



MÄLARDALEN UNIVERSITY

“Service Quality of Thai Travel Agency, Thailand Resor AB, in Sweden”



**Group Member 2279:
Miss Suppalak Suksom 730328
Miss Rotjarek Lumyong 820502**

**Supervisor:
Jean-Charles Languilaire**

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Abstract

Title: Service quality of Thai travel agency, Thailand Resor AB, in Sweden

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Authors: Miss Suppalak Suksom 730328 - T005
Miss Rotjarek Lumyong 820502 – T143

Supervisor: Jean-Charles Languilaire

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Problem Statement: How can Thailand Resor AB gain its service quality for its Swedish Tourist?

Research Question: What do Swedish tourists perceive service quality offered by Thailand Resor AB based on 5 dimensions of SERVQUAL model? And how does Thailand Resor AB manage customers' expectations ?

Purpose: To explore the service quality attributes that constitute 5 dimensions of service quality of Thailand Resor AB, to find the relative importance attached by Swedish tourists to each of the perceived service quality dimensions served by Thailand Resor AB, and to explore the management of customers' expectations

Method: This study is mainly grounded on quantitative method using questionnaire followed SERVQUAL instrument. The data collection was come from primary data (questionnaire and interview) and secondary data (books, journals, and internet website)

Conclusion: The customers perceived all 5 SERVQUAL dimensions; tangibles, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy, pertaining service quality performance at low level when compared with their expectation. Thailand Resor AB should fulfill these 5 gaps and pay attention at assurance dimension concerning conveying trust and confidence because of the highest gap. The dimension of tangibles (equipment, physical facilities, etc.), empathy (ability to see through the customer's eyes), responsiveness (willingness to help and provide prompt service), and reliability (doing what company have promised) were adjusted consequencely. The respondents highlighted the following key quality factors of their expectations; be treated with respect, be listened to and be dedicated attention, more friendly staffs, get the accuracy information. Some respondent have fuzzy expectations that he company have to further discover the real expectations by providing guidance to their staffs to encourage them to ask questions.

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Group 2279

Miss Rotjarek Lumyong

Miss Suppalak Suksom

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Table of Content	Page
Chapter 1 Introduction	6
1.1 Background	6
1.1.1 Tourism Industry in Sweden	6
1.1.2 Service Quality	7
1.1.3 Company Profile	9
1.2 Problem Statement	11
1.3 Research Question	12
1.4 Purpose	12
1.5 Limitation	12
 Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework	 13
2.1 Service Quality Concept	13
2.2 SERVQUAL	14
2.3 Management of Customer's Expectation	18
2.4 The Conceptual Framework Model	20
 Chapter 3 Method	 21
3.1 Research Methods	21
3.2 Data Collection	21
3.2.1 The Secondary Data	22
3.2.2 The Primary Data	22
3.2.2.1 Questionnaire	22
3.2.2.2 Interview	26
3.3 Analysing Data	27
3.3.1 Summarising Data	27
3.3.2 Analysing Data Based on SERVQUAL Method	27
3.3.3 Interpretation	28

Chapter 4 Finding and Analysis	29
4.1 General Information	29
4.1.1 Respondents Demographics	29
4.1.2 Respondents Background	31
4.2 Service Quality	32
4.2.1 Service Quality of Total Respondents	32
4.2.1.1 Overall SERVQUAL	33
4.2.1.2 Each SERVQUAL Dimension	35
4.2.2 Ranking of Expectation and Perception	38
4.3 Customers' Expectation	41
Chapter 5 Conclusion and Recommendation	43
5.1 Conclusion	43
5.2 Suggestions and Recommendations	44
References	45
Appendix	
- Appendix A: Questionnaire	50
- Appendix B: Raw Data from Questionnaires	55
- Appendix C: Service Quality	60

List of Figure

Figure 1 Number of Customer's of Thailand Resor AB during 2007 to 2009	10
Figure 2 A dynamic model of expectations	19
Figure 3 Theoretical framework of this research	20
Figure 4 Data Analysis Process from Bond	28
Figure 5 Pie Chart represented age group of the total respondents	30
Figure 6 Scatter diagram represented the income per month (SEK) of respondents	30
Figure 7 Pie chart represented the frequency of responses related to travelling with any travel agencies (<i>Left</i>) and with Thailand Resor AB (<i>Right</i>)	32
Figure 8 Result of Expectation and Perception of All Respondents	33
Figure 9 Each Dimension's Result of Expectation and Perception of All Respondents	35
Figure 10 Prioritizing of each feature of customers' expectation	39
Figure 11 Prioritizing of each feature of customers' perception	40

List of Table

Table 1 Number and Rate of Increasing (percentage) of Customer's of Thailand Resor AB during 2007 to 2009	10
Table 2 Some researches of service quality within tourism sector regarding with SERVQUAL	17
Table 3 Estimating margin of error on sample survey results at 95% level of uncertainty	23
Table 4 Statement pertaining to the dimension presented in the questionnaire	25
Table 5 An interpretation of Likert Scale	27
Table 6 Sex and Age of Respondents	29
Table 7 Amount and percentage of respondents who have ever traveled with travel agencies (Question No. 4: <i>Have you ever travel with travel agencies? And How many time?</i>)	31
Table 8 Amount and percentage of respondents who travel with travel agencies a year (Question No. 5: <i>How often do you travel with travel agency a year?</i>)	31
Table 9 Amount and percentage of response who have ever traveled with Thailand Resor AB (Question No. 6: <i>How often have you travel with Thailand Resor AB?</i>)	32
Table 10 Averaged Score of Expectation and Perception of All Respondents	33
Table 11 Result of prioritizing the feature pertaining customers' expectation and perception	39
Table 12 The result of customer feedback question No. 1.3 and 1.4	41

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The introduction presents and overviews the focus of this research as well as why this research are investigated and studied in terms of service quality in tourism industry. This part is therefore separated into 5 sub-topics which represent the background of this research, problem statement, research question, purposes, and the limitations.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Tourism Industry in Sweden

The tourism industry is one of a crucial part in service sectors which generated 30% of the world's exports of service and continuously expanded from 2006 until 2007 by 6% of international tourism arrivals (UNWTO 2008). Beside, the tourism industry, including of inbound and outbound tourism, is not only a major source of incomes for any countries but also help to support the growth of other related businesses including restaurants, hotels, transportation, entertainment, souvenirs, and shop selling local product. Many sectors are affected in some way by tourism. As in Sweden, it is shown that travel and tourism industry share for different lines of business, and in 2006 travel and tourism industry's share of added value mostly affected on travel agencies as 100% of the added value, while air travel, and hotels and restaurants are affected by 89% and 60% of added value respectively. The growth of such businesses resulted in the increasing of employment rates and inflows of foreign currencies. In the past decade, the tourism industry also contributed to the country evidenced in a positive its trade balance. (TAT 2006; Nutek 2008) This is also the case in Thailand (Osotho 48th Vol. 9, 2008).

Travel agencies (tour operators) operated in tourism industry are major actors of the tourism industry development. They do not only provide a link between customers and the final travel service providers in the tourism countries, but they are also active in marketing and promoting a country's tourism development (Chang 2008). Since tourism is essentially integrated with many sectors in the economy, an underpinning of the tourism industry is today much more considered by both of government and travel agency itself. To promote enterprise and entrepreneurship within the travel and tourism industry, Nutek; the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth has taken responsibility to support travel agency in Sweden through boosting skills, improving quality and cooperation. (Nutek 2008) At the same time, the government of Thailand is carrying forward inbound tourism in Thailand by setting up the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) in Sweden as well as propagandising the national tourism promotional program. In 2009 the travelling campaigns have been established around 13 campaigns for persuading the Thai travelling and attracting foreign tourist to visit Thailand, e.g. Amazing Thailand: Friends Forever, Thailand Travel Mart and Visit Thailand Year, etc. (TAT, 2009)

An increasing in the needs of customers is one key driven the competition in the service sector. Focused on tourism in Sweden, much in evidences is shown as the positive result in the Swedish tourist intention to visit Thailand. For instance, a number of Swedish tourist in Thailand during 2005 to 2007 was founded that 222,287 persons, 307,284 persons, and 378,387 persons repectively (Osotho, 2008). At the same time the Swedish travel trade which is comprised of members of the publication's editorial team and four representatives from the Swedish travel and tourism industry, ranks Thailand at the first in "World's Best Tourist Country 2009", making this the 8th executive time of the annual Swedish Grand Travel Award (TAT , 2009). By attractive these customer outcomes mentioned above , travel agency need to understand the tourists' involvement and interaction which directly impact on the overall perception of their tourism experience. At the same time, the competition in the tourism industry will be driven by intense preoccupation with the quality of service to enhance the overall tourism experience and that is as well challenge for tourism businesses in the future. (Kandampully, 2000)

1.1.2 Service Quality

Service competition in service sector has seen to be a reality as customer expectations move continuously upward due to that only satisfied customers are likely to remain loyal in the long run business (Heskett, Sasser, Schlesinger, 1997). Improving services would be more focused rather than to compete only on price or offering similar products in competitive market (Grönroos, 2007). The service concept is then significantly rising as followed an economic development in both domestic markets and internationally (Atilgan, Akinci, & Aksoy, 2003)..

Service differs from goods in terms of how they are produced, consumed, and evaluated. In service marketing context, the delineation of services, which are widely accepted by many scholars and marketers (e.g. Zeithaml, 1981, 1985; Levitt, 1981, Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996), can be defined through four characteristic differences between services and goods, "IHIP", i.e. intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability, and perishability (Wolak, Kalafatis & Harris, 1998) Services are normally "*intangible*" since they are performances and experiences which infrequently control accurate manufacturing specifications concerning a uniform quality like any objects. These performances often change from producer to producer, customer to customer, and day today, "*heterogeneous*". Production and consumption of services cannot be separated, "*inseparable*", compared with goods that are separated into small units/ departments. Because quality in services often occurs during service delivery as well as in an interaction between customer and provider. Finally services are "*perishable*" which are time dependent and can not be stored. (Parasuraman et al., 1985, in Tatakasem & Lee, n.d.; Parasuraman et al., 1990) As the inherent differences between goods and services, they therefore make unique exist as well as management challenges for service business and for manufactures that provide services as a core offering (Zeithaml & Bitner, 1996).

Beside, Edvardsson (1996) claimed that in the eyes of the customer, the service is one associated with added value and quality and that quality will satisfies the needs and meets the

expectations of customers, employees and owners. On the other hand, quality of service is also being the main driving force of service providers to build the competitive challenges as well as position themselves in market and to remain the existing customers as well as to attract more new customers to company (Kandampully, 2000 in Kvist & Klefsjo, 2006, Lewis, 1993 in Yoon, T-H & Ekinici, 2003). The growing recognition of the importance of such quality in service industries has been driven by the realization that high service quality results in positive behavioral intentions as well as greater market share and profitability. It is also seen as a beneficial effect on the bottom line performance for any companies (Caruana & Malta, 2002) as well as the delivery of high-quality services to customers (Atilgan et al., 2003). Likewise the service profit chain (SPC), developed by Heskett, Sasser, Schlesinger (1997), shows the positive relationship in model, among internal service, customer satisfaction and together with the outcome of profit. The assumption of the model is that profitability draws from customer satisfaction and loyalty which in turn are drawn from a customer's sense of value received, and the capability, productivity, satisfaction and loyalty of employees. The customer's sense of value from this model can be measured from the perceived quality of results received and the perceived quality of how these have been delivered. (Walker et al., n.d.) Moreover good quality of service is shown a fruitfulness in case of not only leading to positive word-of-mouth recommendation and repeating customers, but also avoiding a lack of satisfaction that will lead to negative results, e.g. complaints which can be expensive, time-consuming, and injurious to a destination's reputation in the dealing with such complaints (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001 in Kvist & Klefsjo, 2006).

Nevertheless service quality is not easy to evaluate for customers which differ from goods quality. As the criteria customers use to evaluate such service quality may be more difficult for any marketers to understand. In the other hand, service quality is not only entirely evaluated by customers on the outcome of that service, but its process of delivery is also considered during customers' evaluating (Parasuraman et al., 1991). To help understand a unique nature of services and improve the quality of service, one well know instrument have been proposed, SERVQUAL. This instrument was introduced to measure and evaluate service quality more than a decade ago (Parasuraman et. al, 1988). The 22 statements pertaining to 5 keys dimensions of service quality evaluation; i.e. tangibles, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy, are proposed and specifically related to perception of service quality which offer a multinational scale for measuring service quality in every service provider. A detail of SERVQUAL is further discussed in this report, in the next section of Chapter 2; 2.2 SERVQUAL, . This instrument has therefore be the most popular research instrument in both academic and industry, as well as a great deal of research has been carried out in recent years in various service sectors (e.g. Llosa S., Chandon, J. L. and Orsingher, C., 1998; Atilgan, E., Akinci, S. & Aksoy, S., 2003; Sivabrovornvatana, N, Siengthai, S, Krairit, D, & Paul, H, 2005; Kvist & Klefsjo, 2006; Stromgren, O., 2007, etc.).

Referred to the previous studies of SERVQUAL, some have found empirical support for the five dimensions, but some question the five service dimensions. Yoon & Ekinici (2003) stated that the number of relevant service quality dimensions is dependent on the nature of the

services being evaluated. For instance, the study result of Carman (1990 in Yoon & Ekinci, 2003) was expressed that only reliability, responsiveness, and tangibles are strongly affected on 3 different retail outlets (a tire store, placement center, and dental clinic), and the study suggested that “the number and type of dimensions could be different according to the services being evaluate”. As same as the study of Babakus & Boller (1992 in Yoon & Ekinci, 2003), they argued that “the domain of service quality might be complex in some industries and very simple in others” which was dependent on the nature of the services being evaluated. It was found on the other hand in tourism context as a study of Chang (2008) who evaluated Taiwanese travellers’ perceptions of service quality on the guided package tour by SERVQUAL. The result was shown that ‘tangibility’ dimension does not show much significance of service quality than other dimensions. Likewise any models, SERVQUAL has their own limitations depended on the circumstances and the subjects to be investigated. However, Chang (2008, p. 168) stated that “SERVQUAL instrument can still be partially used in the travel and hospitality industry and received considerable recognition in service marketing.”

