

# Service Quality and Its Effect on Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty: A Qualitative Study of Muang Thai Insurance Company in Krabi, Thailand

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## Abstract

This qualitative study explored customer satisfaction and customer loyalty towards service quality of Muang Thai Insurance Company, Krabi Branch in Thailand. A purposive sampling of Thai six insurance customers of Muang Thai Insurance Company, Krabi Branch, were selected for a qualitative study. The data were analyzed employing content analysis and the NVivo software program. The results indicated that the SERVQUAL Model (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) influenced customer satisfaction and customer loyalty of Muang Thai Insurance Company's customers, Krabi Branch. The implication could assist insurance company managers, as well as other businesses, in improving service quality in order to respond to customers' needs and expectations, as well as increase customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Besides, it may aid in understanding customer satisfaction and customer loyalty towards service quality to develop effective marketing strategies. Therefore, high business performance will incur. The recommendation is to consider a quantitative study in a large sample in further study.

**Keyword:** Service Quality, SERVQUAL Model, Customer Satisfaction, Loyalty and Qualitative

## 1. Introduction

The insurance industry is essential for the economic growth of many countries, including Thailand. It is a sector that generates long-term savings and funds for the development of the capital market and infrastructure, thereby providing stability to the economy's growth (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Terdpaopong et al., 2021). The insurance industry has a highly competitive environment (Nzyoka and Orwa, 2016). Service is a critical component for gaining a sustainable competitive advantage in a highly competitive marketplace (Al-Ababneh et al., 2018). Service quality management is a method of directing any service provider to provide high-quality services to internal and external customers while also surviving in a competitive environment (Balinado et al., 2021; Shen and Yahya, 2021). Besides, service quality

is associated with customer expectations and perceptions (Saad and Alshehri, 2021). Good service quality will eventually encourage consumers to be satisfied and loyal to a brand (Devi and Yasa, 2021). Similarly, the quality of services, as well as achieving customer satisfaction and loyalty, are critical for insurers' survival (Khurana, 2013). Therefore, service quality is critical in developing customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Devi and Yasa, 2021; Kanyama et al., 2022). Previous research has shown that few studies identify the direct relationship between service quality, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the insurance industry. Hence, this qualitative study fills a gap by explaining customer satisfaction and customer loyalty towards service quality of Muang Thai Insurance Company of Krabi Branch in Thailand. Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty could be related to the level of service provided by insurance companies. Customers who receive services that exceed their expectations or high-quality services could be satisfied and more likely to remain loyal to the company.

## 2. Objective

This study aims to explain customer satisfaction and customer loyalty towards service quality of Muang Thai Insurance Company of Krabi Branch in Thailand. This study could be beneficial to insurance company managers, including other industry businesses, to improve service quality to respond to customers' needs and expectations and increase customer satisfaction and loyalty. Furthermore, it may aid in understanding customer satisfaction and loyalty towards service quality to develop effective marketing strategies. Therefore, high business performance will incur.

## 3. Literature Review

### 3.1. Insurance Industry

Insurance has become an important component of the economy in developed countries such as Germany, England, Switzerland, and others because it contributes significantly to the global market (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Furthermore, the Thai insurance industry grew rapidly from its modest beginnings in the early to mid-1990s (Connelly and Limpaphayom, 2004). In 2018, the Thai insurance industry ranked 27th in the world, with a total premium volume of US\$26 billion (Benraheem, 2020). Insurance is a contract or agreement between an individual and a company in which the company promises to pay its customers a sum assured based on the terms and policies of the insurance (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Insurance industry provides security products to individuals and businesses such as life insurance, health insurance, car insurance, as well as other liability coverage of non-life insurance (Sukpaiboonwat et al., 2014). The primary reason for having insurance is that it provides security in a variety of ways including generating financial resources (Adeniyi et al., 2019) and promoting economic growth (Ojo, 2012). Therefore, the Thai insurance sector is critical to study.

