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ENCOURAGING SMART TOURISM BY STARTUP BUSINESS ENTREPRENEUR - TOONEY TOY MUSEUM THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to carry out an evaluation of the new concept of smart tourism, and its possible adoption by start-up business through a case study of Tooney Toy Museum in Thailand. The study was guided by three objectives, to determine the effect of Tooney Toy Museum on tourists/customers satisfaction level, determine how individual aspects of Tooney Toy Museum influences customer satisfaction levels; and to develop a recommendation to the start-up business entrepreneurs on smart tourism. The study adopted quantitative methodology and was carried using primary data using a sample of 311 sample size who were composed of people who have visited Tooney Toy Museum. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was applied to test the hypothesis, using SmartPLS. The validity and reliability of the model found to be satisfactory. The study found out that Tooney Toy Museum factors have a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction, and "8P's marketing mix of Tooney Toy museum have positive effect on customer satisfaction". Based on the findings of hypothesis one (H1) and hypothesis 2 (H2) the study concluded that smart tourism is should be encouraged by start-up entrepreneurs since it would result to positive customer satisfactions. The findings of the research are applicable in the tourism sector and encouraging start-up entrepreneurship in the sector.

INTRODUCTION

Smart tourism is a relatively new concept in the global tourism sector, which implies the an increased reliance on the application of information communication technology (ICT) in the identifications and operations related to tourism destinations, industries and emerging forma of tourists through transformation of data into values propositions (Lamsfus, Wang, Alzua-Sorzabal & Xiang, 2014). Though smart tourisms lay vital technological and business foundations in terms of future development of tourism activities, it has received limited theoretical developments as a concept. The word ‘smart’ is implies the aspect of technology, economic and social developments, which are driven by the power of technology, relying on big data, open data and extended channels of data and information exchange. According to Harrison et al. (2010), the concept of ‘smart’ is conceptualized as the process of sharing data and application of complex analytical modelling and visualization techniques, geared towards making organizational and business operations better. Within the context of tourism, smart tourism implies the effective and efficient use of innovative and advanced tourism channels and opportunities available (Neuhofer, Buhalis & Ladkin, 2015). It incorporates the use of technologies that enable new and advanced forms of collaborations and value creation, which in turn leads to improved levels entrepreneurship, innovation and competitiveness in the tourism sector.

Smart tourism is considered as an advancement of the process and practices of tourism activities from the traditional tourism, towards the recent and more advanced e-tourism, which is based on the innovations and technological orientations, which is supported by information communication technology (ICT) in tourism (Buhalis 2003; Werthner and Ricci 2004). Despite being a new concept, Sigala & Marinidis (2012) argues that significant advancement has been such as realization of the mobile tourism, through increasing the mobility of tourist’s information tourism consumption (Buhalis and Law 2008; Wang et al. 2012). This paper conducts an investigation to the new concept of smart tourism, and its possible adoption by start-up business through a case study of Tooney Toy Museum in Thailand.

Components of smart tourism

Inferring from Staab & Werthner (2002) smart tourism is made up of various layers and components, which are enabled and supported by information communication technology (ICTs). These components and layers are illustrated in the Figure 1 below.

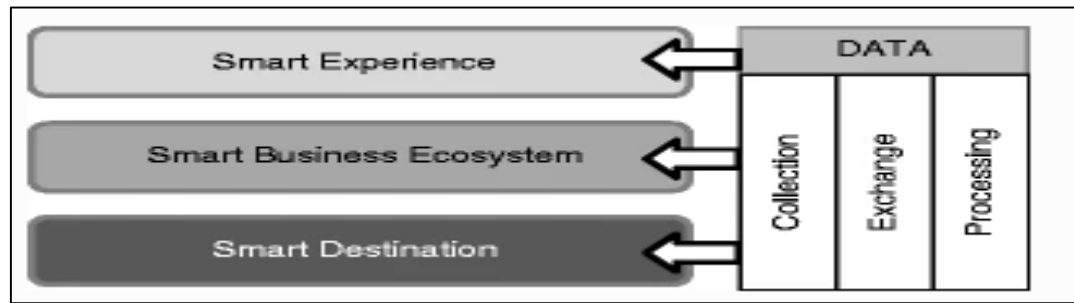


Figure 1: Smart Tourism Components and Layers

The first component of smart tourism is smart business, which involves the creation of an atmosphere facilitating the access and exchange of tourism resources, and creation of improved tourism experience. According to Buhalis and Amaranggana (2014), smart tourism within the context of smart tourism entails dynamic interconnection of the concerned stakeholders, organization agility and more importantly, digitizing the major practices of the tourism business. In addition to private-public collaboration, another important component of smart tourism is the provision of an opportunity to the consumer tourists to offer their value. There are three layers within the three components of smart tourism. These include the smart information layer, whose objective is collection of data; the second is the smart exchange layer, which supports the connection between involved components and stakeholders, and the third is the smart processing layer, whose mandate is to analysis and visualization of the data.

