by Pine and Gilmore in 1999 in their conceptualisation of experience economy by proposing four dimensions of experiences namely aesthetic, education, entertainment, and escapism. It becomes a fundamental concept in service-dominant logic, and research on service experience is growing rapidly (Ali, Amin, and Cobanoglu 2016). With the increasing amount of commercial hospitality, physical goods are not enough to compete with in today's business but service experience is getting high valued (Richards and Wilson 2006; Jaakkola, Helkkula, and Aarikka-Stenroos 2015).

The service experience has been rising to distinguish the major products by displaying the experience beyond expectation (Nankervis 2000). Besides, Asian hospitality is presently introduced to provide products and services by offering mysterious services with value-added local characteristics to distinguish themselves from global competitors. Market-oriented strategy is dependent on customers' experiences and satisfactions. When providing service delivery to customers, it is imperative in today's business to provide the high quality while distinguishing business from the competition (Shaw, Bailey, and Williams 2011). Firms develop various strategies to meet the needs of customers which product, employees and customers are essential for the business's success (Pikkemaat and Zehrer 2016). To create value, the engagement between customers and employees during the process of service delivery does impact on customers' experience in overall value. By creating value and engaging with both customers and employees, each business creates a service delivery culture that may help create a favourable brand image for the organisation/company and increase revenue.

In this study, service experience is referred to a series of discrete experience which consists of many messages that impact customers' feelings, stories of service and organisations and experiences that goods and services provide for them. It is an integration of a 'hedonic impression' (individual touches while encountering service and perhaps even imaginary) and a 'practical contact' (consisting of observable facts or events which are acquired knowledge and skills in practice). Service experience is often facilitated by firms for customers and is shifting to be co-created by customers with other individuals (actors) in the customers' own service ecosystems (Mccoll-kennedy *et al.* 2015; Helkkula 2011).

Service experience consists of tangible and intangible elements (Helkkula 2011; Bettencourt and Gwinner 1996; Kim, Lee and Han 2023; Piuchan and Pang 2015). Tangible elements are viewed as physical decorations, atmosphere creations, people being involved, dialogue and conversations etc, while intangible elements include a process, a change, events, a touch moment which combines both real (physical) or virtual (observed) elements. Both tangible and intangible elements perhaps create a holistic phenomenon in service experience. So, the wide variation is apparent and the notion of service experience varies in accordance with different contexts and circumstances. However, there are some collective characteristics of service in different organisations, industries or even cultural settings. It is interesting to seek service experience in Thai hospitality that uplift the strengths in hotel business in Thailand.

Research related to service experience involved Helkkula (2011), Piuchan and Pang (2015) and Winsted (1997). Starting with Winsted (1997), this author developed a framework for identifying relevant behavioural measures and important factors in evaluating the service encounter in each culture studied. The research conducted the comparative studies between two dissimilar cultures, the U.S. and Japan, to examine the differences in service perception through eight dimensions comprising of *Authenticity, Caring, Control, Courtesy, Formality, Friendliness, Personalisation and Promptness*. The result reported that the U.S. presented friendliness, personalisation, authenticity and promptness were the dominant factors while Japan was reported the heavy emphasis in the factor related to caring for the customers.

Later, by adapting Winsted's study, Piuchan and Pang (2015) further investigated service experience dimension in Asian hospitality using Thailand and Hong Kong as cases. Authors had attempts to investigate the different indicators of service experience in Asian cultural contexts. The results showed the expressions of service experiences which perceived differences from previous studies of Winsted (1997) by looking through the practices in those eight dimensions. This research revealed the new distinguished practices in Asian hospitality except promptness. Moreover, examples of the practices of cultural blending in service also clarify how people in particular culture reflect their culture in service offering. This has altered the origin of cultural attention. The concept of culture is defined as the influence on human interaction by providing the overall learning process of their modes of thought, emotions, behavior, and communication in connection with their environment and the awareness of their culture, and customer perceived the cultural value through service delivery and the people who carry that culture.

Culture provides the framework for social interaction in a society. Parasuraman, Berry, and Zeithaml (1991) noted the influence of external variables on expectations and recognition of cultural values as the principal

determinants of consumer behaviour. However, only a few authors examined the influence of culture on perceptions of service provision. This research has reviewed some key cultural characteristics in Thailand relating to service setting. This is to set some key attributes to be further evaluated for service offering in Thai cultural contexts (as Thai hospitality).