### 3.2. Service Quality and SERVQUAL Model

Service quality is the result of a consumer's comparison of their expectations and perceptions (Bungatang, 2021). The customer's expectation serves as the foundation for evaluating service quality. Quality is high when performance exceeds expectations, and it is low when performance falls short of expectations (Karim and Chowdhury, 2014). To measure customer's perceptions and expectations from service, SERVQUAL (SERVICE QUALity Model) was developed and has since become the most widely used instrument for assessing service quality (Han and Baek, 2004). Five dimensions in the SERVQUAL instrument include tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, empathy, and assurance (Kanyama et al., 2022; Parasuraman et al., 1985 & 1988). Furthermore, service quality is strongly related to customer satisfaction, financial performance, customer retention, customer loyalty, and the success of marketing strategy (Khan and Fasih, 2014; Naeem et al., 2009). Hence, organizations can achieve a higher level of service quality, a higher level of customer satisfaction, and a constant competitive advantage through service quality (Karim and Chowdhury, 2014; Wijetunge, 2016). Therefore, service quality is critical to consider. In this study, the SERVQUAL model (tangibles, responsiveness, reliability, empathy, and assurance) explains the feelings after using the services from Muang Thai Insurance Company, Krabi Branch.

#### 3.2.1. Tangibles

Tangibles are items that have a physical existence and can be seen and touched (Blery et al., 2009). In the context of service quality, tangibles include information and communications technology (ICT) equipment, physical facilities and their appearance (i.e. ambience, lighting, air-conditioning, and seating arrangement), as well as the organization's service-providing personnel (Blery et al., 2009; Khan and Fasih, 2014). Therefore, tangibles in this study include clean and comfortable office rooms, appealing interior and exterior decoration, as well as well-groomed staff.

Khurana (2013) explored the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. It was founded that the tangibility dimension of service quality had an effect on customer satisfaction. Alnaser et al. (2017) investigated customer satisfaction and loyalty in Islamic banks using the SERVQUAL model and subjective norms. The perceived tangibles were found to be significantly related to customer satisfaction. Kanyama et al. (2022) also confirmed a relationship between perceived tangibles and customer loyalty.

#### 3.2.2. Responsiveness

Responsiveness refers to employees' willingness to assist customers and provide prompt service. It is conveyed to clients by the length of time they need to wait for the reply for inquiries (Al-Ababneh et al., 2018). Therefore, responsiveness in this study includes polite staff, as well as well-trained staff to provide prompt service.

Ravichandran et al. (2010) investigated the impact of perceived service quality on customer satisfaction in the banking sector. Customer satisfaction was found to be

significantly related to perceived responsiveness. Khurana (2013) also confirmed a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and perceived responsiveness. Kanyama et al. (2022) investigated customer loyalty to hotel service quality in Ubon Ratchathani, Thailand, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Hotel customer loyalty was found to be significantly related to perceived responsiveness in service quality.

### **3.2.3. Reliability**

Reliability refers to the ability of a service provider to provide the promised services truthfully and consistently. Customers want reliable services they can rely on (Blery et al., 2009; Khan and Fasih, 2014). Therefore, reliability in this study includes informative and trustworthy staff, as well as up-to-date and credible information.

Alnaser et al. (2017) used the SERVQUAL model and subjective norms to investigate customer satisfaction and loyalty in Islamic banks. Customer satisfaction was found to be significantly related to perceived reliability. Furthermore, Ravichandran et al. (2010) confirmed that customer satisfaction was found to be significantly related to perceived reliability. Kanyama et al. (2022) also confirmed a relationship between perceived reliability and customer loyalty.

### **3.2.4. Empathy**

Empathy entails taking care of customers by paying attention to them on an individual level. It entails listening to their problems and effectively responding to their concerns and demands (Blery et al., 2009; Khan and Fasih, 2014). Therefore, empathy in this study includes sincere staff, friendly staff, empathetic staff, and dedicated staff.

Amiri Aghdaie and Faghani (2012) used the SERVQUAL model to investigate the relationship between mobile banking services and customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction was found to be significantly associated with empathy. Khurana (2013) discovered that empathy influenced customer satisfaction. Leninkumar (2016) investigated the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty. It was found that the effects of empathy on customer loyalty were both positive and significant. Kanyama et al. (2022) confirmed that hotel customer loyalty was found to be significantly related to perceived empathy in service quality.

### **3.2.5. Assurance**

Assurance refers to employees' knowledge and courtesy, as well as their ability to gain trust and confidence (Al-Ababneh et al., 2018). The level of knowledge and courtesy displayed by employees in providing services, as well as their ability to instill trust and confidence in customers, contribute to the development of assurance (Blery et al., 2009; Khan and Fasih, 2014). Therefore, assurance in this study includes effective security systems, as well as professional and knowledgeable staff.