As illustrated in the figure above, one of the vital components of smart tourism is smart destination, which implies smart tourists' attraction sites and places such as buildings, recreation sites, cities, ranches, game reserves and national and international parks. Smart destination incorporates the principles of both urban and rural areas, in the bid to support the mobility, resource availability and allocation, as well as the quality and stability of life. According to Wang, Park & Fesenmaier (2012), smart destination should be considered as an innovation tourist destination, which has the advanced tourism attraction things that guaranteed sustainable tourism practices. Smart tourist destination is characterized by easy accessibility to everyone, facilitation to the visitors' interaction and more importantly, increase the tourists experience at the destination.

Among the recognizable smart tourism facility in Thailand, borrowing from the three components – smart destination, smart business and smart business ecosystem is the Toy Museum, and specifically the Tooney Toy museum in Thailand. The aspects of toy museum are discussed in the following section.

Toy Museum

Toy museum simply means a museum for toys. These are museums which typically show the toys from a particular culture of a certain period of time. According to Sundholm & Dahlbäck (2002), toy museum are institutions which specialize in providing pictorial information and training about children and play culture by approaching the social history through the eye of toys (Artar&Karadeniz, 2017). The primary objectives of museum toy are the conservation toy and toy culture as well as provide an opportunity to compare the past and the present. It is recorded that toy museum emerged from Europe, and the two major toy museums in record is the Pollock Toy Museum and Nuremberg Toy Museum. Inferring from Madran (2014), the toy collections in toy museums are majorly based on the dolls, baby houses and miniature theatre. The exhibition of toys in a museum plays a critical role in giving information regarding the children culture, as well as the social and cultural processes in the current time. It is therefore vital to protect the toys culture, since they exhibit the cultural and social characteristics of the concerned period they were produced (Onur, 2013). They play the same roles as other museums in terms of research and education towards the investigation and conservation of culture and history.

From the business and smart tourism perspective, toy museum presents a vital and lucrative business opportunity, especially in the regions that the concept has not fully been adopted such as IN Thailand. According to Erbay (2017), the tourists in this case are children visitors, and they play a critical role in helping the children express themselves as well as conserve the traditional heritage. From the toy museums, children have an opportunity to communicate with their own age groups, in an unhindered and non-transferable manner. However, considering that toy museums create an opportunity for experiences of family members, all family members are in apposition to share experiences and realize their aspirations for their past and childhood. Therefore, toy museum is could be considered an entrepreneurial opportunity, that could be invested in areas where it still not done.

Purpose and research objectives

Building on the above background, the purpose of this research is to investigate on the business perspective of smart tourism and encourage start-up business entrepreneurs to venture on it through a case study of the Tooney Toy Museum in Thailand. The study is carried out by findings the customer satisfaction by the various aspects and factors of Tooney Toy Museum. The customer satisfaction levels were evaluated using the 8P's of marketing mix. The following are the objectives of the research.

1. To determine the effects of Tooney Toy Museum factors on customer satisfaction

2. To determine the effects of 8P's marketing mix of Tooney Toy museum on customer satisfaction
3. To determine whether smart tourism should be encouraged by start-up entrepreneurs

The scope of this research covered three aspects. First, the research evaluated the general satisfaction of the customers who visited Tooney Toy Museum, from a business perspective. Second, the research evaluated the individual characteristics of Tooney toy museum influences the customer satisfactions levels, and third, based on the findings of the above two scopes, develop a recommendation on the start-up business entrepreneurs on smart tourism.

LITERATURE AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Tooney toy museum

Tooney Toy museum is a fun toy museum, started with the inspiration of Khun Somporn's family. Khun Panin Pho has been collecting toys since his childhood with the objective of conserving the memories of life and lifetimes. The initiative is grounded on the believe that toys brings happiness to children, as well as enhance the developmental and cognitive skills. They encourage the discovery quotients in children, and the subsequent spontaneous discoveries by playing with toys. More importantly, they have a common element that connects family members together.

