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Exploring the Factors Influencing Tourist Destination Loyalty: A Case Study of Homestay Entrepreneurs in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore the image of the homestay entrepreneurs through service marketing mix, tourist satisfaction, and tourist loyalty toward homestay entrepreneurs and find their tourist destination loyalty model. The data were collected from 440 tourists and were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics consisting of confirmatory factor, path, and structural equation modeling. The results showed that the image of the homestays in Samut Sakhon province, service marketing mix, tourist satisfaction, and tourist loyalty toward homestay entrepreneurs in Samut Sakhon province were mostly at

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high levels. Moreover, confirmatory factors analysis showed that the image of the homestays in Samut Sakhon province has the highest in the “Impression,” the service marketing mix has the highest in “People,” tourist satisfaction has the highest value in “Service quality,” and tourist loyalty toward homestays entrepreneurs has the highest value in the “Repeated use of the service.” Furthermore, it is revealed that the image of the homestays and the service marketing mix have direct and indirect influences on tourist loyalty toward homestay entrepreneurs. With continuous improvement in service quality, affordability, and customer relationship management, homestay entrepreneurs can create positive experiences, enhance value for money, cultivate customer loyalty, and benefit from positive word-of-mouth recommendations, ultimately driving the growth and success of their businesses.

KEYWORDS

tourist loyalty, entrepreneurs, homestays, marketing mix, Thailand

Introduction

The tourism industry plays an important role in Thailand's economy (Soh et al., 2021). Annually, it brings Thailand a significant income. In addition, the industry positively affects the overall economic system of Thailand by providing employment opportunities in the country (Soh et al., 2021; Wattanakuljarus & Coxhead, 2008). This contributes to the growth and prosperity of rural areas, as well as the creation of infrastructure and many convenient facilities to accommodate incoming tourists (Sudsawasdt et al., 2022). According to information from the Secretariat of The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Thailand was the most popular place to visit in ASEAN in 2019 (Tubtimtong, 2020). Most visitors came because of the low cost of living, the beautiful scenery, the culture, and the unique food. The Thai government has developed policies to promote and support the tourism industry, thus emphasizing its prominence in boosting Thailand's economy (Wattanacharoensil & Schuckert, 2016). Furthermore, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTCC) estimates that the tourism industry will increase Thailand's GDP by 5.6% annually to reach 28.2% of GDP by 2028 (Tubtimtong, 2020).

Thailand has many tourist attractions that are targeted for sustainable tourism development. Nowadays, the tourism trend focuses on “resource conservation travelers,” who are interested in eco-travel (Srisawat et al., 2023). The term “resource conservation travelers” refers to tourists who go on their trips with the intention of reducing their impact on the environment and helping to preserve natural resources. They are ecologically sensitive and make an effort to travel to new places while minimizing the impact that they have on the local ecosystem (Baloch et al., 2023). In addition to this, eco-travel (also known as ecological travel or eco-tourism) represents a distinct form of sustainable tourism. Ecotourism is the practice of visiting natural regions and participating in activities that are designed to have minimum impact on

the environment (Zainol & Rahman, 2023). Eco-tourists support the initiatives aimed at conservation of nature, the adoption of environmentally sustainable practices, and the promotion of local communities (Samal & Dash, 2023). One of them is the “homestay” style tour, which is a popular lifestyle and cultural experience (Chakraborty, 2020). A residence manager is appointed in the community and is responsible for setting up and organizing the residents’ homes into hotel rooms for tourists. The homeowners then need to give their consent and willingness to host tourists and provide them with services (Forno & Garibaldi, 2015; Srisawat et al., 2023). This scheme enables a process of learning about ways of life together between communities and tourists. It creates knowledge and understanding of community life, creating a positive attitude toward the community (Chin et al., 2014). Moreover, homestays are often linked to environmentally friendly tourism because they encourage real cultural experiences and can help local economies (Janjua et al., 2023). In contrast to major hotels, the energy and water consumption of typical homestays is lower because they are smaller and locally operated (Tsai et al., 2014). Thus, homestays reduce their environmental impact by adopting eco-friendly habits including recycling and using low energy consumption equipment (Noor & Kumar, 2014).

