

# DEVELOPMENT OF SPA SERVICE MODEL IN THE SOUTHERN THAILAND BORDER CONTEXT: A CASE STUDY OF ELDERLY IN YALA PROVINCE

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**Abstract:** The objectives of this research and development were to investigate the needs in spa service model, to develop spa service model, and to determine an effectiveness of the developed spa service model for the elderly in the southern Thailand border in Mueang District, Yala Province. The research underlying on the premises in consumer's behavior theory 6W's and 1H as well as 7P's integrated marketing concept was conducted in three phases; 1) survey phase, 2) model development phase, and 3) evaluation phase. The results indicated that four important aspects included in the developed model of spa service. The first is process of quality and standard which entail a standard training certification of personnel's quality service, availability of safety deposit boxes for customers' valuable belongings, allocation of male and female service staffs, and availability of disposable panties. The second is different products in spa business and service for elderly customers which concern sound therapy, Ayurvedic medicine, massage therapy, meditation, hydro therapy, body massage, body scrub, body mask, mineral water bath, milky bath, head massage, and massage for disposing of cellulite. The third is expenditures on daily, weekly, monthly bases. And, the last is a quality, clean, and safe place of service. A relaxing and peaceful atmosphere with decoration of trees can support a sense of relaxation to elderly customers. The results also showed that an overall effectiveness of the developed spa service model was at a high level ( $M=4.29$ ,  $SD=0.36$ ).

**Keywords:** Development of Spa Service Model, Spa Service for Elderly, the Southern Thailand Border

## I. Introduction

Thailand has entered an ageing society due to rapid changes in the structure of Thai population during a few last decades. A total number of Thai population from 2001 onwards shows there have been more than ten percent of the Thai elderly who are 60 years old. The increased proportion of the elderly in the country has not only been evident, but Thailand has also been a part in a definite ageing society as determined by ageing index which can be calculated by a comparison of compensate structure between the elderly of more than 60 years old and young population of less than 15 years old. An index from calculation has two different indicators, that is, an index of below 100 and an index of above 100. The first and the latter presents less number of elderly and more number of elderly as compared to number of children respectively

(Department of Elderly Affairs, 2020). The current situation of ageing society in Thailand is going to be in a transition to an aged society. Supporting by that, a report from United Nations World Population Ageing revealed that a number of dependency population (i.e., elderly and children) was greater than worker population after 2009. Surprisingly, the phenomenon of less number of children population as compared to a number of elderly in the country was also first documented in the Thailand's history in 2017. This situation resulted from a sudden decrease in sexual reproduction and a steady decline of death rate of the Thai population (Foundation For Older Persons' Development, 2020). For these reasons, the number of Thai elderly in a comparison with different age groups has considerably risen. The Thais in today society with economic crisis and different issues have been suffering from stress and diseases. Different negative effects from routine activities such as long hour on computer, carrying of heavy stuffs, and bad body postures of sleeping, sitting, and standing-up as well as wearing of high heels cause muscle pain. In addition to this, excessive pressure on sleeping in plush mattress injures an individual a low back muscle which potentially turns into muscular spasm and mid-lower back muscle especially for those who are overweight people and pregnant women. Thai traditional alternative treatment is effective in curing non-treatable diseases using injection and modern medicine (Daeng-in, N. (2012).

Spa massage is a process of healthcare based on principles of sensation and creation of natural atmosphere.

A correlational study investigating into factors affecting acceptance in beauty business in the three southern border provinces found that gender, age, education levels, monthly salary, price, and process of service offers had significant relationships with acceptance in beauty business at the significant level of 0.05 (Latekeh, N., & Maeng, D. (2019). No matter less or more, everyone would like to be good-looking so that beauty and spa business in Thailand and the AEC regions including China and middle-east countries has grown tremendously. Since Thailand as a part in the AEC community is in a pursuit of becoming logistics center, it is anticipated that more numbers of investors are going to immerse themselves in marketing for beauty business. Furthermore, a spread in customers' values on facial and skin beauty tends to be more impactful to Thai people. Therefore, marketing business in beauty service in a particularly to spa business has developed rapidly so that entrepreneurs in beauty business have been facing high competitive situations. To facilitate them to continue their business, they need to expose to adaptation and know how to use strategies to develop their service in various competitions in order to provide clients' demands with appropriate and effective service (Phonpraserth, A. (2015).