Founded in 2012, Tooney toy museum contains a collection of movies, toys, and stories from the past to the present. The museum if found in Thailand, and is s located on an area of approximately 300 square wah, the total area of the exhibition building is approximately 800 square meters in front of Soi Srisamarn 8, Srisamarn Road, Ban Mai Subdistrict, Pak Kret District, Province. Nonthaburi. Figure 2, below shows images of the Tooney toy museums and some of the toys in the museum.



Figure 2: Pictures of Tooney Toy Museum

From the business and smart tourism perspective, Tooney museum charges an admission fee of 150 baht for adults and 100 baht for children, which, from an entrepreneurial perspective, is both affordable and attractive to both local and international tourists. The museum has also capitalized on investing in online marketing, as a means of creating its awareness locally and internationally. Its tourism favorable location incorporates the aspects of smart tourism such as smart destination and smart enterprise. The aspect of smart enterprise is also enhanced by inclusion of a section in the museum, which sells beverages, coffee, cocoa, and other soft drinks. It also has a toy shop where visitors can buy toys as they go home.

Customer Satisfaction and 8P's Marketing Mix

At the base of the idea of customer satisfaction, is the concept of needs and their fulfilling. It is a process that starts with understanding the needs of people, and the emotions associated with these needs, and developing strategies of satisfying the needs (Othman, Harun, De Almeida & Sadq, 2020). In the tourism sector, meeting the needs and expectations of tourists, both domestic and international is critical. Therefore, adoption of smart tourism is among the techniques that could be adopted and implemented in evaluating the needs of tourist and associated emotions, and devising ways of meeting these needs. Customer satisfaction implies the gap existing between expectations (= what I want) and perception (= what I get) on the concerned services of products offered. This implies that if expectations exceed perception, then the service is considered poor and vice-versa

(Sarker, Aimin, & Begum, 2012). The evaluation of the levels of customers' satisfaction when visiting Tooney Toy Museum is important because it predicts the ability of the museum to meet the expectations of tourists, and the possibility of exploration of smart tourism as an entrepreneurial opportunity. The levels of customer satisfaction in this case is evaluated using the 8P's marketing mix, which include product, price, place, promotion, people, processes, physical evidence and productivity & quality.

