

## **Tourist Satisfaction with Hotel Brands (Thai and International):**

### **A Case Study of Pattaya, Thailand**

**ความพึงพอใจของนักท่องเที่ยวที่มีต่อแบรนด์โรงแรมไทยและนานาชาติ :**

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### **Abstract**

The research objectives aimed: 1) to examine the differences in tourists' perception toward Service Marketing Mix (8Ps) of Thai and international hotel brands; 2) to examine the differences in overall tourists' satisfaction toward Thai and international hotel brands, 3) to determine and predict the relationships between the Service Marketing Mix (8Ps) and overall tourists' satisfaction. The research hypotheses were formulated to accomplish these objectives.

A quantitative methodology was used in this study in which a questionnaire survey was employed as a research instrument. The questionnaire data from 600 tourist respondents were collected from international hotel brands (300) and local hotel brands (300) in Pattaya, Thailand. Multiple regression analysis and independent sample t-test were employed to test the hypotheses on tourist overall satisfaction with hotel brands where the means comparison method was used to test the differences between hotel brands. The results showed that there were six marketing mix factors (product, place, people, physical evidence, process and productivity & quality) had significant difference between hotel brands (international and Thai). There was also significantly differences between hotel brands in terms of overall tourist satisfaction. In addition, there was a significant positive correlation between service marketing mix and overall tourist satisfaction in a positively significance. Moreover process, productivity and quality and promotion had the strongest relationships with overall tourist satisfaction, while place showed the least positive relationship with overall tourist satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Hotel Brand, Service Marketing Mix (8Ps), Tourist, Tourists' Perception, Tourist Satisfaction

## บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีจุดมุ่งหมาย 1) เพื่อตรวจสอบความแตกต่างในการรับรู้ของนักท่องเที่ยวที่มีต่อปัจจัยส่วนประสมทางการตลาดทั้งแปดด้านระหว่างโรงแรมไทยและโรงแรมต่างชาติ 2) เพื่อตรวจสอบความแตกต่างของความพึงพอใจโดยรวมของนักท่องเที่ยวที่มีต่อโรงแรมไทยและโรงแรมต่างชาติ 3) เพื่อศึกษาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างความพึงพอใจของนักท่องเที่ยวกับการรับรู้ต่อปัจจัยส่วนประสมทางการตลาดแปดด้าน

การวิจัยครั้งนี้เป็นการวิจัยเชิงปริมาณใช้แบบสอบถามเป็นเครื่องมือในการวิจัยเก็บข้อมูลจากกลุ่มตัวอย่างที่ใช้บริการโรงแรมนานาชาติ จำนวน 300 คน และโรงแรมไทยจำนวน 300 คน การวิเคราะห์ทางสถิติใช้การทดสอบค่าเฉลี่ยของกลุ่มตัวอย่าง 2 กลุ่มที่มีความเป็นอิสระต่อกันและการวิเคราะห์การทดสอบโดยพหุคุณผลการวิจัยพบว่า ความแตกต่างของแบรนด์โรงแรมมีผลต่อการรับรู้ต่อปัจจัยส่วนประสมทางการตลาด 6 ด้านได้แก่ ผลิตภัณฑ์ (Product) ของทางการจัดจำหน่าย (Place) บุคลากร (People) สิ่งแวดล้อมทางกายภาพ (Physical Evidence) กระบวนการให้บริการ (Process) และคุณภาพ (Productivity and Quality) ความแตกต่างของแบรนด์โรงแรมมีผลต่อความพึงพอใจของนักท่องเที่ยว และการรับรู้ต่อปัจจัยส่วนประสมทั้งแปดด้านมีความสัมพันธ์กับความพึงพอใจของนักท่องเที่ยว โดยปัจจัยส่วนประสมการตลาดด้านกระบวนการคุณภาพและการส่งเสริมการตลาดมีความสัมพันธ์ที่ในระดับสูงสุดกับความพึงพอใจของนักท่องเที่ยว และปัจจัยสถานที่มีความสัมพันธ์ต่ำสุดกับความพึงพอใจของนักท่องเที่ยว

**คำสำคัญ:** แบรนด์โรงแรม ส่วนประสมทางการตลาด นักท่องเที่ยว การรับรู้ของนักท่องเที่ยว และความพึงพอใจของนักท่องเที่ยว

## Introduction

In today's world, tourism and hospitality industries seem to be the largest and fastest-growing industries ( Leonidou, Leonidou, Fotiadis, & Zeriti, 2013). Tourism products are transportation, local and hotel (Masarrat, 2012). This study focused only on hotel businesses provides luxury services with valuable for the economy. It has highly competitive environment with global competitor (Leonidou et al., 2013) which brings attention to satisfaction and hotel brand names (Kozak, Bigné, & Andreu, 2003; Tsoutsou & Vasioti, 2006) in nowadays. The hotel brand also have power on consumer buying behavior (Batra, Ramaswamy, Alden, Steenkamp, & Ramachander, 2000).