Hence, the researchers realise and are interested in an importance of quality service in spa business that can serve good healthcare and create innovation for prosperity in spa business. This study used aims at developing spa service model and assessing the developed model based on elderly's needs in the southern Thailand border. The researchers employed consumer's behavior theory 6W's and 1H as well as 7P's integrated marketing concept to explain the developed spa service model for the elderly in the southern Thailand border context specifically in Yala province.

## II. Materials and Methods

### Research Objectives

Three main research objectives in this research are;

- 1) to investigate the elderly's needs in spa service;
- 2) to develop spa service model; and

3) to determine the effectiveness of the developed spa service model.

### **Research Methodology**

This research and development included three main phases, that is, 1) survey phase; to investigate the elderly's needs for spa service based on data from questionnaire, 2) model development phase; to develop spa service model, and 3) evaluation phase; to determine the effectiveness of the developed spa service model. A description in each phase is presented in a greater detail as follows.

#### **Survey Phase: Investigating the Elderly's Needs in Spa Service**

The researchers used questionnaire to collect data from target population and samples. The target population included entrepreneurs, Thai traditional medicine doctors, and 300 spa service customers while the target samples included entrepreneurs and 120 spa service customers. The present study utilised purposive sampling technique which had inclusion and exclusion criteria as further explained below.

The respondents participated in this phase based on the inclusion criteria included those who 1) lived in Mueang District, Yala province, 2) were entrepreneurs in spa service, 3) were spa service users, and 4) had voluntary participation. For the exclusion criteria, the target population excluding from this phase were those who 1) moved out from Yala province, 2) had health issues, and 3) showed unwillingness of participation in the present study.

#### **Research Instrument**

This study used questionnaire on the needs for halal spa service in the southern Thailand context which an average range of the needs was categorised into three levels; high (3.68-5.00), moderate (2.34-3.67), and low (1.00-2.33) respectively. A width between each range was considered by outcome from subtraction of maximum and minimum levels on a scale being divided by required levels (i.e., three in this particular case) (Best, 1977).

The questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first section was respondents' general information. The second section concerned the needs of spa service which asked respondents to rate their demands in high, moderate, and low levels with rating scores of 5, 4, and 3 sequentially. Average scores on the needs for spa service were also interpreted in three levels; high (3.68-5.00), moderate (2.34-3.67), and low (1.00-2.33) respectively. In the third section, there were five aspects in determining the effectiveness of the developed spa model. And respondents could express their opinions on the developed spa service model in the last section. Before data collection, three experts in Thai traditional medicine used Index of Item Objective Congruence or IOC to examine content validity of the questionnaire. Then, the researchers tried out the questionnaire with 30 samples who had common characteristics with the target samples in actual data collection in order to check the Cronbach's alpha coefficient using the Kuder Richardson (KR20) criterion. The results showed the items on the needs for spa service and the aspects of evaluation in the developed spa service model had overall reliability of 0.76 and 0.72 respectively.

#### **Data Collection**

The researchers created an online questionnaire to collect data from five entrepreneurs/Thai traditional medicine staffs and 120 spa service users whom were chosen by purposive sampling. Then the researchers summarised key responses from the informants and asked them to check its

accuracy. Upon a completion of data collection in survey phase, the researchers applied consumer's behavior theory 6W's and 1H as well as 7P's integrated marketing concept to account for the development of spa service model in model development phase.

### **Data Analysis**

Two data analysis methods based on types of data were used in the present study.

1. The researchers used descriptive statistics (e.g., frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) to analyse quantitative data.
2. The researchers analysed qualitative data with content analysis and used narrative summary method to present qualitative findings.