1.1.3 Company Profile

Thailand Resor AB is a small travel agency in Sweden which is very much a small-business industry as same as other companies in tourist industry. It was established on 2007 by Miss Tanaporn Nelson, Director of Thailand Resor AB, and the head office is located in Hantverkargatan, Stockholm. The company had formerly composed of two shareholders and now it has been managed by only one owner, Ms Nelson. Products or service offered to their customers in Sweden is mainly focused on tourism program in Thailand, such as information of traveling in Thailand and included of any tickets. The company was run by two employees at the first year and nowadays there have six employees. Even if the company has run its business for only 2 years, the owner has experienced in tourism business in Sweden for 4 years as well as an gradual growth of company by 25% customer has increased since 2008. Their customers are classified between existing former customers and new customers, with 30% and 70% respectively. Company’s website (thailandresor.se), magazine (for an instance of Thailand Magasinet), and road show are the ways to get insight into their customers. Furthermore in order to offer superior services to their customers, the company has coordinated with many resorts and hotels in their travel destinations, especially in Thailand, for establishing several Thai travel programs and gaining in the travel information to the customers. The information of destinations, hotels (new hotel in Bangkok, the rank of the most booked hotel in Bangkok, and hotel under a control budget) as shown in their website, are provided to the customers.

Underlying growth of number of customers, Thailand Resor AB’s customers totally increase to 73.33% since 2007 (Table 1 and Fig. 1), which can be divided by customers’ nationalities into 2 main groups; i.e. Swedish’s and Thai’s customers. It is found the positive trend of the number of both groups of Thailand Resor AB; 82.86% of Swedish’s and 65% of Thai’s. Ms Nelson views that the company can be flourished in the Swedish market as she said that she

would like to continually seek to enhance their customer loyalty as well as profitability. Therefore to understand the phenomena of their main target group of tourists in concern with expectation and perception of service quality is raised here in this research.

Table 1 Number and Rate of Increasing (percentage) of Customer's of Thailand Resor AB during 2007 to 2009 (Nelson, T, May 15, 2009)

Year	Total		Swedish's		Thai's	
	Number (persons)	Increasing Rate (%)	Number (persons)	Increasing Rate (%)	Number (persons)	Increasing Rate (%)
2007 ¹	0		0		0	
2008	400		120		280	
2009	1500	73.33	700	82.86	800	65.00

¹ Established year

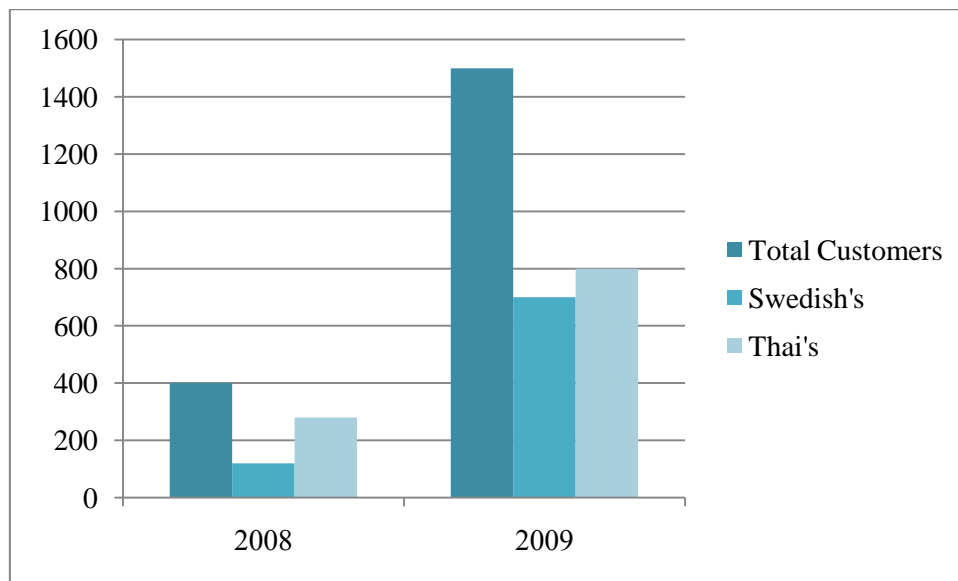


Figure 1 Number of Customer's of Thailand Resor AB during 2007 to 2009 (Nelson, T, May 15, 2009)

Based on an operational management perspective, it is important that managers of tourism services understand the importance of tourists' involvement in the various activities (Kvist & Klefsjo, 2006). As well as Miss Nelson realize that this understanding will assist company to streamline their operations to enable them and to enhance the quality of the tourists' experience by incorporating the activities that they enjoy most.

1.2 Problem Statement (re-write)

Quality is an issue of increasing significance in recent years (Erstad, 2001 in Stromgren, 2007). However services are complexity and normally differs from goods in terms of how they are produced, consumed, and evaluated as previously mentioned by its characteristics. Hence it is not easy for service providers to explain what and for customer to asses what. Moreover service quality is also different in many aspects from one person to another regardless of their expectations and perception. Service quality therefore would be measured to better capture the quality characteristics of individual industries under examination, likewise in travel agency. In order to success and prolong company's business, entrepreneur has to make sure it is providing the goods and services that customer wants as it gets its quality right and that it delivers on time. Similarly, Hoffman & Bateson also supported that high-quality services enhance customer satisfaction, increase market share, and enhance profitability of service organizations (1997, in Ekinci, 2002) as describe in service profit chain. Erstad (2001 in Stromgren, O., 2007) also addressed the service quality is a key success factor which can bring significant strategic advantages.

As mentioned by Kvist, A. K. J. & Klefsjo, B. (2006), "the citizens of many countries, such as those in eastern Europe, now find it much easier to travel abroad". To go further and based on the fact that Swedish tourists value Thailand as a resort for holiday but only on an importance of travel agency in the satisfaction process. Furthermore due to Thai Travel's background, much evidences founded in tours of Swedish expecially to go to Thailand is grounded on high customer need; i.e. increasing in a number of Swedish tourist in Thailand during 2005 to 2007 (by 222,287 persons in 2005, 307,284 persons in 2006 and 378,387 persons in 2007) (Osotho 48th Vol. 9, 2008) Therefore much travel agencies in Sweden have focused on Thailand and greater level of competition in this service sectors has established.

Finally from above reasons, to understand service quality issues as well as understand customer perspective has intensified as a key success factor for improving service quality. Understanding exactly what customers expect and what customers perceived are the most crucial step in defining and delivering high-quality service (Parasuraman et. al, 1990). Thailand Resor AB is one of travel agency in Sweden which recognizes the quality as the business objective. The overall aim of this thesis is thus to focus on quality in a service company as a case of travel agency in Sweden, Thailand Resor AB. The problem statement is established in this research in terms of "*How can Thailand Resor AB gain its service quality for its Swedish Tourist?*" from understanding of Swedish customers' perspective. The better understanding of these phenomenon in tourism service's encounter as well as company itseft are particulary important and will permit the industry to better perform in high competitive market.

1.3 Research Question

For answering the above problem statement, the research studies the service quality in terms of what Swedish tourists perceive services from company: a case of Thai travel agency in Sweden “Thailand Resor AB” to better understand and insight into knowing its customers. The research questions of this study are therefore as following;

- “What do Swedish tourists perceive service quality offered by Thailand Resor AB based on 5 dimensions of SERVQUAL model?”
- “How does Thailand Resor AB manage customers’ expectations?”

The questions are based on our framework that will be explained in Chapter 2.

1.4 Objective

This research explores;

- The service quality attributes that constitute 5 dimensions of service quality in evaluating Thailand Resor AB’s organization
- The relative importance attached by Swedish tourists to each of the perceived service quality dimensions served by Thailand Resor AB
- The management of customers’ expectations within Thailand Resor AB

The purpose of this research would be moreover helping company define the areas of weakness in its service process and then it is useful for organizing and adjusting services to meet customer’s need.

1.5 Limitation

According to the purpose of this research, some limitations have to be specified for the further use of both practitioners and academias. Firstly this research is grounded on the service quality provided by travel agency, Thailand Resor AB. Therefore the results of this research might not be used to generalize in the different service areas because of the different in its characteristics and the quality attributes of each service industry. Secondly the research is only focused in Swedish tourists who have ever experienced with the services of Thailand Resor AB, especially in Thailand travelling programmes, because Swede is the main target customers of this studied company, Thailand Resor AB. Therefore the other groups of tourists are excluded in this research. Finally since expectations of customers can evolve and change over time as a dynamic process, hence the term of service quality of any businesses and circumstances should be developed over time as well.

CHAPTER 2 The Theoretical Framework

In this section, the basic concepts of factors and the theoretical framework model are defined. First of all the terms and concepts of factors related to this research questions are clarified including of service quality concept, SERVQUAL, and management of expectations. Finally these terms and concepts are connected and expressed by theoretical framework.

2.1 Service Quality Concept

According to Parasuraman et al. (1991), companies can gain their competitive advantage by using of the technology for the purpose of enhancing the service quality by gathering information on marked demand. The conceptual models of service quality are the solution for supporting the management of each company to identify quality problems and therefore .

For decades, many researchers have developed a service perspective (Zeithaml, 2009, Ramsaran-Fowdar, 2006). The concept of service should be generally approached from the customer's point of view which may have different values, different grounds for assessment, and different circumstances (Chang, 2008). Therefore customers do not perceive quality at one dimensional concept and there also have perceptions of multiple factors when quality is assessed (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2000 in Atilgan et al., 2003). Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry mentioned that service quality is an extrinsically perceived attribution based on the customer's experience in what services customer perceived through the service encounter (1985 and 1988 in Walker, Johnson, and Leonard, 2006). According to the work of Kumra (2008), service quality is not only involved final products and services, but also involved production and delivery process of services, thus employee involvement in process redesign and commitment is important to produce those final tourism products or services come into picture.

Another researcher studied on service quality is presented by Grönroos (2007) who focuses on a model that is a comparison between the consumer expectations of the service with their experience of the service they has received before. This model is named "total perceived service quality". As he emphasizes on what customer is really looking for and what they evaluate, the service quality thus comprises of two dimensions. The first dimension is the technical quality. This dimension refers to the outcome or what is delivered or what the customer gets from the service. The next dimension is the functional quality which refers to the manner in which the service is delivered or how it is delivered. Both dimensions affected the corporate image and the perception of quality in various ways. According to total perceived service quality model, perceived quality of a service is not only affected by the experiences of the quality dimensions that the consumer went through for evaluating whether quality is perceived as good, neutral, or bad. Therefore, but also the perceived quality of a given service is as the outcome of an evaluation process. (Grönroos, 2007)

During the same era and following Grönroos' line of thinking, Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry developed the gap analysis model, which has a well-known model of service quality (1994 in Chang, 2008). This model shows an integrated view of the consumer-company relationship. The main idea of model is focused on the premise that service quality is dependent on the size and direction of 5 gaps in the service delivery process (see Fig. C1 in Appendix C);

- Gap 1: the gap between consumer's expectation and those perceived by management to be the customer's expectations
- Gap 2: the gap between management's perceptions of consumer expectations and the firm's service quality specifications
- Gap 3: the gap between service quality specifications and service delivery
- Gap 4: the service delivery, external communication gap
- Gap 5: the perceived service quality gap, the difference between expected and perceived service (Parasuraman et al., 1990)

The first four gaps (GAP1, GAP2, GAP3, GAP4) are identified as functions of the way in which service is delivered from service provider to customer, while GAP5 pertains to the customer and as such is considered to be the true measure of service quality. The later, GAP5 is the GAP that SERVQUAL instrument influence. From this gaps, Parasuraman et al. developed instrument used to define a perceived service quality of customers through criteris pertaining to service quality. This instrument is further discussed in the next topic.

Finally as mentioned by Edvardsson (1996), it is one key important for a service organization to define the level of quality at which to operate; he argued that it is more relevant to speak of the "right quality" than of merely high quality. Since service quality is now a considerable part of business as its subjective judged by customers (Edvardsson, 1996). Defining service quality and providing techniques for its measurement become a particularly complex issue in a high contact service industry such as tourism (Kvist & Klefsjo, 2006). It makes this issue important for service providers and researchers to properly and correctly measure and research its effectiveness as well as the need to measure of service quality for individual and different circumstances should be emphasized.

2.2SERVQUAL

Because of the significant effect of service quality on an organization's success, a customer-oriented model, SERVQUAL, was introduced to assess service quality more than a decade ago (Parasuraman, Zeithaml,&Berry, 1988). The aim of this model is to help managers diagnose and improve the quality of services under their control. According to SERVQUAL, quality is the gap between customer expectations and perception of performance. The model offers a multidimensional scale that aims to measure service quality in any (and every) service organization. This proposition has made SERVQUAL the most popular research instrument in both academia and industry, and a great deal of research has been carried out in recent years using this model in various service organizations, including hotels. Those of 5

dimensions are classified into 2 mains considering which part of the service they are more involved in process or outcome. Reliability dimension represents the service outcome, which can be judged after the service was delivered to customers. The other dimensions of service are more related with the service process or it can be judged when the service was being delivery. (Parasuraman et al., 1991)

In service-quality concept, service quality can be measured by using the SERVQUAL instrument, an attribute-based evaluation, defined by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry on 1985 (Parasuraman et al., 1991). SERVQUAL is a general instrument which is a concise scale which can use as a basic skeleton of its expectations and perceptions for any kind of service business (Parasuraman et al., 1990). Then it is now replicated in many different service categories by other service researchers (Llosa et al., 1998). This model is used to measure a service quality based on the difference between consumers' expectations and experiences of service. The initial 10 categories of the model are reliability; responsiveness; competence; access; courtesy; communication; credibility; security; understanding/ knowing; and tangibles. Then it was refined on 1988 into 5 dimensions because of the overlap across the 10 criteria. These attributes are focused on the notion of perceived quality, and would represent how customers organize information about service quality they get in their minds and judge through the level of service quality as well as overall (Parasuraman et al., 1991). The 5 dimensions are composed of tangibles, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy.

