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EXPLORING THE EXCELLENCE: UNRAVELING THE SERVICE QUALITY OF TOUR BUS OPERATORS IN THAILAND

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Abstract

Chartered buses or tour buses have become a prevalent mode of transportation for tourists in Thailand, owing to the inadequate, inconvenient, and time-consuming public transport infrastructure. Given the intensifying competition, it is imperative for tour bus operators to provide high-quality services. This study aimed to identify the management problems faced by tour bus entrepreneurs and examine service quality from the perspective of users. To achieve this, both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed, with a sample group comprising 100 bus company representatives, including owners, executives, and employees, as well as 400 bus users, comprising tour guides and tourists selected via purposive sampling. Data was collected through interviews and questionnaires. The findings indicated that the main management problems faced by bus companies were caused by internal factors, including planning and staffing, while existing regulations also affected bus operations. Moreover, customers were least satisfied with the quality of service in terms of empathy. Statistical analysis revealed significant differences between overall service quality expectations and perceptions at the 0.01 level. Furthermore, significant differences were found in terms of assurance, tangibles, reliability, and responsiveness at the 0.01 level. These results provide bus entrepreneurs with guidelines to develop their management and services.

Keywords: Tour Bus, Transportation for Tourism, Service Quality, Logistics

Introduction

The travel and tourism industry plays a significant role worldwide, and Thailand is no exception. Thailand has heavily relied on tourism, with the tourism industry directly contributing 5.65 percent to the gross domestic product (GDP) in Thailand as of the first quarter of 2020 (Statista, 2023). The three main sectors supported by tourism are hotels and restaurants, wholesale and retail trade, and transportation. Transportation has played a pivotal role in the development of domestic and international tourism (Page, 2009). Rodrigue (2020) asserts that transport is both the cause and the effect of tourism growth, as improved transport facilities have incited tourism, and the expansion of tourism has incited the development of transport infrastructure. Tourist transportation modes comprise road transport, including private vehicles and rental vehicles, air passenger transport, water passenger transport, and land passenger transport (United Nations, 2010), which are significant contributors to generating revenue in the tourism industry, accounting for 46.5 percent of total revenue (Waeoraweewong & Vor-Sittha, 2018). Road transport expenses for tourists generally rank second highest among transport expenditure incurred on a trip, after air passenger transport, which ranks first (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2018).

This study focuses on the tourist bus service (also known as sightseeing bus, chartered bus, or hired bus) in Thailand, as it significantly enhances tourists' journeys in Thailand (Jomnonkwao et al, 2015). This is because it enables tourists to access attractions comfortably without time constraints and facilitates group excursions more than public transportation can provide. The public transportation network in Thailand has limited linkage between primary and secondary tourist attractions (Waeoraweewong & Vor-Sittha, 2018). Tourist bus services are becoming increasingly popular in Thailand, with the proportion of tourist buses operated by private entrepreneurs increasing from 34% in 2011 to 68% in 2015 (SCB Economic Intelligence Center, 2016), while the proportion of public buses has decreased considerably.

As the Thai tourism industry grows, demand for road vehicles has increased, resulting in a corresponding increase in the number of tour bus operators (SCB Economic Intelligence Center, 2016). As tour bus services become an essential mechanism for driving the Thailand tourism industry, bus entrepreneurs require guidance to improve their services to be more qualified and competitive. Ratanavaraha & Jomnonkwao (2014) investigated users' expectations of drivers of sightseeing buses and found that, in business competition, if bus entrepreneurs do not improve their services, they have to quit the businesses. Bajada & Titheridge (2017) found that good quality transport services help create a positive impression and add convenience for visitors. Therefore, this research aims to identify management problems in tourist bus companies and measure tourist bus service quality from users' perspectives based on the five determinants of quality, namely Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy. The results will be used to propose potential guidelines for developing bus operators' management and service provision.

