

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF AN INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT MODEL FOR DAY SPAS IN THAILAND

องค์ประกอบที่จำเป็นของรูปแบบการบริหารแบบบูรณาการ
สำหรับเดย์สปาในประเทศไทย

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Abstract

This study was conducted with the aim of identifying elements which are essential for the management of day spas in Thailand and in line with sustainable tourism, in order to create an integrated management model. A sample population of 400 customers of Thai day spas was surveyed regarding product management, quality management, human resource management, supply chain management, and sales and marketing. Data resulting from the survey was processed for descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviations. It was found that the respondents agreed that all studied elements were important, however, marketing (\bar{X} 4.07), quality management (\bar{X} 3.93), and supply chain management (\bar{X} 3.90) were considered most crucial. In the area of quality management, security for both customers and staff was found to be of particular concern, while customers considered environmental conservation to be the most important element of supply chain management.

Keywords: Integrated management elements, Sustainable spa management

บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อระบุองค์ประกอบที่จำเป็นของการบริหารธุรกิจเดย์สปาในประเทศไทยตามแนวทางของการท่องเที่ยวแบบยั่งยืน ทั้งนี้เพื่อใช้ในการสร้างรูปแบบการบริหารแบบบูรณาการ โดยกลุ่มตัวอย่างของการศึกษานี้ ได้แก่ ผู้ใช้บริการเดย์สปาที่ดำเนินงานโดยชาวไทย จำนวน 400 ราย โดยสำรวจความคิดเห็นที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการบริหารผลิตภัณฑ์ การบริหารคุณภาพ การบริหารทรัพยากรบุคคล การบริหารห่วงโซ่อุปทาน รวมทั้งการขายและการตลาด สถิติที่ใช้ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล คือ ค่าความถี่ ค่าร้อยละ ค่าเฉลี่ย และส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน จากการศึกษพบว่า ผู้ตอบแบบสอบถามเห็นว่าองค์ประกอบในการศึกษานี้มีความสำคัญทุกประการ อย่างไรก็ตาม การตลาด (ค่าเฉลี่ย 4.07), การบริหารคุณภาพ (ค่าเฉลี่ย 3.93) และการบริหารห่วงโซ่อุปทาน (ค่าเฉลี่ย 3.90) มีความสำคัญมากกว่าองค์ประกอบอื่นๆ ในแง่มุมของการบริหารคุณภาพ ความปลอดภัยของทั้งลูกค้าและพนักงานเป็นประเด็น

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สำคัญที่ต้องพิจารณาเป็นพิเศษ ในขณะที่ลูกค้าเห็นว่าการอนุรักษ์สิ่งแวดล้อมเป็นองค์ประกอบสำคัญของการบริหารห่วงโซ่อุปทาน

คำสำคัญ: องค์ประกอบของการบริหารแบบบูรณาการ การบริหารธุรกิจสปาแบบยั่งยืน

Introduction

The spa industry is an important part of Thailand's tourism sector, with total annual revenue of around USD 275 million, and Thailand has the highest numbers of spas center in Asia (Cohen & Bodeker, 2008). However, the industry has recently faced a number of challenges, including the world economic crisis that started in 2005, and devastated flooding in Thailand during 2012 (Fiscal Policy Research Foundation, 2013). These overwhelming challenges have positively forced businesses to adopt more sophisticated management strategies specifically channeled to areas such as quality improvement, customer relationships, supply chain management, marketing, and human resources (Cohen & Bodeker, 2008).

Additionally, the ongoing trend and issue for spa businesses globally is sustainability. (Suchawadee Srisuwannakarn, 2013). Page & Dowling (2002) defined sustainability as an aspect that incorporates several significant issues, namely, environmental conservation, resource conservation, cultural assets maintenance, lifestyle protection, impact monitoring, and limitation of change.