Samut Sakhon province has its distinctive features, cultural heritage and natural attractions that make it appealing for tourists (Muangmee, 2020). According to the Samut Sakhon Sightseeing Information Center, the province has a number of notable tourist spots that are highly recommended to visit. For instance, visitors can explore Wat Chong Lom, which offers stunning views of estuaries, and its rear side provides a beautiful view of the Tha Chin river (Tourism Authority of Thailand, n.d.). Wat Luk Si Raja Samosorn serves as the principal temple within the city, accommodating the highly venerated Buddha statue of Samut Sakhon. Wat Pa Chai Ransi is characterized by its architectural resemblance to ancient rock palaces discovered in cities of the northeastern region (Muangmee et al., 2021). The Pan Thai Norasing Historical Park is home to the Pan Thai Norasing temple and provides nature trails for individuals who wish to engage in the study of the indigenous mangrove ecosystem (Tourism Authority of Thailand, n.d.). In Samut Sakhon province, homestays play an important role in attracting tourists and contributing to the local economy (Yiamjanya, 2016). Therefore, homestay owners need to know what makes tourists stay with them more than once and accordingly improve the quality of their services, accommodation facilities (Sekorarith, 2016). This ability of homestay owners to adjust their services in line with the needs and tastes of tourists makes homestay more preferred by tourists than other options (Leung et al., 2021). Therefore, enhancing tourist loyalty has the potential to boost the economic prosperity of these communities, granting them a sustained means of financial support and empowerment (Nitikasetsoontorn, 2014).

Nevertheless, the factors influencing tourists’ loyalty to homestays in the region have yet to be sufficiently identified and explored. Current literature on destination loyalty focuses on hotels and resorts while overlooking the unique characteristics and challenges faced by homestay entrepreneurs (Muangmee, 2020). Therefore, this study aims to develop a comprehensive Tourist Destination Loyalty Model specifically for homestays in Samut Sakhon province, identifying the key determinants of tourist loyalty and providing

actionable recommendations for homestay entrepreneurs to enhance visitors' satisfaction, loyalty, and repeat visitation. Homestays have become an increasingly popular form of accommodation among tourists seeking unique experiences (Chakraborty, 2020).

Keeping in view the objectives of this study, the data is collected from 440 homestay tourists in Samut Sakhon. To ensure the reliability of the questionnaire, it underwent thorough validation and was subjected to further SEM modeling. The primary objective of this study was to ascertain the fundamental factors that contribute to the loyalty of tourists within the homestay sector. The findings of this research could be utilized as a valuable framework for comparable enterprises in various geographical areas, extending beyond the limits of Samut Sakhon. This research provided valuable insights for entrepreneurs, researchers, and policymakers in the international academic community who are interested in enhancing their understanding and enhancing the visitor experience in diverse tourist accommodations. Globally, hosts and guests of homestays and other accommodations can benefit from the study's practical ideas and techniques. The following are the research hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): The image of the homestays in Samut Sakhon province and tourist satisfaction has direct and indirect effects on tourist loyalty toward homestay entrepreneurs in Samut Sakhon province.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): The service marketing mix and tourist satisfaction have direct and indirect effects on tourist loyalty toward homestay entrepreneurs in Samut Sakhon province.

Methods

Study Area

Samut Sakhon is a popular tourist destination and one of Thailand's most well-known coastal provinces. The fishing and sea salt manufacturing sectors are the backbone of this province's economy (Jiaratham et al., 2020). The province is located in the lower part of the central region, at approximately 13° north latitude and 100° east longitude (Muangmee, 2020). The topography of the province is a coastal plain at an elevation of about 1.0–2.0 meters above sea level. The Tha Chin river, which is about 70 kilometers long, flows from north to south into the Gulf of Thailand at Mueang Samut Sakhon (Tourism Authority of Thailand, n.d.). A network of more than 170 interconnected rivers and canals is spread throughout the area, making the soil fertile and suitable for growing various types of crops. The lower part of the province in Mueang Samut Sakhon district adjoins 41.8 kilometers of coastline. Moreover, the province is rich in cultural attractions, such as temples, historical sites, and Benjarong Village, providing opportunities for tourists to learn about the local culture, history, and way of life (Muangmee, 2020).