Ali and Raza (2017) investigated the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction among Pakistani Islamic bank customers. Customer satisfaction was

found to be positively and significantly associated with assurance. Khurana (2013) also confirmed that assurance influenced customer satisfaction. Kanyama et al. (2022) confirmed that perceived assurance in service quality was significantly related to hotel customer loyalty.

### **3.3. Customer Satisfaction**

Satisfaction refers to a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment as a result of comparing a product's or service's perceived performance to expectations (Karim and Chowdhury, 2014). Customer satisfaction is critical to long-term business success (Hanif et al., 2010). To maintain or increase market share, organizations must outperform competitors by providing high-quality products or services that satisfy customers (Angelova and Zekiri, 2011). Customer satisfaction management is becoming increasingly important in many industries, including the insurance industry as it is a critical factor in determining a company's success (Chana et al., 2021; Eckert et al., 2022). Thus, customer satisfaction is critical to consider. Customer satisfaction in this study refers to an individual's feelings of disappointment or pleasure regarding services from Muang Thai Insurance Company of Krabi Branch.

### **3.4. Customer Loyalty**

Customer loyalty is associated with a brand's positive attitude (attitudinal loyalty) and repeated purchase behavior (behavioral loyalty) toward service providers (Kanyama et al., 2022). It is the intention to return or repurchase and to recommend the service providers to their peers and relatives (Siripipatthanakul and Sixl-Daniell, 2021). Service quality results in customer loyalty (Khan and Fasih, 2014). Hence, the significance of service quality as a business strategy to retain customer loyalty in today's highly competitive environment is becoming increasingly apparent (Kanyama et al., 2022). Therefore, customer loyalty is critical to consider. Customer loyalty in this study refers to individuals' intentions to repurchase and to recommend Muang Thai Insurance Company of Krabi Branch to their peers and relatives.

## **4. Research Methodology**

### **4.1. Research Strategy**

The purposes of qualitative research are to investigate every context in which people or groups make decisions and act, as well as to explain why that specific observed phenomenon occurred in that manner. The qualitative approach includes four primary research steps: question design, data collection, data analysis, and report writing (Tong-On et al., 2021). In this study, the qualitative approach was used as a research strategy. In-depth interviews were conducted to identify the determinants of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the insurance industry in Krabi, Thailand. Semi-structured interviews were employed in a data collection process from six insurance customers of Muang Thai Insurance Company, Krabi Branch in Thailand.

## 4.2. Population and Sample

Purposive sampling is often used in qualitative research. The objective is to gain detailed knowledge about a specific phenomenon or population (Siripipatthanakul and Bhandar, 2021). The population was insurance customers of Muang Thai Insurance Company, Krabi Branch in Thailand. The sample of this study consisted of six key informants who were insurance customers of Muang Thai Insurance Company, Krabi Branch in Thailand. The data in this study was collected through purposive sampling. The criteria of participants include: 1) the participants were Thais living in Krabi, 2) the participants were insurance customers of Muang Thai Insurance Company, Krabi Branch in Thailand, 3) the participants had experience as insurance customers of Muang Thai Insurance Company, Krabi Branch in Thailand for over two years, and 4) the participants' age was over 18 years old.

## 4.3. Data Collection

The researchers reviewed the secondary data for appropriate key survey questions. The data were collected through in-depth interviews to accomplish the primary data results. The survey interview questions were based on the SERVQUAL model.

- Q1: What are your thoughts on tangibles? Are the insurance company's physical facilities visually appealing? Does the company use modern equipment and technology, and offer you its products and services at competitive prices?
- Q2: What are your thoughts on responsiveness? Are employees and agents of the insurance company always willing to help you? Do employees and agents of the insurance company do their best to give your prompt service?
- Q3: What are your thoughts on reliability? Do employees and agents of the insurance company have the necessary knowledge to give professional service to you? Do you feel safe in transactions with the insurance company?
- Q4: What are your thoughts on empathy? Are employees and agents of the insurance company consistently courteous with you? Does the insurance company show sincere interest in solving your problems?
- Q5: What are your thoughts on assurance? Does the insurance company have operating hours convenient to all its customers? Are employees and agents of the insurance company professional and neat appearing?
- Q6: Are you satisfied with the overall insurance company's services, and why?
- Q7: Would you recommend the insurance company to your peers and relatives, as well as continue to use it in the future, and why?