2. Method

This study followed the mixed methods which the researcher believes that both qualitative and quantitative approaches can add to supplement and improve the study by reflecting breadth or depth answers, providing a fuller picture and enhancing description and understanding. The samples were the frontline hotel staff who had a direct contact to hotel customers and worked in hotels and resorts located in Thailand. Most studies had done research about service experience from a customer side. However, this study would like to investigate what are the key elements that hotel staff have prepared and provided service to customer which might make other future evaluate whether the match between both sides. This research targeted hotel service providers to obtain valuable opinions and various perspectives regarding service in hotel field. Scholars suggest that the service experience is more likely to be optimised when there is a match between the personality characteristics of the employee and the customer (Mills, Chase, and Margulies 1983; Bettencourt and Gwinner 1996).

The interview questions were initially developed based on literature comprised four open-ended questions. The face-to-face interview was conducted on a one-by-one basis with approximately 30-40 minutes and Thai (mother language) was the interviewing language. Interviews were conducted to investigate additional concerns and to explore the new attributes that distinguished the service characteristics of Thai hospitality. According to the interview results, the measurement items in the questionnaire were set and refined to ensure the appropriation of all survey items as the proposed items developed from literature might be inadequate. Therefore, the interview results can help to create and validate an instrument. Three experts were selected for the instrument evaluation and to give the comments about the survey questions and measurement items. There were 40 service experience attributes of Thai hospitality in total and using a 5-point measurement scale. A consent form that described all essential information about the research and the data was treated confidentially and they had right to quit the study. These followed the procedure recommended by Research Ethic Committee.

2.1 Data Collection

Interviews followed the purposive sampling method by the recommendation of contact. The researcher had specific predefined groups that the study was seeking. The researcher verified that the participants did in fact met the criteria for being in the sample (*i.e.* workplaces and work functions). Purposive sampling could be very useful for situations to reach a targeted sample quickly and was likely to get the opinions of target population. Questionnaire surveys also was the non-probability sampling method and on a voluntarily basis. A voluntary response sampling is mainly based on ease of access. Instead of choosing participants and directly contacting them, people volunteer themselves (*e.g.* by responding to a public online survey). In summary, there were 11 interview participants and 320 sets of questionnaires in this study. This research was conducted during March 2021 to April 2022.

2.2 Data Analysis

For interview analysis, thematic analysis was used to uncover major areas of service that the service providers had been pressed as the essences of hotel service in Thailand. To avoid any arbitrary designations, all concepts and domains were mainly arranged in accordance with the literature review. The concepts and domains were identified by the shared similarities from participants' responses and cross-checked against literature. However, some domains did not exist in previous studies. When this occurred, the researcher read and labelled the new domains via open coding to create an initial code of that information with particular attention to the occurrence of patterns. After all the analysis was completed, several strategies were designed to organise the qualitative result and discovered the added items to be used in the questionnaire.

2.3 Measurement Development

The measurement items were developed from the literature review which consisted of 18 items. To be more specific to Thai culture and Thai hospitality, this current study had done 11 interviews with frontline hotel staff to get more relevant information. Based on the interviews, 22 measurement items were later added to ensure the appropriation of all survey items as the proposed items might be inadequate. The interview data helped to create and validate an instrument. Therefore, there were 40 measurement items in total in the questionnaire.

For questionnaire surveys, data was computerised using the SPSS statistical program. Before analysing the data, data screening took place to ensure that no data was omitted in order to be assured of a realistic example. The first analysis of the data included the calculation of the descriptive to screen the data and to provide a quick summary result. The second analysis is using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to identify the underlying dimensions of service in Thai hospitality.

3. Results and Discussions

The profile of survey respondents. In summary, females were the predominant (66.9%), half of respondents were age range between 26-35 (49.4%), mainly got undergraduate degree (75.6%), 2-5 years of hotel working experience (43.1%), working in the front office department (40.3%) and food and beverage department (32.5%), and mostly worked in international hotel chains (40.3%).