The relationships of the service marketing mix, brand and tourist satisfaction will create benefits for the hotel business (Oliver, 1980). The outcome will lead to future profits, loyalty,

sustainable competitive advantages, secure future revenue, future transaction cost reduction and less price sensitivity for customers (Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1997). Moreover, a hotel brand is more than just a name or logo of a particular hotel or property (Cai & Hobson, 2004) and always refers to customer awareness, reputation, customer perception and competitive advantages (Keller, 2008; Prasad & Dev, 2000).

The importance of brand (international and Thai brand) seems to have power on consumer buying behavior and many studies have investigated this issue in tangible products (Batra et al., 2000; Lee, Knight, & Kim, 2008). Therefore, this paper will gain a better understanding of the differences between international and Thai hotel brands for tourist aspect and their determinants, namely, tourist satisfaction and tourist perception with service marketing mix (8Ps) as indicator.

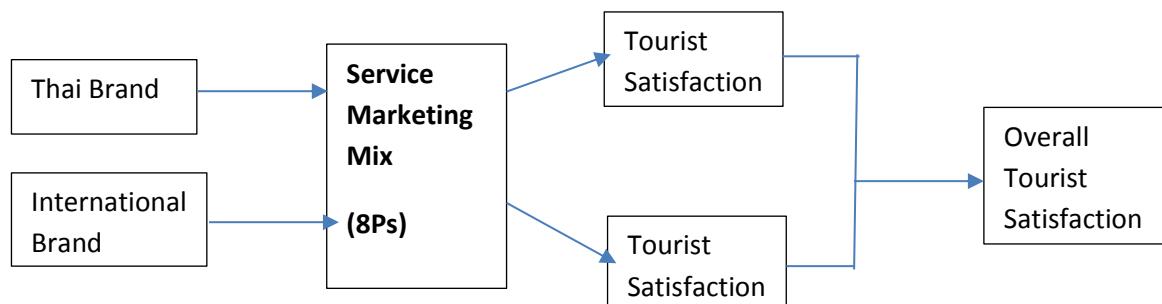
## Objective

1. To examine the differences in tourists' perception toward Service Marketing Mix (8Ps) of Thai and international hotel brands.
2. To examine the differences in overall tourists' satisfaction toward Thai and international hotel brands.
3. To determine and predict the relationships between the Service Marketing Mix (8Ps) and overall tourists' satisfaction.

## Scope of Research

- This study focuses on tourist satisfaction with hotel brands and tourists who visit to local (Thai) and international hotel brands in Pattaya.
- The survey focuses on tourists including leisure and business travelers.

## Conceptual Framework



## Definition of Operational Terms/ Research Terms

Hotel Brand: International hotel brands will follow the same standard procedures, rely on a well-known reputation globally (Aaker, 2004), and satisfaction guarantee (O'Neill & Mattila, 2010).

Local hotel brand located in a limited area or only one country (Schuiling & Kapferer, 2004) and followed local culture, and values (Aaker, 2004).

The Service Marketing Mix focuses on service-specific issues includes with 8Ps: product, price, place, promotion, people, physical evidence, process, productivity and quality (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2006).

Tourist satisfaction is a feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance or outcome in relation to the customer's expectation. Tourist satisfaction includes ambience, hospitality, added value (Sim, Mak, & Jones, 2006).

## Literature Review

The Extended Marketing Mix includes people, process, physical evidence, productivity and quality with eight concepts according to Zeithaml et al., (2006) as below which represents 48 hotel attributes in order to measure tourist satisfaction for hotels:

Product refers to room cleanliness (Rittichainuwant, Qu, & Mongknonvanit, 2002), room comfort (Khoo-Lattimore & Prayag, 2015; Xiang, Schwartz, Gerdes, & Uysal, 2015), availability of in-room amenities and facilities (Choi & Chu, 2000; Khoo-Lattimore & Prayag, 2015), cleanliness of hotel amenities (Rittichainuwant et al., 2002), hotel ambience (Simpeh, Simpeh, & Abdul-Nasiru, 2011), food and beverage hygiene and sanitation (Samori & Rahman, 2013), and availability of public facilities (Zhou, Ye, Pearce, & Wu, 2014).