- Tangibles: is attribute in which it is used to define appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication material, etc. Tangibles are more important in high contact services, for example conditions of the building.
- Reliability: is ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
- Responsiveness: is use to define willingness to help customers and provide prompt service with customer requirements and complaints.
- Assurance: covers knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence.
 - 1) Competence: staff should possess the necessary skill, knowledge and information to perform the service effectively.
 - 2) Courtesy: the politeness, respect, consideration and friendliness shown to the customer by the contact personnel.
 - 3) Credibility: the extent to which the service is believed and trusted. It involves the service provider's name and reputation and personal traits of front line staff.

- 4) Security: the freedom from danger, risk and doubt. It involves physical safety, financial security and confidentiality.
- Empathy: is defined as caring, individualized attention the firm provides its customers.
 - 1) Access: the ease of approachability and contact; this includes convenient opening hours, location and getting through on the telephone.
 - 2) Communication: clear and regular communication with clients to keep them informed about the service, e.g. give detailed and accurate information whenever a delay in service occurs.
 - 3) Understanding/ knowing the customer: involves understanding the customer's needs and requirements. It emphasizes close client focus and customization.

(Jannadi & Al-Saggaf, 2000)

This approach is argued by Kettinger and Lee (1997 in Atilgan et al., 2003) that it was a remarkable diagnostic tool for the assessment of service quality in the information service. The SERVQUAL is significantly well-built relationship between value and customer services in the tourism industry, which was the highest importance for determining the real meaning of customer satisfaction (Augustyn & Ho, 1998 in Atilgan et al., 2003). The service quality in the tourism industry therefore receives growing consideration as well (Hudson et al., 2004 in Chang, 2008). In the same manner Ryan (1999 in Atilgan et al., 2003) claimed that the SERVQUAL was a simple tool for tourism managers to use in tackling the areas of weakness in their service delivery. SERVQUAL can serve as an effective diagnostic tool to guide management in its service quality improvement efforts by focusing attention in the areas that are most needful (Kvist & Klefsjo, 2006).

Since the five dimensions mentioned above were generally written for any service sectors in any circumstances (Parasuraman et al., 1991), it needs to be adjusted specifically for each service provider likewise in the tourism sector. However it was found that there have been few empirical studies as shown in Table 2 that have used the SERVQUAL approach (Kvist & Klefsjo, 2006).

Table 2 Some researches of service quality within tourism sector regarding with SERVQUAL

Researchers	Research Focus	Finding
Hudson, S., Hudson, P. & Miller (2004)	The Measurement of Service Quality in the Tour Operating Sector: A Methodological Comparison (Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA), SERVQUAL, SERVQUAL-importance, SERVPERF)	The results indicate how each service quality dimension ranks for the holiday dimensions according to the 4 models. SERVPERF produces very different rankings to the IPA for dimensions (“company magazine” is ranked highest using IPA but lowest using SERVPERF). Similarly, SERVPERF produces different rankings for dimensions to SERVQUAL. Finally, factoring in importance makes little difference to SERVQUAL rankings (the ranking of only 4 dimensions change from 13 dimensions). Yet espite the many differences in rankings, the dimension skiing/ snowboarding is ranked in the top two by all tests, while the journey is ranked in the bottom three by all tests.
Kvist, A. K. J. & Klefsjo, B. (2006)	Which service quality dimensions are important in inbound tourism?: A case study in a peripheral location	“Reliability” was the most commonly mentioned dimension by Italian and British tourists to Sweden, which is supported the previous study of Zeithalm, et al. (1990). In the other hand, “responsiveness” do not accord with those of previous study, it was to be only the fourth most important dimension in the first phase (before the experience); moreover, the present study found that “responsiveness” diminished further in importance in the third phase (after the experience). “Tangibles” was counted as the least important mong five dimensions of service quality according to Zeithaml et al. (1990), but was ranked as third most important by the respondents in the present study, both before and after the experience.

Table 2 Some researches of service quality within tourism sector regarding with SERVQUAL (continued)

Researchers	Research Focus	Finding
Chang (2008)	Taiwanese tourists' perceptions of service quality on outbound guided package tours using the SERVQUAL instrument	The study used modified SERVQUAL which was added 2 dimensions of communication and sociability. The result shown that tangibility dimension was less significant compared with other dimensions in term of customers' perceptions of service quality. Other dimensions such as communication and sociability were critical when applied to the travel industry in a particular ethnical group.

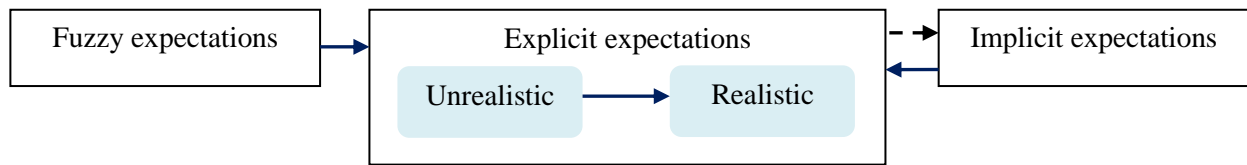
2.3 Management of Customers' Expectations

The term expectations in service quality literature has a different meaning for different authors (Ekinici, 2002). However even if that term of expectation is vague and makes difficult surveys for interpretation (Bellini, 2002), understanding how customer expectations also have to develop and update for a part of success in influencing customer satisfaction (Tam, 2005). Likewise in the tourism industry, the competitiveness of the tourism companies will essentially ground on a fully professional approach to effect a tourism experience that exceeds tourists' expectations. Therefore the management of these customers' expectations is also an imperative concept in tourism companies for further products and services designing to match and exceed those expectations. (Kandampully, 2000)

In order to increase long term quality, Ojasalo suggested that the customers' expectations should be focused, revealed, and calibrated. Ojasalo (1999 in Grönroos, 2007) developed the dynamics model of expectation for the way that the quality of professional services develops in a customer relationship over time. This model is illustrated in Fig. 2 which is classified the expectations into three distinguishable types and can be characterized in the following;

- *fuzzy expectations* exist when customers expect a service provider to solve a problem but do not have a clear understanding of what should be done;
- *explicit expectations* are clear in the customers' minds in advance of the service processes. They can be divided into realistic and unrealistic expectations;
- *implicit expectations* refer to elements of a service which are so obvious to customers that they do not consciously think about them but take them for granted"

(ibid, 2007, p. 100)



→ Intentional dynamics = expectations management

- -> Unintentional dynamics

Figure 2 A dynamic model of expectations
 (Ojasalo, 1999, p. 97, in Grönroos, 2007, p. 99)

Followed Fig. 2, Grönroos (2007) stated that a service provider should understand fuzzy expectations because these expectations have still impact on satisfaction with quality or customers will be disappointed in case of the service provider does not fulfill it. The characteristics in this expectations of customers is that, “customers may feel that there is a need for service or for a change of their current state in general, but they do not have a clear understanding of what would be fulfill this need or change the current situation” (Grönroos, 2007, p. 100) or customers expect something more in addition to be done but they don’t know exactly what and how should be done. Grönroos (2007, p. 100) also said that if the service provider “can make the explicit of these expectations for the customer and for itself, there is an opportunity to satisfy the customer”.

Even though customers normally presume that explicit expectations will be met, unrealistic might be existed in these expectations. Service providers have to help customers adjust these unrealistic expectations into more realistic ones to ensure that a service delivery will meet customers’ expectation. In this stage, service providers should be aware of the more vague promises or “implied-in-fact” promises because it can form unrealistic explicit expectations that lead customers to believe that service offered will include features that infact are not included. Beside explicit expectations, implicit expectations also have to be fulfilled because they are apparent that customers are never clearly expressed. Such implicit will become explicit if they are not fulfilled. (Grönroos, 2007)

Both fuzzy and implicit expectations should be detected, because they can form explicit expectations as seen in the thick narrows (Fig. 2); called “international dynamics”. It mean that how service provider can and should actively manage expectations. For the dotted line called unintentional dynamics, it is “shifts in the nature and range of expectations that take place over time interference from the service provider as the relationship process”. (Grönroos, 2007, p. 101)

Finally, the service provider should design the service offering to customers in order to meet all their expectations, and the dynamic approach to managing expectations in service contexts are therefore concerned (Grönroos, 2007). Berry and Parasuraman (1991 in Caruana, 1995)

also suggested that the management of customers' expectations involves in the relationship management and in the delivery of quality that the following.

- 1) "a realistic picture of the service is potrayed to the customer,
- 2) a premium is placed on company reliability,
- 3) effective communications with customers take place,
- 4) employees excel during service performance and exceed customers' expectations,
- 5) the recovery situation is exploited to the full. 'a good recovery can turn angry, frustrated customers into loyal ones (Hart, Heskett and Sasser, 1990 in Berry & Parasuraman, 1990)'

2.4 Conceptual Framework Model

The theoretical concepts used to shape and structure our research are mainly grounded on the theory of service quality. This research is mainly concentrated on service quality which is measured by SERVQUAL instrument as shown in Fig. 3.

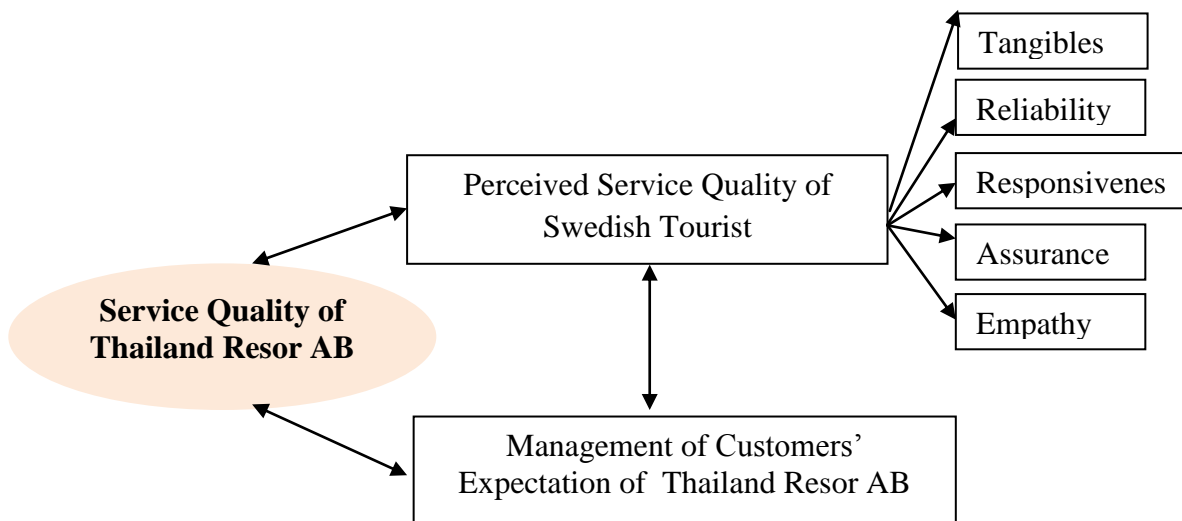


Figure 3 Theoretical framework of this research

CHAPTER 3 Method

This chapter presents the way to conduct and gather information. Research method and data collection heading are therefore expressed as well as the way to analyze the data is developed.

3.1 Research Methods

Quantitative and qualitative methods are basically two different types of research method for collecting information. To accomplish each research purpose, the most appropriate method has to be chosen. Firstly, quantitative method is associated with numerical measurement or statistics as numbers or quantity is presented. (Swaine & Kozicki 2005, Connecting Learning Ltd) This method is generally applied for doing research in case of to verify the existing theories or to test hypotheses developed by previous researchers (Björklund & Paulsson, 2003 in Stromgren, 2007). It could be collected through questionnaires, surveys or attendance records. The other types of research method, qualitative method, is on the other side, it is formed to collect data in case of in depth knowledge and understanding (Swaine & Kozicki 2005) as same as to gain a range of perspectives, opinions, ideas, and feelings which data cannot be presented by numbers. The qualitative data can be achieved through individual interviews or group discussions, video, written diaries or observation numbers. It could be implied that number and statistic are not involved in the qualitative method and therefore the main different between these two research methods are the use of number and statistic. (Björklund & Paulsson, 2003 in Stromgren, 2007)

In this research, both qualitative and quantitative methods are applied for collecting all relevant data of service quality offered by Thailand Resor AB. Likewise Björklund & Paulsson (2003 in Stromgren, 2007) said that “while these two approaches to research are often presented as if they were in binary opposition to one another, they can also be used to complement one another.” Quantitative method is chosen to track data through rating-scale questionnaires based on previous theory (as mentioned by Björklund & Paulsson, 2003 in Stromgren, 2007) of SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (Parasuraman et al., 1990) because evaluating service quality is directly defined by customers who have ever used such service as Parasuraman et al. (1990, p. 16) stated that “only customers judge quality”. At the same time, there have the open-questions in this questionnaire to finding out new things concerned with customers’ expectations as well as to acquire qualitative data that dealt with the attitudes and opinions of a range of individuals on an issue, and “how people understand their experiences (i.e. qualities)” (as mentioned by Björklund & Paulsson, 2003 in Stromgren, 2007).