Sampling

Recognizing the fundamental importance of exploring the factors that influence tourist loyalty, with a specific focus on understanding what contributes to repeat customer behavior in the context of homestay accommodations, we carefully designed our sampling method to align with the research objectives. The target population was the tourists who visited homestays. The sample was selected to be representative of

this diverse group, encompassing a variety of demographic characteristics, travel preferences, and geographic diversity. Additionally, the sample was designed to meet the minimum requirements for the use of structural equation modeling, or SEM (Rathachatranon, 2018). The appropriate sample size should be at least 20 times the number of variables in the structural equation when analyzing data using SEM. In this research, the sums of observed and latent variables were 22; therefore, we collected data from 440 tourists by a convenient sampling method. The study has adopted data analysis using multivariate statistics following the concept of Lindeman et al. (1980).

Research Instrument

The data were collected through questionnaires. To collect data from the tourists in the study area, a questionnaire was divided into five parts: (a) general information of the respondents, (b) the image of the homestays, (c) service marketing mix, (d) tourist satisfaction, and (e) tourist loyalty. The questionnaire was structured to include variables specifically designed to capture insights into repeat customer behavior and its implications for tourist loyalty. These variables were chosen to address our research objectives comprehensively, ensuring that the study was equipped to analyze the elements contributing to tourist loyalty, including the impact of repeat visitation.

In order to make this study most efficient, the researchers wrote a letter to the hotel operators in Samut Sakhon province asking for their cooperation in distributing the questionnaires. The researchers then traveled to the field themselves to collect the questionnaires according to the locality as well as to check the completeness of the questionnaires and to count the number of completed questionnaires as planned. The questionnaire was converted into preliminary statistical values and further analyzed using statistical methods. As a result, from April 2022 to February 2023, data were collected from 440 tourists.

For validation of the data collection instrument, three experts in the field reviewed the questionnaire using the item objective congruence (IOC) technique, which assesses the alignment of each item with the research objectives. This validation step serves to ensure that the questionnaire accurately and effectively measures the intended constructs. Furthermore, the reliability of the research instrument was assessed through a pre-testing of 30 participants who were representative of the target population. The purpose of the pre-testing was to evaluate the internal consistency and reliability of the questionnaire. The results of the pre-testing indicated a high level of reliability as evidenced by a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .962. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient is a commonly used measure of reliability, indicating the extent to which items within a scale or questionnaire are consistent in measuring the same construct. The high value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient suggested that the questionnaire used in the study has strong internal consistency and reliability. This indicated that the items in the questionnaire were closely related and consistently measured the constructs of interest.

Statistical Analysis

When the questionnaires were returned, the researcher manually checked the accuracy and completeness of each questionnaire. The questionnaires were then coded and

processed using a readymade program for further descriptive statistical analysis. We used structural equation modeling (SEM) to analyze the relationships between repeat customer behavior and tourist loyalty and to examine the factors contributing to these variables. This approach provides a robust and in-depth examination of these critical aspects of our study.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

According to the results of statistical analysis, tourists have a positive perception of homestays in Samut Sakhon province in terms of their overall image (Table 1). The marketing mix of services provided by hotels in Samut Sakhon province was rated as similarly (high level, mean value of 3.52). This indicates that tourists perceive the services provided by homestays as high quality and meeting their expectations. The service marketing mix includes various elements of service delivery such as product, price, place, promotion, people, process and physical evidence. In addition, the tourist loyalty towards homestay entrepreneurs in Samut Sakhon province also reached a high level (mean value of 3.96). This indicates that tourists are loyal to homestays and are most likely to return or recommend them to other tourists. A check on skewness and kurtosis, both measures of data distribution, reveals that all the variables have values within the acceptable range. So, the distribution of the data is relatively symmetrical and fits a normal model, making it suitable for further analysis using structural equation modeling (Angsuchot et al., 2011).