### **Model Development Phase: Developing of Spa Service Model for the Southern Thailand Context**

1. The researchers used the findings in Tables 1 and 2 to design spa service model in the southern Thailand border context.
2. The researchers developed spa service model in the southern Thailand border context. Five entrepreneurs in spa business/Thai traditional medicine and 120 spa service users based on purposive sampling involved in providing data for the process of development in which was supported by consumer's behavior theory 6W's and 1H as well as 7P's integrated marketing concept.

### **Evaluation Phase: Determining the Effectiveness of the Developed Spa Service Model**

The researchers requested experts in entrepreneurs in spa business/Thai traditional medicine and 35 spa service users to determine the effectiveness of the developed spa service model as the results presented in Table 3.

### **Research Ethics**

The researchers received a clearance of research ethics No. 199/2563 dated on February 4, 2564 which was certified by the committees' consideration of research ethics in humans at Yala Sirindhorn College of Public Health.

## **III. Results and Discussion**

### **Research Findings**

Research findings from this study are presented corresponding to research objectives. Firstly, Table 1 shows the data analysis from the respondents' general information in different facets. The findings indicate the majority were the elderly living in Yala province (85.00%) and they were all female (100.00%). Besides that, the female elderly were more than 55 years old (74.16%). A half of the respondents were Muslim (52.50%). It was also found that most respondents graduated Bachelor's degree (41.66%). A hundred and two respondents reported their marital status as being married (85.00%). Sixty female respondents (50.00%) had average monthly salary in a range between 15,001 and 20,000 Baht and sixty-six respondents (55.00%) worked as officers in government and private sectors or had been retired servants. Additionally, there were 93 respondents (77.50%) used spa service between one and three times in a month. The results also reveal there were 71 respondents (59.17%) had spa service for relaxation and 49 respondents (40.83%) selected to have body massage.

**Table 1 Respondents' General Information (n=120)**

<b>Demographic Data</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Stakeholders	Entrepreneurs in spa business/Thai traditional medicine staffs	15	12.50
	Elderly	102	87.50
	Others	0	0.00
Gender	Male	0	0.00
	Female	120	100.00
Age	25 -34 years old	2	1.67
	35 -44 years old	21	17.50
	45 - 54 years old	8	6.67
	More than 54 years old	89	74.16
<b>Demographic Data</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Religions	Islam	63	52.50
	Buddhism	57	47.50
Educational levels	Primary	17	14.17
	Lower secondary	11	9.17
	Upper secondary	29	24.17
	Bachelor's degree	50	41.66
	Higher than Bachelor's degree	13	10.83
Marital status	Single	7	5.83
	Married	102	85.00
	Widowed/Divorced	11	9.17
	Others	0	0.00
Monthly salary	Less than 5,000 Baht	8	6.67
	5,001 - 15,000 Baht	27	22.50
	15,001 - 20,000 Baht	60	50.00
	More than 20,000 Baht	25	20.83
Occupations	Farmer	21	17.50
	Traders	14	11.67
	Employee	19	15.83
	Officers in government and private sectors as well as retired servants	66	55.00
	Others	0	0.00
Have you had experience in using spa service?	Never	8	6.67
	Yes, between once and three times in a month.	93	77.50
	Yes, four and more times in a month	19	15.83
Purposes of spa service usage	Massage for relaxation	71	59.17
	Massage for treatment	3	2.50
	Massage for healthcare	34	28.33
	Massage for skin care	12	10.00
	Others	0	0.00
<b>Demographic Data</b>		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Types of spa service	Body massage for relaxation	49	40.83
	Foot massage	17	14.17

Oil massage	24	20.00
Body scrub	14	11.67
Massage for disposing of cellulite	9	7.50
Facial massage	7	5.83
Others	0	0.00

For the first research objective, the result point out that the elderly prioritised their most needs for sound therapy (100.00%), and massage (100.00%) at a high level. Furthermore, the respondents showed their demands on different spa service such as Ayurvedic medicine (95.00%), yoga (95.00%), aromatherapy (95.00%), meditation (80.00%), and hydro therapy (80.00%) respectively.