While spa business management may incorporate many aspects, past researches has focused attention on particular aspects to the exclusion and detriment of others. A critical

examination of the studies of Prateep Wetprasit (2006); Deenonpho (2007) and Sirirak Ponprawe (2008) clearly revealed that the main focus of their studies was directly related to aspects of spas, such as human resources and customer satisfaction. Phapruek Ussahawanitchakit and Purit Pongpearchan (2010) viewed activities that lead to sustainability as a way to develop spas' personnel rather than a means to develop the overall spa businesses and the society. This study is therefore concerned with the overall context of day spa management in Thailand, in order to create an integrated management model.

Literature Review

Porter's value chain management model (Chain Conveyor Design, 2011) formed the basis for this study, as it incorporates many aspects including product planning, quality control, technology, procurement, staff recruitment, and evaluation (see Figure 1). Value chain management is a chain of activities which an organization can channel to create a competitive advantage in order to deliver a valuable product or service for the customers. Findings from the research study of Vorawan Norasucha (2007) regarding value chain management model for performance excellence of hotel spas

in Bangkok shows that the value chain model for spa business which Spa Excellence Award (SEA) is given, could be the reliability test for value chain model of further research study. Vorawan Norasucha further indicated that the value chain model presented in the research study is useful for spa managers to design and manage their activities to create a high value added services.

In this study, the researcher focuses on the integrated management model for the service industry (day spas) which is an understanding of the effective direction of every aspect in the organization, in order to equally satisfy needs and expectations of all stakeholders by the best use of all resources (Dalling, 2007). Consequently, the conceptual framework of this research is integrated from value chain management and integrated management model.

Pertaining to planning, Krajewski, Ritzman & Maholtra (2007) recommended a break-even analysis, which allows a business to estimate the resources necessary to serve a certain number of customers in order to be profitable. Attention should also be paid to quality, which is an important element in the design of the service or product to be sold to customers (Chase, Jacobs & Aquilano, 2004).

As a matter of duty and unquestionable responsibility, the quality of day spas should cover many aspects as described by Department of Health Service Support (2012). These aspects includes: temperature, noise, light, and materials of products such as bed sheets and spa products.

As for human resources management, getting the right personnel can be achieved when the organization has a recruitment and selection plan that enables them to set the desired skills, attitudes, characteristics, and personalities of required staff (Berry, 2003). The plan should incorporate candidate selection methods, such as knowledge tests, interviews, attitude tests, and trial periods, which enable the organization to have the right people for the right jobs (Bateman & Snell, 2007).

The majority of spas in Thailand can be said to have simple structures because they have small numbers of staff. Staffs are not particularly multi-tiered (Colquitt, Lepine & Wesson, 2009). It might therefore be erroneously presumed that such spa businesses have little use for technologies. Stair & Reynolds (2010) stated that information technology is very useful for all businesses because it helps them manage data concerning customers' previous purchases, preferences and complaints, and staff's profiles and inventories. These data must be updated consistently so as to enable management to make sound decisions (Stair & Reynolds, 2010).

Regarding sustainability, a business should be practically concerned about environmental conservation. This may take a variety of forms, such as the use of organic products, pollution reduction, energy savings to improve air and water quality, use of low or zero-carbon emission energy, and waste-sorting (Gummusson, 2008; Grondzik, Kwok, Stein & Reynolds, 2010; McMullan, 2012 and Starbuck, 2012).

Methodology

Concerning the sample size, citing the Japanese maestro in statistics Yamane (1973); Leedy & Ormrod (2005) suggested that the appropriated sample size is 400 for the number of the populations of which is greater than 10,000. The primary research on the number of day spas registered under Ministry of Public Health found that; cluster 1 which is Bangkok has the highest number of day spa totaling 321; followed by cluster 7 which are Ranong, Phang-Nga, Phuket, Krabi and Trang with a total of 270; and cluster 15 which are Chiang Mai, Mae Hongson, Lampang, and Lanphoon with a total of 163 Ministry of Public Health (2011). As depicted by the Department of Tourism (2010), there are more than 10 Million tourists visiting the three studied clusters in 2010. Owing to this, the tourists who are customers of registered day spas under the Ministry of Public Health in the three clusters are used to represent the whole population of Thailand in this research study. Thus, the applicable methodology is quantitative research which the customers in general think about the management elements of day spas in the studied region. Realizing the aforementioned points, the researcher decides that the sample size for the quantitative research is 400 (spa customers) who were given a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed from the literature review incorporated with the initial interviews with spa experts. The questionnaire consists of three main parts. The first part consists of questions that asked respondents' demographic data, i.e., gender, age, monthly income, average spending, and ethnicity. The second part of the