Literature Review

Management Functions

Harold D. Koontz and Heinz Weihrich defined the management process in five aspects (POSDC): Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, and Controlling (Koontz & Weihrich, 2015). These five aspects have been widely recognized as critical components of effective management and are frequently applied in various fields of business and management including hospitality and tourism. 'Planning' is a process in setting goals, policies, structures, and the course of action to achieve the objectives. Management must be capable of predicting social, economic, and political situations correctly and accurately, as well as making the right decision for their business. 'Organizing' refers to the process of setting relationships among the members of the organizational structure. The relationship is created in the form of a clear set

of authority, duties, and responsibilities of each division to avoid duplication of work. Organizing helps managers to establish a clear chain of command and ensures that employees know their roles and responsibilities. 'Staffing' is concerned with human resource management of an organization from recruitment, effective selection, appointment, appraisal, and development of personnel to the end of employment. Staffing helps managers to ensure that the organization has the necessary human resources to achieve its goals. 'Directing' or commanding is concerned with stimulating personnel to work and to be enthusiastic for the accomplishment of the organization's goals. Therefore, the management must have leadership, motivation and good human relations. 'Controlling' is the process of observing and monitoring operations of individuals in an organization to ensure that activities have been carried out in conformity with the plans and the standards set by the organization. If the performance is not in accordance with the planned goals, corrective action must be implemented to ensure accomplishment of objectives. The controlling process may be done in the form of budget auditing, inspections, reporting or performance evaluation.

Measurement of Service Quality

Service quality consists of a comparison of the difference between expectations before receiving services and the understanding after receiving services which can be assessed by SERQUAL according to Parasuraman et al. (1988). Parasuraman proposed that SERQUAL is a multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality. This model enables service providers to better understand the service expectations and perceptions of consumers and, as a result, improve their services. It has been used in a variety of service contexts (Shah et al., 2020), including air industry (Sriboonlue, 2022), tourism, hospitality, healthcare, and banking. After conducting series of studies targeted at identifying and measuring service quality, Parasuraman found that service quality perceived by customers can be assessed along five dimensions. (1) Tangibles refers to adequate physical facilities. Tangibles are defined " as the appearance of equipment, personnel, and communication Physical appearance is the appearance of the equipment, appearance of the personnel, the look of renovation" (Anwar, 2017). (2) Reliability refers to a situation where a promised service is performed dependably, accurately, and regularly. In transport service, Daskalakis & Stathopoulos (2008) explained that reliability focuses on reducing travel time and reducing travel time variability. Such variability may lead to vagueness of arrival time. Anwar (2017) explained that reliability is a companies' ability to perform assured service and honor its promises. (3) Responsiveness refers to commitment and willingness to help customers as well as ability to provide fast and prompt service. Yao & Ding (2011) explained that responsiveness includes drivers' patience, response towards bookings, managing complaints, and making efficient route arrangements once a destination is assigned. (4) Assurance means that the service provider must have knowledge and skills, competence, honesty, and politeness. This credibility assures customers a courteous and secure service. Communication languages are identified as one of the elements in assurance, in addition to elements such as knowledge of routes, availability of security facilities, small changes, and receipts (Yao & Ding, 2011). (5) Empathy means caring and providing individualized attention and effort to understand customer needs. Moreover, empathy covers driver knowledge of tourist spots, warm service, and honesty (Yao & Ding, 2011).

Parasuraman proposed that the service quality is a function of the differences between customers' expectation and service providers' performance along the quality dimensions. If expectations are greater than performance, then perceived quality is less than satisfactory and customers' dissatisfactions occur. The gap between expectations and perceptions is calculated by subtracting the perception score from expectation score. The five determinants of quality have been applied to measure the service quality of various service sectors and to improve quality of services to satisfy customer's needs (Ojo et al., 2014). Ojo et al. (2014) found that,

in the context of transportation services, the satisfaction of passengers can be assessed by comparing expectations before travel with the actual experience. Barabino et al. (2012) applied the SERVQUAL approach to measure service quality in urban bus transport. Earl & Too (2010) used this framework to measure public transport services within a master-planned community in Australia. In the context of taxi service quality, Yao & Ding (2011) applied the SERVPERF scale, which is developed from the SERVQUAL model of Parasuraman, to evaluate the taxi service quality in China. They found that all five dimensions of service quality (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy) were significantly and positively correlated with satisfaction.