Price refers to value for money (Choi & Chu, 2000; Ramanathan & Ramanathan, 2010; Zhou et al., 2014) in terms of hotel facilities, food and beverage service and room service. Place refers to location and accessibility which includes: accessibility to the hotel (Zhou et al., 2014), convenience of local transportation to the hotel (Rittichainuwant et al., 2002) convenience and speed of online booking (Yen & Tang, 2015) and accessibility of hotel on social media (Ting, Wang, Bau, & Chiang, 2013). Promotion describes availability of best price guarantee via online booking (Tso & Law, 2005), availability of promotion via social media (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011), availability of complimentary breakfast (Xiang et al., 2015), availability of free high-speed internet access (Muller, 2010), availability of loyalty membership

program (Kumar, Pozza, & Ganesh, 2013) and availability of hotel room package promotion (Hargreaves, 2015).

**People:** To provide a human interface, where necessary, between the consumer and the products and services offered by the firm. It refers to hotel staff and tourist interaction which describes the following: appearance of hotel staff (Zhou et al., 2014), reliability of hotel staff (Liu, Chapleo, Ko, & Ngugi, 2015), friendliness of hotel staff (Torres-Moraga, Vasquez-Parraga, & Zamora-Gonzalez, 2008), helpfulness of hotel staff (Liu, Yan, Phau, Perez, & Teah, 2016), ability of hotel staff to understand customer needs (Khoo-Lattimore & Ekiz, 2014), language skills of hotel staff (Zhou et al., 2014) and ability of hotel management to solve customer problem (Ceylan & Ozcelik, 2016). Physical evidence describes the décor and appearance of hotel facilities (Zhou et al., 2014), physical appearance of public areas (Ali & Amin, 2014), hotel atmosphere and ambience (Chen, Yu, Tsui, & Lee, 2014), sign-posting of hotel facilities (Herrmann, 2014), safety and security of the hotel (Choi & Chu, 2001), identification of fire evacuation routes (Chan & Lam, 2013) and availability of in-room safe box (Dong, Li, & Zhang, 2014).

Process refers to the following hotel attributes: easiness of making room reservation (Bilgihan & Bujisic, 2015), courtesy of check-in process (Choi & Chu, 2000), courtesy of check-out process (Deo & Jain, 2015), availability of in-room check-out/express check-out (Cobanoglu, Berezina, Kasavana, & Erdem, 2011), accuracy of bill during check out (Brandt, 2015; Davis & Horney, 2015), availability of 24 hour service at front desk (Lu, Berchoux, Marek, & Chen, 2015) and availability of 24 hour room service (Dominici & Palumbo, 2013).

**Productivity and Quality:** To ensure that the requisite level of service is provided to the consumer with strict regard for customer expectations before, during and after a purchase event (Zeithaml et al., 2006). The following hotel attributes belong to the aspect of productivity and quality: quality of room (Choi & Chu, 2001; Li, Law, Vu, Rong, & Zhao, 2015), room and bed sizes standard (Suhartanto, 2011), food and beverage quality (Zhou et al., 2014; Choi & Chu, 2001), quality of public area (Zhou et al., 2014), quality of Wi-Fi connection (Li et al., 2015), quality and effectiveness of hotel staff (Zhou et al., 2014; Choi & Chu, 2001), quality of hotel design and layout (Zhou et al., 2014).

Customer satisfaction is a feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product in terms of the perceived performance or outcome in relation to customer

expectations (Kotler, 2000, p. 36). The customer satisfaction factors are as follows: ambience, hospitality and added value according to Sim et al. (2006) illustrated as below:

Ambience is a broader servicescape (Bitner, 1990) that influences customer satisfaction, behavioral intentions (Simpeh et al., 2011) and image (Baker, Grewal, & Parasuraman, 1994). Hospitality industry, customer satisfaction are the secret key to success (Radojevic, Stanisic, & Stanic, 2015) and requires a long-term relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty (Bowen & Shoemaker, 1998). Added value is another important factor leading to customer satisfaction and retention. Customer satisfaction will be the sole focus of this study. Price offered by hotels can play a critical role in customers' perception value. Value is considered one of the influencing factors determining travelers' overall satisfaction (Choi & Chu, 2001).

The first study reviewed was entitled "**Hotel Brand of Origin: Do Guests Perceive Service Differences?**" and conducted by Suhartanto (2011). This study showed the differences between international and domestic hotel brands in terms of service quality, perceived value, customer satisfaction and brand image all of which have impacted on brand loyalty. Finally, the international hotel brands are perceived as having better accommodation when compared to domestic hotel brands, which has impacted on economic and rational consideration rather than culture, ethnocentrism or nationalism.

