

Thai Poshtel Guest Revisit Intention: A Structural Equation Model Analysis

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Abstract

The study aimed to identify the factors that affect foreign guests' intention to return to a Thai poshtel. Poshtels are growing in popularity as urban boutique accommodations worldwide. The study was based on a review of existing literature, which showed that perceived quality (PQ), guest satisfaction (ST), and brand loyalty (BL) positively impact the intention to revisit (RV). The sample consisted of 405 foreign travelers who stayed at ten poshtels in Thailand in 2019, selected through simple random sampling. A 21-item questionnaire was used to collect each guest's opinions concerning their poshtel stay and analyzed using descriptive statistics and LISREL 9.10. The results showed that perceived quality, guest satisfaction, and brand loyalty had a combined impact of 76% on the revisit intention, with PQ being the essential factor. Five of the six hypotheses conceptualized were supported by the relationship between perceived quality (PQ) and guest satisfaction (ST) having a very strong connection. Results suggest that customer attraction is far less effective than customer retention, and Thailand's entrepreneurial poshtel owners should focus on making their guest's experiences exceptional. The study found that poshtel guests in Thailand are typically single, mixed in age, and stay for only two nights. The study significantly contributes to the literature as it is one of the first studies in Southeast Asia to explore the factors related to poshtel revisit intention within Asian tourism.

KEYWORDS: Brand Loyalty, Guest Satisfaction, Phuket, Poshtel, Thailand.

INTRODUCTION

The word *posh* comes from travel folklore and is said to have originated in tales of travel to British colonial India and other parts of the East (Bandyopadhyay, 2022). At the time, air-conditioned cabins did not exist, so that wealthy travelers could afford cabins on the side of the ship away from the scorching tropical sun. This led to using the acronym p.o.s.h, *port outbound, starboard home*. This means that affluent travelers would stay on the ship's left side when traveling east and on the right side when returning to England in the west. This definition was further legitimized in the 1968 movie *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* when the phrase and its meaning were used in a song. There are also other definitions of the word *posh* in the literature, which generally refer to a wealthy and sometimes eccentric individual.

Compared to *posh*, the word *hostel* has a long history, dating back to Latin and 14th-century Europe. The youth hostel concept was introduced in Germany in 1912 to get urban youth out of the city and into the countryside (Ellwood, 2018). The poshtel is a newer concept that combines the 14th-century hostel with the 19th-century posh, resulting in a sensibly priced boutique hotel with unique amenities like a rooftop bar or pool (Griffith-Jones, 2015). The growth of poshtels can be attributed to shifting demographics, low-cost carrier airlines, the 2008 economic recession, and the desire for exceptional design at low cost (Ellwood, 2018).

Furthermore, like a *motel* (motor hotel), a *poshtel* has combined the 14th-century *hostel* with 19th-century *posh* to become what Lonely Planet describes as a sensibly priced boutique hotel, frequently having unique amenities such as a rooftop bar or pool (Griffith-Jones, 2015). The emergence of poshtels can be attributed to changing demographics, the growth of low-cost carrier airlines, the 2008 economic recession, and the increasing demand for stylish yet affordable travel accommodations (Ellwood, 2018). The IKEA effect, where exceptional design is available at a low cost, has also played a role in developing poshtels.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following section contains an overview of the study's primary constructs and their observed variables.

Perceived Quality (PQ)

Olsen et al. (1998) have stated that PQ involves consistently delivering the correct service within the hospitality industry. Also, according to Zeithaml (1988, 1991), perceived service quality (PSQ) is how a consumer assesses the superiority or excellence of a service, which can be subjective and varies from one guest to another. Additionally, Petrick (2004) stated that high-quality guest experiences could lead to

customer satisfaction and their perception of value, affecting repurchase intentions. Matzler et al. (2006) also contributed research in which it was determined that PSQ and price influenced perceptions of value.