Secondly, the results for the second research objective are shown in Table 2. The elderly completely expressed their needs for standard training certification of personnel's quality service (100.00%) and allocation of male and female service staffs (100.00%) at a high level. In addition, most respondents showed high level of demands on spa service in various aspects such as availability of safety deposit boxes for customers' valuable belongings (87.50%), availability of disposable panties (85.00%), availability of disposable panties (85.00%), massage, scrub, body mask, mineral water bath, milky bath, and head massage (80.00%) as well as creating of relaxation to enhance elderly's emotions (60.00%). Also, more than half of the respondents showed their needs for good atmosphere with decoration of trees in spa at a moderate level (62.50%).

**Table 2 Results of the Elderly's Needs for Spa Service in the Southern Thailand Context (n=120)**

Statements	High	Moderate	Low
Massage, scrub, body mask, mineral water bath, milky bath, and head massage	96 (80.00%)	24 (20.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Massage for disposing of cellulite	102 (85.00%)	12 (10.00%)	6 (5.00%)
Quality, clean, and safe place of service provider	93 (77.50%)	24 (20.00%)	3 (2.50%)
Standard training certification of personnel's quality service	120 (100.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Availability of safety deposit boxes for customers' valuable belongings	105 (87.50%)	15 (12.50%)	0 (0.00%)
Allocation of male and female service staffs	120 (100.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Availability of disposable panties	102 (85.00%)	12 (10.00%)	6 (5.00%)
Relaxing and peaceful service place	93 (77.50%)	24 (20.00%)	3 (2.50%)
Good atmosphere with decoration of trees	42 (35.00%)	75 (62.50%)	3 (2.50%)
Creating of relaxation to enhance elderly's emotions	72 (60.00%)	48 (40.00%)	0 (0.00%)

Thirdly, the use of consumer's behavior theory 6W's and 1H as well as 7P's integrated marketing concept in developing the spa service model based on the elderly respondents' needs for spa service demonstrated that there are key components in the model as defined as follows.

**Who** refers to elderly.

**What and how** refer to the needs for spa service in the southern Thailand context in Yala province.

**Where** refers to entrepreneurs in spa service, Thai traditional medicine, and spa elderly users.

**Why** refers to creating spa service for the elderly.

**When** refers to elderly's selection of spa healthcare.

**Whom** refers to elderly.

**Products** comprised with spa service for elderly such massage, body scrub, body mask, mineral water bath, milky bath, and head massage.

**Price** refers expenditures on daily, weekly, and monthly bases.

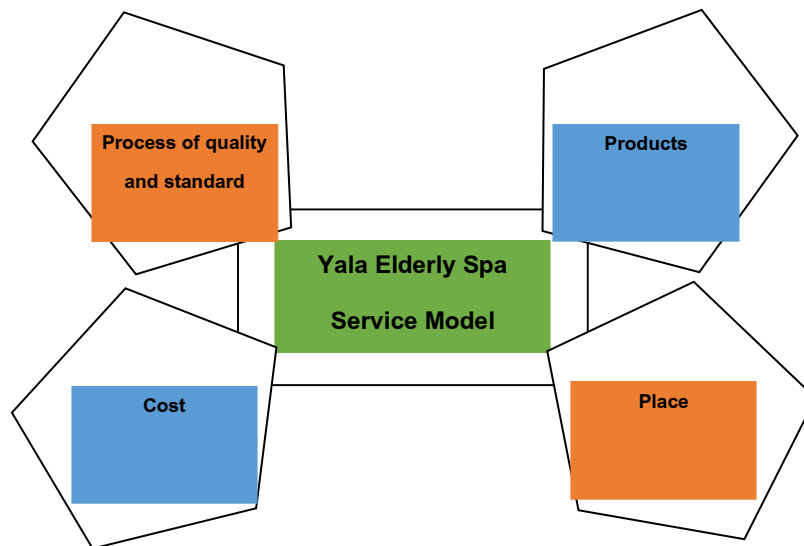
**Promotion** refers to service charge on daily, weekly, and monthly bases for a number of spa service such as sound therapy, Ayurvedic medicine, massage, meditation, and hydro therapy.