The second study reviewed was entitled "**Levels of satisfaction among Asian and Western travelers**" and conducted by Choi and Chu (2000). According to the study findings Asian travelers place greater emphasized on value for money, rooms, food and beverages as well as hotel ambience and the reputation. The multiple regression model shows the relative importance hotel factor determining customer satisfaction. Value is the most importance factor to Asian travelers' overall satisfaction while room quality and staff service quality are the most importance factors for Western travelers' overall satisfaction.

The third research "**International Visitor' Perception of Cultural Heritage for Tourism Development on the Island of Phuket, Thailand: A Marketing Mix Approach**" was conducted by Siriphanich (2007). The findings of this research indicate the influenced on important factors on international visitors' selection Phuket as a cultural heritage tourism destination. There is a uniqueness of heritage and cultural traditions, uniqueness of heritage and cultural tourist attractions, and image of heritage and cultural tourist activities. Word-of-mouth seems to be the visitors' primary sources of destination information.

The Fourth study was entitled “**The Relationship between Leisure Traveler’s Hotel Attribute Satisfaction and Overall Satisfaction**” was conducted by Kim (2004). This study found a relationship between hotel attribute satisfaction and overall satisfaction on leisure traveler in a hotel setting. The findings indicate the relative impacts on six hotel attributes of satisfaction as important to overall satisfaction. This study provided useful information about hospitality industry research. The top three hotel attribute satisfaction factors include comfort, value for money and hotel location. This study discovered significance for hotel managers who need to understand customer needs and expectations.

The fifth study “**Comparison of Marketing Mix Dimensions between Local and International Hotel Customers in Malaysia**” was conducted by Sanib, Aziz, Samdin, and Rahim (2013). This research found out that independent sample t-test was applied to gain a better understanding of differences in groups of customers between marketing mix. The findings of this study demonstrated how local customers focused on products and services who demanded more skills and capability of hotel staff when compared to international hotel customers. There was no significant different in price.

According to the findings, it seems that tourist satisfaction is related to customer satisfaction. The following research hypotheses were based on this relationship:

Hypothesis 1: Tourists’ perceptions on service marketing mix vary between Thai and international hotel brands.

Hypotheses 2: The level of overall tourist satisfaction vary between Thai and international hotel brands.

Hypotheses 3: Tourists’ perceptions on service marketing mix can predict overall tourist satisfaction.

## **Research Methodology**

This study employed quantitative method to test research questions and hypotheses. A questionnaire survey was used as the research instrument to collect data. The questionnaires were distributed to 600 samples during June-August, 2016 at Pattaya. The tourists who visited Pattaya during 2016 numbered 12,284,770 persons (Ministry of Tourism & Sports, 2018), and the sample size of this study was derived by the calculating method of Yamane (1967) where  $n = N/1+(Ne^2)$ , therefore,  $n = 12,284,770/1+(12,284,770 \times 0.04^2)$ . The  $n = 624.30$  or 600 samples.

The study applied non-probability sampling methods, and the respondents were chosen because they were easily accessible. These methods required some justification that the respondents were representative of the population (Kitchenham & Pfleeger, 2000). This research will applied the judgmental sampling method, which is a type of non-probability sampling (Luo, 2008) selected on the basis of judgment of researchers and has become the most usable, representative (Babbie, 2013) and the best sampling strategy (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The sample size was divided into 300:300 for international and Thai hotel brands, respectively.

A questionnaire consisting of four sections was structured for the purpose of measuring tourist satisfaction at selected hotels in Pattaya. In the first section, the basic details about tourist and hotels visited in Pattaya were collected. This section was composed of six questions. The second section was composed of 48 hotel attributes based on a seven-point Likert scale from (1) very dissatisfied to (7) very satisfied. The scale was structured to measure level of tourist satisfaction with service marketing mix as indicator for visiting hotels (international and Thai). The Likert scale produced the best direct ranking matches that were the most accurate and easiest to use (Diefenbach, Weinstein, & O'reilly, 1993).

The third section was composed of the following three components of tourist satisfaction from Sim et al. (2006): ambience, hospitality and added value. This section contained 25 questions and was designed to determine overall tourist satisfaction with hotels. A seven-point Likert scale from (1) very dissatisfied to (7) very satisfied was used as the best way to evaluated usability (Finstad, 2010). The final section of the questionnaire was composed of thirteen questions designed to provide a view of tourist profile.

In terms of reliability testing, Cronbach's alpha was .952 on 48 hotel attributes according to eight service marketing mix factors and three components of overall tourist satisfaction with a score of .815 on 25 items, which refers to excellent constructs as the most preferable (Aron, Aron, & Coup, 2006). The high Cronbach's Alpha value always indicated the level of strong correlation between items of hotel attributes (Terwee et al., 2007). Statistical method were applied for data analysis, including Mean, Standard deviation, Independent sample t-test analysis, Multiple regression analysis, all of which were used to test hypotheses and responses.