Logistics Service Quality Measurement

Logistics service quality serves as a metric for evaluating logistics services to which a logistics services provider meets or exceeds the expectations of its customers. Where competition among businesses is intense, logistics plays a pivotal role due to its significance in satisfying customer needs (Gulc, 2017). Many research papers indicate that customer satisfaction is closely linked to the quality of transportation or logistics services performances (Mentzer et al., 1999) (Cheunkamon et al., 2022). The concept of logistics service quality started in the early of the twentieth century when Shaw (1915) acknowledged the role of physical distribution. Mentzer et al. (1989) argued that there are two elements existing in the service delivery: marketing customer service and physical distribution service (PDS). They also reveal the existence of three main dimensions of PDS comprising of availability, timeliness, and quality. The availability dimension means enough stocks, percent orders, units filled. The timeliness dimension refers to consistent delivery and order cycle time reliability within the specified time frame. Lastly, the quality dimension is represented by smallest damage in transit and order-filling accuracy (Mentzer et al., 1989).

The quality of PSD is considered a component of logistics service quality (LSQ). Mentzer et al. (2001) identified nine dimensions of LSQ consisting of personal contact quality, order release quantities, information quality, ordering procedures, order accuracy, order condition, order quality, order discrepancy handling, and timeliness.

As far as LSQ measurement from a customer perspective is concerned, Juran & Gryna (1970) suggest four quality dimensions: capacity, availability, reliability, and maintainability. Parasuraman et al. (1988) develop and refine SERVQUAL as detailed in the former section. These dimensions of service quality developed in such two studies are partially reflected in most subsequent quality scales (Gulc, 2017). Franceschini & Rafele (2000) compare the five dimensions of the SERVQUAL framework with the logistic quality dimensions indicated by practitioners and found that every dimension of the SERVQUAL model has its equivalent in indicators of logistics service quality except of the empathy. Since the five dimensions of SERVQUAL are comprehensive and have been recognized for some time, and there is no universally accepted model for measuring LSQ (Gulc, 2017), this study utilized the five dimensions to evaluate the service quality of tour bus operators.

Laws of Thailand Regulating the Operation of Tourist Buses

The main legislation regulating the operation of tourist bus providers is the Land Transport Act 1979. This Act controls and organizes road transport, and governs transportation operations, transport management, vehicle conditions, drivers, and bus stations under the supervision of the Department of Land Transport (DLT), Ministry of Transport. Section 23 requires that any person who wishes to operate a transportation business must obtain a license from the DLT prior to starting the business. Operating a transportation business without a license is liable for imprisonment not exceeding five years and a fine from 20,000 to 100,000 THB, or both. Section 27 defines four categories of transportation licenses, and stipulates that a tour bus operator with no regular schedule and no fixed route must apply for a "License to Operate Non-

fixed Route Transport," which will be issued if the requirements of candidate operators, drivers and vehicles are satisfied.
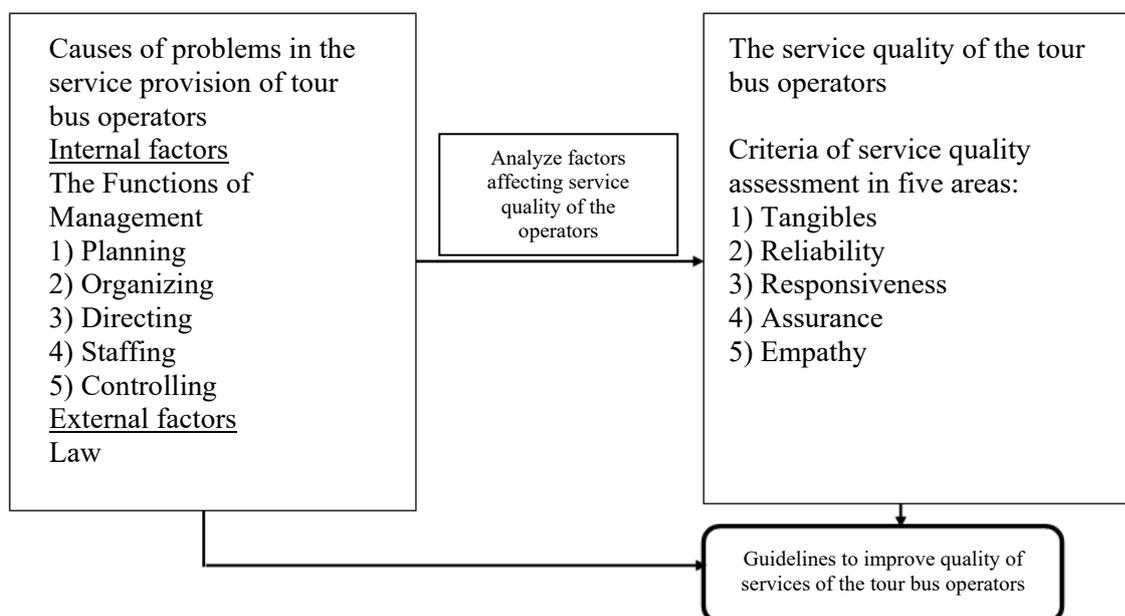
Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Research Methodology