Table 1
Average and Standard Deviation of Tourist Information (N = 440)

Observable variables	Mean	SD	Sk	Ku	Interpretation
The image of the homestays	3.98	0.62	-.237	.455	High level
Believe	3.71	0.59	-.342	.427	High level
Attitude	4.01	0.67	-.328	.377	High level
Impression	4.23	0.54	-.231	.645	High level
Service marketing mix	3.82	0.63	-.239	.423	High level
Product	3.90	0.61	-.149	.562	High level
Price	3.88	0.53	.549	.160	High level
Place	3.65	0.64	-.064	.651	High level
Promotion	4.04	0.55	-.311	.569	High level
People	4.14	0.49	-.445	.311	High level
Process	3.61	0.81	-.154	.350	High level
Physical evidence	3.56	0.67	.199	.319	High level
Tourist satisfaction	3.52	0.69	-.138	.454	High level
Service quality	3.88	0.66	.069	.823	High level
Value for money	3.81	0.65	.061	.552	High level

Table 1 Continued

Observable variables	Mean	SD	Sk	Ku	Interpretation
Atmosphere	3.68	0.72	-.233	.332	High level
Clean	3.14	0.80	-.089	.254	Medium
Safety	3.08	0.77	-.235	.012	Medium
Tourist loyalty	3.96	0.64	-.189	.475	High level
The repeated use of service	4.10	0.55	-.001	.712	High level
Frequency of repeat visits	3.88	0.64	-.036	.245	High level
Suggest and tell	3.92	0.67	-.339	.581	High level

Note. Sk = skewness; Ku = kurtosis.

Confirmatory Factors

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for the four latent variables—the image of the homestays, service marketing mix, tourist satisfaction, and tourist loyalty—are presented in Table 2. The observed variables and their corresponding factor loadings, which indicate the strength of the relationship between the observed variables and the latent variables are reported. The R^2 values represent the proportion of variance in the observed variables that are explained by the latent variables. For the latent variable “The image of the homestays” the observed variables of belief, attitude, and impression have high factor loadings ranging from .69 to .81, indicating a strong relationship with the latent variable. Similarly, for the latent variable “Service marketing mix” the observed variables of product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence all have high factor loadings ranging from .65 to .80. The latent variable “Tourist satisfaction” is measured by the observed variables of service quality, value for money, atmosphere, clean, and safety, all of which have high factor loadings ranging from .70 to .79. Lastly, the latent variable “Tourist loyalty” is indicated by the observed variables of the repeated use of service, frequency of repeat visits, and suggest and tell, all with high factor loadings ranging from .71 to .82. The goodness-of-fit indices, such as chi-square (χ^2), degrees of freedom (df), p -value, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), indicate the overall fit of the model. In this case, the chi-square test is not statistically significant ($p = .11$), suggesting a good fit for the model. The SRMR and RMSEA values are also low (.04 and .01, respectively), further indicating a good fit.

Table 2
Results of the Confirmatory Factors

Latent variables	Observed variables	Factor loadings	R^2
The image of the homestays	Believe	0.75**	.44
	Attitude	0.69**	.55
	Impression	0.81**	.49

Table 2 Continued

Latent variables	Observed variables	Factor loadings	R ²
Service marketing mix	Product	0.74**	.55
	Price	0.70**	.53
	Place	0.76**	.62
	Promotion	0.69**	.53
	People	0.80**	.57
	Process	0.73**	.48
	Physical evidence	0.65**	.44
Tourist satisfaction	Service quality	0.79**	.57
	Value for money	0.74**	.55
	Atmosphere	0.72**	.53
	Clean	0.70**	.52
	Safety	0.73**	.54
Tourist loyalty	The repeated use of service	0.82**	.56
	Frequency of repeat visits	0.75**	.55
	Suggest and tell	0.71**	.54

$\chi^2 = 39.39$; $df = 33$; $p = .11$; SRMR = .04; RMSEA = .01

Note. ** significance at 1%.

The results indicated that the image of the homestays in Samut Sakhon province has both direct and indirect influences on tourist loyalty toward homestay entrepreneurs. Similarly, the service marketing mix also has direct and indirect influences on tourist loyalty. These findings are illustrated in Figure 1, while Table 3 provides the statistical analysis of the relationships and influences between variables. The coefficients represent the total influence (TE), indirect influence (IE), and direct influence (DE) of the event variables on the result variables. The values in the table indicated the strength and direction of these influences. The variable “The image of the homestays” has a significant direct influence (0.61**) on tourist satisfaction. Similarly, the variable “Service marketing mix” has a significant direct influence (0.59**) on tourist satisfaction and a significant direct influence (0.38**) on tourist loyalty. Furthermore, tourist satisfaction has a significant direct influence (0.39**) on tourist loyalty. The R-squared values in structural equation modeling indicate that the model explains 75% of the variance in tourist satisfaction and 64% of the variance in tourist loyalty.