## Results

Table 1 presents the characteristics of tourists who responded to the survey. Approximately 52.30 percent of the respondents were females and 47.70 percent were males, thereby placing the male respondents 4.60 percentages away from the female respondents. Hence, the rate was not much different for gender and age (Kiliç & Adem, 2012). Pattaya is a destination for young people; therefore, the respondents were mostly in the 25 to 34 age group (41.48%), followed by the middle aged group (16.56%) and the senior group (14.43), respectively. As for the young people, the single group was nearly half of those who visited the destination (49.34%). However, the large percentage of the respondents was composed of business owners (25.41%), followed by professionals (19.34%) and administrators (15.90%). The majority of respondents visiting Pattaya as their tourism destination were Koreans (18.52%), followed by Thais (16.56%), Americans (14.10), and Chinese (9.67%). These four nationalities illustrated the majority of visitors to Pattaya which is a fun destination for family (60.82%) and friends (28.03%). The majority of respondents showed 39.67 percent to stay no more than three nights. On the other hand, 34.75 percent stayed three to five nights. Approximately 70.32 percent of the respondents were visiting the hotel for the first time, while 29.18 percent had come to the hotel for the second time. Furthermore, 74.59 percent had an intention to revisit the hotel, while 25.41 percent were not interested in revisiting the hotel.

**Table 1:** Sample Profile (In Percentages)

Demographic variable	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Status in Pattaya	Tourist	610	100.00
Hotel brand to Stay	International Hotel Brand (IB)	308	50.49
	Local (Thai) Hotel Brand (TB)	302	49.51
Gender (n = 610)	Males	291	47.70
	Females	319	52.30
Age	25-34	253	41.48
	35-44	101	16.56
	45-54	70	11.48
	55 and over	184	14.43
Marital Status	Single	301	49.34
	Married	225	36.89
	Partner	84	13.77

**Table 1:** Sample Profile (In Percentages)

Demographic variable	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Occupational Level	Student	72	11.80
	Administrative Officer	97	15.90
	Business owner	155	25.41
	Professional	118	19.34
	Others	81	13.27
	Not Specified	87	14.26
Nationality	Korean	113	18.52
	Chinese	59	9.67
	American	86	14.10
	Thai	101	16.52
	Others	251	41.19
Travel Party	Alone	68	11.15
	Family	371	60.82
	Friends	172	28.03
Length of Stay	No more than 3 nights	242	39.67
	3-5 nights	212	34.75
	More than 6 nights	156	25.57
Visiting This Hotel	First time	432	70.82
	More than two time	178	29.18
Revisit Intention to this Hotel	Yes	455	74.95
	No	155	25.44

**Table 2:** Differences between Hotel Brands towards Service Marketing Mix

Variables	Brand	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t	p-value
Product	International Hotels	6.04	0.720	4.365	0.000*
	Thai Hotels	5.78	0.748		
Price	International Hotels	5.72	0.794	-.688	0.491
	Thai Hotels	5.76	0.902		
Place	International Hotels	6.04	0.845	2.315	0.021*
	Thai Hotels	5.88	0.760		
Promotion	International Hotels	5.83	0.710	-.505	0.613
	Thai Hotels	5.86	0.765		
People	International Hotels	6.39	0.635	7.785	0.000*
	Thai Hotels	6.00	0.593		

**Table 2:** Differences between Hotel Brands towards Service Marketing Mix

Physical Evidence	International Hotels	6.10	0.630	2.850	0.005*
	Thai Hotels	5.95	0.612		
Process	International Hotels	6.03	0.585	2.627	0.009*
	Thai Hotels	5.90	0.679		
Productivity & Quality	International Hotels	6.26	0.539	4.039	0.000*
	Thai Hotels	6.08	0.557		
Tourist Satisfaction	International Hotels	5.95	0.414	2.575	0.010*
	Thai Hotels	5.86	0.438		

\*p-value < 0.05

Table 2, an independent sample t-test was employed on the means scores of each item as well as factor items in order to examine any significant differences existing in the mean scores presented regarding hotel brands. The tourists in the study were mostly satisfied with international hotel brands when compared with Thai hotel brands in terms of service marketing mix. No differences were found in price and promotion between international and Thai hotel brands. International hotel brands in combination with perception of better quality and higher reputation than Thai hotel brands. There was a strong factor influencing tourist satisfaction in terms of uniform service quality assurance and worldwide awareness, while Thai hotels tend to attract little preference compared to international hotel. Therefore, the tourists' perception varied between hotel brands in terms of product, place, people, physical evidence, process, productivity and quality. At significant difference was found between hotel brands. There are only two aspect with no differences between two hotels (international and Thai), namely, price and promotion. According to the study of Sanib et al. (2013), there was also significant difference in light of price. Promotion is also overlooked by both hotel brands according to the tourists' perceptions.