#### 4.4. Data Analysis

This qualitative study performed the content analysis method and the NVivo Trial Version (a qualitative approach software) to analyze the qualitative data through in-depth online and face-to-face interviews. To ensure that the text conversion was accurate, the researchers compared the transcripts to the original audio recording.

Content analysis is a qualitative method for describing and quantifying specific phenomena by making valid inferences from verbal, visual, or written data systematically and objectively (Salem et al., 2022). According to Siripipatthanakul and Bhandar (2021), the transcribed interview texts are a common starting point for qualitative content analysis. The goal is to transform a large amount of text into a highly organized summary of key findings. The first step is to read and re-read the interviews to fill in some of the gaps and gain a general understanding of what the participants are saying. The next step is to begin dividing the text into smaller meaning units. These meaning units are then further condensed. The following step is to label condensed meaning units by creating codes and then categorizing them. Depending on the purpose of the study and the quality of the data collected, categories may be chosen as the highest level of abstraction for reporting results, or the researcher may go further and create themes.

Beyond the coding exploring and visualizing data in NVivo, Siripipatthanakul and Bhandar (2021) also recommended the process including 1) memoing and annotations to help you keep reflective memo notes, record insights, and keep your thoughts separate from the imported text, 2) word frequency and text search to find the most commonly used word, 3) the word cloud, cluster analysis, document distribution, 4) coding to aid in writing by allowing you to look at more specific information or frequency numbers, 5) matrix and compound to examine coding frequency numbers cross-referenced with classification criteria or other source material, and 6) framework analysis to determine where sources intersect.

### 5. Research Finding

#### 5.1. Respondents' Demographics

Six customers of Muang Thai Insurance Company, Krabi Branch in Thailand, participated in this study. Three females were a 32-year old teacher, a 31-year old nurse, and a 37-year old chief, respectively, and three males were a 35-year old policeman, a 48-year old teacher, and a 33-year old doctor, respectively. The participants were over 18 years old, and all were Thai living in Krabi.

