

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The first and sole genuine spa resort in Thailand was established in 1972. Its popularity was fluctuated and finally faded out. In the year 2000, the spa industry was revived again and became in trend among certain groups of the population like celebrities and customers of five-star hotels in Thailand. This new spa has been in a form of Beauty and Relaxation Salon with the combination of mineral or herb bath, massage, aromatherapy and beauty treatment. Later, it was expanded downwardly to be more public in various affordable forms such as Day Spa, Destination Spa and Medical Spa and so on.

According to the research of Intelligent Spa, it was indicated that Thai spa business growth increased 154% since 2002. From the Thailand Spa Benchmark Report 2002-2010, it was stated that the 2007 revenue from spa business was 8.3 billion Baht, a 200% increase from 2002. Besides, in an article titled “Thai Spa Goes Inter!” (2008), citing Thansettakij, August 7-9, 2008, it was stated that the Tourism Authority of Thailand made an announcement to promote spa business globally aiming to be the spa hub of Asia.

In a view of the spa business in other countries, spa gains huge reputation. One of their services includes Thai traditional massage and spa treatment. The growth of the spa business is high. For example, in Canada, from Leading Spas of Canada’s record (2004), the number of spa operations, located all over the country, was increased by 62% from 2002-2004. The national revenue from the spa industry increased 146% in two years. In 2001, the revenue was Canadian \$610 million, while in 2003, it was up to CDN \$1.5 billion.

With the above two core supportive references, the rapid growth of spa business domestically and globally has been proved; one of the subsequent problems was the lack of spa attendants compared to the escalated requirement of standardized Thai spa attendants from both local and international spa operations. Consequently, the spa operators have faced the non-stopping problems of a high turnover and shortage of them, directly affecting the service quality customers prioritized on.

However, there have been no studies focusing on high therapist turnover. Most of the studies have focused on customer satisfaction with spa services, frequency of visits by customers and like or dislike of spa products.

For instance, in 2006, Kitisuda Parnkul carried out research on customer's satisfaction with spa services at Sivalai Spa. Her objective was to reveal the degree of satisfaction of repeated and first-time customers with the overall Sivalai's spa service quality.

Hence, in this study, the reasons affecting the frequent job resignation, the career expectations and the preference to select the workplace will be questioned and subsequently studied.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

Main Problem

1. What are the spa therapists' choices and expectations leading to their preference in working in Thailand and abroad?

Sub Problems

1. What is the feasible outcome in their spa career?
2. What are the alternatives affecting therapist's selection of workplace?
3. How do external sources affect therapist's expectations?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Main Objective

1. To compare the preference of spa therapists in working domestically and abroad in terms of their expectations.

Sub Objectives

1. To examine the feasible outcome from their career.
2. To investigate the alternatives affecting their selection.
3. To measure the effect of external sources on their expectation.

1.4 VARIABLES AND DEFINITIONS

In order to fulfill the understanding of this study, the relevant definitions of variables are provided as followings:-

Variable	Conceptual Definition	Operational Definition	Indicators
Alternative	A choice between 2 or more things	An option of workplace	Work in Thailand, work abroad
Expectation	A thing looked forward to; anticipation	Attainment in career	Needs achievement
Feasible	Capable of being done or carried out	Work potential	Actually gained, soon exist
Income	Money earned from working	Monthly cash earning from working	Money, Tip, Commission
Information	Facts about a situation, person, event, etc.	Wording, Statement	Working experience in abroad
Marital	Related to marriage	The present official position of marriage	Single, Married, Divorced, Separated
Outcome	The way something turns out; result	Advantage or attainment in career	Money, Promotion, Benefit
External source	The external place things come from	The external institute or workplace	Friend, Colleague
Preference	Likelihood, advantage people get, choice	Advantage from career, choice in career	Decision, selection
Therapist	One who acts on a curative treatment	One who specializes in spa operation	Spa attendant

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The two focus groups of this study are 140 therapists who work in an international spa salon and take the training in the government institutes and in the private institutes. The instrument using for data collection in December 2008 is in the form of a questionnaire. Therefore, the result of this study will represent the opinions of the therapists who work or are trained by that time only.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This academic research is aimed to examine the spa therapists' opinions reflecting their anticipation and workplace selection. The findings of this research may be significant to spa operators in terms of the awareness of their therapists' expectations and preference which may lead to a decrease in the turnover rate and enhance the service standard arising from the long-term staff. In addition, the results of this study may be beneficial to anyone who is considering to work in this field.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This study of preference of spa therapist to work in Thailand and abroad in this paper is divided into five chapters:

Chapter One provides background, statement of the problems, objectives of study, definitions of relevant variables including scope, significance of the study.

Chapter Two focuses on the literature review regarding spa definitions, the pertinent theories, concepts and previous studies.

Chapter Three explains the research methodology in aspects of subjects, materials, procedures and data analysis.

Chapter Four illustrates the results of the research presented in tables and descriptive statements.

Chapter Five presents the conclusion of the study, discusses the overall results and recommends some additional issues for the other researchers to further study.

The last part of the paper is references and the appendix with the questionnaire used to gather data for this study in both Thai and English versions. In field work, the researcher distributed the Thai version.