**Table 3:** Differences between Hotel Brands towards Overall Tourist Satisfaction

Variables	Brand	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t	p-value
Ambience	International Hotels	5.13	1.316	-2.352	0.390
	Thai Hotels	5.39	1.420		
Hospitality	International Hotels	5.34	1.298	2.303	0.000*
	Thai Hotels	5.07	1.776		
Added Value	International Hotels	5.93	0.910	.373	0.418
	Thai Hotels	5.91	0.928		

\*p-value < 0.05

Table 3 describes the overall tourist satisfaction based on Sim et al. (2006) and shows the differences in overall tourist satisfaction between hotel brands (international and Thai). According to the aspect of ambience and added value, these two aspects had no difference in terms of the overall tourist satisfaction. On the other hand, the hospitality aspect had significance differences in terms of overall tourist satisfaction. In two out of three aspects, both hotel brands showed no differences in the overall tourist satisfaction.

**Table 4:** Regression Model Service Marketing Mix

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized		
	Coefficients	Beta	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error			(p-value)
1	(Constant)	2.864	.387	7.406	.000*
	Process	.862	.071	.484	12.219
	Productivity & Quality	.604	.089	.296	.006*
	Promotion	.237	.055	.154	4.332
	Price	.147	.050	.110	.012*
	People	.139	.078	.079	2.773
	Product	.128	.075	.084	2.719
	Physical Evidence	.125	.098	.069	2.272
	Place	.115	.066	.038	.040*

Dependent Variable: Tourist overall Satisfaction

\*\*p-value < 0.05

Table 4 shows the significant variables existing in the equation that explain service marketing mix in order of important based on standardized beta coefficient value ( $\beta$ ). The level of service marketing mix with its strongest beta coefficient value was the highest indicator of tourist overall satisfaction ( $\beta = .484$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) referring to process, followed by productivity and quality, which had a high significant statistically difference ( $\beta = .296$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Promotion was the next variable influencing overall tourist satisfaction ( $\beta = .154$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Price and the level of tourist overall satisfaction were the fourth most significant elements ( $\beta = .110$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), followed by people with influence on overall tourist satisfaction, which was the fifth most significant element ( $\beta = .079$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Product was the next variable which had a highly statistically difference as the sixth ( $\beta = .084$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), followed by physical evidence ranked as the seventh most influential factor on overall tourist satisfaction ( $\beta = .069$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The least standardized beta coefficient value on place had the lowest indicator on the tourist overall satisfaction ( $\beta = .038$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Every component of the service marketing mix had positive and predictable relationships with overall tourist satisfaction. The highest indicators of overall tourist satisfaction were process, productivity and quality, promotion, price, people, product, physical evidence and place, respectively.

## Discussion

According to the findings, hotel brands in Pattaya are good destinations for tourists. Both hotel brands have unique, irresistible charm. International hotels were found to attract slightly higher tourist satisfaction than Thai hotels. Furthermore, the tourists who responded to the surveys claimed that Pattaya was a destination for young people within an age range of 25-34 years. The destination is popular for Korean, Thai, American and Chinese who generally visited with family and friends. Mostly, the tourists stayed no more than three nights, which indicated revisit intention for the hotel. The safety and security of the hotel become a predominant factor in selection. In identifying the tourist attitudes toward the eight factors with the respect to the service marketing mix, the top three factors were people, productivity and quality and physical evidence. In examining overall tourist satisfaction (Sim et al., 2006) were found to focus on added value, hospitality and ambience. The main reason for visiting Pattaya were leisure, recreation and holiday. Amongst the eight hotel attributes of the service marketing mix, a relationship capable of predicting service and overall tourist satisfaction was found.

Furthermore, the most influential factors in tourist satisfaction were process, productivity and quality and promotion. These hotel attributes had a positive and significant influence on tourist satisfaction. Tourist perceptions of the eight hotel attributes varied between Thai and international hotels. According to the findings on tourist satisfaction, hotel brand names do make a difference, because international hotels were found to gain higher tourist satisfaction concerning the expected price and promotion aspect. While ambience and added value had no difference in overall tourist satisfaction, hospitality gained higher overall tourist satisfaction compared to Thai hotels.