The population and sample used in this research are divided into two groups. The first group is the tour bus operators with non-fixed route, who provide tourist transport service in Thailand of unknown number. The researcher, therefore, used the overall statistics of licensed operators providing fixed-route and non-fixed route bus services in Bangkok and vicinity with a total number of 3,332 operators (Department of Land Transport, 2014). This group consists of 100 business owners, executives, operational employees, and drivers possessing a driver's license to drive non-fixed route vehicles. The sample size was derived from Taro Yamane's formula (Yamane, 1967). The prescribed sample size for this type of study is 97; the researcher rounded this number up to 100 for convenience. Key informants were purposively selected. The second group is tourists who use tour bus operators from the first group with unknown exact number. Also using the formula of Taro Yamane (Yamane, 1967), the prescribed sample size is 385. The researcher rounded this number up to 400 for convenience by purposive sampling.

This research combined qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The two self-administered questionnaires were used to quantitatively collect information from the two groups of key informants. The questionnaire for the first sample group consists of three parts i.e., general information; opinions about internal factors in the company management (divided into five areas, namely, planning, organizing, directing, staffing, and controlling); and legal factors affecting service delivery. The questionnaire for the second sample group consists of general information and quality of service of the tour bus operators divided into five areas (tangibles, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy). The quantitative data were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis (percentages, mean, standard deviation) and hypothesis testing (using paired t-test).

The qualitative component consisted of in-depth interviews with key informants using an unstructured interview guideline. The questions used in the interview consist of personal information, company information, internal factors of company management, and external factors of law and service quality. Content analysis was used to process the qualitative data.

The research team conducted the data collection over a period of one year.

Research Findings
Results of the Survey from the Tour Bus Operators
The first part of the survey includes data from the questionnaire of 100 service providers regarding the internal management factors. It was found that the respondents had opinions on the overall management at the "agreed" level (3.878). When considering each aspect, the level of opinion was at the level of "agreed" with all aspects as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Opinion of company's management

Company's management	Mean	Standard deviation	Level of opinion
Planning	3.5728	.97665	Agreed
Organizing	4.0432	.69053	Agreed
Staffing	3.8280	.71088	Agreed
Directing	3.9148	.69293	Agreed
Controlling	4.2060	.80509	Agreed
Overall management	**3.8780**	**.60857**	**Agreed**

The results of the interview with eight service providers revealed that the operators had modest and uncomplicated organizational management systems. However, there were problems in staffing, because some operators lacked quality drivers; and because some operators did not have a quality evaluation system and lacked clear performance appraisal of the drivers. The interview findings indicate that drivers were hesitant to operate tour buses due to the high level of driving skills and knowledge of routes required, as well as the associated health risks stemming from the unsafe work environment and working conditions (Jongrungrotsakul et al., 2018). As a result, the operators were compelled to engage less-qualified drivers.

The second part of the survey asked about legal factors affecting service provision. The 100 service providers who responded to the survey agreed that the law hinders operations at the highest level in the first two ranks: (1) working hours restrictions of drivers accounted for 29.6%; and (2) Imposing traffic rules in various tourist destinations accounted for 28.7%. In addition, legal problems and government policies were also found to be challenges to operations (from response in the open-ended questions section). According to the in-depth interviews with eight coach operators, it can be concluded that the operators focused on legal issues and had the strongest attitudes about those issues. They feel that some of the laws are useful while others pose considerable barriers to profitable business operations.