The goodness-of-fit indices including chi-square (χ^2), degrees of freedom (df), p -value, comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) provide an assessment of the overall fit of the model. In this case, the model shows a good fit as indicated by the non-significant chi-square test ($p = .11$) and the satisfactory values of CFI (0.99), TLI (0.99), SRMR (.05), and RMSEA (.01). The results suggested that the image of the homestays and service marketing mix have significant direct and indirect influences on tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty. Tourist satisfaction, in turn, has a significant influence on tourist loyalty.

Table 3
Statistics, Analyze Relationships, and Influence Between Variables

Result variable	Tourist satisfaction			Tourist loyalty		
Event variables	TE	IE	DE	TE	IE	DE
The image of the homestays	0.61	–	0.61	0.71	0.24	0.47**
Service marketing mix	0.59	–	0.59	0.61	0.23	0.38**
Tourist satisfaction						0.39**
<i>R</i> ² structural equation modeling		0.75			0.64	

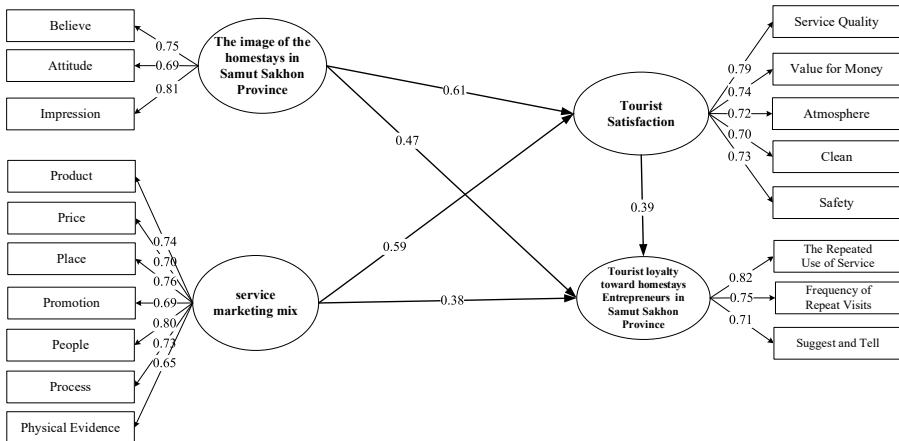
$\chi^2 = 39.39$, $df = 33$, $p = .11$, $CFI = .99$; $TLI = 0.99$; $SRMR = .05$; $RMSEA = .01$

Note. TE = total influence; IE = indirect influence; DE = direct influence. ** $p < .05$.

Hypothesis Testing Results

Based on the results and analysis, we can conclude that Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 are both accepted. The image of the homestays in Samut Sakhon province and tourist satisfaction have direct and indirect effects on tourist loyalty toward homestay entrepreneurs in the province. Similarly, the service marketing mix and tourist satisfaction also have direct and indirect effects on tourist loyalty.

Figure 1
Construct Model Displaying the Effect Values Between Variables



Discussion

The image of homestays, service marketing, tourist satisfaction, and tourist loyalty to homestay entrepreneurs in Samut Sakhon province were mostly at high level. The results of the study indicate that the aspect of “Impression” has the strongest influence among the different components that constitute the image of homestays

in Samut Sakhon province. This means that the overall impression or perception that tourists have towards the homestays significantly influences the formation of their attitudes and beliefs towards these homestays. The components of “Beliefs” and “Attitudes” also contribute to the overall image, but to a somewhat lesser extent. These results are consistent with the theoretical framework proposed by Tarik and Moussaoui (2009) emphasizing the significance of impressions, beliefs, and attitudes in influencing tourists’ perceptions and evaluations of accommodation facilities. In addition, they also agree with Mechinda et al. (2010) who found that Impression has a positive effect on image.