Conceptual Framework

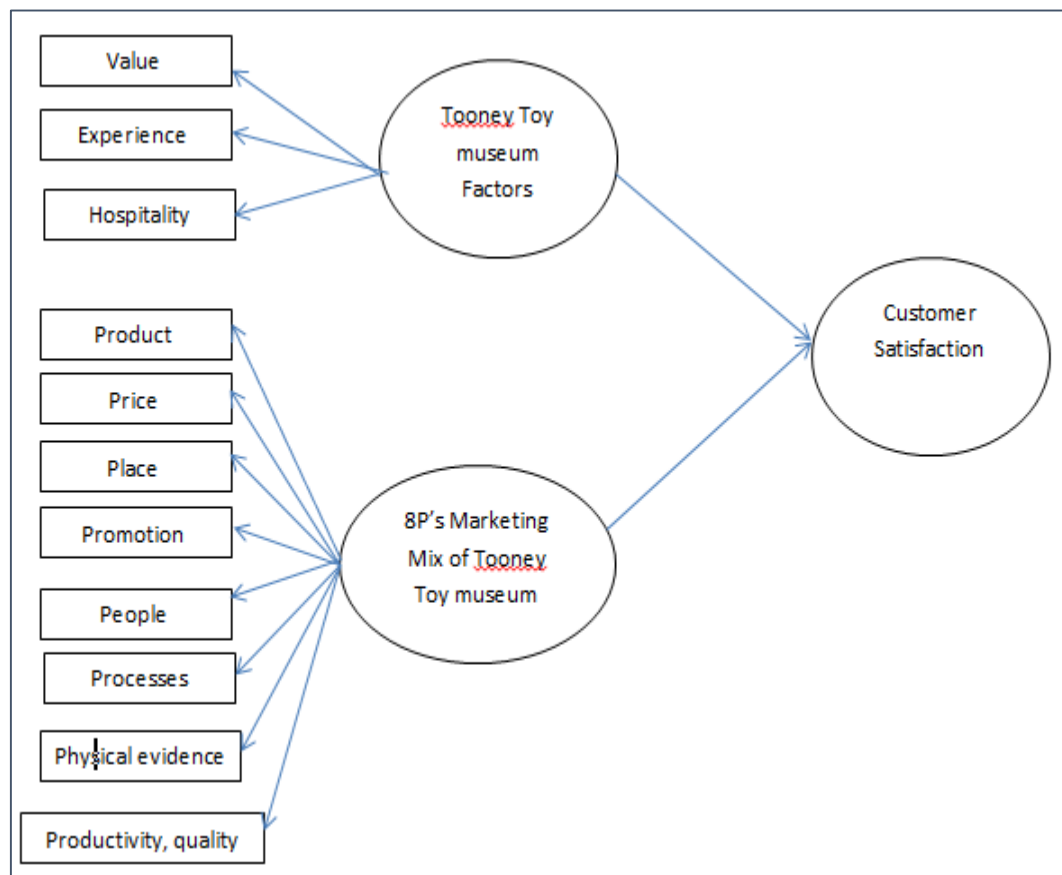


Figure 3: Conceptual Framework

Based on the above conceptual framework, three hypotheses are developed:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Tooney toy museum factors have a positive effect on customer satisfaction

Hypothesis 2 (H2): 8P's marketing mix of Tooney Toy museum have positive effect on customer satisfaction

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Based on Tooney Toy Museum customer satisfaction levels, smart tourism is encouraged by start-up entrepreneurs

METHODOLOGY AND INSTRUMENT

This research adopted a quantitative technique, to evaluate the how Tooney Toy Museum as a representation of smart tourism affects customers satisfaction, and the possible recommendation of smart tourism on the start-up business entrepreneurs. This research was guided by three hypotheses stated in the previous section. The study used primary data collected from the visitors of Tooney Toy museum, using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire contained questions with 5 Likert Scale range from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The data was collected from a representative sample of 450 respondents, but after cleaning the data, 310 questionnaires were considered appropriate for use in the analysis. The data evaluated using reliability and validity techniques before being analyzed. The analysis was carried out using structural equation modeling (SEM) and path analysis, to evaluate the effects of the independent variable on the dependent variable. SmartPLS software was applied to carry out the test.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Evaluation of the model

The first step in the analysis was the evaluation of the suitability of the model. The evaluation was done using three measurement techniques, reliability analysis, validity analysis and proportion of the variation of the dependent variable explained by the independent variable(s). The reliability analysis was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, validity analysis was carried out using discriminant validity (DV), while the proportion of the variation of the dependent variable explained by the independent variable(s) was measured using r-squared. For Cronbach's Alpha, the following criteria indicating level of α and its associated internal consistency were applied.

Cronbach's alpha	Internal consistency
$\alpha \geq 0.9$	Excellent
$0.9 > \alpha \geq 0.8$	Good
$0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$	Acceptable
$0.7 > \alpha \geq 0.6$	Questionable
$0.6 > \alpha \geq 0.5$	Poor
$0.5 > \alpha$	Unacceptable

Figure 4: Reliability Testing Criteria

The results for cronbach's alpha discriminant validity and r-squared are presented in the table 1 below.

Table 1: Model Evaluation Tests

Reliability Analysis Results				
	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum	0.933	0.935	0.945	0.682
Customer Satisfaction	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Tooney Toy museum Factors	0.811	0.819	0.888	0.726
Validity Analysis Results				
	8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum	Customer Satisfaction	Tooney Toy museum Factors	
8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum	0.876			
Customer Satisfaction	0.71	1.000		
Tooney Toy museum Factors	0.861	0.677	0.852	
	R-Squared Results			
	R Square	R Square Adjusted		
8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum	0.741	0.74		
Customer Satisfaction	0.521	0.518		

The results on the reliability analysis showed that Cronbach's alpha (α) ranged from 0.811 for the Tooney Toy museum factors variable to 0.933 for 8P's Customer Satisfaction variable. This implies that the variables used in the study had a good internal consistency. Similarly, considering the composite reliability, it ranged from 0.888 for the Customer Satisfaction variable to 0.945 for 8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum variable, which indicates that since they were all above the recommended minimum of 0.7, then the questions used in the study constructs were reliable (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2010). Additionally, AVE ranged from 0.682 for 8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum variable to 1.000 customer satisfaction. The AVE was above the recommended minimum of 0.5, it is an indication that the measurement questions can better reflect the characteristics of each research variable in the model.