Furthermore, a study on Montenegrin destinations determined a significant connection between a hotel's ST and the probability of their RV (Popovic et al., 2018). However, the criteria for guest satisfaction were noted to be significantly different between Eastern and Western European tourists. These findings are consistent with research concerning PQ in Indonesia in which the author found that price is the most significant influential aspect of young adult tourist satisfaction towards the hostel business (Permatasari, 2020).

Therefore, the authors developed four items to evaluate a poshtel's PQ for the study, which included *poshtels having good service quality* (x1), *poshtels are comfortable* (x2), *poshtels providing a wide variety of styles* (x3). Finally, *poshtels are trendy and fashionable* (x4).

Guest Satisfaction (ST)

Giese and Cote (2000) reported a wide variance in the definitions of satisfaction. However, Hoffman and Bateson (2006) stated that ST could be defined as comparing guest expectations and service perceptions. This is consistent with five-star ranking systems, such as in the United Kingdom, where top-tier rooms must also have fitness and spa facilities. In France, standards are controlled by the French Government, with five-star hotel rooms now required to have air-conditioning rooms of at least 24 square meters (Amey, 2015; Chavanne, 2019). Hotel staff is also required to be able to communicate in English and one other language. Furthermore, competitively focused organizations rely on service quality and consumer satisfaction to sustain competitive advantages (Angelova & Zekiri, 2011).

In the transportation sector, passenger satisfaction is frequently connected to *reliability*, which consists of being on-time, consistent, frequency, and speed (Dzisi et al., 2021; Kaewwongwattana et al., 2016). Other factors related to ST are correlated to the staff's happiness. In India, Nandhini and Santhanalakshmi (2022) examined posh hotel employee retention and determined that demographic factors were vital to job satisfaction.

Therefore, the authors developed four items to evaluate a poshtel's ST for the study, which included '*my poshtel was happy to meet me*' (y1), '*I was happy with my poshtel's service*' (y2), '*My poshtel stay was excellent*' (y3), and '*overall, I am delighted with the poshtel I stayed at*'

(y4).

Brand Loyalty (BL)

Multiple studies have reported that creating and maintaining current customer BL is essential in creating competitive environments (Chuenban et al., 2021; McMullan & Gilmore, 2008). Furthermore, within the tourism sector, research conducted in China by Shi et al. (2019) concluded that a traveler's perception of a hostel's 'homeliness' and the community's local culture significantly affected a guest's loyalty to their accommodations. This is very similar to an Airbnb study from Mody and Hanks (2020) which stated that a consumer's authenticity experience is a critical factor in BL. Han and Back (2008) added that from other past studies examining guest experiences and loyalty, there was significant and positive guest satisfaction from favorable service experiences. This is consistent with Ali et al. (2014), who also saw positive service experiences as having a significant and positive effect on hotel BL.

Therefore, the authors developed four items to evaluate a poshtel's BL for the study, which included '*poshtels offer good value for their price*' (y5), '*this poshtel was my first choice*' (y6), '*I will recommend my poshtel to others*' (y7), and '*I can always trust this poshtel*' (y8).

Revisit Intention (RV)

In Bali, Dewani et al. (2019) examined RV and stated that a traveler's positive impressions encourage RV and word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations to friends and family. In Malaysia, Alfaisaly et al. (2022) examined 401 tourists from the Middle East and determined that electronic WOM (eWOM) significantly influenced how others perceived their experiences. Han and Jeong (2013) also determined that positive RV and WOM experiences influence recommendations. For Chinese visitors to Hong Kong, Huang and Hsu (2009) found a positive correlation with their RV after a pleasurable shopping experience.

Cossío-Silva et al. (2019) also examined numerous global studies. They reported that destination loyalty (DL) is a crucial topic in many studies which in reality is RV and intent to recommend (WOM). These findings are similar to Chou (2013), who investigated Taiwanese night markets and determined that the destination's image significantly and positively affected visitor satisfaction, increasing their RV and destination loyalty.