3.1 Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

In performing EFA, the following fundamental criteria should be considered. Firstly, the number of factors was determined by eigenvalues, in which only factors having eigenvalues larger than 1 was kept (Field 2009). Secondly, the reliability of each identified factors was examined. Scale reliability was ensured by determining values of Cronbach's Alpha, any values greater than 0.7 indicated high reliability and those less than 0.3 signified low reliability (Hair *et al.* 2010). Thirdly, as the sample size of this study was exceed 300 respondents, minimum factor loadings values of 0.4 was regarded to demonstrate significant level (Hair *et al.* 2010). Fourthly, as average communality in social sciences were often low (0.4) to moderate (0.7), any items demonstrating communality values less than 0.5 were deleted (Costello and Osborne 2005). Fifthly, Bartlett's test of sphericity should be statistically significant. The p-value should be less than 0.05 to ensure sufficient correlations exist among variables (Hair *et al.* 2010). Sixthly, a KMO measure of sampling adequacy was examined and values greater than 0.5 were suggested (Field 2009). Finally, a scree test was conducted, in which a visible elbow was used as the cut-off point to determine the number of dimensions for the study (Hair *et al.* 2010). In social sciences, it was suggested a variance explained of 60% or higher could be considered in determining the number of factors (Hair *et al.* 2010).

For the extraction method the Principle Axis Factoring (PAF), Promax oblique rotation with Kaiser Nominalization was used to obtain the latent variables that contributed the most to the variance (Cohen and Ben-Nun 2009). The Promax rotation has the advantage of being fast and conceptually simple. Via PAF analysis, the factorability of the data was supported by highly significant Bartlett's test of Sphericity and the Kaiser Meyer Olkin test of sampling adequacy values exceeding the minimum recommended value of 0.60 (Field 2009; Reavley and Pallant 2009). Most of variables were statistically significant, $p < 0.05$ and KMO value was 0.906, a value of 0.90 and higher meant to be marvellous (Mooi and Sarstedt 2011). The Bartlett's Test was significant (a significance value less than 0.05), indicating that the variables were correlated highly enough to provide a reasonable basis for factor analysis.

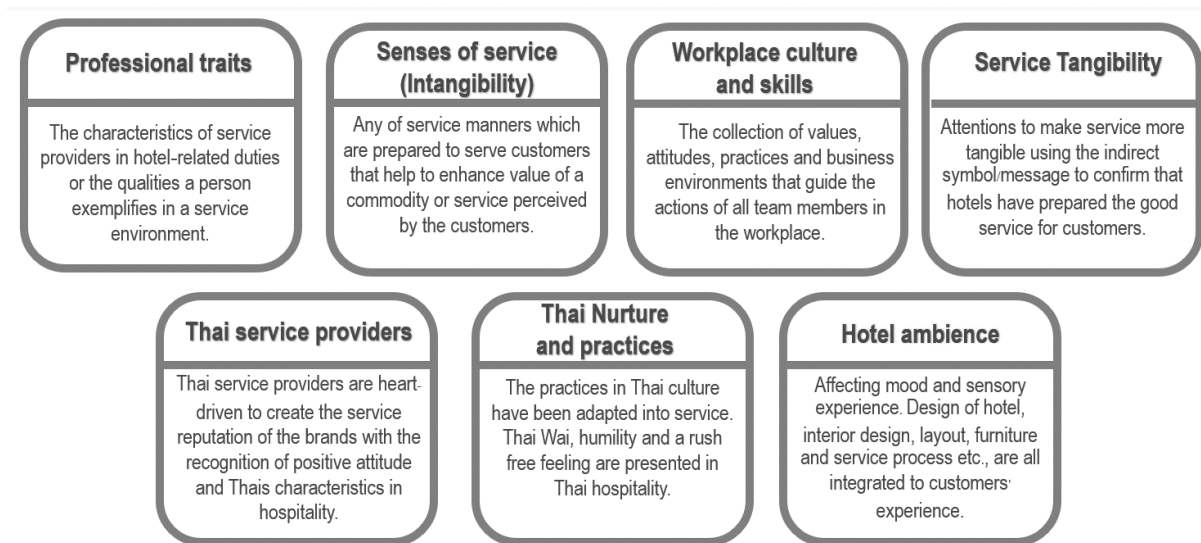
The communalities were generally in between .381 to .658, which was acceptable as the communalities should lie above 0.30 (Mooi and Sarstedt 2011). To enhance the reliability and efficiency of the scales, the items that failed this assessment were removed one by one and the remaining items were subjected to the PAF in the final stage. An analysis of PAF initially revealed a total of seven components, accounting for 48.974 percent of the total variance which were extracted from the data.