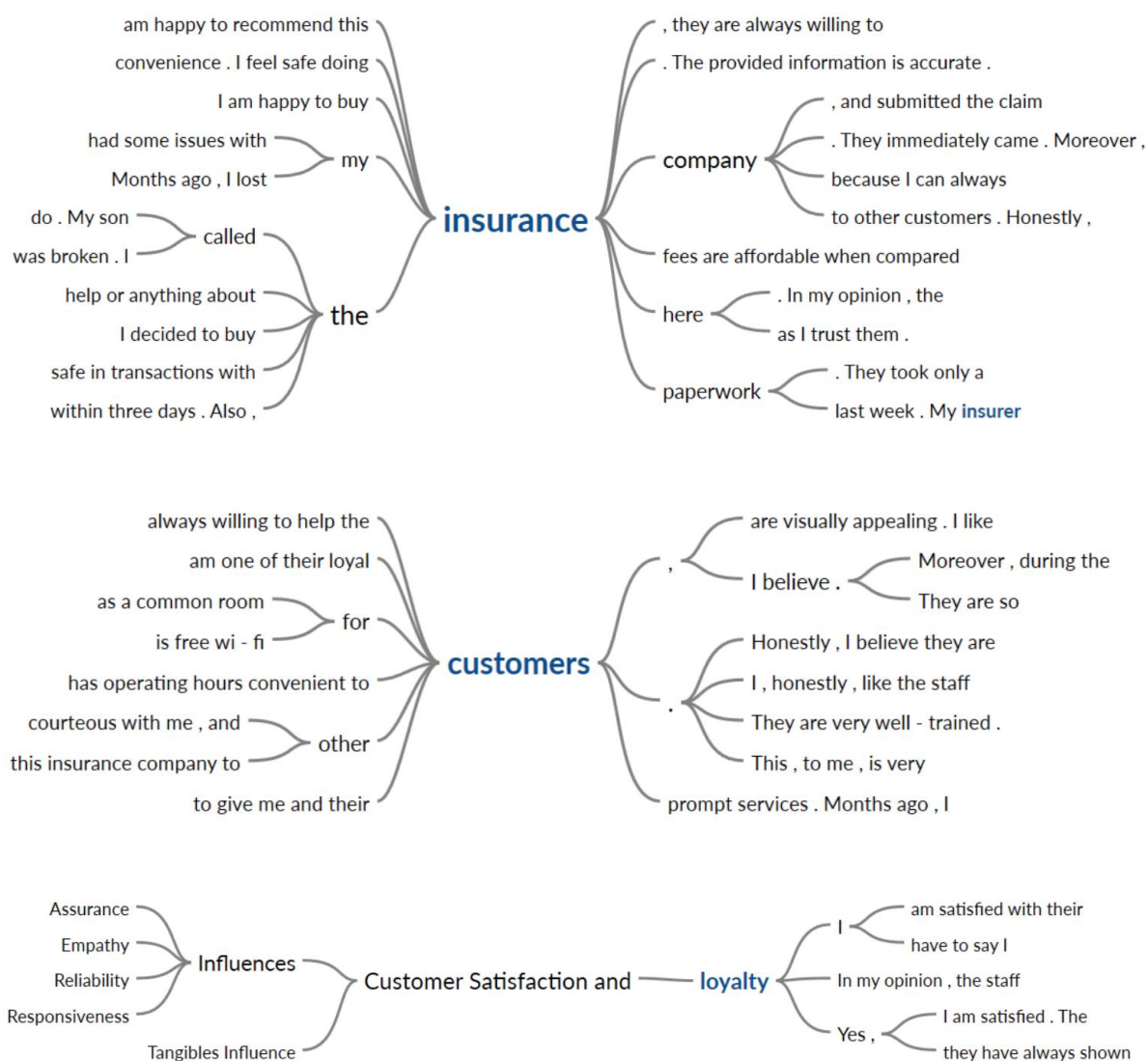
#### 5.2. NVivo Analysis

The collected data through in-depth online and face-to-face interviews was analyzed using the content analysis method. Hence, the interpretation and analysis were based on NVivo (Trial Version), a qualitative data analysis software.