Therefore, the following three manifest variables were identified for the study's revisit intention (RV) analysis. These included the '*I am*

thinking about revisiting this area and staying at this poshtel' (y9), 'I would like to stay again soon at this poshtel' (y10), and 'If I return to this area, I am positive that I will book this poshtel again' (y11).

Therefore, from the literature review and related theory, the authors propose the following six hypotheses:

Research Hypotheses

The authors conceptualized the following six hypotheses:

H1: Perceived Quality (PQ) directly influences Guest Satisfaction (ST).

H2: Perceived Quality (PQ) directly influences Brand Loyalty (BL).

H3: Perceived Quality (PQ) directly influences Revisit Intention (RV).

H4: Guest Satisfaction (ST) directly influences Brand Loyalty (BL).

H5: Guest Satisfaction (ST) directly influences Revisit Intention (RV).

H6: Brand Loyalty (BL) directly influences Revisit Intention (RV).

METHODS

The Methods section provides an overview of the methods and materials used in the study.

Population and Sampling

Foreign travelers to Thailand who stayed in a regional poshtel comprised the study's population. These included one of ten Thai poshtels in Krabi (The Snooz Hotel), Chiang Mai (Strips The Poshtel, Bedgasm Poshtel x Café & Fashèn Poshtel Bed, OON Poshtel x Café), Bangkok (The Quarter Bangkok & The Posh Phayathai-A Luxury Hostel) and Phuket (Bandai Poshtel, Box Poshtel Phuket & Phuket Marine Poshtel) identified from the travel portal <https://travel.kapook.com/>. According to Loehlin (1992) and Kline (2011), CFA and SEM studies should include a minimum sample size of 200 people.

Therefore, each questionnaire collection team was given the competitive goal of collecting 50 questionnaires from each of the ten poshtels identified for the study and from which the management had gained permission. This strengthened the survey in case of any questionnaire non-response errors, as there was no chance to return to the areas to conduct another survey (Cornish, 2002). From July 2019 to August 2019, the teams requested to speak with every ^{fifth} poshtel guest to participate in the survey, during which a free coffee would be offered. From this process, 405 questionnaires were collected.

Research Tools

The questionnaire used for data collection had six parts. Part 1 contained six items about each guest's gender, age, education level, relationship status, profession, and poshtel stay duration. Parts 2-6 used a 7-level opinion scale, with a '7' indicating a strong agreement with the item's statement, a '4' as a moderate amount of agreement, and a '1' used to indicate strong disagreement.

Analysis of the Data

The preliminary CFA goodness-of-fit (GoF) analysis and follow-on SEM used LISREL 9.10 software for the analysis. Also, various outputs from the software analysis were used to validate the SEM's goodness-of-fit (GoF). Commonly accepted standards include chi-square (χ^2) being not significant ($p \geq 0.05$) with $\chi^2/df \leq 2.00$. Also, the suggested primary GoF indices (GFI ≥ 0.90) usually contain the SRMR (≤ 0.05), the RMSEA (≤ 0.05) (Daengneam et al., 2023), the likelihood ratio χ^2 , the CFI (≥ 0.90), and the AGFI (≥ 0.90) (Byrne et al., 1989; Hooper et al., 2008; Jöreskog et al., 2016). Tavakol and Dennick (2011) also suggest that Cronbach's α score be ≥ 0.70 .

RESULTS

This section details the results from the CFA goodness-of-fit assessment, descriptive statistics analysis, and final hypotheses testing.

Poshtel Guest Characteristics ($n = 405$)

The analysis of Part 1's questionnaire responses determined that 58.77% of the poshtel guests were men, single (56.54%), and between the ages of 21-30 (70.62%). Another 19.01% were aged 31-40, and 10.37% were 41 or over. The researchers found education levels low, with 20.74% having yet to finish high school and another 16.30% having an undergraduate degree. Also, 38.77% depended on their families for income. Finally, most visitors only intended to stay for two nights (35.06%).