3.2 Data Collection

For data collecting, two different types of data sources are expressed; primary and secondary sources of data. Throughout this research, both primary and secondary sources of data are used and discussed as in the following sub-topics. It is beginning with searching for the

secondary data as an overview of literature involving service quality and travel agencies in Sweden. Then collecting the primary data of Swedish tourist customers in Thailand Resor AB will be achieved by using questionnaires.

3.2.1 The Secondary Data

As mentioned by Stromgren (2007), the secondary data is indirectly relating to the purpose which is collected through a theoretical study. The secondary data used in this research consisted of books, electronic database and the internet website to acquire information of service quality and relevant concepts and theories as well as to fulfill the information of our research question consecutively. The books are loaned from the library's Mälardalen University. At the same time, any journals and articles are obtained from Mälardalen University Library's online databases like Emerald, SAGE Premier, Science Direct, etc. These are wholly based on peer reviewed researches as suggested by Fisher (2007, p. 81) that means "two or more expert referees approved the papers before they were accepted for publication". Fisher (2007) also recommended the journals that researchers should use like a main source for research dissertation and "it is probably being more important than books because the most up-to-date research and debates will be found in journals Fisher (2007, p. 81)". Finally the internet as well as the World Wide Web is one beneficial source for finding data, such as the search engines or google toward the key words related in this study. However Fisher (2007, p. 81) stated that "the Web has to be used with care, because it includes both high-quality material and utter tosh." Therefore the World Wide Web sources presented in this research was reliable sources, such as the sources cited by any universities and well-known organizations/ institutions.

3.2.2 The Primary Data

Throughout the research, the primary sources are used to conduct all the data which are directly related to the study purpose (Stromgren, 2007). Both questionnaire and interview are used as a research instrument for gathering information involved this purpose from target respondents.

3.2.2.1 Questionnaire

In this research, the questionnaire is provided to collect data of Swedish tourist in terms of perceived and expected service quality that is offered by the travel agency, Thailand Resor AB. The presentation of sample size, and how questionnaire are constructed, distributed and analyzed in order to gather accurately data, are expressed in this section.

a) Target Respondents

As this research studies in the travel agency named "Thailand Resor AB" which is located in Stockholm, Sweden. Swedes are the most customers of this travel agency and therefore Swedish tourists represent the target respondents in this research. The respondents are randomly selected from Swedish tourists who have ever experienced with the services offered by Thailand Resor AB, especially in Thailand travelling programmes.

b) Sampling Size

Determining sample size is a very important issue for collecting an accurate result within a quantitative survey design. “One of the real advantages of quantitative methods is their ability to use smaller groups of people to make inferences about larger groups that would be prohibitively expensive to study” (Holton & Burnett, 1997, p. 71, in Bartlett, Kotrlik, & Higgins, 2001). According to Fisher (2007, p. 189), to obtain the result that is representing the whole population, sample size should be taking regarding in part on the size of the margin of error that researcher can accept (Table 3).

Table 3 Estimating margin of error on sample survey results at 95% level of uncertainty (Saunser et al., 2002, p. 156 in Fisher, 2007, p. 190)

Population	Margin of Error			
	5%	3%	2%	1%
100	79	91	96	99
150	108	132	141	148
200	132	168	185	196
250	151	203	226	244
300	168	234	267	291
400	196	291	343	384
500	217	340	414	475
750	254	440	571	696
1000	278	516	706	906

Note: the number in table represented the number of complete questionnaires researcher have to get from respondence (returning of questionnaires)

Our target groups, Swedish tourist customers, are derived from customer database of Thailand Resor AB. In 2009, company have totally about 1500 customers, which is 700 Swedish customers and 800 of other national customers. Hence 254 Swedish customers are sampling in this study regarding 5% (+5/ -5) a margin of error in Table 3. The sampling technique chosen is random sample from population and all elements in the population have an equal chance of being included in the sample. Followed by Fisher (2007, p.189), the random survey is that “Random surveys of a suitably large sample allow you to determine what is average and what the variations around the average are, to a definable level of statistical confidence”.

c) Design of Questionnaire

In this stage, authors use an instruction for designing a questionnaire by setting any relevance questions followed Fisher (2007, p. 192). Fisher (2007) concerned 6 points in order to get the response rate at maximising level.

1. “Keep the questionnaire as short as possible 2 or 4 sides of A4 paper would be good for research for a Master’s dissertation.
2. Design it to look attractive by using the capacities of your word processor.
3. Give it a logical and sequential structure so that the repondent can easily see what the questionnaire is about and can follow its themes as they develop.
4. Divide the questionnaire into parts that correspond to the various issues you are asking questions about. If you are going to ask for demographic information about the respondents (such as age, sex, job title, or whatever), ask for it at the end of the questionnaire. People are more likely to answer personal questions if they have already invested time and effeort in completing the rest of the questionnaire.”
5. Ask the easy questions first and the hard ones last.
6. Keep any personal questions (as long as they are justified) until last.”

(ibid, 2007)

Based on these recommendations, authors have built the questionnaire that can be seen in Appendix A. The questionnaire have been developed into 3 main parts with different types of the question formats in order to conduct the relevance data of service quality offered by travel agency, Thailand Resor AB. Part I and II are grounded on SERVQUAL method of service quality concept that composed of expectation and perceived service quality of customers and that there are issues in measuring both of them in the same questionnaire. The last part, Part III, deal with a general information of respondents as shown in detail below.

Part I: Customers’ Expectations

To collect data of customers’ expectation, 4 sub-topics questions are formed in this part. The first sub-topic (No. 1.1) follows the SERVQUAL questionnaire proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1990) that consists of 22 statements of questions based on 5 dimensions (i.e. tangibles, reliability, assurance, responstiveness, and empathy) (see 22 statements in Appendix A). These statements are then grouped for pertaining to the dimension as shown in Table 4. The formulation of the questions is the results of authers’ understanding of each SERVQUAL dimension as presented in above theory.

Table 4 Statement pertaining to the dimension presented in the questionnaire (Parasuraman et al., 1990, p. 176)

Dimension	Statements pertaining to the dimension
Tangibles	Statements 1-4
Reliability	Statements 5-9
Assurance	Statements 10-13
Responsiveness	Statements 14-17
Empathy	Statements 18-22

A form of rating scale is claimed by Fisher (2007, p. 195) that is “commonly used to ask people about their opinion and attitude”. The five-point and seven scale are generally founded in previous study of service quality. In this study, the likert scale based on a five-point scale is used to acquire the data about customer perception according to SERVQUAL dimensions, towards Thailand Resor AB in Stockholm region after experiencing. We use five-point scale instead of seven-point scale because there are a lot of questions in this questionnaire needed the customers rating. Therefore the seven-point scale might be difficult to get an exactly feeling, respondents might be annoyed or frustrated for rating on too many question. Scales of 1 to 5 are used to rate a graduated scale and score each question range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). (Fisher, 2007) Furthermore “no opinion” column is also included to ask for opinion of responses in 22 statements of questions for standing in the measurement of the dynamics of customers’ expectations.

Secondly, how important each of five features of expectations pertaining to Thailand Resor AB and the service they offer are prioritized according to respondents’ mind (sub-topic No. 1.2). Therefore the ranking questions are used as the question format in this topic for asking the respondents to put a number into rank order on each statement.

The open questions are subsequently used in sub-topic No. 1.3 and 1.4, to ask for knowing new ideas and novel points of view or cannot anticipate the likely answers as mentioned by Fisher (2007). These questions are developed in concern of obtaining customers’ expectations views of the target respondents.

Part II: Perceived Service Quality

This part is also organized for gathering data about service quality perceived by Swedish tourists of Thailand Resor AB. It is divided into 3 sub-topics. Firstly, respondents are asked the same 22 statement questions about the perceived service quality based on SERVQUAL (as same as sub-topic No. 1.1 of customers’ expectations) with a set of five graduated scale (1; strongly disagree to 5; strongly agree). Then these five features pertaining to perceived service quality are presented for asking the respondents to put a number into rank order as well (sub-topic No. 2.2). Finally, an open question is used to obtain customers’ new ideas and

opinions of the overall the service quality they perceive as well as their suggestions in terms of “how Thailand Resor can provide better service to customers”.

Part III: General Information

This part is asked for the general demographic of respondents and other information related in their former travel experience. The dichotomous questions and multiple choice questions mainly use to collect the general data of respondents, for instance, demographic data (age, sex, income, etc.), traveling experience (have you ever travel with travel agencies?, etc.). Referred to Fisher (2007) the dichotomous questions is the questions that have only 2 alternatives to choose between, and suitable for clear-cut issues. For the multiple choice questions, it is the questions that have a choice of 3 to 5 options and asks for one choosing. (Fisher, 2007)

d) Distributing the Questionnaire

The authors directly send the questionnaire to Thailand Resor AB, for distributing it to their customers that they have contacted address in database. The questionnaire is surveyed approximately 6 weeks, from the first of May 2009 until the middle of June 2009. The questionnaire distributed to Swedish people is only expressed in English because The Translation People (2009) said that “most Swedish people born in the last 50 years are able to communicate very well in English”. Furthermore it is found that “the general level of proficiency in English in Sweden is quite high” as English is widely taught in Sweden from primary school as well as English is ordinary reached Swedish people on television, in films and in music (Cunningham U., n.d.). However, the respondents are firstly made sure that they are Swed who have ability to do the English questionnaires, by asking for English language before handing out questionnaires to each respondent.

3.2.2.2 Interview

The interview is used in this research in order to fulfill data provided by the study company, Thailand Resor AB. This interview data is related in area of no information about company or limitation of information in English and some area of information/ knowledge that relevance in this research. At the beginning of doing this research, the authors contact Thailand Resor AB via its telephone in order to discuss on the subject with their expert on 27th April, 2009. Then the authors met an owner of Thailand Resor AB, “Miss Tanaporn Nelson”, on 20th Mar, 2009, and an overviews of company profile and tourism market in Sweden are obtained. The data drawn from the interview is firstly transcribed to extract useful information from them, and then related those of information, comments, and suggestions with theories and concepts of our research.

3.3 Analysing Data

The empirical data collected from questionnaires are analyzed as the following descriptions.

3.3.1 Summarising Data

The large amount of data is normally analysing in diagrammatic form; e.g. tables, histograms and pie charts, by using statistical software packages (Fisher 2007). Throughout this research, SPSS 16 software (Statistical package for social sciences) and Microsoft Office Excel 2007 are statistical software packages used to tranform the raw data drawn from questionnaires to be easy to facilitate one as well as summarised into categorical data via tables, histograms and pie chart. The descriptive statistics like mean, mode, and median are determined and displayed by table. Mean or average is the sum of all data, divided by the number of data. Mode is the greatest frequency of data. Median is the middle vale or the number at which half data are more than that number and half are less than that number. Moreover standard deviations are also expressed to measure dispersion of data around the mean.

In this research the numeric data according to likert scale as well as gathering from questionnaires is defined as an opinion of respondents by a graduated scale which is ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The descriptive statistics' data (mean, mode, and median) is interpreted in the same way as the following; Koobgrabe, et. al. 2008

Table 5 An interpretation of Likert Scale

The Average between	Interpretation of Respondents' Opinion
4.21 – 5.00	The most
3.41 – 4.20	At much
2.61 – 3.40	Moderate
1.81 – 2.60	Less
1.00 – 1.80	At the least

3.3.2 Analysing of Service Quality based on SERQUAL

SERVQUAL scores can be used to assess a given firm's quality for each feature. The gap between perception and expectation (perceptions score minus expectations score) can then be judged on the service given to the customer. (Jannadi & Al-Saggaf, 2000)

$$SQ_i(\text{feature}) = P_i - E_i \tag{1}$$

$$SQ(\text{dimension}) = \sum_{i=1}^n (P_i - E_i) / n \tag{2}$$

when n = number of items in the dimension

$$\text{Overall SQ} = \sum_{i=1}^n SQ_i / n \tag{3}$$

when n = total number of features
 i = each feature
 SQ = Service Quality
 P = Perception score
 E = Expectation score

The measurement shows the high level of perceived service quality when the higher (more positive, +) the perception minus the expectation score is obtained. In the contrary, the low level of perceived service quality is found when the bigger the minus score between the perception and expectation score is obtained or the worse the company’s service quality. (Jannadi, O. A. & Al-Saggaf, H, 2000)

3.3.3 Interpretation

Then interpretation of qualitative information in this questionnaire will be used to help justify the quantitative results thoughts the respondents’ feelings. Furthermore this data is liked with theories and concepts to identify how Thailand Resor AB can manage those of customers’ expectation. Furthermore as mentioned by Bond “data never speak for themselves – they have to be interpreted by the researcher” (Bond 2006, p. 42 in Ferzan, Dung, & Thuy, 2008), and the interpretation of qualitative data is developed under the process suggested by Bond (2006, p. 43): description – classification – connection (fig. 4). Our interpretation of service quality based on SERVQUAL instrument applies from Bond’s interpretation process by jumping into the second stage of Bond’s, because the main collected data in this research is directly come from questionnaires. Therefore it is no need to transcrip and note from interview. Then organizing and classifying data into meaningful set that are the 5 dimention of service quality. Finally the connection stage involved interpreting customers’ view on each dimension of Thailand Resor AB’s service quality and conclusions are summed up from the interpretation and linked with theories to identify areas company should improve.