The validity was evaluated using the discriminant validity (DV). Fornell and Larcker, (1981) and Hair et al., (2016) indicated that for DV to be present, the square root of the mean variance extracted rate (AVE value) of each of the measurement question should greater than between variables correlation coefficient (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2016). Since this condition holds for this study, it was concluded that the discriminant validity was present. The r-squared for the model was 0.521 which indicated that approximately 52.1% of the variation n of the dependent variable (customer satisfaction) was explained by the independent variables (8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum and Tooney Toy museum Factors). Though this variation was low, it was considered satisfactory.

Analysis of results and hypothesis testing

The structural equation model (SEM) applied in study was used to evaluate three hypotheses stated in the previous section. Specifically, the study evaluated how Tooney toy museum factors effect on customer satisfaction, how 8P's marketing mix of Tooney Toy museum effect on customer satisfaction and the based on Tooney Toy Museum customer satisfaction levels, determine whether it advisable for start-up entrepreneurs to invest in smart tourism. Figure 5 presents the SEM path analysis.

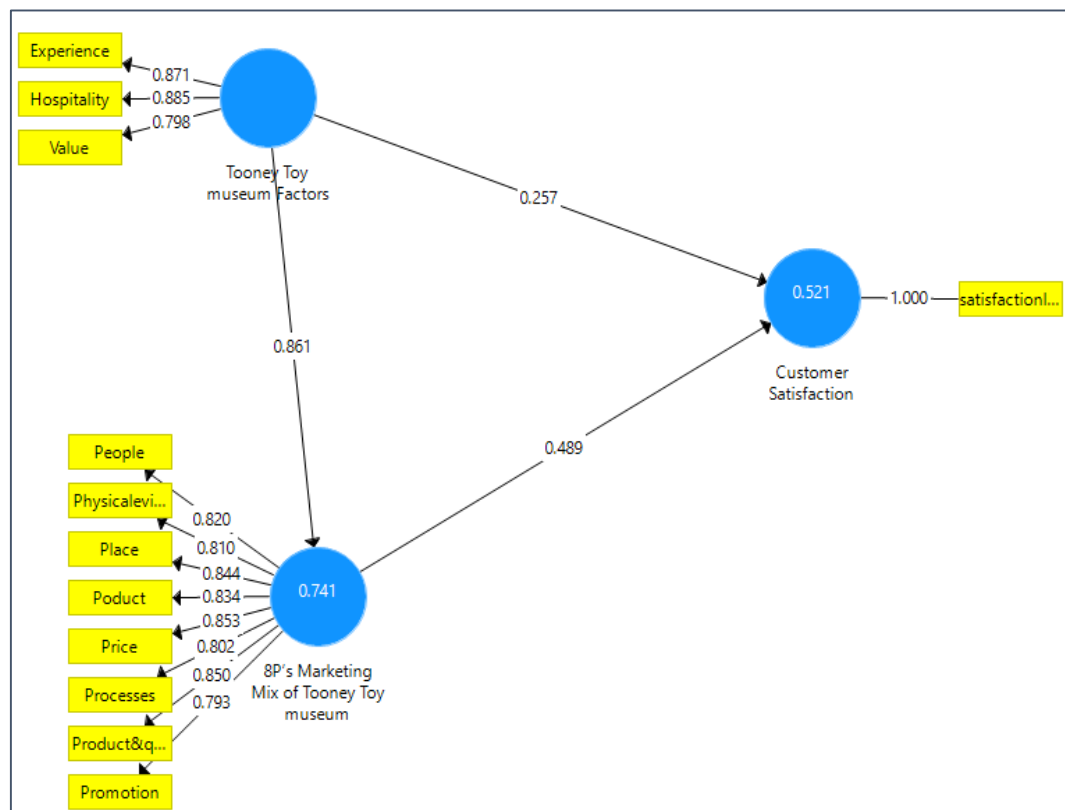


Figure 5: SEM Model Results

From the results, both Tooney Toy Museum factors variable and 8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum explains 52.1% of the variation in customer satisfactions. Considering individual variables, the path coefficient indicates that Tooney Toy museum factors has 25.7% influence on Customer Satisfaction while 8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum has 48.9% effect on customer satisfaction.