The CFA Goodness-of-Fit (GOF) Assessment

The CFA's GOF analysis determined that the model was consistent with the data, with $\chi^2 = 0.98$, CFI = 1.00, $\chi^2/df = 0.67$, GFI = 0.98, NFI = 0.99, AGFI = 0.97, RMR = 0.01, SRMR = 0.01, RMSEA = 0.00, and α was 0.89-0.94 (Cho & Kim, 2015).

CFA Results

Table 1 shows the CFA analysis results. In the first column, we see the results from the α (.87-.90), indicative of questionnaire pre-testing being suitable to excellent. In the second column of results, we see the

values for the AVE (0.66-0.76), which is part of the construct validity assessment (Hair Jr. et al., 2021; Jöreskog et al., 2016). Also, Manly (1994) has reported that model fit occurs when all construct variables have a value of ≥ 0.60 . Thus, the model showed it was consistent with the data as all factor loadings were ≥ 0.6 (0.77-0.93) (Table 1).

Table 1: CFA analysis results

Construct	α	Average Variance Extracted	CR	Observed variables	Factor loading	R ²
PQ	0.90	0.69	0.90	Poshtels have good service quality (x1).	0.93	0.86
				Poshtels are comfortable (x2).	0.81	0.64
				Poshtels provide a wide variety of styles (x3).	0.79	0.63
				Poshtels are trendy and fashionable (x4).	0.79	0.63
ST	0.89	0.74	0.92	My poshtel was happy to meet me (y1).	0.84	0.71
				I was happy with my poshtel's service (y2).	0.86	0.73
				My poshtel stay experience was excellent (y3).	0.88	0.78
				I am delighted with the poshtel I stayed in (y4).	0.87	0.75
BL	0.86	0.76	0.93	Poshtels offer good value for their price (y5)	0.87	0.75
				This poshtel was my first choice (y6).	0.89	0.78
				I will recommend my poshtel to others (y7).	0.90	0.80
				I can always trust this poshtel (y8).	0.83	0.69
RV	0.87	0.66	0.85	I am considering revisiting this area and staying in this poshtel (y9).	0.87	0.75
				I want to stay again soon in this poshtel (y10).	0.77	0.59
				I will book this poshtel (y11) if I return to this area.	0.79	0.62

Relationship Effects Between Latent Variables

In Table 2, the relationship effects between the latent variables are shown. This includes the direct effect (DE), indirect effect (IE), and total effects (TE) (Chen et al., 2010), confirming the positive effects of the SEM causal variables on poshtel guest RV, whose combination explains

the factors influencing RV (R^2) by 76%. Finally, the constructs influencing RV from highest to lowest were PQ (0.87), BL (0.54), and ST (0.34).

Table 2: Construct estimated values

Dependent variables	R^2	Effects	Independent variables		
			PQ	ST	BL
ST	.82	DE	0.91**		
		IE	-		
		TE	0.91**		
BL	.84	DE	0.48**	0.48**	
		IE	0.44**	-	
		TE	0.92**	0.48**	
RV	.76	DE	0.31*	0.08	0.54**
		IE	0.56**	0.26*	-
		TE	0.87**	0.34*	0.54**