The factor loading indicates the strength of the relationship between each component and the overall construct being measured. In this case, the higher factor loading for “People” suggests that it had the strongest impact on the overall effectiveness or perception of the service being analyzed. The other components, such as “Place,” “Product,” “Process,” “Price,” “Promotion,” and “Physical evidence,” also had significant but comparatively lower factor loadings. All the components of the service marketing mix found to be in line with the concept and theory of Lovelock and Wirtz (2007) stating that people, product, price, place, promotion, process, and physical evidence are important components of service marketing. The findings also are in line with (Muangmee & Meekaewkunchorn, 2022) who found that “People” have a positive effect on the sustainable marketing factors of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy.

Among the factors examined, “Service quality” demonstrates the highest factor loading, indicating that it has the strongest influence on tourists’ satisfaction. This suggests that the quality of services provided to tourists, such as accommodation, transportation, dining, and hospitality, plays a critical role in determining their overall satisfaction levels. Ahmad et al. (2019) examined service quality and customer satisfaction in the context of Small and Medium-Sized Hotels (SMSHs) in the United Arab Emirates and then reported that service quality affects tourist satisfaction. A high factor loading for service quality implies that improvements in service delivery can have a significant positive impact on tourists’ satisfaction levels. Following “Service quality,” “Value for money” shows the second-highest factor loading. That implies that tourist’s perception of what they get for their money from products or services has a strong influence on their satisfaction. Lee et al. (2007) revealed that restaurant managers should prioritize delivering value to customers in order to attract and retain them. By offering competitive prices, quality food and service, and a positive overall experience, restaurants can enhance perceived value and meet customer expectations. Emphasizing value for money can help restaurants differentiate themselves in a competitive market and build customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The factor loading for “Atmosphere” suggests that tourists’ perceptions of safety and security significantly contribute to their overall satisfaction. Creating a safe and secure environment, implementing effective safety measures, and addressing concerns related to personal safety and well-being are crucial for enhancing tourists’ satisfaction and fostering positive experiences. Perceptions of safety and security are essential factors that can shape tourists’ overall experiences and determine their satisfaction with a destination or tourism service. On the other hand, if tourists feel

insecure or have concerns about their well-being, this can significantly reduce their overall satisfaction. Yüksel and Yüksel (2007) reported that the safety and security of a shopping location play a vital role in shaping tourists' decision-making and willingness to engage in shopping activities. If tourists perceive a location as unsafe or perceive significant risks associated with shopping, it can deter them from exploring the shops and making purchases. Lastly, "Clean" demonstrates a factor loading that indicates its importance in determining tourists' satisfaction. Clean and well-maintained environments including attractions, public spaces, accommodations, and facilities contribute to positive perceptions and enhance tourists' overall satisfaction (Bhuiyan et al., 2021; Rauch et al., 2015).

The results of the research on the components of tourist loyalty towards homestay entrepreneurs in Samut Sakhon province showed that "Repeated use of service" has the highest factor loadings. The finding implies that tourists who repeatedly use the homestay service are more likely to develop loyalty toward the homestay entrepreneurs in Samut Sakhon province. This providing a positive and satisfactory experience during the initial stay can encourage tourists to return and use the service again in the future. The repeat usage of the homestay service signifies a level of satisfaction and trust in the service provided by the entrepreneurs. The high factor loading for "Repeated use of service" highlights the importance of cultivating customer loyalty through delivering consistent and memorable experiences. By focusing on providing exceptional service, personalized attention, and meeting the needs and expectations of tourists, homestay entrepreneurs can encourage repeat visits and foster long-term relationships with their customers. The "Frequency of repeat visits" and "Suggest and tell" components are in line with the concept and theory of Schiffman and Kanuk (2007) which stated that the loyalty of tourists is an act of "Repeated use of service", as well as corresponding to the research of Helgesen and Nettet (2007) who found that "Repeated use of service" and "Frequency of repeat visits" had a positive effect on loyalty (Muangmee and Meekaewkunchorn, 2022). In addition, it was found that the image of homestays in Samut Sakhon province has both direct and indirect effects on tourist loyalty to homestay entrepreneurs in Samut Sakhon province. This is consistent with the concept and theory of Schiffman and Kanuk (2007) who argue that image has a positive effect on loyalty, as well as aligns with the studies of Helgesen and Nettet (2007) and Muangmi et al. (2021).