Figure 1 Word Frequency Query – Word Cloud





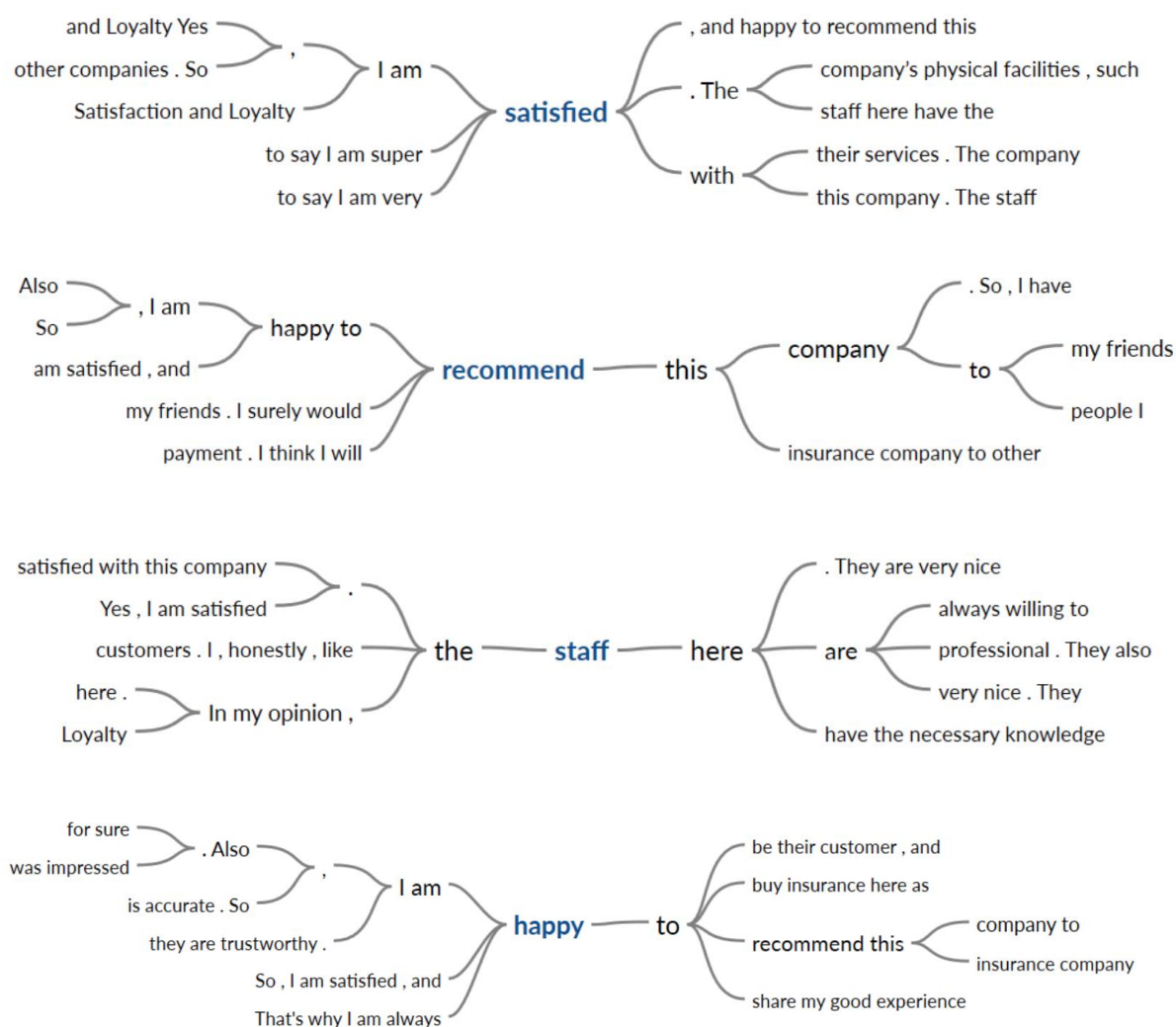


Figure 2 Text Search – Word Tree

### 5.3. Content Analysis

#### 5.3.1. Tangibles Influence Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty

Referring to the interviews, tangibles influence customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The respondents would be satisfied and become loyal if the company's physical facilities were well-decorated, clean and comfortable. Therefore, an insurance company must consider the tangibles of the SERVQUAL model into marketing strategies.

*"I have to say I am very satisfied. The company's physical facilities, such as a common room for customers, are visually appealing. I like it as it is well-decorated. Also, what I like the most is that there is free wi-fi for customers. This, to me, is very good"* – Respondent 1: a 32-year-old female, interviewed at 09:00 a.m. on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

*“The company keeps its promise when it undertakes to do something by a certain time. My car glass was broken. I called the insurance company, and submitted the claim with my insurer. It was repaired within three days. Also, the insurance fees are affordable when compared to other companies. So, I am satisfied, and happy to recommend this company to my friends.”* – Respondent 2: a 31-year-old female, interviewed at 11:00 a.m. on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

### **5.3.2. Responsiveness Influences Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty**

Referring to the interviews, responsiveness influences customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The respondents would be satisfied and become loyal if the insurers and staff were well-trained to provide prompt service. Therefore, an insurance company must consider the responsiveness of the SERVQUAL model into marketing strategies.

*“In my opinion, the staff here are always willing to help the customers. They are very well-trained. I had some issues with my insurance paperwork last week. My insurer quickly resolved my problems. I was very impressed. So, I have to say I am super satisfied with this company.”* – Respondent 1: a 32-year-old female, interviewed at 09:00 a.m. on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

*“The staff here are very nice. They will do their best to give me and their customers prompt services. Months ago, I lost my insurance paperwork. They took only a day to sort things out for me. I mean they are quick and ready to act and respond. That's why I am always happy to be their customer, and I am sure I will continue to use this company for sure.”* – Respondent 3: a 37-year-old female, interviewed at 01:00 p.m. on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

### **5.3.3. Reliability Influences Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty**

Referring to the interviews, reliability influences customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The respondents would be satisfied and become loyal if the insurers and staff were informative and trustworthy. Therefore, an insurance company must consider the reliability of the SERVQUAL model into marketing strategies.