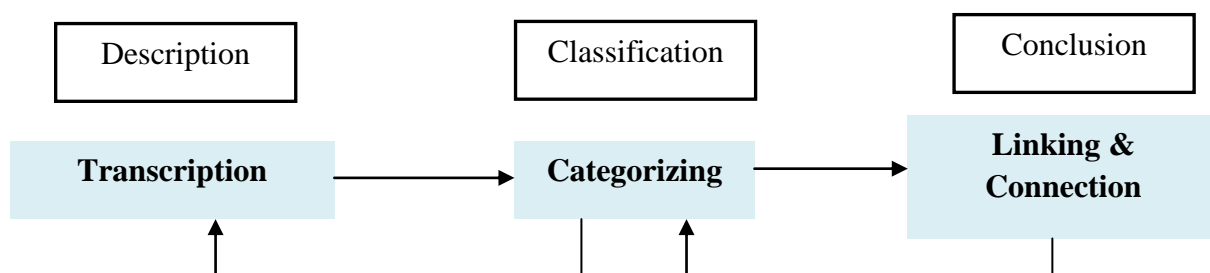


Figure 4 Data Analysis Process from Bond (2006, p. 42, in Ferzan, Dung, & Thuy, 2008)

CHAPTER 4 Finding and Analysis

This chapter presents the empirical data gathering by questionnaires which is divided into three parts; i.e. the general information of repondents, service quality of Thailand Resor AB from respondents' experiences, and cutomer's expectations . Analysis and discussion were also presented in this chapter.

The survey of this research was conduced by questionnaire. The duration was approximately 6 weeks (the first of May to the middle of June 2009). The questionnaires were directly sent to our study company, Thailand Resor AB, for distributing to their customers by e-mail, letter and on sight. The number of usable respondents was 254 which was selected from the total distribution of around 300.

4.1 General Information

This section shown the general information of our respondents which consisted of repondents demographics data and their background of travelling by travel agencies. (Question 1 to 3 of questionnair, see Appendix A)

4.1.1 Respondents Demographics

Based on gender, the main repondent in this research was in the age group of 31-40 years old which shown a percentage of 51.97. The age group of 20-30, 41-50, <20, and > 50 years old were followed respectively. The total repondent was also classified into 2 groups which were 58.66% of male and 41.34% of female. The main respondent of both male and female was in the age group of 31-40 years old which was as same as the tendency of the main respondent of the total.

Table 6 Sex and Age of Respondents

Gender	Total (Amount & %)	Amount of Respondents (and percentage %)				
		< 20 years old	20-30 years old	31-40 years old	41-50 years old	> 50 years old
Total	254 (100%)	13 (5.12%)	72 (28.35%)	132 (51.97%)	25 (9.84%)	12 (4.72%)
Male	149 (58.66%)	13 (8.73%)	44 (29.53%)	72 (48.32%)	10 (6.71%)	10 (6.71%)
Female	105 (41.34%)	0 (0%)	28 (26.65%)	60 (57.14%)	15 (14.29%)	2 (1.80%)

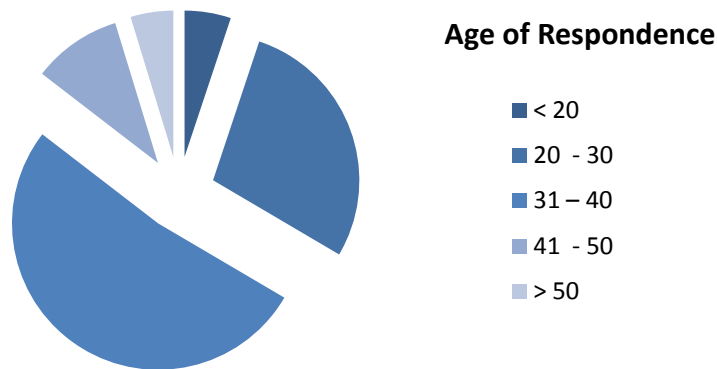


Figure 5 Pie Chart represented age group of the total respondents

A salary of respondents was presented in Fig. 5. It was found that a salary of the respondents in this research was averaged in 20,559.06 SEK where represent the most appropriate measure of central tendency for continuous-type data. The most frequently occurring score was expressed by the mode which was 22,000.00. It could be implied that the most respondents in this research had salary equaled to 22.000.00 SEK. Finally the last statistical data of salary of respondents was presented by median. It was equaled to 20,000 SEK which represented the middle value of data when data was arranged in order of increasing or decreasing.

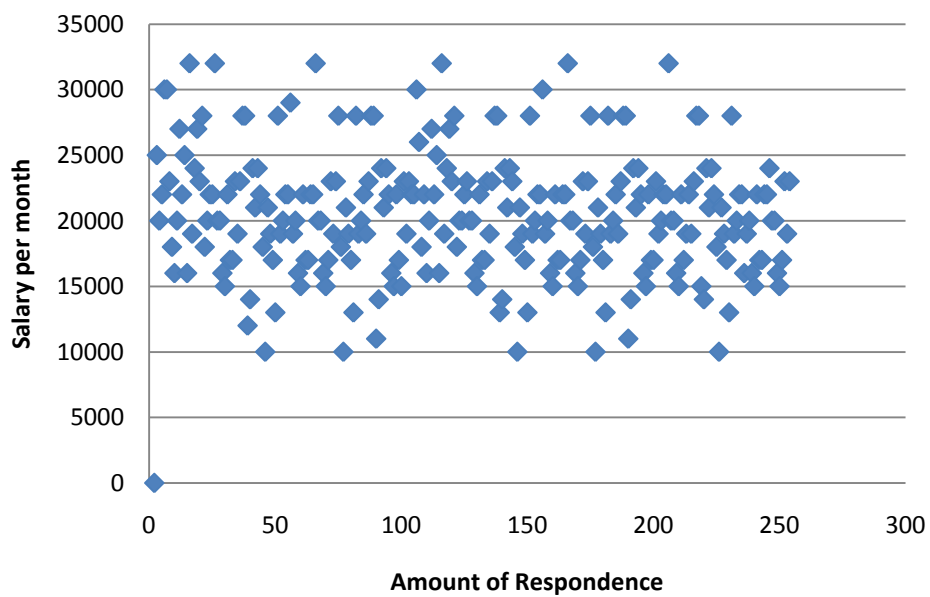


Figure 6 Scatter diagram represented the income per month (SEK) of respondents

4.1.2 Respondents Background

The respondents backgrounds were focused on their travelling with travel agency as followed question no. 4 to 6 in the questionair (see Appendix). According to question no.4 in this research, all respondents have ever traveled with travel agencies in range of 1 to 5 times. Result in Table 7 was shown that the most repondents (33.86%) have ever traveled with travel agencies for 2 times followed by 3 times (31.10%), 1 time (20.08%), 4 times (8.66%) and 5 times (6.30%), respectively.

Table 7 Amount and percentage of respondents who have ever traveled with travel agencies (Question No. 4: *Have you ever travel with travel agencies? And How many time?*)

Time to travel with Travel Agencies	Amount of Respondent	Percentage (%)of Respondent
5	16	6.30
4	22	8.66
3	79	31.10
2	86	33.86
1	51	20.08
Total	254	100

The result of amount and percentage of respondents which asked for the frequency to travel with travel agencies a year were given in Table 8. It was found that the most respondents traveled with travel agencies as 1 time a year and they did travel with travel agencies not more than 2 times a year. Focused on the studied company, Thailand Resor AB, respondents have been a customer at lease 1 time (83.46% of total respondent) and the other was 2 times (16.54%).

Table 8 Amount and percentage of respondents who travel with travel agencies a year (Question No. 5: *How often do you travel with travel agency a year?*)

Frequency of Respondence traveled with Travel Agencies a Year	Amount of Respondent	Percentage (%)
2	65	25.59
1	189	74.41
Total	254	100

All respondents of this research have ever been customers of Thailand Resor AB. Almost respondent have ever been customers of Thailand Resor AB for 1 time as 83.46% and the remaining was 2 times (16.54%), respectively.

Table 9 Amount and percentage of response who have ever traveled with Thailand Resor AB (Question No. 6: *How often have you travel with Thailand Resor AB?*)

Frequency of Response traveled with Thailand Resor AB	Amount of Response	Percentage (%) of Respondent
2	42	16.54
1	212	83.46
Total	254	100

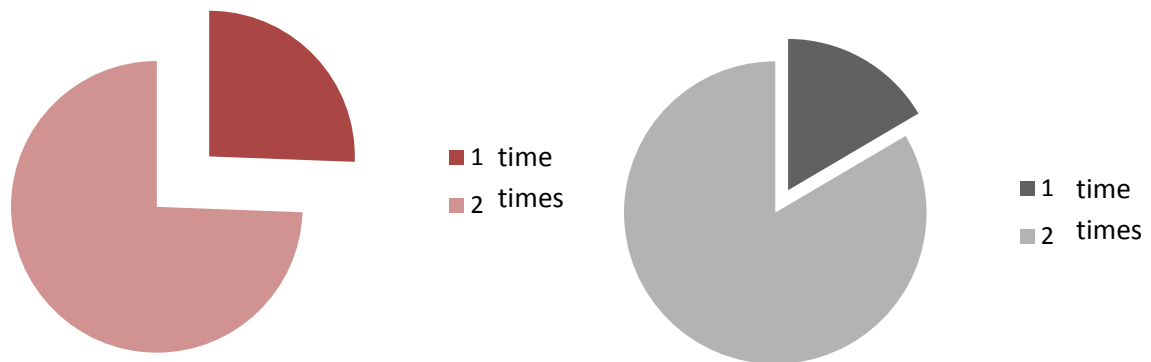


Figure 7 Pie chart represented the frequency of responses related to travelling with any travel agencies (*Left*) and with Thailand Resor AB (*Right*)

4.2 Service Quality

The study on service quality of Thailand Resor AB was followed SERVQUAL instrument which was assessed service quality by calculating SERVQUAL scores. This method was performed for all the 21 service features and for the overall measure of customers' expectation and perception.

4.2.1 Service Quality of Total Respondents

The mean empirical data of total 254 respondents of customers' expectation and perception was shown in Fig. 8 and Table 10, which was presented by each dimension (tangible, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy). Likert scale ranked from 1 to 5 was used

to represent the level of customers' expectation and perception. In expectation question, there had an additional score of 0 (zero score), which represented "no opinion" result from respondents' view.

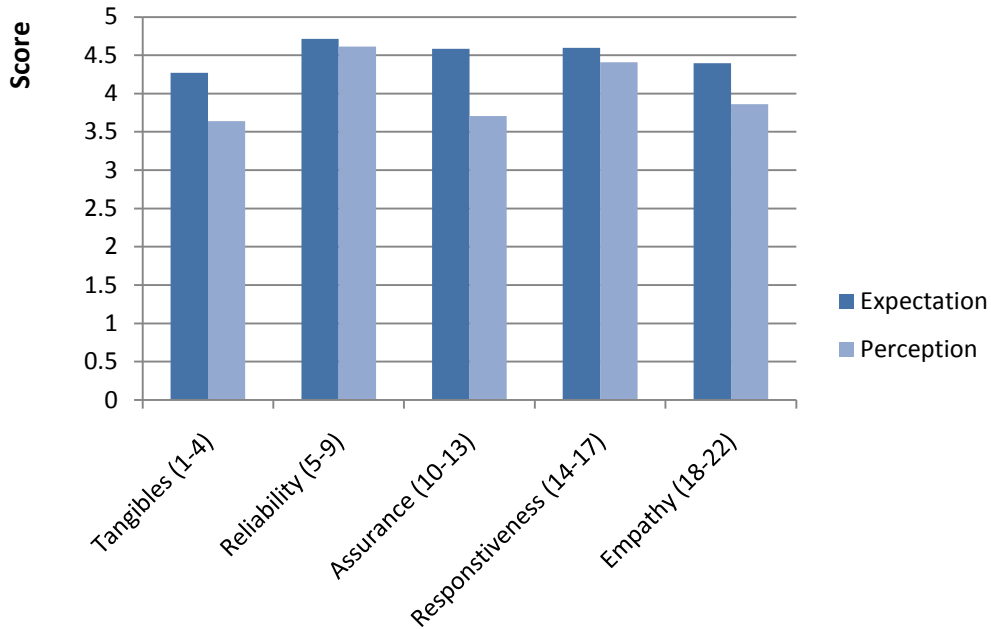


Figure 8 Result of Expectation and Perception of All Respondents

Table 10 Averaged Score of Expectation and Perception of All Respondents

Dimension	Averaged Score	
	Expectation	Perception
Tangibles (1-4)	4.27 (± 0.030)	3.64 (± 0.277)
Reliability (5-9)	4.71 (± 0.095)	4.61 (± 0.154)
Assurance (10-13)	4.59 (± 0.046)	3.71 (± 0.561)
Responsiveness (14-17)	4.59 (± 0.128)	4.41 (± 0.086)
Empathy (18-22)	4.39 (± 0.069)	3.86 (± 0.106)
Total	4.52 (± 0.555)	4.06 (± 0.105)

\pm in parenthesis is a standard deviation (SD.)

4.2.1.1 Overall SERVQUAL

Table 10 shows mean scores for expectation and perception of all respondents with its standard deviation. Overall expectation of respondents at Thailand Resor AB was averaged as 4.52 with ± 0.555 SD. or at the most level, while overall perception was at 4.06 with ± 0.105 SD. or at much level. The difference between expectation and perception was shown score at

– 0.46 or perceived service quality was less than prior customer expectation at 0.46. It can implied that customers perceptions and expectations coincide, negative values imply perceptions fall short of expectations for one level by the rating scale.

In the expectation section as seen in Figure 8, the most important dimension was ‘Reliability’ at 4.71 averaged point (followed by Responsiveness; 4.59, Assurance; 4.59, Empathy; 4.39), while the least important one was ‘Tangibles’ at 4.27 averaged point. This study was confirm a study of Parasuraman et al. (1990) that ‘Reliability was the most important dimension in service quality as well as ‘Tangibility’ did not show much significance in terms of service quality. Moreover this study was in the same direction of Juwaheer and Ross (2003 in Chang, 2008), that ‘Reliability’ was one of the most important dimensions for tourists in their study in hotel industry and a study of Kvist, A. K. J. & Klefsjo, B. (2006) presented ‘Reliability’ was also the most important dimensions in inbound tourism. Similarly in perception section, ‘Reliability’ took the highest score, (but followed by Responsiveness; 4.41, Empathy; 3.86, Assurance; 3.71) and the lowest score was ‘Tangible’ which was in the contrary to the expectation section.