Results of Opinion Survey from the Service Users
The users who responded to the survey have high overall expectations for the quality of service, with an average score of 4.35. When considering individual aspects, users have the highest expectations for assurance, reliability, empathy, tangibles, and responsiveness, with average scores of 4.39, 4.36, 4.36, 4.33, and 4.32, respectively.

The users who responded to the survey have a high overall perception of service quality, with an average score of 3.87. When considering individual aspects, users perceive high quality service in every aspect, including reliability, responsiveness, assurance, tangibles, and empathy, with average scores of 3.89, 3.89, 3.87, 3.85, and 3.83, respectively.

When comparing the differences between the expectations and perceptions of the users, it was found that the services of the operators were lower than expected, with an average value of -0.49, signifying that the service quality was poor or unsatisfactory. When considering each aspect, it was found that the users were not satisfied with the level of empathy by the providers, as most assigned an average value of -0.53. Next most common was dissatisfaction with the provision of assurances for users, with an average value of -0.52. The users were not satisfied

with the quality of tangibles, with an average value of -0.49. In addition, the users were not satisfied with the reliability of the service, with an average value of -0.48. Finally, the users were dissatisfied with the responsiveness to customers' needs, with an average value of -0.43, respectively as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 The average and standard deviation of the difference between expectations and perceptions of service quality of service users

Criteria for evaluating service quality	P	E	(P-E)	S.D.	Service quality
Tangibles	3.85	4.33	-0.49	0.57	Dissatisfied
Reliability	3.89	4.36	-0.48	0.61	Dissatisfied
Assurance	3.87	4.39	-0.52	0.63	Dissatisfied
Responsiveness	3.89	4.32	-0.43	0.65	Dissatisfied
Empathy	3.83	4.36	-0.53	0.59	Dissatisfied
Overall	**3.87**	**4.35**	**-0.49**	**0.51**	**Dissatisfied**

To test the hypothesis of expectations and perception of service quality, the researcher compared expectations and perceptions of service quality of tour bus operators by using the Paired Sample t-test and found that the quality expectations for the overall service and perception of service quality were statistically significant at the 0.01 level. The users had an overall expectation of 4.35, while the overall service quality perception was 3.87, indicating that the users were not satisfied with the service of the operators. Upon examination of each aspect, it was found that in terms of tangibles, the expectation of service quality differs significantly from the perception of service quality at a statistically significant level of 0.01. Overall, service users have an expectation of 4.33 in this aspect, while the perception of service quality is 3.85. This indicates that service users are dissatisfied with the tangibles aspects of the service provided by the operator.

Upon consideration of reliability, it was found that the expectations of service quality differed significantly from the perception of service quality at a statistically significant level of 0.01. That is, the expectations for reliable service quality were different from the perception of reliable service quality. It was found that the overall expectations of users in this aspect were 4.36, while the overall perception of service quality was 3.89, indicating that users were dissatisfied with the service provided by the business in terms of reliability.

In terms of assurance, it was found that the expectation of service quality differs significantly from the perception of service quality at a statistically significant level of 0.01. This means that the expectation of service quality in terms of assurance differs from the users' perception. It was found that the overall expectation in this aspect is 4.39 and the overall perception of service quality is 3.87, indicating that customers are dissatisfied with the service provided by the operators in terms of providing customer confidence.

In terms of customer responsiveness, it was found that the expectation of service quality differs significantly from the perceived service quality at a statistically significant level of 0.01. Specifically, the expectation of service quality in terms of customer responsiveness differs from the perceived service quality in the same area. Users of the service have an overall expectation score of 4.32 in this area, while the overall perceived service quality score is 3.89. This indicates that customers are dissatisfied with the level of service provided by the business in terms of responsiveness.