questionnaire incorporated questions that asked respondents to indicate a level of agreement with the importance of the elements of day spa management. The rating scale used for this part was a 5-point scaled rating system where 5 represented the high agreement, 4=agreement, 3=neutrality, 2=disagreement, 1=high disagreement (Baxter & Babbie, 2004 and Marczyk, de Matteo & Festinger, 2005).

Choice of sampling technique is important because researchers must obtain samples whose features are beneficial to the research being conducted (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The two techniques applicable to this project were convenient sampling and purposive sampling. (Boehnke, Lietz, Schreier & Wilhelm, 2011).

For many experts such as Marczyk et al. (2005); Kvale (2007) and Pelham & Blanton (2007), the quality of a research tool consists of three elements, namely, objectivity, validity, and reliability. Objectivity is maintained by avoiding to lead the respondents with subjective wording such as 'good', 'great', 'poor', etc. (Kvale, 2007). One of the most practiced verifications of validity is the test-retest technique, in which the questionnaire is used in simulated research whereby a small group of participants with features similar to the research population are surveyed. This technique is called test-retest because it has to be performed at least twice (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005 and Marczyk et al. 2005). Additionally, Index of Item Objective Congruence (IOC) testing was carried out, which involves asking a group of 5 spa experts to rate the questions on the questionnaire. If they deemed a question appropriate, they gave that question a mark of 1. On the contrary, if they did not

think that the question was appropriate, they gave it a mark of 0. Then, the total mark for each question was calculated with the following formula:

$$IOC = \frac{\sum R}{N}$$

Where $\sum R$ = the total mark from all the experts; and N = the number of the experts.

The IOC for each question must not be inferior to 0.5. Questions which obtained an IOC mark lower than 0.5 were deemed invalid and eliminated (Thaweerat Phuangrat, 1997: 117). Of the 38 originally-designed questions, the majority attained 1 IOC point, while several received 0.6-0.8 points. A question regarding the pricing received less than 0.5 points and was therefore removed from the questionnaire. As for reliability, Cronbach's alpha was used to indicate whether the questions in the survey are reliable or not. The outcome of the whole questionnaire is .910 therefore; this questionnaire can be used as the tool for this survey.

Data resulting from the questionnaire was processed for descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviations; and inferential statistics including t-values, f-values, and Pearson's correlation

coefficients.

The average value of mean is scaled as follow:

1.00-1.80 = disagree

1.81-2.61 = slightly agree

2.62-3.41 = moderately agree

3.42-4.21 = highly agree

4.22-5.00 = extremely agree

The correlations among variables are tested with Pearson's correlation analysis. The obtained coefficient can be positive, negative, and Zero. A positive coefficient shows that if the two tested variables rise, the other will rise accordingly. On the contrary, a negative coefficient indicates invert correlation; if one goes down, the other goes up. Meanwhile, '0' means that there is no correlation between the two tested variables (Naronk Phopruksanantha, 2008).

Result

This section discusses results of individual survey items. The item categories were product management, quality management, human resource management, supply chain management, and sales and marketing.

Management elements	Mean	S.D.
Product Management	3.74	1.02
- The spa should be able to provide products and services that suit guests' requests all the time.	3.82	1.02
- The spa should be able to analyze its break-even so that Spa can determine the appropriate prices of its products and service.	3.79	.99
Quality Management	3.86	.95

Management elements	Mean	S.D.
- The spa should care about its customers' security.	3.93	.90
- The service areas of spa and staff's outfits have to be clean.	3.84	1.02
Human Resource Management	3.89	.88
- The spa should care about its staff's security.	4.08	.83
Supply Chain Management	3.90	.88
- The spa should care about waste and pollution reduction.	4.17	.78
Sales & Marketing	4.07	.79
- The spa should have the process that reduces customers' waiting time.	4.14	.73