**People** refer to elderly.

**Physical evidence** refer to sound therapy, Ayurvedic medicine, massage, meditation, and hydro therapy.

**Process** refers to quality and standard service such as standard training certification of personnel's quality service, availability of safety deposit boxes for customers' valuable belongings, and allocation of male and female service staffs.

The components as stated above are presented in the developed model as drawn in Figure 1.



**Figure 1 Yala Elderly Spa Service Model**

Lastly, the results for the third research objective in Table 3 reveal that the effectiveness of the developed spa service model was achieved at a high level ( $M=4.29$ ,  $SD=0.36$ ). Also, the respondents identified all domains of evaluation at high levels. The five domains presented in a descending order included contribution to community ( $M=4.60$ ,  $SD=0.49$ ), suitability for the context ( $M=4.40$ ,  $SD=0.49$ ), Quality ( $M=4.23$ ,  $SD=0.42$ ), possibility of implementation ( $M=4.20$ ,  $SD=0.41$ ) as well as contribution to spa business operation ( $M=4.00$ ,  $SD=0.00$ ).

**Table 3 Results of Evaluation of the Developed Spa Service Model**

<b>Domains</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Suitability for the context	4.40	0.49	High
Contribution to community	4.60	0.49	High
Contribution to spa business operation	4.00	0.00	High
Possibility of implementation	4.20	0.41	High
Quality	4.23	0.42	High
<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.29</b>	<b>0.36</b>	<b>High</b>

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Based on the research design, the present study presents conclusion and discussion in the three different phases as follows:

##### **Survey Phase: Investigating the Elderly's Needs for Spa Service**

###### **1) The Respondents' General Information**

The target samples participated in this study were 105 elderly in Yala province (87.50%), female (100.00%), and more than 55 years old (71.46%). Most respondents were Muslim (85.00%) with status of being married (85.00%). Half of the respondents earned monthly salary in range of 15,001 - 20,000 Baht (50.00%) and were Bachelor's degree holders (41.66%). More than half of the respondents worked as officers both government and private sectors or retired servants (55.00%). The results in the present study are aligned with the research conducted by. (Pinsirigul,P., 2011:108) which discovered influential factors on acceptance in a usage of Thai traditional medical service for massage among the samples in Mueang district, Buri Rum province. The results showed that people with different jobs had significant varying degrees in accepting to use Thai traditional medical service for massage at the significant level of 0.05. The researcher further explained that servant officers showed significantly greater level of acceptance than officers and employees working in private sector and students at the different levels of 0.29 and 0.26 respectively.

In this study, most spa service users went to spa service center between once and three times a month (77.50%) and showed their tendency to purchase body massage for relaxation (40.83%). The results are the same with the research of (Latekeh, N., & Maeng, D. , 2019 : 1422-1423) which looked into the effects of different relevant factors on acceptance of beauty business among people in the three southern Thailand border provinces. It was reported that gender, age, education levels, monthly salary, price, and service procedure showed significant relationships with acceptance of beauty business at the significant level of 0.05. Other than that, (Traiyawong, S., & Sittichanda, S .(2011:57) carried out a study investigating customers' satisfaction in Thai traditional massage service in Phetchabun province and showed the results that most customers were married female officers working in government sector, aged in a range between 41 - 50, had Bachelor's degree, and lived in Phetchabun province.

###### **2) The Elderly's Needs for Spa Service**

The elderly in Yala province showed the needs for two different spa service at a high level (100.0%) which included sound therapy and massage. Also, they identified five additional spa service at a moderate level such as Ayurvedic medicine (95.00%), aromatherapy (95.00%), yoga (95.00%), meditation (80.00%), and hydro therapy (80.00%) respectively. Deesomlert, S., & Sawmong, S. (2016) found factors of marketing, service, and organisation had direct positive



effects on factors of innovation and service and showed indirect effects on management of spa healthcare business which was mediated by factors of innovation and service. It was evident that the most influential factor was marketing, and followed by factors of service, and organisation respectively. What is more, factors of innovation and service affected sales of service the most, and followed by profit, customer, and image of service quality respectively.