Regarding empathy, it was discovered that there is a significant statistical difference between the expected service quality and the perceived service quality at a significance level of 0.01. Specifically, the expectation of service quality in terms of empathy differs from the perceived service quality in terms of empathy. Users of the service have an overall expectation score of 4.36 in this area, while the overall perceived service quality score is 3.83. This indicates that

customers are dissatisfied with the level of service provided by the business in terms of empathy as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Test of hypothesis of expectations and perception of service quality

Service quality	Expectation/Perception	Mean	S.D.	Paired Samples t-test		
				t	df	Sig.
Tangibles	Expectation	**4.33**	0.55	**16.91****	397	0.00
	Perception	**3.85**	0.65			
Reliability	Expectation	**4.36**	0.53	**15.62****	399	0.00
	Perception	**3.89**	0.60			
Assurance	Expectation	**4.39**	0.53	**16.52****	399	0.00
	Perception	**3.87**	0.59			
Responsiveness	Expectation	**4.32**	0.56	**13.40****	399	0.00
	Perception	**3.89**	0.63			
Empathy	Expectation	**4.36**	0.57	**17.89****	399	0.00
	Perception	**3.83**	0.64			
Total	**Expectation Overall**	4.35	0.49	**18.86****	397	0.00
	Perception	3.87	0.54			

** The statistically significant level with a significant level of 0.01

Guidelines for Improving Tour Bus Operators' Management and Services
The researchers selected problematic issues identified from a survey of two groups of respondents to design questions for conducting in-depth interviews. The aim was to propose recommendations for improving the management and service provision of business operators. Results revealed that problems of the bus company management were mainly caused by internal factors in planning and staffing, while certain existing regulations affected the bus operation. It was found that customers were least satisfied with the quality of service in terms of lack of sympathy received.

In terms of problems in planning, the interviews revealed that the operators did not have an annual plan and rarely announced a business plan to their employees. Therefore, there should be an annual plan and announcement of the annual plan to employees in order to encourage them to work in the same direction. There should be risk assessment in various areas. In this regard, the researcher recommends that the DLT (as the agency responsible for granting licenses to tour operators) should prepare statistics on use of non-regular route sightseeing vehicles each year to help operators make investment decisions.

Several operators have encountered staffing issues due to a shortage of skilled drivers, limited personnel, and a lack of a quality evaluation system. As a result, these problems have adversely affected the business competitiveness of these operators. In their study, Ratanavaraha & Jomnonkwao (2014) discovered that driver qualifications are of paramount importance to users, and when a bus owner is unable to provide qualified drivers, users will seek out other companies. Therefore, operators need to expedite the recruitment and training of skilled drivers by focusing on improving driving abilities, utilizing car security devices, enhancing foreign language skills, and providing staff uniforms to elevate the presentation and professional image of their services. Additionally, Jomnonkwao et al. (2015) found that the cleanliness of a bus driver's uniform contributes significantly to the image of tour bus operators. Driving skills and route experience are essential, according to Ratanavaraha & Jomnonkwao (2014). Operators should also provide incentives, bonuses, compliments, welfare benefits, and paid leave to encourage and reward drivers who demonstrate professionalism and strive for efficient and effective performance.

The survey also revealed that in terms of empathy and responsiveness, the channels for receiving and managing customer feedback and complaints were ineffective. Customers expressed the need for continuous accessibility to business operators and prompt response to their complaints and needs. Utilizing technology to receive feedback and handle user complaints can partially resolve these issues and instill confidence in customers that they can reach the operator at any time. Additionally, operators should have staff available to assist with emergency situations and establish a customer relations unit that operates 24/7. Providing training in service psychology for staff and customer service personnel can also be beneficial. These guidelines will help improve the quality of service so that they favorably impress the service users and increase the competitiveness of the operators.

Conclusion and Discussion
The Causes of Management Problems of Tour Bus Operators
According to the statistical data obtained from the questionnaires, it was found that the service providers implemented internal management strategies based on the administrative processes proposed by Harold D. Koontz and Heinz Weihrich, which includes planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling (POSDC) which is relative to the research of Lozovaya et al. (2023) demonstrating that well management of the company will maximizing profits and improving reputation, maintaining a high level of quality, work, services, innovation, further development and building up strategic potential. This finding is supported by the qualitative data gathered from in-depth interviews, which revealed that larger operators placed greater emphasis on internal management practices. In contrast, smaller operators, typically run as family businesses with a limited number of staff, did not have a clearly defined management structure.