Product Management

The average mean for the category of product management was 3.74, which means that the respondents agreed that the product management aspect of the day spa management is important. Considered separately, the 'The spa should be able to provide products and services that suit guests' requests all the time' item received the highest mean of 3.82, followed by the 'The spa should be able to analyze its break-even so that spa can determine the appropriate prices of its products and service', 'The spa should be able to anticipate the number of customers on monthly basis, so that spa can prepare its facilities accordingly', and 'The spa should be able to design the products and service that fit the new trend of demand' items, with mean of 3.79, 3.72, and 3.62, respectively. The mean of all the items in this aspect falls in the high level of agreement.

Concerning the standard deviations; which are a statistic measure of dispersion of a set of data from its mean, the more spread apart the data, the higher the deviation (Niles, 1995). It

was discovered that day spas should be able to analyze its break-even so that spa can determine the appropriate prices of its products and service' and 'The spa should be able to anticipate the number of customers on monthly basis, so that spa can prepare its facilities accordingly' items were 0.99 and 0.98, respectively. This means that the respondents' opinions toward these two items do not significantly vary. Meanwhile, the standard deviations of: 'The spa should be able to design the products and services that fit the new trend of demand' and 'The spa should be able to provide products and services that suit guests' requests all the time' items were 1.08 and 1.02, respectively. This is an indication that the respondents' opinions toward these two items varied significantly.

For the item 'The spa should be able to design the products and services that fit the new trend of demand', 138 (34.5%) respondents were neutral. 118 (29.5%) agreed with the statement and 98 (24.5%) respondents highly agreed. 26 (6.5%) respondents disagreed and 20 (5%)

respondents highly disagreed. It is apparent that the numbers of respondents who are neutral, agreeable, and highly agreeable with the statement are not much different from each other. Therefore, the opinions (degrees of agreement) of the respondents have significant variation.

For the item, 'The spa should be able to provide products and services that suit guests' requests all the time', 108 (27%) respondents highly agreed, 168 (42%) agreed, and 84 (21%) were neutral. 24 (6%) disagreed, while the remaining 16 (4%) highly disagreed. This shows significant variation among the respondents' degrees of agreement.

Quality Management

For the category of quality management, the average mean was 3.86, which is an indication of a positive agreement by the respondents that the quality management aspect of the day spa management is important. Considered separately, the 'The spa should care about its customers' security' item received the highest mean of 3.93, followed by the 'The spa and its staff must response to customers' requests and complaints in order to satisfy customers', 'The spa should ensure that all of its staff will adhere to its standards, values, and codes of conducts such as to keep clean, to be polite, and to follow service standard', 'The spa masseurs must have certificates from the governmental agencies such as the Ministry of Education and/or the Ministry of Public Health', 'The spa must provide information about its services in a polite and humble manner so that customers will understand and trust in the services', 'The service areas of spa and staff's

outfits have to be clean', 'The spa has to adhere to the standard for spas set by the Ministry of Public Health', and 'The spa must use only trustworthy spa products such as the products that comply with the FDA items, the mean of which were 3.91, 3.91, 3.90, 3.86, 3.84, 3.80, and 3.74, respectively. The mean of all the items in this aspect falls in the high level of agreement.

Concerning the standard deviations, it was found that there was significant variation among the responses to the item 'The service areas of spa and staff's outfits have to be clean', which had a standard deviation of 1.02, while those of other items were lower than 1. Of the 400 respondents, 126 (31.5%) highly agreed with the statement, 124 (31%) respondents agreed, and 122 (30.5%) respondents were neutral. 16 (4%) respondents disagreed and 12 (3%) respondents highly disagreed. It is apparent that the numbers of respondents who are neutral, agreeable, and highly agreeable with the statement are not much different from each other. Therefore, the opinions (degrees of agreement) of the respondents significantly vary.