*“Yes, I am satisfied. The staff here have the necessary knowledge to give professional service to me. I've checked several companies before I decided to buy the insurance. The provided information is accurate. So, I am happy to recommend this insurance company to other customers.”* – Respondent 4: a 35-year-old male, interviewed at 09:30 a.m. on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

*“Honestly, I believe they are trustworthy. I am happy to buy insurance here as I trust them. Also, I feel safe in transactions with the insurance company because I can always check online to see if the fee matches the invoice. They also always provide receipts immediately following payment. I think I will recommend this company to my friends, and will use it again in the future.”* – Respondent 5: a 48-year-old male, interviewed at 11:30 a.m. on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

#### **5.3.4. Empathy Influences Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty**

Referring to the interviews, empathy influences customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The respondents would be satisfied and become loyal if the insurers and staff were empathetic and dedicated to providing good services to the customers. Therefore, an insurance company must consider the empathy of the SERVQUAL model into marketing strategies.

*“Yes, they have always shown sincere interest in solving my problems. Months ago, I had a small accident, and I was in shock. I didn't know what to do. My son called the insurance company. They immediately came. Moreover, one of them even drove me home. I have to say I was impressed. Also, I am happy to share my good experience here with my friends. I surely would recommend this company. So, I have to say I am one of their loyal customers.”* – Respondent 4: a 35-year-old male, interviewed at 09:30 a.m. on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

*“I, honestly, like the staff here. They are very nice and friendly. They are also consistently courteous with me, and other customers, I believe. They are so well-trained. If you need help or anything about the insurance, they are always willing to help. I would say they treat you like a family.”* – Respondent 6: a 33-year-old male, interviewed at 01:30 p.m. on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

#### **5.3.5. Assurance Influences Customer Satisfaction and Loyalty**

Referring to the interviews, assurance influences customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. The respondents would be satisfied and become loyal if the insurers and staff were knowledgeable and professional. Therefore, an insurance company must consider the assurance of the SERVQUAL model into marketing strategies.

*“I am satisfied with their services. The company has operating hours convenient to customers, I believe. Moreover, during the COVID-19 pandemic, they assure that they will do everything for my convenience.”* – Respondent 5: a 48-year-old male, interviewed at 11:30 a.m. on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

*“I feel safe doing insurance here. In my opinion, the staff here are professional. They also give me personal attention, which is very nice. They have gained my trust and confidence. I have to say I am very impressed. So, I would rate ten out of ten. Of course, I will continue to use this company for sure. Also, I am happy to recommend this company to people I know, too.”* – Respondent 6: a 33-year-old male, interviewed at 01:30 p.m. on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

## 6. Conclusion and Discussion

The results indicated that the SERVQUAL model (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) influenced customer satisfaction and customer loyalty of Muang Thai Insurance Company's customers, Krabi Branch. Customers who received services that exceeded their expectations or were of high quality were more likely to recommend and remain loyal to the company. The finding supported the previous research of Angelova and Zekiri (2011) that service quality significantly impacted customer satisfaction. Furthermore, the finding supported the previous research of Kanyama et al. (2022) and Khan and Fasih, (2014) that service quality significantly impacted customer loyalty.

The finding also supported the previous research of Khurana (2013) that customer expectations and perception toward service quality dimensions had an impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, the SERVQUAL model can influence customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Customer satisfaction and loyalty can be increased through improving empathy, assurance, responsiveness, tangibility, and reliability. Therefore, business owners, managers, and marketers should increase customer satisfaction and customer loyalty by implementing these service quality dimensions. Increasing tangibility quality, insurance companies, for example, should pay attention to common rooms that look comfortable, clean and safe. Increasing reliability quality, the insurance staff can provide the correct information of insurance and service. Furthermore, enhancing responsiveness quality, insurance companies should increase the staff's responsiveness to assist customers and provide prompt service. Increasing assurance quality can be enhanced by improving employees' knowledge. Also, insurance companies should expand staff's empathy and provide customers with personalized attention.

The implication could assist insurance company managers, business owners, as well as other industry businesses, in improving service quality in order to respond to customers' needs and expectations, as well as increase customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Moreover, it may aid in understanding customer satisfaction and customer loyalty towards service quality to develop effective marketing strategies. As a result, effective business performance will incur.

## 7. Research Suggestions

This study examined customer satisfaction and customer loyalty towards service quality (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy) of Muang Thai Insurance Company, Krabi Branch in Thailand. It only looked at Thai customer samples from Krabi and may not include other predictors. The recommendation is to expand more areas and sample further. Also, a quantitative study should be considered in a future study to explain the relationship phenomenon in a large group in general.

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