As discussed by Chang (2008), ‘Tangibility’ dimension should be considered as well as a service quality for any tourists and most travel agencies considered this dimension to be important to inspire customer’s trust and confidence at the beginning of service encounter. However this study found that ‘Tangibility’ dimension had less influence with Swedish tourists and was less remarkable when compared with other dimensions. The outcomes might be due to the fact that nowadays tourists do not necessarily have to visit travel agencies in order to join with their service, the direct sales through internet/ telephone booking paid by credit card have turn out to be a popular as same as Thailand Resor AB have provided this service (www.thailandresor.se). Therefore the physical settings of travel agencies may have less influence with tourists than others.

The others dimension is concerned with the intangible nature which makes the travel agencies heavily dependent upon the company’s image and word of mouth. Similarity the result of previous study indicated that earning customers’ respect and confidence are significant for service providers in terms of service quality and repeat business. (Chang, 2008)

4.2.1.2 Each SERVQUAL Dimension

According to measurement of service quality of Thailand Resor AB, twenty two items of SERVQUAL were shown in Fig. 9 as compared between expectations and perceptions. This part was discussed by five distinct dimensions groups as below. The horizontal axis represents each service quality feature in SERVQUAL that is asked in questionnaire (see a detail of each feature/ statement in Appendix A). The vertical axis shows average score rated by all respondents (see score in Table B1 and B3 in Appendix B).

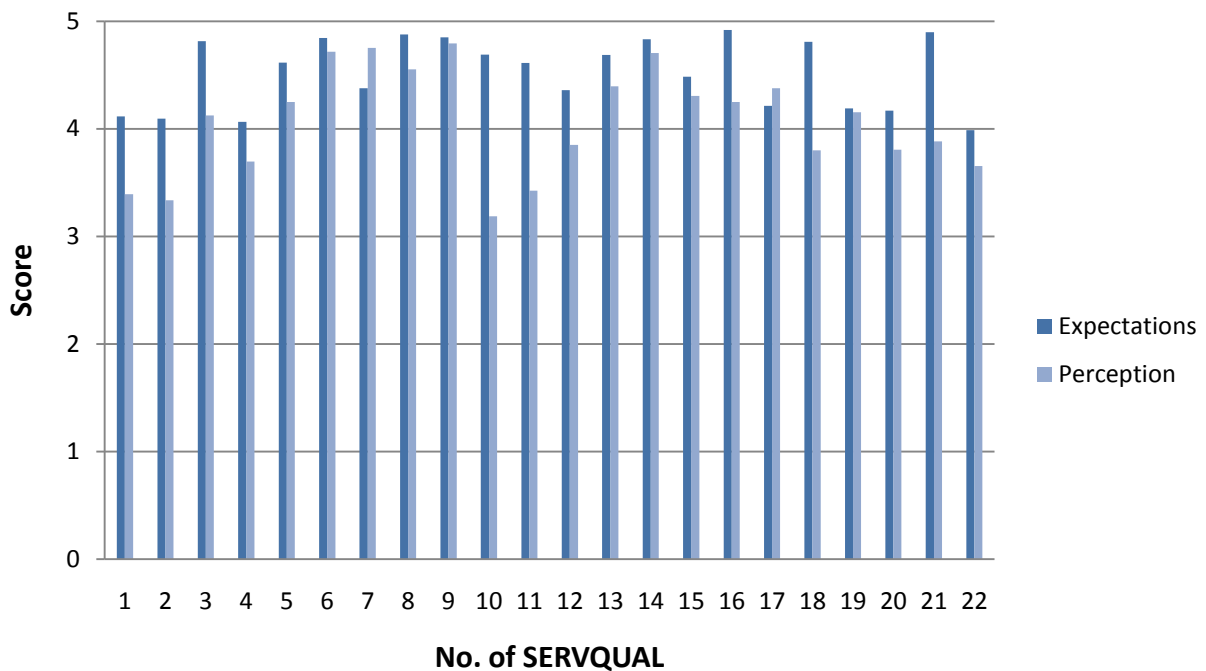


Figure 9 Each Dimension’s Result of Expectation and Perception of All Respondents

a. Tangibles

As stated by Parasuraman et al. (1990), Tangibles dimension refer to the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication material. This dimension included the personal appearance of the staff at company which was expected to be in neat and nice clothing. In this research the respondents who represent as customers at Thailand Resor AB expected overall tangibles dimension (question no. 1-4) at mean 4.27 (± 0.030) or it was replied based on Table 10 that respondents expected to perceive this dimension averaged at the most level by rating scale. While their perception of this dimension was shown at mean 3.64 (± 0.277) or at much level by rating scale. That mean from the opinion of the total respondents, Thailand Resor AB did not fully provide about visually appealing materials and facilities associated with their service in company to their customers as equal to -0.63 score or one level by rating scale. Looked at each statement within Tangibles dimension

(question no. 1-4), it was shown that Thailand Resor AB was not fulfilled their customer's expectation as -0.72, -0.76, -0.69, and -0.37 differed from their expectations, respectively.

Tangible is an importance dimension which can provide good impression to the customers because it concerned about visually appealing materials. Sivabrovornvatana et al. (2005) suggested the direction for obtaining high standard in this context that "hospital administrators are aware of the need for such hygienic conditions, and usually pay significant attention to safety and effectiveness in this context".

b. Reliability

As discussed earlier, this Reliability dimension is taken as the most importance dimension considered by customers of Thailand Resor AB. Judging from the average responses for expectations of all customers, the average score of Reliability dimension was equaled to 4.71 (± 0.095), while perception score was 4.61 (± 0.154). The difference score of expectation and perception based on this dimension was at -0.10, but both expectation and perception score was expressed at the same opinion's level as the most level by rating scale. It could be implied that the Reliability dimension grounded on the respondents' Thailand Resor AB was replenished by this travel agency.

Within this dimension, three statements (no. 6, 8, and 9) of customer's expectation received extremely high average responses (as equal to 4.84, 4.88, and 4.85, respectively), it indicated that most customers or respondents felt them to be of greatest importance in their needs and wants on solving problem service (a sincere interest of Thailand Resor AB's staffs in solving any problems), service at the time Thailand Resor AB promise to do so, and insisting on keeping records accurately. The outcome of customers' perceptions were shown at 4.71, 4.55, and 4.79, respectively, which those perception's score were lower than expectation as 0.13, 0.33, and 0.06, respectively. However each statement was being at the same level by rating scale as same as the average score of the total of Reliability dimension. Surprisingly, the statement no. 7 was remarkable that the perception score was higher than the expectation score. This mean that the respondents perceived this statement more than they expected or Thailand Resor AB performs the service right the first time at higher level than their customers expected. This might be due to respondents do not have a high expectation for the right service at the first time based on their previous experiences. In the other hand, Thailand Resor AB can provides the right service at the first time when they meet their customers because all staffs of Thailand Resor AB have trained to have service mind and to have a good interpersonal skills with customers by the owner as well as the owner and their staffs speak and listen to their customers suggestions as if they were their cousins. Moreover this outcome might be due to the Thai's style as being an optimistic and compromise that the owner try to put on their staffs. Finally the statement no. 5 was given a least importance compared with other statements in the Reliability dimension that was shown score as 4.61 of expectation and 4.25 of perception. Again, the different score was shown at - 0.36 which mean the company was not fully filled customer's expectation at 0.36.

c. Assurance

As seen in Fig 9, statement no. 10 to 13 pertained to Assurance dimension shown the service quality's result of Thailand Resor AB. It was remarkable that the average score of Assurance dimension was equaled to 4.59 (± 0.046) of customer's expectation and 3.71 (± 0.561) of perception. That meant difference score between expectation and perception was at 0.88. The opinion's level by rating scale based on this dimension was at the most level of expectation and at much level of perception, which the different result was at one level. That could mean based on definition stated by Parasuraman et al. (1990), staffs of Thailand Resor had not much knowledge and courtesy an ability to inspire trust and confidence covered all travelling information provided to their customers. As mentioned by Glynn & Barnes (1996, in Ferzan et al. 2008), courtesy reflects the politeness and friendliness that staffs in company show to their customers. Therefore the result of disappointing at Assurance dimension might be came from staffs of Thailand Resor AB didn't express pleasant attitude or smile when talking with their customers or the staffs didn't serve customers in good manner. Moreover human error might be occurred and then caused customers anxiety and distress when mistakes were made.

Look at each statement (No. 10-13) in Assurance dimension, customers of Thailand Resor AB expected to get the knowledge and contesy of employees/ staffs and their ability to convey trust and confidence at 4.69, 4.61, 4.36, and 4.68, respectively. While the feedback of customer's perception was at 3.19, 3.42, 3.85, and 4.39, respectively. Therefore, the minus differential score as -1.50, -1.19, -0.51, and -0.29 were expressed, respectively. It can be defined based on customers' expectation and their perception, that the behavior of staffs in Thailand Resor AB didn't completely instill confidence in their customers at 1.50 score. Score of 1.19 represented the score Thailand Resor AB needed to fulfill the customers' feeling about transaction safe. Thailand Resor AB should take more attention at 0.51 score about consistenly courteous of their staffs. Finally the knowledge to answer customers' questions of the staffs should be enhanced at 0.29 score.

d. Responstiveness

Statement no. 14-17 represented the Responstiveness dimension which was expressed the result of Thailand Resor AB customers' feeling in Fig 9. According to Zeithaml (1996), Responsiveness is defined as the willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service. This dimension underlines the attentiveness and promptness in dealing with customers' requests, inquiries, complaints and problems. From the opinion of Thailand Resor AB's, the average score of this dimension was shown as 4.59 (± 0.128) of customer's expectation and 4.41 (± 0.086) of perception which resulted in 0.18 of the discrepancy between expectation and perception. It can be identified by rating scale which shown at the same level, the most level, of both expectation and perception. Therefore it could be stated from an overall perspective that there had no difference between expectation and perception of Thailand Resor AB's customers or Thailand Resor AB fully provided any services based on Responsivenss dimension.

Focused on each statement in this dimension, customers of Thailand Resor AB evaluated statement no. 14-17 at 4.83, 4.48, 4.92, and 4.21 of their expectations, respectively. While they evaluated their perceptions at 4.70, 4.30, 4.25, and 4.38, respectively. The difference score of expectations and perceptions were shown at -0.13, -0.18, -0.67, and 0.16, respectively. The minus score of statement no. 14-16 answered questions that the company unfulfill their customers' expectation at 0.13 difference score of keeping customers informed about when service will be performed, at 0.18 difference score of prompt service staffs gave to customers, and at 0.67 difference score of willing to help customers by staffs. The last statement of this dimension was expressed a good service provided by staffs of Thailand Resor AB to customers at 0.16 score that was higher than customer's expectation, or the staffs always pay attention and respond to customers' requests.

e. Empathy

Empathy dimension was presented in the last five statement (no. 18-22). According to Parasuraman et al. (1990), Empathy is caring and giving individualized attention to customers. The mean score of this group were 4.39 (± 0.069) of expectations and 3.86 (± 0.106) of their perceptions. Therefore 0.53 differential score was expressed which Thailand Resor AB have to fulfill the need of customers. By rating scale, the customers expected Empathy dimension at the most level, while they perceived this dimension at a much level. One level difference was shown in this dimension and again that meant Thailand Resor AB had to fulfill this gap in order to catch requirements of their customers.

The results of Customers' opinion on statement no. 18-20 were shown their expectations at 4.81, 4.19, 4.17, 4.90, and 4.00 score, respectively. While their perception were expressed at 3.80, 4.15, 3.80, 3.88, and 3.65 score, respectively. Judging from the gap score between perception and expectation, it was found at -1.01, -0.03, -0.36, -1.02, and -0.34 score, respectively. It was noted that all differential score shown the negative value and it implied that perception fall short of expectation. Thailand Resor AB had to fill their customers' requirement about giving an individual attention provided by the company at 1.01 score and provided by their staffs at 0.03. 0.36 of gap score should be fulfilled about paying attention on customers' interest at heart. The statement "to understand customers' specific needs" should be also fulfilled at 1.02 score. Finally, the operating hour was not convenient to some customers based on 0.34 score of gap found.

4.2.2 Ranking of Expectation and Perception

According to the prioritizing of 5 features of expectation and perception pertaining to Thailand Resor AB which linked to part 2 of questionnaire, the result of percentage of respondents ranked number in each feature was shown in Fig. 10 and Fig. 11. Each feature was ranked from 1 (rank no.1 = the highest priority) to 5 (rank no.5 = the lowest priority).