The qualitative data obtained from the interviews conducted highlight that internal factors within the management of the organization have resulted in issues in two key areas: (1) Planning: Insufficient collection of relevant information prior to planning, leading to inadequate decision-making; and (2) Staffing: The operators employed non-qualified drivers and recruited new employees without considering their qualifications. The underlying reason for this is the shortage of qualified drivers. In terms of policy, pertinent government agencies must address the shortage of qualified drivers since it poses a significant threat to user and road safety. According to statistics from the DLT, road traffic accidents are on the rise in Thailand, with driver behavior being the primary cause of such accidents. Therefore, pertinent government agencies must elevate the career of tour bus drivers to a more standardized and acceptable level to enhance salary base and align demand with supply. The proposed recommendation is consistent with the results of the Ministry of Labor's 2007 survey. Trakarnvachirahut et al. (2014) also found that the inclination of existing truck drivers to remain in their careers is highly influenced by factors such as career path opportunities, job security, job characteristics, relationships with colleagues, and the degree of pride in the profession.

External factors were identified as additional causes of problems in the management of tour bus operators. One of the most important external factors are legislation which is supported by the study of Chutiphongdech (2021), finding that a legislation element of PESTEL, plays the most crucial component and has the biggest impacts on Thailand public airports with an estimated weighted at 28% when comparing to other PESTEL elements. It is found that the traffic laws are not tailored to the country's context. Moreover, this study found that the government often introduces changes to the laws on vehicle specifications, usually as ad hoc measures, which are not part of a long-term planning framework. Sousa & Castañeda-Ayarza (2022) also found that legal factor together with other external factors including politics, economy, technology, socio-culture and ecologic have a significant influence on development

of Brazil's electric and hybrid vehicles industry. These external factors hinder the ability of operators to develop longer-term business plans, leading to increased operating costs. The study conducted by the Ministry of Labor of Thailand in 2007 on the employment situation of drivers in tourism transport also revealed that tour bus operators faced challenges related to high operating costs and intense market competition. In such a scenario, the operators may be unable to afford service costs, resulting in reduced profits or even losses, which corresponds to Mhlanga (2019) who found that increasingly cost of operating airlines, government interference, competitors (in terms of technology) have negative affected to airline performance.

Service Quality of Tour Bus Operators

The dimension of empathy was the least satisfying for users in terms of service quality. Service users expected the tour operators to have staff available 24 hours a day to handle customer complaints effectively, provide easy-to-contact staff, and establish a system to listen to suggestions. Following empathy, customers were most dissatisfied with the quality of service in terms of providing assurances, tangibles, reliability, and responsiveness to customers. Fauzi et al. (2020) also found that responsiveness has the least significant influence towards customer satisfaction, however, this study revealed that tangibility dimension has the most significant impact on customer satisfaction, followed by reliability, assurance, empathy, and, as mentioned, lastly responsiveness.

This finding found a significant relationship between service quality and customers satisfaction which is consistent with the research of Khurshid et al. (2012), which discovered a positive relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in the public transport sector of Pakistan. Cheunkamon et al. (2022) found that service quality of tourism supply chains is a base to generate satisfaction, trust, commitment, and loyalty of tourists who travel to destinations; therefore, tourist transport entrepreneurs should improve their performance. Moreover, the government should closely focus on the measurement of service provision in the tourism industry as it is necessary for the improvement of increase in the service quality being delivered to tourists. The tourist satisfaction factor results from people's feeling after receiving quality service (Belwal & Amireh, 2018).

To address these issues, tour operators should focus on utilizing technology to enhance communication with customers. Responding to customers in a timely manner will increase their confidence in the service and results in trust and commitment as suggested in the study of Cheunkamon et al. (2022) that when tourists receive good and effective service with technological preparedness, a good relationship between tourists and entrepreneurs will be built. Developing their own application for this purpose may not be necessary and may be costly. Instead, operators can consider utilizing existing operating systems or applications developed by other developers to save on development costs and outsource system maintenance.

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