Note. *Sig. $\leq .05$, **Sig. $\leq .01$

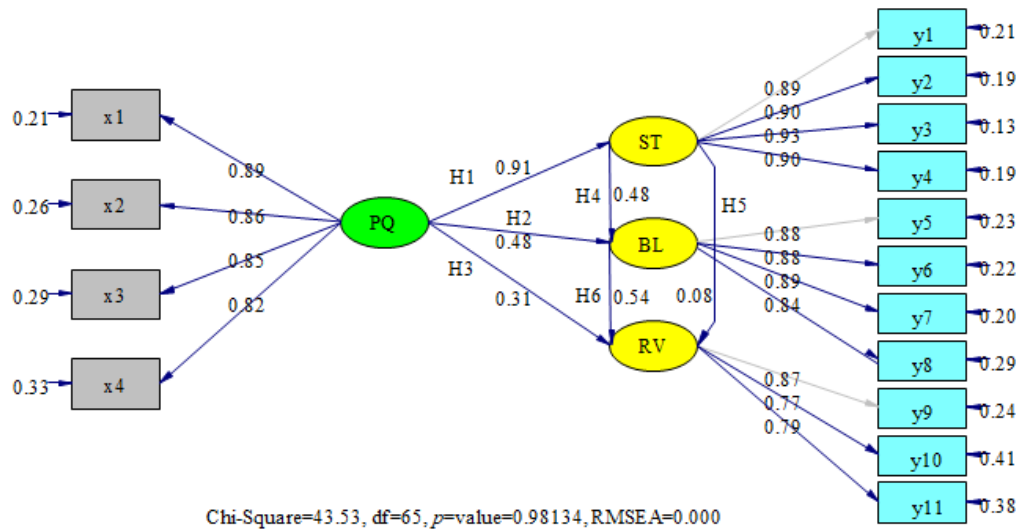
Furthermore, Table 3 shows that internal consistency was achieved as all variables were ≥ 0.70 (Hair Jr. et al., 2021). Figure 1 also shows the LISREL 9.1 software's final SEM. Table 4 details the six hypotheses' final testing results.

Table 3: Constructs Affecting RV

Constructs	PQ	ST	BL	RV
PQ	1.00			
ST	.87**	1.00		
BL	.86**	.88**	1.00	
RV	.76**	.77**	.80**	1.00
AVE	0.73	0.81	0.76	0.66
Construct reliability (CR)	0.92	0.94	0.92	0.85
$\sqrt{AVE}$	0.85	0.90	0.87	0.81

Note. **Sig. $\leq .01$

Figure 1: Final model of constructs Influencing poshtel guest revisit intention



Source: The authors.

Table 4. Final SEM hypotheses testing

Hypotheses Conceptualization	Correlation coefficient s	t-test values	p values	Hypothesis confirmatio n
H1: Perceived Quality (PQ) directly influences Guest Satisfaction (ST).	0.91	19.40	$p \leq .01$	confirmed
H2: Perceived Quality (PQ) directly influences Brand Loyalty (BL).	0.48	5.89	$p \leq .01$	confirmed
H3: Perceived Quality (PQ) directly influences Revisit Intention (RV).	0.31	2.71	$p \leq .05$	confirmed
H4: Guest Satisfaction (ST) directly influences Brand Loyalty (BL).	0.48	5.73	$p \leq .01$	confirmed
H5: Guest Satisfaction (ST) directly influences Revisit Intention (RV).	0.08	0.82	-	unconfirme d
H6: Brand Loyalty (BL) directly influences Revisit Intention (RV).	0.54	4.20	$p \leq .01$	confirmed

DISCUSSION

Study results concluded that all the factors influenced a poshtel guest's RV, as the combined influence was 76% (R^2). Furthermore, stated in

importance by ranking were PQ (0.87), BL (0.54), and ST (0.34) on RV. Interestingly, this study confirmed other international hostel studies in which guests were older than many might suspect (Schmalbruch, 2015). In our case, nearly 30% were 31 or over, with the majority being single (56.54%). These findings are similar to an MMGY worldwide traveler survey in which 25% reported they traveled solo (Ellwood, 2018). Furthermore, many female travelers view poshtels as a safe environment for social networking. Many have also voiced their liking for what is referred to as the 'Ikea effect' (comfort surroundings) (Ellwood, 2018), access to nightlife and public transportation, free Wi-Fi, budget accommodations, and large communal areas.

Perceived Quality (PQ) Hypotheses Testing

From the study's SEM analysis, the relationship from PQ to ST in H1 was determined to be exceptionally strong and positive ($r = 0.91$, $t\text{-value} = 19.40$, $p \leq 0.01$) (Moore et al., 2013). Also, the relationship from PQ to BL in H2 was moderate and positive ($r = 0.48$, $t\text{-value} = 5.89$, $p \leq 0.05$). Finally, the inter-relationship between PQ and BL in H3 was weak but positive ($r = 0.31$, $t\text{-value} = 2.71$, $p \leq 0.05$).