The factor structure and the items loading are presented in Table 1. The factor scores were calculated and standardised based on the features that contribute to each factor. Only features that contributed to the factors were presented in the table (factor loading above 0.4). A value of 0.7 alpha score and above generally indicates a scale of high reliability and between 0.5-0.7 and was considered as a moderately reliable scale (Hinton, McMurray, and Brownlow 2014). However, the limit of Cronbach's Alpha value could decrease to 0.6 in exploratory research (Hair *et al.* 2010). In this study, the reliability values for the factor 1-7 were between 0.878 to 0.644 and most dimensions achieved a level of reliability. The resulting factors were therefore correlated. The newly seven created components are labelled thusly: **Professional traits, Senses of service (intangibility), Workplace culture and skills, Service tangibility, Thai service providers, Thai nurture and practices and Hotel ambience** (Table 1 is attached at the end of this paper).

3.2 Service Components in Thai Hospitality

Figure 1 summarises service in Thai hospitality that hotel service providers had been indicated as the key essences in the hotel's context located in Thailand.

Figure 1. Service components: the practices of hotels in Thailand



Source: from the result of this study

3.2.1 Professional Traits

Professional traits refer to the characteristics of service providers in hotel-related duties or the qualities a person exemplifies in a service environment. These includes standards for the employees' behaviours and abilities to embody the hotel's value and transfer into service to customers. According to the result, professional traits of Thai service providers are perceived through the Thai hotel staff. The expressions are related to having a backup plan for any assistant requests by customers, attentions to details, follow-up what the guest asked, advanced preparations, service consistency, creating relaxed service atmosphere by taking care them like respected relatives, well-known personalised service in Thai hospitality and the characteristics of Thai hotel staff. This is in line with the service quality that customers usually expect a high and personalised level of service, responsiveness, assurances and empathy during the service encounters (Ladhari *et al.* 2011).

3.2.2 The Senses of Service (intangibility)

The senses of service are any of manners being perceived such as sight, smell, hearing, touch, taste which might be expressed in anything intangible .The senses of service mean being able to serve someone, people, community, social cause, or a belief, which enhance value of a commodity or service perceived by the customers. Besides, it is difficult to identify what will be included due to heterogeneity in service .However, Thai hospitality has shown some common characteristics of the senses of service as human touch, emotional connection, willing to service, helpfulness, close attention to details as found in this research .Thais are humility and caring which display as the collective attitude and behaviour in society .Giving an example from the interviewee, one mentioned that guest usually indicated why staff helped to comfort guest or advise something they needed even though those incidents were not the work responsibilities .This touches the feeling of customer and feel-like home when staying Thailand's hotel .The interview statement supported as showing.

“...Thai hotel staffs are quite good at collecting customer's detail and remember the characteristics of each customer. Then, the hotel staff will manage service to customers immediately to fit with their preferences. For example, one customer like to order Americano every morning. So, we (staff) will not ask the customer what he want to drink, we will ask whether he want Americano as he used to order. Most customers like to be remembered and this can make little impressed for customers.”

3.3.3 Workplace Culture and Skills

Workplace culture and skills refer to the collection of values, attitudes, practices, and business environments that guide the actions of all team members in the workplace. A great work culture exemplifies positive traits to improve performance and bring out qualities of the whole company. It also retains the hotel company uniqueness. From the result, job knowledge and hard skills, well-rounded tourism knowledge and teamwork of front-and-back of the house are the key important aspects in hotel service which are labelled as a work culture and skills in service experience in Thai hospitality. In tourism and hospitality, this is known as 'service culture' which people

understand the importance of a positive organisational culture that creates an environment to work effectively and grow employees' skills. Service culture is beyond the call of duty work, it drives works more naturally, honest thoughts and mindset while taking care of customers. Strong service culture helps to increase employee motivation and better customer experiences. This is vital to productivity.