### **Recommendation**

Due to the contributions of the tourism and hospitality industry, many countries have exerted their best efforts toward promoting this industry by performing the active marketing in order to create tourist satisfaction, which is considered a critical factor towards the competitive, sustainable growth of the tourism industry. Tourist satisfaction is an essential element aimed at measuring the success of destination marketing, because it is delivered directly to the destination of choice, consumption of products and service as well as revisiting intentions (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2003; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000) Next, a satisfied tourist tends to re-buy products, communicates with word-of-mouth, recommending the products to others as well as revisiting intentions (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Oh, 2000; Tohidi, 2012). Therefore, the studies concern factors that influence tourist satisfactions, which is essential to the development of the tourism industry.

Tody's tourism and hospitality industries are recognized as the largest and fastest growing industries compared to other business globally (Leonidou et al, 2013). Therefore, the hotel business seems to be a major part of the world's economy (Corporate Catalyst India, 2011) in a highly competitive environment surrounded with global competitors (Oh, 2000). A hotel's brand name is a set of promises to consumers to be delivered that mainly differentiates the product from other brands and assures that guests receive actual service standards with a certain level of quality (O'Neill & Mattila, 2010). With the highly competitive environment in the international hotel business, customer satisfaction and hotel brand names attract attention (Oh, 2000). According to Batra et al. (2000), Lee et al. (2008) indicated that types of brands have power on consumer buying behavior. However, it is difficult to find the studies on the service industry, particularly in the hotel business where findings remain ambiguous about how

consumers perceive the international and local hotel brands (Schuiling & Kapferer, 2004). This study was aimed at investigate a better understanding of the differences between international and local hotel brands regarding to the tourist satisfaction, tourist perception with service marketing mix (8Ps) as indicators.

The findings revealed that tourists' major objectives in visiting Pattaya were leisure, recreation and holiday. The findings indicate that 'safety and security' had the strongest influence on the respondents concerning hotel accommodations. Pattaya is an entertainment and tourist destination that attracts tourist from all over the world. Therefore, safety becomes an issue of concern. In order to investigate tourists' perceptions about the effects of service marketing mix on overall tourist satisfaction levels. It is important to explore all of the hypotheses for this study. The hypotheses focused on the service marketing mix (8Ps). The product was a significant positive influenced on overall tourist satisfaction. According to tourists' perceptions of international and Thai hotel brands, tourists were definitely focused more on international brands than Thai hotel brands. Thai brands tend to have little preference when compared with international brand products.

In this study, the tourist perceived price positively as a significant influencing on the tourist satisfaction. On the other hand, price had no difference between hotel brands in terms of value for money, hotel facilities, food and beverage services and room service. Although international hotel brands are generally perceived as more expensive than Thai brands, the findings of this study indicate no significant difference between international and Thai hotel brands according to tourists' perceptions.

Tourist perceptions of the place vary between two hotel brands. It would seem that tourist perceptions differed concerning the two hotel brands which reflects the hotel's attributes of the place factor. Tourists perceived places as an influence on overall tourist satisfaction. Promotions also seemed to have an influence on tourist satisfaction in the service marketing mix. According to tourist perceptions, the two hotel brands had no differences in terms of promotions and received no attention in terms of tourist perception, but created tourist satisfaction with no significant differences between international and local hotel brands.

People are another service marketing mix attribute that directly influences overall tourist satisfaction. Tourist perceptions are varied between hotel brands. Tourists tend to focus on international hotel brands while less attention is given to local hotel brands. Physical evidence

has direct relationships that directly impact tourist satisfaction. Therefore, the process directly influences overall tourist satisfaction which has a positive significance on tourist satisfaction. Process refers to the flow of the service delivery and operating system affecting tourist satisfaction towards hotel brands. Tourists vary differently on hotel brands. International hotel brands always gain more attention when compared to Thai hotels. Productivity and quality influence tourist satisfaction. Thus, it was indicated that tourists perceived positive significance in productivity and quality which creates tourist satisfaction towards hotel brands with variances between the international and Thai hotel brands. Tourist perceptions towards hotel brands are totally different and tourists tend to focus on international hotel brands when compared to the Thai brands.

International hotel brands have an influence on ‘overall tourist satisfaction level’ when compared to Thai hotel brands. Although, there is a slightly difference between both hotel brands, the results show that tourists perceived more international hotel brands. According to the findings, the hotel service marketing mix was related to overall tourist satisfaction. Process showed the greatest influence on tourist overall satisfaction, while place ranked with the least influence. The results determined that the differences among product, place, physical evidence, process, productivity and quality in both hotel brands were based on tourist perceptions. Price and promotion showed no differences in hotel brands.