These findings are consistent with Chi et al. (2020), whose 12 dimension of PQ and their revelations about rural tourism are an excellent solution to the strict social distancing requirement urban visitors experienced under the COVID-19 lockdowns in China. Rural tourism in mainland China is regarded as an effective strategy for sustainable economic and social development (Wang et al., 2019).

Guest Satisfaction (ST) Hypotheses Testing

The relationship from ST to BL in H4 was also determined to be exceptionally strong and positive ($r = 0.91$, $t\text{-value} = 19.40$, $p \leq 0.01$). However, the ST and RV inter-relationship in H5 was determined to be unsupported.

In past years, some hotel managers believed obtaining new guests was their best marketing strategy. However, recent studies have suggested that guaranteeing customer loyalty is a more cost-effective strategy, with guest satisfaction being a key aspect (Maroco & Maroco, 2013; Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999). Furthermore, various authors and studies have reported on ST, with some suggesting that an increase of 5% in guest retention increases profits by 25%-95% (Willott, 2019). Also, obtaining new guests is 6-7 times more expensive than keeping an existing one. Finally, satisfied guests tell 9-10 people, while dissatisfied guests will tell 15-20.

Brand Loyalty (BL) Hypotheses Testing

Moreover, the relationship between BL and RV in H6 was moderate and positive ($r = 0.54$, $t\text{-value} = 4.20$, $p \leq 0.01$). This is consistent with Hoyer and MacInnis (2001), which determined that guest satisfaction is the foundation of a firm's success, leading to repeat purchases, positive WOM, and BL. This is also consistent with Heskett (2002), who stated that BL is critical for an organization to maintain a competitive edge.

Revisit Intention (RV) Analysis Results

The study's findings were also supported by other scholars in whom a traveler's attitude significantly influenced RV (Goh, 2015; Han & Kim, 2010). Other factors include consumer experiences such as entertainment, education, aesthetics, and escapism (the 4Es) (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Ali et al. (2014) also reported on the importance of a resort's entertainment in motivating a traveler's potential to book and stay. Richardson (2000) added that resort hotels should have adequate, pleasant, and convenient indoor amenities where aesthetics remain integral. Finally, quite interestingly, Rita et al. (2016) have noted that although the common perception is that hostels are thought to attract young budget travelers, today, this is not true as Lisbon, Portugal hostels attract older guests who view sociability as a critical determinant in RV. Thus, hostel managers should focus on creating a social environment that allows guests of all ages to interact to retain their guests' loyalty. However, the COVID-19 pandemic social distancing protocols left owners and guests in a conundrum about what to do (Hamdi, 2020; Yurayat & Tuklang, 2023).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Before the global COVID-19 pandemic, Thailand was on track for 40 million foreign guests in 2019, many of whom would opt to stay in an upscale boutique hostel or 'poshtel.' With the ever-increasing demographic changes in international travelers and their desire to find more luxurious but inexpensive accommodations, the authors needed to evaluate the factors affecting their RV in Thai poshtels. Numerous studies have detailed the methods in which poshtel proprietors can increase and satisfy their guest's experience, with the authors agreeing with Reichheld and Scheffer (2000) that customer attraction is far less effective than customer retention, and Thailand's entrepreneurial poshtel owners should focus on making their guest's experiences exceptional. There also needs to be careful attention given to which guests they want to return and how they will use social media sources to relate their experiences (good or bad eWOM) (Alfaisaly et al., 2022). Further exploration must be undertaken to explore the 'social value' element in a poshtel's guest revisit intention, as COVID-19's social distancing requirements and the shutdown of international tourism

has destroyed countless independent hostels/poshtels worldwide. Also, part of the great success story before COVID-19 was the location and accessibility. However, that has also changed as many places have closed their doors without international travelers to pay the rent.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study.

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