3.3.4 Service Tangibility

Service is intangible; however, there are many attentions to make it more tangible to confirm the guest's feelings in service. Hotels are tangibilizing intangibility or using the indirect symbol/message to confirm something intangibility. To illustrate, the interpretation of cleanliness is sometimes abstract in hotel service, so it has been tangibilized by using the symbol of sterilisation. Folding the towel, placing the towel on the bathtub are symbolised as this washroom has been cleaned, the guest is the first to use it. In Thai hospitality, it seems to have an attempt to acknowledge cultural symbol/message more tangible by demonstrating through Thai-style uniform, Thai-style hotel decoration, voices and tone in conversation with Thai English accent, friendliness atmosphere through facial expressions (for example, smile becomes a tangible symbol to show the friendliness of Thai people as customers can "see" smile on the face of Thai staff which implicitly becomes a physical appearance or tangibility). These tangible symbols confirm guests' experience of gentle service.

Other support from the interview, one interviewee stated the guest impression of a contemporary design of the hotel uniforms from the local textile or print patterns that were originated in the areas. This is a blending of locally presenting in hotel uniforms together with keeping the professional appearances with the contemporary design. Moreover, welcoming design of hotel make guests feel relaxed. Conscious interior design affects the mood and mental well-being of building occupants. Hotels incorporate layout, colour, artworks, furniture, lighting that create positive emotional responses. Furthermore, friendliness in Thai hospitality includes smiles, the volume and tone of voice and polite conversation when hotel staff communicated with the customers. For example, to reply the customer's questions, there are many sudden answers but the service provider will explain the reasons and clearly understand the customers. Moreover, the proper tone of voice could consider to reduce the unsatisfied situation during conversation with customers in Thai hospitality.

3.3.5 Thai Service Providers

Hotel service providers are the forefront of hotel business that are embodying their own culture and company culture together. Thais are perceived to have the positive and right attitude for customer service which are underlined the practice of his/her culture. Besides, Thais characteristics are genuinity, kindness, forgiveness, balance, attention to details, which are good combinations to service. Therefore, Thai hospitality is about the natural feeling and behaviour from service providers' subconscious or attitude during service.

The service providers were heart-driven to create the service reputation of the brands. In Thailand, most of the words relate to the words of heart (organ) or 'Jai' in Thai language as from the centre of emotion. The heart-centred expression may relate the mode of thinking in that culture which reflects the actions or interpersonal relationships. Japan also expresses 'Kokoro' as 'heart' or "mind" which is perceived as the location of emotion and thinking (Berendt and Tanita 2011). Employees keep the power of service delivery. The influence of positive emotional display takes the control of reactions under the service operation period. Thai hospitality is determined by customer experience which presses less commoditisation and makes customers perceive more about the experience. When service display seems to be as fake as working effectively in the business, customers will not be satisfied in the total experience. Therefore, Thai service providers become an integral part of service encountering.

3.3.6 Thai Nurture and Practices

Culture is not innate, it is nurtured and is an adaptive mechanism. The practices in Thai culture have been adapted into service, for example from this study, Thai Wai, respectfulness behaviour and its practice, humility and a rush free feeling are proven statistically to represent in Thai hospitality. In Thailand, the local greeting is 'Wai' by placing the palms together, holding the hands in front of chest and then lower the head as slightly bowing to say hello, thank you, or goodbye. This is the form of local greetings normally impress customers. Thais pay much attention to the other people's feelings when building the relationships which influence the way to express respect to other people. Providing smiles and maintaining eye contact produce superior level of natural hospitality and customer will not imagine that there may be any hidden agenda. So, the cultural practice enhances positive service quality which displays through Thai hotel employees' behaviours.

“...The culture has a huge impact on service and customers compare service in the present culture with other culture they have been experienced. Based on Buddhism in Thailand, it teaches Thais to have mercy and compassion for others. This is naturally in Thai people's minds while we do various service tasks. For example, we meet our senior guests walking uncomfortably in our hotel, we will offer help for a walk to their hotel room. This also happens when Thai people see an aging man waiting to cross the street, we will give the hands to help him cross the street.”