Human Resource Management

The average means for the category of human resource management was 3.89, which means that the respondents agreed that the human resource management aspect of the day spa management is important. Considered separately, the 'The spa should care about its staff's security' item receives the highest mean of 4.08, followed by the 'The spa should treat all of the staffs in a fair manner', 'The spa staffs should be allowed to share their ideas and experiences in order to improve the overall

performance of the spa’, ‘The spa should train its staffs to boost staff’s skills and knowledge on a regular basis’, ‘The spa should have career path development policy’, ‘The spa must have proper recruitment and selection process to ensure that the chosen staff members qualify for their tasks’, and ‘The spa has to retain its staffs by giving them some extra money or any other extra benefits when they can generate the revenue that the spa sets as the goal for them’ items, the mean of which were 3.96, 3.88, 3.86, 3.83, 3.80, and 3.80, respectively. The mean of all the items in this aspect falls in the high level of agreement.

Concerning the standard deviations, it was discovered that the standard deviation of all the items in this category were lower than 1. This means that there was no significant variation in respondents’ opinions toward any of the survey items.

Supply Chain Management

The average mean for the supply chain management category was 3.90, which shows that the respondents agreed that the supply chain management aspect of day spa management is important. Considered separately, the ‘The spa should care about waste and pollution reduction’ item received the highest mean of 4.17, followed by the ‘The spa should care about natural resources conservation such as water reservation’, ‘The spa should be able to control the quality of all supplies’, ‘The spa should have sufficient supplies so that it will always be ready to serve customers’, ‘The spa should care about energy

saving’, ‘The spa should care about environmental conservation’, ‘The spa should use the bed sheet and blankets that make customers warm and can well absorb sweat’, ‘The spa should use new technologies such as computer programs or innovative equipment to boost its capabilities’, ‘The Spa should have facilities such as an effective booking and queuing system in order to facilitate its customers’, ‘The spa should form business alliances with other spas and other businesses such as hotels in order to persuade tourists to buy its services (such as by setting a package with a tour company or a hotel)’, ‘The ambiance of the spa should not be hotter than 27°C; with the noise that is not louder than 30 dB and the light magnitude that is not higher than 1,000 lux’, and ‘The spa must be located near the main road or have sufficient parking space’ items, the mean of which were 4.01, 3.98, 3.96, 3.96, 3.92, 3.88, 3.84, 3.82, 3.82, 3.75, and 3.73, respectively. The mean of all the items in this aspect falls in the high level of agreement.

Concerning the standard deviations, it was discovered that the standard deviation of all the items in this category were lower than 1. This means that there was no significant variation in respondents’ opinions toward any of the survey items.

Sales and Marketing

The average mean for the category of sales and marketing was 4.07, which means the respondents agreed that the sales & marketing aspect of the day spa management is important. Considered separately, the ‘The spa should have the process that reduces customers’

waiting time’ item receives the highest mean of 4.14, followed by the ‘The spa should have reception service such as welcome drink or waiting area for customers’, ‘The spa should have its Facebook account or an account in any other social network channel’, ‘Spa ambiance and decoration should reflect the influences from Thai and Asian cultures’, ‘The spa should make its services different from the services from other spas’, and ‘The spa should have its official web page’ items, the mean of which are 4.08, 4.06, 4.06, 4.05, and 4.02, respectively. The mean of all the items in this aspect falls in the high level of agreement.

Concerning the standard deviations, it was discovered that the standard deviation of all

the items in this category were lower than 1. This means that there was no significant variation in respondents’ opinions toward any of the survey items.

Correlations among Aspects of Day Spa Management Model

Pearson’s correlation coefficients attained from the analysis reflect that all the studied aspects are correlated to each other in the positive way and with a statistical significance of 0.01 or 0.05. This means all the studied variables are important in the same level. In addition, this means that the spa’s good performance in one aspect ensures good performance in others.