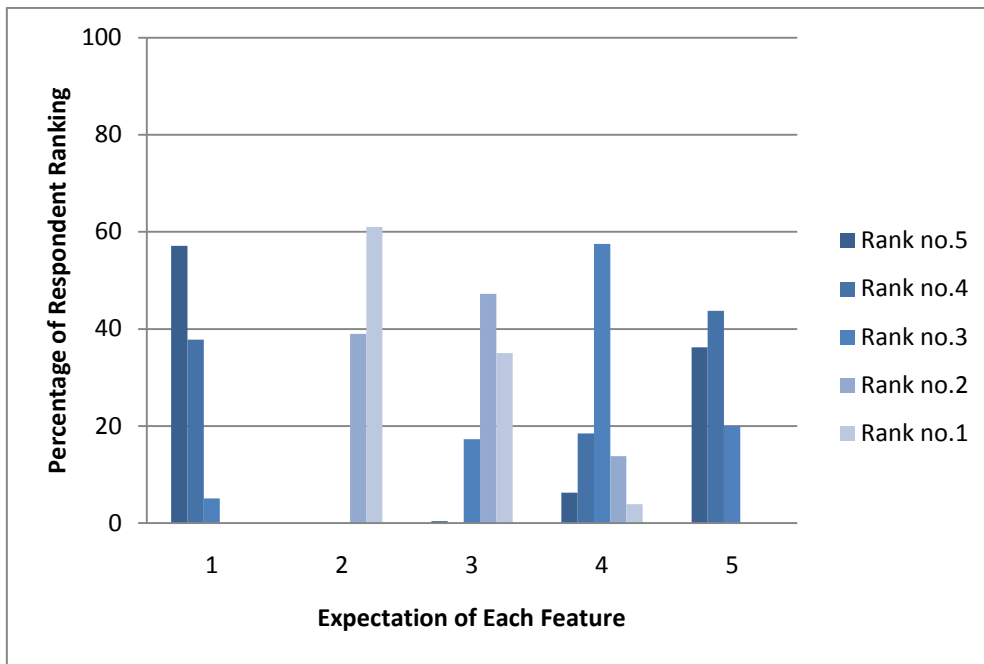


Figure 10 Prioritizing of each feature of customers’ expectation

Table 11 Result of prioritizing the feature pertaining customers’ expectation and perception

Prioritizing	Feature No.	
	Customers’ Expectation	Customers’ Perception
rank 1 (1 st priority)	2	2
rank 2	3	4
rank 3	4	5
rank 4	5	3
rank 5	1	1

According to the number of respondent in expectation, each feature of expectation was ranked from the highest priority (rank no. 1) to the lowest priority (rank no. 5) as feature no. 2, no. 3, no. 4, no. 5, and no. 1, respectively. Almost customers of Thailand Resor AB (61.02%) ranked the feature no. 2 at the first priority (rank no.1) they expected to get from the company or they concerned about Thailand Resor AB’s ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. The second priority (rank no.2) was feature no. 3 that 47.24% of customers expected the Thailand Resor AB’s willingness to help customers and provide a prompt service. Feature no. 4 was ranked at the third priority (rank no.3) that 57.48% of customers agreed. This feature the customers concerned their expectation about the knowledge and courtesy of the Thailand Resor AB personnel and ability to convey trust and confidence. Finally, feature no. 1 and no. 5 were ranked in the fourth and the fifth

priority respectively, at 43.70% and 57.09% of customers. That meant customers expected that the appearance of the Thailand Resor AB’s physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials, and expect that the caring, individualized attention Thailand Resor AB provides to customers, respectively.

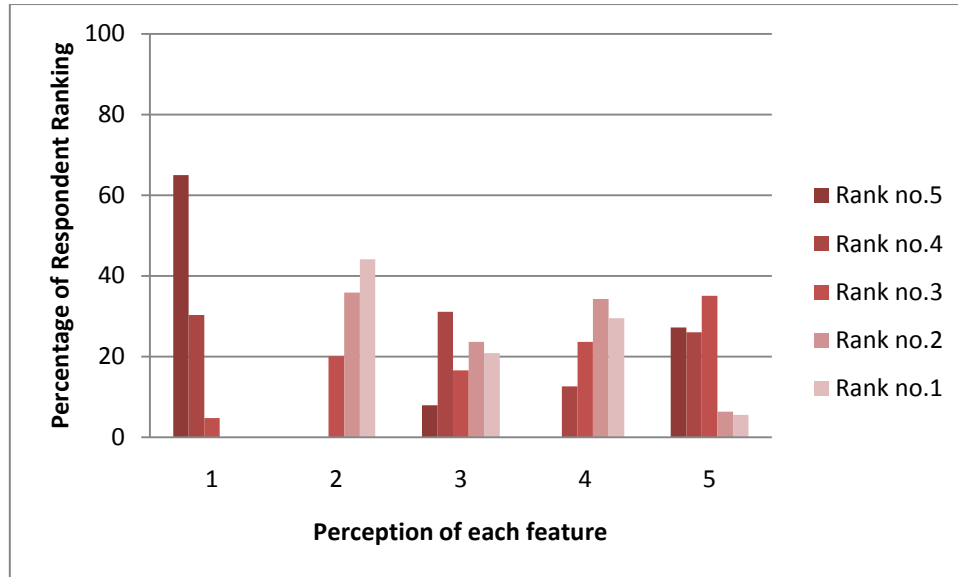


Figure 11 Prioritizing of each feature of customers' perception

The result of customers' perception of each feature pertaining 5 dimensions was shown in Fig. 11. For the whole picture, the prioritizing result of each feature of customers' perception when compared with the prioritizing result of customers' expectation, was dispersed all rank (rank no. 1 to rank no. 5). Similarity to expectation feature, mostly respondents (44.09%) chose feature no. 2 as the first priority they perceived from Thailand Resor AB. Which meant mostly customers perceived Thailand Resor AB's ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately at the first priority and that was as same as mostly customers expected to get this feature at the first priority. But amount of customers agreed with this feature pertaining their perception on reliability (44.09%) dropped from amount of customers' expectation (61.02%). It was found that the second, third and fourth rank of feature pertaining customer perception were not in the same way of feature pertaining customer expectation. The second priority was feature no. 4 as 34.25% of customers agreed that they perceived the knowledge and courtesy of the Thailand Resor AB personnel and ability to convey trust and confidence. The third priority was feature no. 5 as 35.04% of customers ranked this feature according to they perceived the caring, individualized attention Thailand Resor AB provides its customers. In the contrary of prioritizing of feature pertaining customer expectation, feature no. 4 was ranked at the second priority while feature no. 5 was ranked at the third priority. However when looked at amount of respondents ranked the second and third priority of feature pertaining perception, it seem not much difference as shown 34.25% and 35.04%, respectively. For the fourth priority, feature no. 3 was taken place as 31.10% of customers accepted Thailand Resor AB's willingness to help customers and provide a prompt service. Finally feature no. 1 was ranked at the last priority as 64.96% of

customers perceived the appearance of the Thailand Resor AB’s physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials.

4.3 Customer’s Expectations

To understand customer’s expectation of Thailand Resor AB, the dynamic expectation concept developed by Ojasalo (1999 in Grönroos, 2007) was used to set appropriate management for designing and delivering service to meet their customers. Table 12 shown amount and percentage (%) of respondents responded questions concerning the dynamic expectation concept. It was noted that the most respondent (56.30%) thought the services provided by Thailand Resor AB meet their over all expectations or almost customers seem to be satisfied with the services. The rest of customers (53.70%) was on the contrary as they thought the services provided by Thailand Resor AB does not meet their over all expectations. Within this group of respondent, there was 13.78% of respondent can specified what services they need to be fulfilled by Thailand Resor AB, while 29.92% of respondent did not write any their opinion on this question or maybe they cannot explain.

Table 12 The result of customer feedback question No. 1.3 and 1.4

Question No. and Detail		Respond/Answer	Amount of Respondent	% of Respondent
1.3	Do you think the services provided by Thailand Resor AB meet your overall expectations?	Yes	143	56.30%
		No, <i>with</i> specify “what” & “how”	35	13.78%
		No, <i>without</i> specify “what” & “how”	76	29.92%
1.4	What are the other expectations you expect to receive from Thailand Resor AB?	Respond	6	2.36%
		No respond	212	98.64%

13.78% of the customers, who thought that the service of Thailand Resor AB does not meet their overall expectations, could specify what they want to get from the company in order to meet their expectation. Hence, “*the explicit expectation*” was arised within this group of respondent. The following lists were raised in the major group of feedback;

- “I want to be treated with respect.” One respondent suggested that staffs should treat the customers as the same way of what they want to be treated. Another respondent pointed that she would like the staff taken care of her requirements when talking.

- "I want to be listened to and to be dedicated attention, whatever my inquiries or in case of my complaints." One respondent claimed that sometimes she was bounced around and ignored their opinion.

- "I want more friendly staffs." One respondent explained that she used to talk with staff who looks cheerless and then make her be unhappy and depressed. Another respondent explained that she would like staffs willing to help her design a special trip.

- "I want staffs told me the accuracy information." Some of respondent explained that she saw the ticket price quoted in the company's website that was attracting her (and also that price was cheaper than other company.), but when she went to the company's office and talked with staffs. She found that the price that was expressed in website was not include the other charges, i.e. tax, service charge from the company. And when including all charges, the net price was not difference from other company. Some of respondent mentioned that sometimes staff did not explain them so much about an agreement of the travel package they bought. They experienced by themselves.

Above respondings are some directions of what the customers think their expectation is not fulfilled and some customers suggest how the company should be made for them. Nevertheless, the remaining of 29.92% of respondent was unclear because they could only judge the services did not meet their expectations, but they could not specify what or how the company should do further. We could say that this group of customer have "*the fuzzy expectation*" and it is importance to be clarified in terms of what they expect from the company because of effecting to their satisfaction. As well, Ojasalo (1999 in Johnston & Clark, 2005) suggested that the provider have to help the customers with fuzzy expectations to establish their expectations explicit, or to form an intentional dynamic as shown in Fig. 2. Therefore the company need to understand and specify about the expectations they are trying to meet and Ojasalo (1999 in Johnston & Clark, 2005) also suggested that the company must provide a guidance to customer-facing staffs to encourage them to ask questions in order to clarify the real needs of the customers. This fuzzy expectation could run a high risk of being disappointed as same as Ojasalo (1999 in Johnston & Clark, 2005) said that staffs of company should aware of nature of customers that was "customers are often afraid of looking silly in front of other people (both customer and staff), and may ask for something quite inappropriate, leading to eventual dissatisfaction and defection".

In this study, we could not define "*the implicit expectation*" because this kind of expectation may be not expressed or mentioned by the respondents (Grönroos, 2007). However this kind of expectation also need to be completed as well as Ojasalo (1999 in Johnston & Clark, 2005, p. 114) described that "the expectations may be implicit and are not actively or consciously thought about by customers, but they may become explicit when expectations are either not met or exceeded." Moreau (n.d.) gave a perfect example of the implicit expectations that is "the fact that people expect the personnel and staff in a veterinary clinic to have a professional, medical look (white or medical types of clothe). If it is the case, people may be surprised or even upset but they will not mention it - it is implicit for them."

CHAPTER 5 Conclusion and Recommendation

This chapter present the conclusion and recommendation of this study. Firstly, the main results of this study are focused in the conclusion part. Secondly, the areas that the company should be took action for improving in their service are given.

5.1 Conclusion

This study explores service quality given by Thailand Resor AB. The 254 customers of the company were randomly selected to measure their expectations and perception by the questionnaire. The questionnaire was followed SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman et al. (1998), which asked 22 service features grounded on 5 dimensions; tangibles, reliability, assurance, responstiveness, and empathy.

The respondents in this study were 58.66% male and 41.34% female. A main respondent (51.97%) was age between 31-40 years old and their average salary was equaled to 20,559.06 sek. 74.41% of respondents traveled with travel agency 1 time a year.

By the overall result of questionnaires, it was found that Thailand Resor AB did not fully meet their customers' expectation as -0.46 of the gap between actual service perception and expectation, and one level difference by the rating scale was presented in this study. Likewise in each dimension, the result of perception was fallen down from their expectations as -0.63 of tangibles, -0.10 of reliability, -0.88 of assurance, -0.18 of responstiveness, and -0.53 of empathy. Therefore, the company have to fulfill all gaps and have to pay more attention at assurance dimension concerning conveying trust and confidence because of the highest gap we found in this study. The dimension of tangibles (equipment, physical facilities, etc.), empathy (ability to see through the customer's eyes), responstiveness (willingness to help and provide prompt service), and reliability (doing what company have promised) were adjusted consequencely.

This study revealed the same tendency of expectations and perception that "reliability" was the most important dimension as shown the top score as 4.71 of customers' expectation and 4.61 of their perception. "Responstiveness", "assurance", "empathy" and "tangibles" were come after respectively. Our findings therefore support the significace of SERVQUAL dimensions given by Parasuraman et al. (1990) that reliability, responstiveness, assurance, empathy and tangibles were weighted at 30%, 25%, 20%, 16%, and 10%, respectively.

Focused of customers' expectation, 13.78% of the customers have "*the explicit expectation*" because they could specify what they want to get from the company in order to meet their expectation. They highlighted the following key quality factors; be treated with respect, be listened to and be dedicated attention, more friendly staffs, get the accoracy information. While, 29.92% of respondent have "*the fuzzy expectation*" because they could only judge the services did not meet their expectations, but they could not specify what or how the company

should do further. Finally, it is importance to help this group of customers with fuzzy expectations to make their expectations explicit because of effecting to their satisfaction by providing a guildance to their staffs for finding a real expectation.

5.2 Suggestion and Recommendation

According to our findings, some issues are raised in order to close the gap between the customers' expectation and their actual perception as well as to improve their service quality of the company. Some issues should be studied in the future.

5.2.1 Because service quality is often highly dependent on the customer's contacts and relations with the employees. Therefore it is often more related to a specific person. Training the staffs concerning service quality and knowledge in travel information should be regularly existed, so that the staffs will feel professional and confident taking care of the customers as well as they can provide accerate information to the customers. Likewise to educate the staffs perceived up-to-date information related their area of business.

5.2.2 According to service quality may differs among different countries and different background of the customers (Chang , 2008). As well as in Sweden, population is rather mixxed and comes from different countries. Therefore understanding the customers' behavior at specific nationality will be helped the company more easier to manage their service provided and also to enhance the service quality by incorporating their activities for achieving the customer satisfaction. For an example of the study of cultural differences between Asian and Western tourists' perceptions of relational quality service provided by guest-contact employees (Tsang & Ap, 2007). They found that "quality of interpersonal relationships was a key factor in determining the Asian customers' service-encounter evaluation, while Western customers placed emphasis on goal completion, efficiency, and time savings."