3.3.7 Hotel Ambience

Hotel ambience is the factor affecting mood and sensory experience in overall. Design of hotel, interior design, layout, furniture, facilities, and service process etc., are all integrated to customers' experience. Maintaining the physical facility and service ambience are both powerful aspects of service experience. Hotels have the responsibility of defining the desired ambience for the hotel's overall experience, physically and interpersonally, and then sensitising all service providers in the delivery of the complete sensory experience. For Thai hospitality, hotel ambience is one identifying dimension that is a part of service experience. This is consisting of a process, an outcome and a phenomenon (Helkkula 2011; Jaakkola, Helkkula, and Aarikka-Stenroos 2015). A process focuses on aspect of the architecture of service experience formation. This has much discussed in service design and innovation nowadays where an understanding of the formation of the customer's service experience throughout their journey within the service system is a requirement for the successful development of service offerings, environments, and systems (Jaakkola, Helkkula, and Aarikka-Stenroos 2015). Outcome-based characterisations consider the role of service experience as an antecedent to or consequence of other constructs. A phenomenon in service experience might identify as individual and subjective as it focuses on personal encountering, hedonic, context-specific and heavily depending on consumer culture perception. Moreover, it depends on many uncontrollable elements such as service providers, offering, hotel brand promises, setting and process.

Conclusion and Implications

According to the results, this study proposes the implications that could benefit to lift up competitiveness of Thai hospitality in the hotel sector as following.

Foundational service presentations in Thai hospitality, experiences always take place in a specific imaginary or factual social context. The experience in service offering in Thai hospitality has valued to the people-centric approach rather than being in straight-line standards. Thai hospitality draws attention away from the object of consumption (goods) towards the experiencing actors whose creation of value and of experience intertwine. This support that consumers do not simple deplete producer-infused value but are also actualising service value by people being a part of service experience, in this case hotel service providers.

For service mentality of hotel staff in Thailand, it is clear from the result that the core Thai hospitality is the 'people' nurturing in Thai culture who become one of key essence of hotel service in Thailand. In overall, tourists visit Thailand describe people and service as friendly and helpful. Generally, Thailand seems to have a foundation in culture for hospitality that is favourable for the international tourists. This presents a good ground for a continual growth in Thai hospitality. The hotels in each country will often reflect the inherent service mentality of the culture it stands in. This is all due to the inherent differences that make up the service mindset of the local people across different cultures. For Thailand, the reputation for service has appeared to be positive. It appears that the quality of service at the high-end hotels and individual luxury hotels are relatively consistent and well-received as well as more affordably priced, this has left tourists with much better access to the high-end experiences. This overall positive reputation is expected to attract the interest of both businesses and travellers to Thailand.

To maintain the core service, firms need to adopt strategic directions. The culture each service provider belongs to always affects the service performance and the way to treat other customers. Thai hospitality heavily relies on people/local staff who provide service through their sensitivity and cultural background they grew up in. Generally, Thai hospitality much emphasises the long-term service relationship, and service providers are the prime in the service quality delivery as service is performed by the people concerned. Employees become the centre piece of Thai hospitality for satisfying customers' desires. The service intends to be perceived by feeling more than the physical appearance as the exploring indicators from the seven components keep a larger number of intangibilities rather than tangibility indicators. Serving from heart is not just running the business to gain

profits, but it must be part of cultural blending in the practices which create the overall atmosphere in hotels. Therefore, the hotel firms' brand images have to strongly tailor to individual and supportive systems for staff who will later use the practices in service offering. Thus, the products, brands, service operations and employees of each hotel business will have to align with the core service practices creating memorable experience to customers.

Finally, this study has pressed that service experience that customers have received from the hotel firms; the key importance is also the service providers who have concentrated on engagement that stimulate positive feelings. Service providers have prepared all elements of service, included the touch points, and created the good process to delivery those founded elements for the memorable experience to all customers. It also supports the existence of some service components that have been underlined the practices of hotels in Thailand which might be developed to distinguish Thai hospitality to be more precise and better well-known in the future.

Credit Authorship Contribution Statement

Manisa Piuchan is the sole author of this research. The author had done all the processes of this research from development of the research concept; the formation of ideas, goals, and objectives. Writing an introduction, literature review, methodology being used in this research, data collection both interview and surveys, analysis of data, constructing and labelling the domains from EFA result, Writing the results, discussions, conclusion, and implications.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Table 1. Factor Loading of Service Components (Principal Axis Factoring)