### **3) The Elderly's Needs for Spa Service in the Southern Thailand Context**

The current study indicates that all elderly had the needs for standard training certification of personnel's quality service (100.00%) and allocation of male and female service staffs (100.00%). Also, they showed a high level of demands on spa service in various aspects which included availability of safety deposit boxes for customers' valuable belongings (87.50%), availability of disposable panties (85.00%), availability of disposable panties (85.00%), massage, scrub, body mask, mineral water bath, milky bath, and head massage (80.00%), and creating of relaxation to enhance elderly's emotions (60.00%). Moreover, the respondents required good atmosphere with decoration of trees in spa at a moderate level (62.50%). Mekhiwaraphan, K. (2015) suggested four essential components for successful marketing in spa service business in the central Thailand, that is, (1) service marketing which covered sale management, procedure of service, physical environment, and positive image, (2) marketing strategies which consisted of products, price, and personnel, (3) service user's internal attributes which entailed learning, motivation, and attitudes as well as (4) effectiveness of marketing which encompassed with satisfaction and loyalty. Regarding this, Thirathamason, S., Nakpibal, P., & Suwannin, W. (2018). proposed two main factors with 13 indicators that were suitable for authentic implications in different types of business operation. The first factor was service quality which consisted of concrete service, reliability, trust, reflection on customers, warranty, and sympathy. The second factor was organisation image which included contact with customer contact, advice offer, establishing of good relation with customers, marketing positioning, social mobility, service user care, marketing communication, identity of Thai spa, privacy, and cleanliness of service place (e.g., spa room and spa bed). It was further highlighted that natural spa equipment which integrated with Thai culture and tradition can create great value on service and create Thai identity for Thai spa business.

### **Model Development Phase: Developing of Spa Service Model for the Southern Thailand Context**

The developed spa service model included the following components.

**1. Process of quality and standard:** 1) standard training certification of personnel's quality service, 2) availability of safety deposit boxes for customers' valuable belongings, 3) allocation of male and female service staffs, and 4) availability of disposable panties.

**2. Products for elderly's spa business and service:** 1) sound therapy, 2) Ayurvedic medicine, 3) massage, 4) meditation, 5) hydro therapy, 6) body scrub, 7) body mask, 8) mineral water and milky bath, 9) head massage, and 10) massage for disposing of cellulite.

**3. Cost:** expenditures on daily, weekly, and monthly bases.

**4. Place:** 1) quality, clean, and safe place of service provider, 2) relaxing and peaceful service place, 3) good atmosphere with decoration of trees, and 5) creating of relaxation to enhance elderly's emotions.

### **Evaluation Phase: Determining the Effectiveness of the Developed Spa Service Model**

The key findings in this phase showed that the developed spa service model was effective at a high level ( $M=4.29$ ,  $SD=0.36$ ). Luengsawas, A., Kulnides, N., & Somjai, S. (2021). conducted a study exploring foreigners' choices of spa service in Bangkok and showed the results that marketing strategies, administration and management of service quality, motivation on using spa service, selection of spa service were the influential factors. In addition, the results stressed marketing strategies that had the most positive impact on foreigners' choices of spa service at the significant level of 0.01. The findings in this study were beneficial for Thai spa service business operators to identify marketing strategies which serve customers' demands with reasonable service charge. Besides that, alternative channels of service payment, effective marketing communication, creation of impressive and unique environment, service techniques, providing customers' with routine demanding products as well as development of service providers' knowledge and skills were necessarily taken into account for spa business operation.

### **Suggestions**

#### **Practical implications**

1. to provide operators in spa service business with the key information that is useful for improving quality service and prepare a readiness of spa business for an aged society in the future; and
2. to implement the Yala Elderly Spa Service Model into teaching and learning process for the degree of health science business in educational institutions.

#### **Implication for Future Research**

The researchers would suggest a development of international spa service model for further research in the future. This instance would contribute new knowledge to research area in spa service business. In doing so, it is hoped that stakeholders in spa business in different contexts can keep up with international standard in serving high quality spa service to global citizen in an aged society.

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