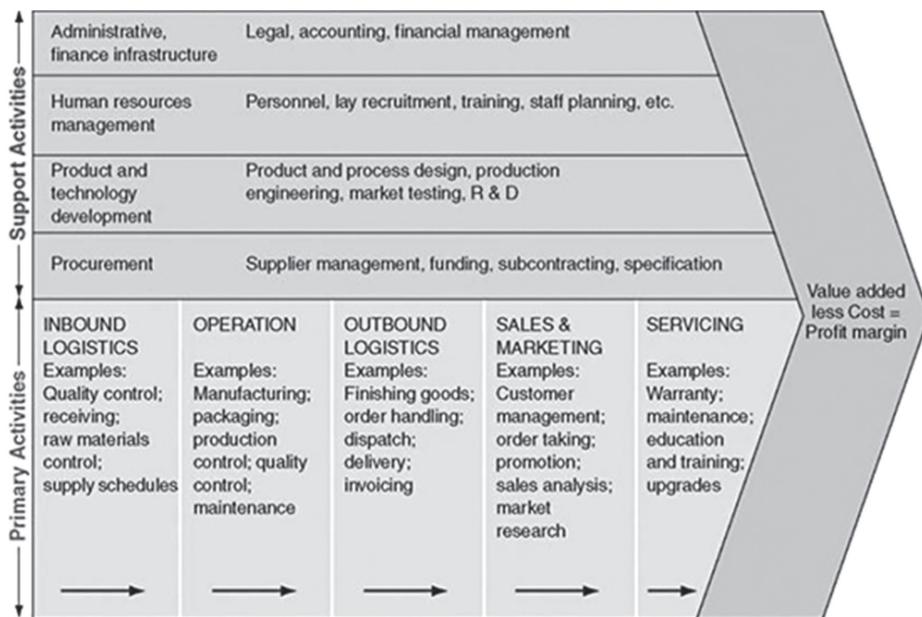


Figure 1 Porter’s Value Chain Management Model (Chain Conveyor Design, 2011)

Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions for Future Study

Conclusion

All day spa customers surveyed agreed on the importance of all aspects studied, i.e., product management, quality management, human resource management, supply chain management, and sales and marketing.

All of these elements are correlated to each other; therefore, none should be overlooked by day spa management. Poor connection among any of the studied elements will obviously lead to unproductive business practice and poor performance of day spas. For example, if a day spa has a poor quality management scheme that does not emphasize retaining and boosting personnel skills, the quality of its personnel will drop, and so will the quality of its services. Finally, its customers will become less satisfied with its services. Likewise, if a day spa does not concentrate on sustainability management, such as spending too much energy, it will bear high expense on power. In the first case, the income of the day spa will decrease. In the second case, the day spa's high expenses on power will in turn force it to charge higher prices for its services. Low income or unreasonable high price tag on spa services will diffidently hinder a day spa from effectively and successfully competing with better-performing rivals.

Discussion

Each element proposed in the integrated management model also lead to the awareness

of individual aspect such as sales & marketing in day spa business, quality management in day spa business, supply chain in day spa business, human resource management in day spa business and product management in day spa business. Spa operators can also benefit from the individual element of this integrated management model by focusing on the areas or elements that spa operators need to improve as priority. Furthermore, spa operators can consider as a strategy to develop more specific packages to approach the business alliances in the right segmentation. Meanwhile, the integrated management model lead to the value added to customers, reduce unnecessary expenses, create high service quality in a consistency manner, and definitely bring to the higher profit margin in a sustainability fashion.

Suggestions for further study

While all elements should be considered important, the most important aspects for customers are sales & marketing, followed by quality management, supply chain management, human resource management, and product management respectively. Each of these presents many opportunities as an area of study for future research. In the category of quality management, safety and security were considered the highest priority for customers. This means that spa management should implement comprehensive and effective systems to provide security for customers and staffs, as well as any valuables belonging to customers, staffs, or the business itself. Future

researches in this category might look at the relative effectiveness of various security measures, as well as customers' and staff members' perceptions of their effectiveness. Marketing is important as this category includes any interaction between business and customers in terms of contacts, booking, and information sharing. The specific benefits of these interactions merits future studies. Spa businesses should ensure that they have an online presence. Supply chain management in this context chiefly

relates to environmental sustainability, with spa customers placing very high value on this category. Spas must work hard shows an inflexible desire to ensure compliance with all environmental regulations, and maintain a 'green' supply chain, the specific logistics of which is another area worthy of further research in a spa context. Ultimately, spas must always be concerned about their customers in order to understand what they have to improve.

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