Service marketing mix has both direct and indirect effects on tourist loyalty toward homestay entrepreneurs in Samut Sakhon province. The service marketing mix referred to as the 7Ps (product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence), encompasses various aspects of the service offering and its marketing. Each element of the marketing mix can contribute to the overall customer experience and subsequently influence customer loyalty. Direct effects of the service marketing mix on tourist loyalty imply that specific elements directly affect tourists' perceptions, satisfaction, and loyalty toward the homestay entrepreneurs (Wu & Li, 2018). For example, a well-designed and appealing product (homestay accommodations and services) attracted tourists, created positive experiences, and led to repeat visits, ultimately fostering loyalty. Similarly, competitive pricing,

effective promotional activities, and convenient location (place) directly influenced tourists' decision-making and their likelihood to choose and stay loyal to a particular homestay entrepreneur. The indirect effects of the service marketing mix on tourist loyalty indicated that the elements indirectly influence loyalty through such factors as customer satisfaction and perceived value. For instance, a well-trained and customer-oriented staff ("People") enhanced customer satisfaction, which, in turn, can foster loyalty. Effective service processes, including smooth check-in/check-out procedures and responsive customer support, can contribute to a positive customer experience, leading to higher satisfaction and increased loyalty. Moreover, the physical evidence, including the physical environment and tangible elements associated with the homestay experience, influenced tourists' perceptions and satisfaction, indirectly affecting their loyalty. Attention to clean, comfort, and aesthetics of the accommodations and facilities contributed to positive perceptions and enhanced the overall experience, thus indirectly influencing loyalty. Islam et al. (2013) revealed that it is important for entrepreneurs to regularly assess and adapt their service marketing mix strategies based on customer feedback, changing market dynamics, and evolving customer preferences. By continuously improving and aligning the marketing mix elements with tourists' needs and expectations, entrepreneurs can build strong and sustainable relationships with their customers, leading to increased loyalty and positive business outcomes (Davari & Strutton, 2014). These findings highlighted the key factors that influence tourists' satisfaction and provide insights for tourism industry stakeholders and policymakers.

Study Limitations

The data collected in this study was self-reported measures of survey responses from tourists. Self-reported data are subjected to biases, such as social desirability bias, where respondents provided answers they believe are more socially acceptable rather than reflecting their true perceptions or behaviors. Factors such as cultural differences, regional characteristics, and economic conditions of Samut Sakhon province may effect the results and limit the generalizability of the findings to other locations or contexts.

Conclusion

The study highlights the factors influencing tourist loyalty. The importance of positive image, service quality, and the emphasis on repeat usage of services have strong implications for homestay entrepreneurs to promote sustainable tourism in Samut Sakhon province of Thailand. The findings shed light on the significance of these factors and their impact on the overall tourism experience and loyalty of tourists. The analysis revealed that the overall image of homestays in Samut Sakhon province was at a high level, with the "Impression" component having the strongest influence on the overall image. This emphasizes the importance of creating positive impressions and perceptions among tourists to shape their attitudes and beliefs toward homestay

establishments. A positive image not only attracts more tourists but also aligns with sustainable practices, as tourists who have a positive perception of an accommodation provider are more likely to support and appreciate their efforts in maintaining eco-friendly and sustainable practices. Additionally, the service marketing mix elements such as people, place, product, process, price, promotion, and physical evidence were found to significantly contribute to the overall effectiveness and perception of the service. Tourist satisfaction was influenced by various factors, with “Service quality” having the highest impact, followed by “Value for money,” “Atmosphere,” and “Clean.” Sustainability practices, like safety measures and responsible resource management, are integral to preserving the environment and ensuring long-term tourist satisfaction. These findings reveal the importance of delivering high-quality services, offering competitive prices, providing a safe environment, and maintaining cleanliness to enhance tourist satisfaction levels. Regarding tourist loyalty toward homestay entrepreneurs, the study found that the “Repeated use of service” was very important. This suggests that repeat usage of the homestay service is a strong indicator of tourist loyalty. More investment in service quality will create positive experiences for tourists and increase their likelihood of returning and recommending the homestay service to others. The findings of the study showed the importance of delivering consistent, high quality, and memorable experiences to create positive impressions and secure customer loyalty, which, in turn, contributes to the sustainable growth of the industry.

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