5.2.3 Service quality may differ from time to time and therefore the company should regularly verify and improve. Likewise, Johnston & Clark (2005, p. 110) stated that "service that was good last time may be only OK this time". A good service in their customer mind in the past may be raised next time depended on subsequent occasions.

5.2.4 Referred to managing of customers' expectation grounded on Ojasalo. The fuzzy expectations have to make its explicit. The company need to understand and specify about the expectations they are trying to meet, which Ojasalo (1999 in Johnston & Clark, 2005) suggested that the company must provide a guildance to customer-facing staffs to encourage them to ask questions in order to clarify the real needs of the customers.

5.2.5 In oreder to catch the real feelings of the customers, the in-depth interviews and observations with the customers might supplement of information on aspects of service quality improvement. Again, because service quality is often highly dependent on the customer's contacts and relations with the employees. It is often more related to a specific

person. Therefore questionnaire is difficult to get the real feelings of how a traveller reacts to a specific issue. Chang (2008) said that “there should be more of uncover factors which the traveller considers are important for their satisfaction judgment, for example, preferring the front seats on the bus – Taiwanese people tend not to complain in social interactions in order to avoid hurting another person’s face.”

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of Master thesis project of International Business and Entrepreneurship program in Mälardalen University in Sweden. Please fulfill your view in the below 3 parts. Because of focusing on SERVQUAL model of service quality, your expectation and experience with service offered by Thailand Resor AB are major issue presented in part I and II. Lastly your demographic data have to be fulfill in part III.

Part I: Customers' Expectation

1.1 The following tables contain the statements relate to your feelings about the service quality you expect from Thailand Resor AB. Please tick \checkmark in each statement that is closest to your view of service quality's expectation.

	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Dis agree	Moderate	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Opinion
1	I expect that Thailand Resor AB has modern-looking equipment.						
2	I expect that Thailand Resor AB's facilities are visually appealing.						
3	I expect that Thailand Resor AB's employees appear neat.						
4	I expect that Materials associated with the service (such as pamphlets or statements) are visually appealing at Thailand Resor AB.						
5	I expect that when Thailand Resor AB promises to do something by a certain time, it does so.						
6	I expect that when you have a problem, Thailand Resor AB shows a sincere interest in solving it.						
7	I expect that Thailand Resor AB performs the service right the first time.						
8	I expect that Thailand Resor AB provides its services at the time it promises to do so.						
9	I expect that Thailand Resor AB insists on error-free records.						
10	I expect that the behavior of employees in Thailand Resor AB instills confidence in me.						
11	I expect that I feel safe in your transactions with Thailand Resor AB						
12	I expect that employees in Thailand Resor AB are consistently courteous with me.						
13	I expect that employees in Thailand Resor AB have the knowledge to answer my questions.						
14	I expect that Thailand Resor AB keeps me informed about when services will be performed.						
15	I expect that employees in Thailand Resor AB give me prompt service.						
16	I expect that employees in Thailand Resor AB are always willing to help me.						
17	I expect that employees in Thailand Resor AB are never too busy to respond to my request.						
18	I expect that Thailand Resor AB give me individual attention.						
19	I expect that Thailand Resor AB has employees who give me personal attention.						
20	I expect that Thailand Resor AB has my best interests at heart.						
21	I expect that employees of Thailand Resor AB understand my specific needs.						
22	I expect that Thailand Resor AB has operating hours that are convenient to me.						

1.2 Could you prioritize the below five features pertaining to Thailand Resor AB that is closest to your view of expectation of the service quality.

Rank	Five features pertaining to Thailand Resor AB
	1. I expect that the appearance of the Thailand Resor AB's physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials.
	2. I expect that the Thailand Resor AB's ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
	3. I expect that the Thailand Resor AB's willingness to help customers and provide a prompt service.
	4. I expect that the knowledge and courtesy of the Thailand Resor AB personnel and their ability to convey trust and confidence.
	5. I expect that the caring, individualized attention Thailand Resor AB provides its customers.

1.3 Do you think the services provided by Thailand Resor AB meet your overall expectation?

Yes No

If answer is "no", please specify "what" and "how" should be done? From your opinions.

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1.4 What are the other expectations you expect to receive from Thailand Resor AB?

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Part II: Perceived Service Quality

2.1 The following tables contain the statements relate to your feelings about the service quality offered by Thailand Resor AB. Please tick \checkmark in each statement that is closest to your view of service quality's perception.

	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Dis-agree	Moderate	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Thailand Resor AB has modern-looking equipment.					
2	Thailand Resor AB's facilities are visually appealing.					
3	Thailand Resor AB's employees appear neat.					
4	Materials associated with the service (such as pamphlets or statements) are visually appealing at Thailand Resor AB.					
5	When Thailand Resor AB promises to do something by a certain time, it does so.					
6	When I have a problem, Thailand Resor AB shows a sincere interest in solving it.					
7	Thailand Resor AB performs the service right the first time.					
8	Thailand Resor AB provides its services at the time it promises to do so.					
9	Thailand Resor AB insists on error-free records.					
10	The behavior of employees in Thailand Resor AB instills confidence in me.					
11	I feel safe in my transactions with Thailand Resor AB.					
12	Employees in Thailand Resor AB are consistently courteous with me.					
13	Employees in Thailand Resor AB have the knowledge to answer my questions.					
14	Thailand Resor AB keeps me informed about when services will be performed.					
15	Employees in Thailand Resor AB give me prompt service.					
16	Employees in Thailand Resor AB are always willing to help me.					
17	Employees in Thailand Resor AB are never too busy to respond to my request.					
18	Thailand Resor AB give me individual attention.					
19	Thailand Resor AB has employees who give me personal attention.					
20	Thailand Resor AB has my best interests at heart.					
21	Employees of Thailand Resor AB understand my specific needs.					
22	Thailand Resor AB has operating hours that are convenient to me.					

2.2 Could you prioritize the below five features pertaining to Thailand Resor AB that is closest to your view of perception of the service they offer.

Rank	Five features pertaining to Thailand Resor AB
	1. The appearance of the Thailand Resor AB’s physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials.
	2. The Thailand Resor AB’s ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.
	3. The Thailand Resor AB’s willingness to help me and provide a prompt service.
	4. The knowledge and courtesy of the Thailand Resor AB personnel and their ability to convey trust and confidence.
	5. The caring, individualized attention Thailand Resor AB provides me.

2.3 Please give your opinions of the overall the service quality you receive and suggestions in terms of “how Thailand Resor AB can provide you with a better service”.

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2.4 Do you satisfy with overall service quality of Thailand Resor AB?

Yes No

Part III: General Information

Please tick in the box and fill the information

1. Gender Male Female

2. Age Lower than 20 years old 20 - 30 years old
 31 – 40 years old 41 - 50 years old
 More than 50 years old

3. Income per month.....SEK

4. Have you ever travel with travel agencies? (Before you travel with Thailand Resor AB)
 Yes,times No

5. How often do you travel with travel agency a year?.....per year

6. How often have you travel with Thailand Resor AB?.....times

Appendix B: Raw Data from Questionnaires

The average expectations (on the scale from 0 to 5) of the proposed 22 statements of service quality as rated by 254 respondents were shown in Table A1.

Table B1 Descriptive Statistics of Customers' Expectations of All Respondents

	Statement	Min	Max	Mean	Std.
1	I expect that Thailand Resor AB has modern-looking equipment.	0	4	4.114173	0.501732
2	I expect that Thailand Resor AB's facilities are visually appealing.	2	4	4.094488	0.45219
3	I expect that Thailand Resor AB's employees appear neat.	2	5	4.814961	0.463289
4	I expect that Materials associated with the service (such as pamphlets or statements) are visually appealing at Thailand Resor AB.	3	5	4.062992	0.514578
5	I expect that when Thailand Resor AB promises to do something by a certain time, it does so.	4	5	4.614173	0.503698
6	I expect that when you have a problem, Thailand Resor AB shows a sincere interest in solving it.	4	5	4.84252	0.405987
7	I expect that Thailand Resor AB performs the service right the first time.	0	5	4.377953	0.575235
8	I expect that Thailand Resor AB provides its services at the time it promises to do so.	3	5	4.877953	0.327987
9	I expect that Thailand Resor AB insists on error-free records.	0	5	4.850394	0.488261
10	I expect that the behavior of employees in Thailand Resor AB instills confidence in me.	0	5	4.688976	0.527614
11	I expect that I feel safe in your transactions with Thailand Resor AB	3	5	4.610236	0.488659
12	I expect that employees in Thailand Resor AB are consistently courteous with me.	3	5	4.358268	0.570686
13	I expect that employees in Thailand Resor AB have the knowledge to answer my questions.	4	5	4.685039	0.465417
14	I expect that Thailand Resor AB keeps me informed about when services will be performed.	4	5	4.830709	0.415702
15	I expect that employees in Thailand Resor AB give me prompt service.	3	5	4.484252	0.587878
16	I expect that employees in Thailand Resor AB are always willing to help me.	3	5	4.917323	0.275937
17	I expect that employees in Thailand Resor AB are never too busy to respond to my request.	3	5	4.212598	0.409954

Statement (cont'd)		Min	Max	Mean	Std.
18	I expect that Thailand Resor AB give me individual attention.	3	5	4.807087	0.414878
19	I expect that Thailand Resor AB has employees who give me personal attention.	3	5	4.188976	0.482619
20	I expect that Thailand Resor AB has my best interests at heart.	3	5	4.169291	0.375749
21	I expect that employees of Thailand Resor AB understand my specific needs.	3	5	4.897638	0.303723
22	I expect that Thailand Resor AB has operating hours that are convenient to me.	3	5	3.988189	0.338356

Table B2 Amount of respondents and percentage from prioritizing 1-5

Prioritizing from Customers' Expectation	5	4	3	2	1
1. I expect that the appearance of the Thailand Resor AB's physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials.	89, 34.04%	108, 42.52%	57, 22.44%	0, 0%	0, 0%
2. I expect that the Thailand Resor AB's ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.	0, 0%	0, 0%	0, 0%	7, 2.76%	247, 97.24%
3. I expect that the Thailand Resor AB's willingness to help customers and provide a prompt service.	0, 0%	0, 0%	44, 17.32%	165, 64.96%	45, 17.72%
4. I expect that the knowledge and courtesy of the Thailand Resor AB personnel and their ability to convey trust and confidence.	0, 0%	36, 14.17%	92, 36.22%	59, 23.23%	67, 26.38%
5. I expect that the caring, individualized attention Thailand Resor AB provides its customers.	30, 11.81%	120, 47.24%	51, 20.08%	31, 12.21%	22, 8.66%

Table B3 Descriptive Statistics of Perceived Service Quality of All Respondents

	Statement	Min	Max	Mean	Std.
1	Thailand Resor AB has modern-looking equipment.	0	4	3.39	1.09
2	Thailand Resor AB's facilities are visually appealing.	3	5	3.34	0.56
3	Thailand Resor AB's employees appear neat.	3	5	4.12	0.82
4	Materials associated with the service (such as pamphlets or statements) are visually appealing at Thailand Resor AB.	3	5	3.70	0.48
5	When Thailand Resor AB promises to do something by a certain time, it does so.	3	5	4.25	0.44
6	When I have a problem, Thailand Resor AB shows a sincere interest in solving it.	3	5	4.72	0.45
7	Thailand Resor AB performs the service right the first time.	3	5	4.75	0.48
8	Thailand Resor AB provides its services at the time it promises to do so.	4	5	4.55	0.78
9	Thailand Resor AB insists on error-free records.	3	5	4.79	0.40
10	The behavior of employees in Thailand Resor AB instills confidence in me.	3	5	3.19	1.61
11	I feel safe in my transactions with Thailand Resor AB.	4	5	3.42	1.38
12	Employees in Thailand Resor AB are consistently courteous with me.	5	3	3.85	0.50
13	Employees in Thailand Resor AB have the knowledge to answer my questions.	4	5	4.40	0.58
14	Thailand Resor AB keeps me informed about when services will be performed.	3	5	4.70	0.46
15	Employees in Thailand Resor AB give me prompt service.	3	5	4.30	0.61
16	Employees in Thailand Resor AB are always willing to help me.	4	5	4.25	0.57
17	Employees in Thailand Resor AB are never too busy to respond to my request.	4	5	4.38	0.66
18	Thailand Resor AB give me individual attention.	3	5	3.80	0.67
19	Thailand Resor AB has employees who give me personal attention.	3	5	4.15	0.56

Statement (cont'd)		Min	Max	Mean	Std.
20	Thailand Resor AB has my best interests at heart.	4	5	3.81	0.64
21	Employees of Thailand Resor AB understand my specific needs.	4	5	3.88	0.82
22	Thailand Resor AB has operating hours that are convenient to me.	3	5	3.65	0.77

Table B4 Expectation, Perception and Differential score of this study

Statement No.	Perceived	Expectations	Gap
1	3.3913	4.1142	-0.7229
2	3.336	4.0945	-0.7585
3	4.1225	4.815	-0.6924
4	3.6957	4.063	-0.3673
5	4.249	4.6142	-0.3652
6	4.7154	4.8425	-0.1271
7	4.751	4.378	0.37304
8	4.5534	4.878	-0.3246
9	4.7945	4.8504	-0.0559
10	3.1858	4.689	-1.5032
11	3.4229	4.6102	-1.1873
12	3.8498	4.3583	-0.5085
13	4.3953	4.685	-0.2898
14	4.7036	4.8307	-0.1272
15	4.3043	4.4843	-0.1799
16	4.249	4.9173	-0.6683
17	4.3755	4.2126	0.1629
18	3.7984	4.8071	-1.0087
19	4.1542	4.189	-0.0348
20	3.8063	4.1693	-0.363
21	3.8814	4.8976	-1.0162
22	3.6522	3.9882	-0.336

Appendix C: Service Quality

Figure C1 Service Quality Gap