Factor	Factor loading	Mean	S.D.	Communalities	Alpha	Variance %	Cumulative Variance %
Factor 1 Professional traits					0.878	28.231	28.231
1 .Thai hotel staff has developed a backup plan to handle emergency, failure scenarios or if guest requests any assistances. (SVE39)	0.910	4.17	0.90	0.646			
2 .If there is inadequate information to response guest, Thai hotel staff will search for details and get back the answers to guest . (SVE40)	0.748	4.29	0.87	0.520			
3 .Thai hospitality has advance preparations to cope with problems and circumstances that might occur with hotel guest . (SVE31)	0.723	4.13	0.88	0.534			
4 .Thai hotel staff has consistency in service (SVE36)	0.718	4.09	0.87	0.578			
5 .Thai hotel staff takes care of guest like their friends/respected relatives which guest seems satisfied and creates relaxed atmosphere (SVE38)	0.611	4.38	0.77	0.559			
6 .Personality traits of Thai hotel staff are parts of Thai hospitality (SVE37)	0.588	4.27	0.88	0.439			
7 .Personalised service in Thai hospitality is well-known (SVE33)	0.543	4.20	0.81	0.502			
8 .Thai hospitality is likely to be more relaxed conversation between guest and hotel staff . (SVE35)	0.506	4.24	0.86	0.433			
Factor 2 Senses of service (Intangibility)					0.737	5.568	33.800
1 .Thai hospitality emphasises on human touch while offering service . (SVE05)	0.696	4.23	0.83	0.437			
2 .Thai providers presents service with emotional connection . (SVE06)	0.624	4.23	0.83	0.394			
3 .Thai hotel staff is willing to deliver quality service . (SVE23)	0.595	4.48	0.70	0.505			
4 .Service offered, and helpfulness of Thai staff are beyond expectation . (SVE21)	0.580	4.29	0.84	0.490			
5 .Guest mentions that Thai hospitality is showing close attention to detail and extreme carefulness . (SVE26)	0.375	4.19	0.87	0.513			
Factor 3 Workplace culture and skills					0.710	4.884	38.684
1 .Knowledge of work/hotel/job task (hard skills) are important	0.709	4.63	0.70	0.578			

Factor	Factor loading	Mean	S.D.	Communalities	Alpha	Variance %	Cumulative Variance %
for hotel service offering (SVE10)							
2 .Teamwork between front-and-back of the house is important to service delivery (SVE12)	0.600	4.67	0.63	0.499			
3 .General knowledge (well-rounded information such as local area, tourism information) is important for hotel service delivery . (SVE11)	0.416	4.53	0.66	0.381			
Factor 4 Service Tangibility					0.731	3.455	42.139
1 .Thai-style hotel uniform creates the sense of formality and professional in Thai hospitality (SVE29)	0.841	3.76	1.13	0.658			
2 .It is mentioned that Thais have friendly English speaking and relaxed conversations because of tones of the voices and Thai-English accents . (SVE28)	0.573	3.29	1.27	0.465			
3 .Thai hospitality can be perceived and make difference from other cultures by Thai-style hotel decorations . (SVE15)	0.510	4.03	1.00	0.410			
4 .Staff friendliness is presenting as a key component in Thai hospitality . (SVE30)	0.428	4.21	0.88	0.422			
Factor 5 Thai service provider					0.706	3.102	45.152
1 .Thai hospitality is related to Thai service providers . (SVE02)	0.670	3.90	1.14	0.497			
2 .Thai service provider is part of creating Thai cultural atmosphere in hotel (SVE03)	0.617	4.17	0.93	0.590			
3 .Thai hospitality is related to Thai culture (SVE01)	0.524	4.22	0.88	0.392			
Factor 6 Thai nurture and practices					0.721	2.078	47.229
1 .Wai (Thai greeting) Is a symbol of Thai hospitality that guest always gets an experience in hotel (SVE18)	0.666	4.64	0.65	0.510			
2 .Guest mentions that Thai service providers show respectfulness through their postures such as bowing or bending over while walking pass the guest (SVE19)	0.563	4.42	0.74	0.429			
3 .Guest mentions about Thai cultural humility is an important attitude that could be seen in Thai service providers (SVE20)	0.417	4.31	0.87	0.524			