In the aspect of the service marketing mix (8Ps), this study is focused on the findings of Zeithaml et al. (2006) in what is known as the extended marketing mix emphasizing people, process, physical evidence and, productivity and quality aspects. The findings of this study reveal that the tourists gave ‘people’ top priority among other aspects. By elevating the term of the ‘people’ in the hotel service, the findings confirmed the concepts of previous researches and marketers towards the hotel service marketing mix. According to Liu et al. (2015), hotel staff member are hotel brand representatives who always live up to the customers’ expectation and perception for the first visit. Shaw, Leggat, and Chatterjee (2010) stated that having well-trained service staff always bring an unforgettable, unique memory to customers. Keh, Ren, Hill, and Li (2013) confirmed that people have the strongest impact on tourist satisfaction in which people become an important part of building satisfaction in tourists.

Productivity and quality were found to be of second priority amongst the other aspects of the service marketing mix. The findings of this study support the concepts and theories of the service stated by previous researchers and marketers. Reynolds (2003) indicated that it is essential to improve productivity in order to achieve hotel organization objectives by improving effectiveness and efficiency. In addition, Kotler (2000) pointed out that higher quality levels always result in higher tourist satisfaction levels, which always support higher prices and lower costs. Then Amin, Yahya, Ismayatim, Nasharuddin, and Kassim (2013) claimed that service quality is very important to hotel business in terms of providing competitive advantage and has effects on tourist satisfaction. Physical evidence was found to rank third in priority among the other aspects of the service marketing mix. The outcome has already confirmed concepts and theories. For instance, Kannan (2009) stated that the physical evidence depends on the travel experience, comfort during stay and in particular, the beds of the hotels. While Sarker, Aimin, and Begum (2012) claimed that the physical evidence has direct relationship with tourist satisfaction. Lashley, Morrison, and Randall (2005) stated that the physical evidence is a crucial factor in creating a memorable experience by providing emotional dimension.

Furthermore, the results showed a relationship between the hotel service marketing mix attributes and tourist satisfaction, revealing that every aspect of the service marketing mix influences tourist satisfaction. This supports the theory concepts of prior researchers and marketers. Rachmawati (2013) claimed that service marketing mix is another factor that fulfills tourist satisfaction, which is mainly used in the service industry. Sasse (2008) stated that tourist satisfaction and the service marketing mix are connected with the hotel business in order to fulfill customer needs.

Amongst the eight-service marketing mix factors, process has the strongest influence on tourist satisfaction. The findings support the concepts of previous researchers such as Hirankitti, Mechinda, and Manjing (2009) who claimed that the service delivery process requires the service skill of providers, which clearly reveals tourist satisfaction. According to Behera (2008), the process of service delivery is essential to tourist satisfaction, while Choi and Chu (2000) revealed that the check-in process always gives the first impression to customers. This means that the courtesy of the hotel staff really matters and leads to higher tourist satisfactions. Ariffin, Nameghi, and Zakaria (2013) claimed that a warm welcome will automatically cause tourist

satisfaction with a hotel. In contrast, a slow check-in process will create dissatisfaction in tourists (Zainol & Lockwood, 2014). Deo and Jain (2015) stated that the check-out process seems to give the last impression to the customer and creates tourist satisfaction with courtesy and warmth.

By comparing tourist satisfaction towards service marketing mix between two hotel brands, it was found that, based on the service marketing mix aspects, the international hotel brands have higher tourist satisfaction when compared to the local brands. This means that the international hotel brands in Pattaya deliver services beyond tourist expectations. On the other hand, the local hotel brands might not be able to provide services at the same level. Therefore, tourist satisfaction is different. The results have raised awareness about service quality improvement amongst Thai hotel brand owners. Regarding the improvement of product, place, people, process, physical evidence, productivity and quality, there were no difference between two hotel brands, except for price and promotion.

The findings of this study imply that the eight components of the service marketing mix are important. The significant differences were varied between the types of tourist based on satisfaction. This study contributes to the existing body of literature on tourism marketing in the following aspects: First, the findings support the result of previous literature that hotel attributes have an influence on the tourists' hotel selection. Second the outcome has increased the significance of 'safety and security' in hotel selection criteria. Third, the findings support that tourists give significance to each and every aspect of the service marketing mix. It was pointed out that the tourist prioritized the 'people' aspect rather than other aspects. Moreover, the findings have shed light on an extension aspect of the service marketing mix, which is the 'productivity and quality'. Fourth, the findings and concepts of prior researchers and marketers that each and every aspect of the service marketing mix has influence on tourist satisfaction is supported. The findings indicated 'process' as the strongest influence on tourist satisfaction. Finally, the results have raised awareness of service quality improvement among Thai hotel brand owners regarding to improve: products, places, people, process, physical evidence, productivity and quality.

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