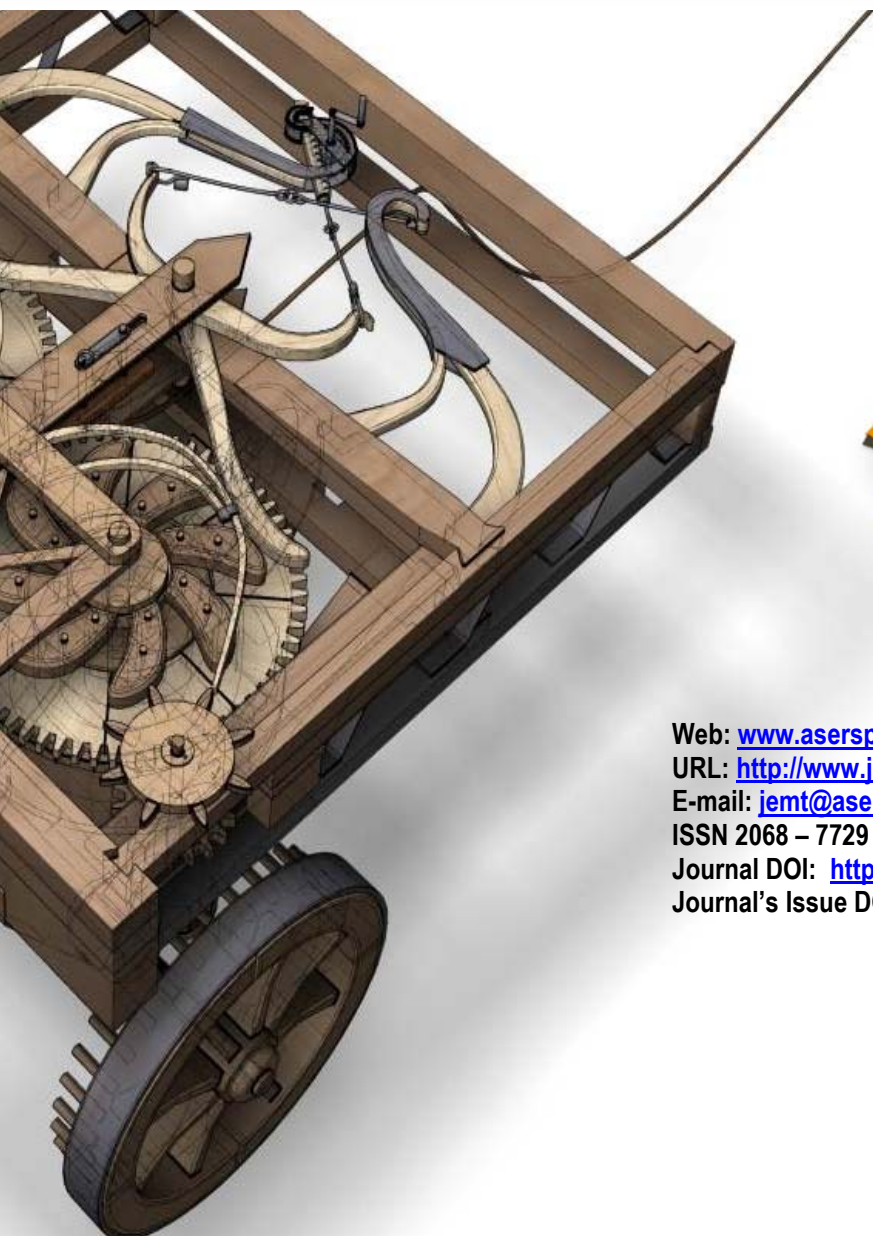
Factor	Factor loading	Mean	S.D.	Communalities	Alpha	Variance %	Cumulative Variance %
4 .Guest always compliment that Thai service providers make guest feel at ease under any circumstances such as they spend time to explain and service without feeling pressured to get things done (a rush free feeling) .(SVE22)	0.401	4.28	0.82	0.397			
Factor 7 Hotel ambience					0.644	1.745	48.974
1 .Surrounding environment and atmosphere are important in hotel service (SVE14)	0.602	4.33	0.82	0.459			
2 .Guest perceives that hotel facilities are an important element of hotel service . (SVE16)	0.494	4.52	0.72	0.460			
3 .Thai hospitality allows a guest considerable control power over staff and gives certain guest priority)i.e. asking permission to enter a guest room during in-room service (SVE27)	0.347	4.22	0.93	0.469			

Extraction Method :Principal Axis Factoring .

a .Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Source: from the result of this study

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