Table 2: Model Statistical Results

Direct Effects					
	Beta	Sample Mean	Std. Dev	T-Stat.	P-Values
8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum -> Customer Satisfaction	0.489**	0.484	0.106	4.618	0.000
Tooney Toy museum Factors -> 8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum	0.861**	0.861	0.022	39.91	0.000
Tooney Toy museum Factors -> Customer Satisfaction	0.257**	0.261	0.108	2.37	0.018
Indirect Effects					
	Beta	Mean	Std. dev	T-Stat	P Values
Tooney Toy museum Factors -> 8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum -> Customer Satisfaction	0.421**	0.416	0.089	4.728	0.000

The hypothesis was evaluated using the direct effects between the study variables, whose results are presented in Table 2 above. The first hypothesis (H1) stated that "Tooney toy museum factors have a positive effect on customer satisfaction". The results on direct effects indicated that Tooney toy museum had a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.257$, $t = 2.37$, $p < 0.05$). These findings confirmed the hypothesis of the study. the second hypothesis (H2) stated that "8P's marketing mix of Tooney Toy museum have positive effect on customer satisfaction" the results on the direct effects indicated that 8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum has a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction ($\beta = 0.489$, $t = 4.618$, $p < 0.05$). this confirms the second hypothesis. The study was extended by evaluating the indirect relationship among the three variables, where 8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum variable was considered as a mediator between Tooney Toy museum Factors variable and Customer Satisfaction variable. The relationship between Tooney Toy museum Factors and Customer Satisfaction with 8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy

museum remained significant ($\beta = 0.421$, $t = 4.728$, $p < 0.05$) and beta increased from $\beta = 0.257$ to $\beta = 0.421$. this is a clear indication that 8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum variable is not a mediator between Tooney Toy museum Factors variable and Customer Satisfaction variable. The study extended further to evaluate the relationship between the variables and their observed constructs.

Table 1: Outer Loadings of the Constructs

Outer Loadings of the Constructs							
	Beta	Mean	Std. dev	T-stat	P Values	Significance	
Experience <- Tooney Toy museum Factors	0.871	0.871	0.019	45.756	0.000	Significant	
Hospitality <- Tooney Toy museum Factors	0.885	0.886	0.013	68.13	0.000	Significant	
People <- 8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum	0.82	0.82	0.028	29.084	0.000	Significant	
Physical evidence <- 8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum	0.81	0.808	0.022	36.907	0.000	Significant	
Place <- 8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum	0.844	0.844	0.019	43.824	0.000	Significant	
Product <- 8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum	0.834	0.835	0.023	36.712	0.000	Significant	
Price <- 8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum	0.853	0.852	0.021	40.466	0.000	Significant	
Processes <- 8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum	0.802	0.801	0.023	34.169	0.000	Significant	
Product & quality <- 8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum	0.85	0.849	0.019	43.938	0.000	Significant	

Promotion <- 8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum	0.793	0.792	0.029	27.584	0.000	Significant
Value <- Tooney Toy museum Factors	0.798	0.795	0.033	24.334	0.000	Significant

From the results presented in Table 3 above, there was a positive and significant relationship between the Tooney toy museum factors variable, and all its observed variables (experience, hospitality, and people). Similarly, the findings indicated that there is a significant and positive relationship between 8P's Marketing Mix of Tooney Toy museum variable, and the observed variables (product, price, place, promotion, people, processes, physical evidence, and productivity & quality).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This conducted an evaluation of the new concept of smart tourism, and its possible adoption by start-up business through a case study of Tooney Toy Museum in Thailand. the study was guided by: 1) determine the effect of Tooney toy museum on tourists/customers satisfaction level; 2) determine how individual aspects of Tooney toy museum influences customer satisfaction levels; and 3) to develop a recommendation to the start-up business entrepreneurs on smart tourism. From the findings of the study, the first hypothesis (H1) was confirmed that Tooney toy museum factors have a positive effect on customer satisfaction”.

The three factors evaluated in this case were ‘value gained by the customers of tourists when they visit Tooney Toy Museum’, the ‘overall experience the customers or tourist enjoy in the facility’ and the ‘hospitality that the tourist are given in the Tooney toy museum’ when they visit. The findings indicate that these aspects positively influenced their levels of satisfaction. The findings also confirmed the second hypothesis (H2) that “8P's marketing mix of Tooney Toy museum have positive effect on customer satisfaction”. This is an evidence that the 8P's marketing mix factors (product, price, place, promotion, people, processes, physical evidence and productivity & quality) employed by Tooney Toy Museum were effectively employed and implemented, in a manner that they positively and significantly influenced the customers satisfaction. Based on these findings of hypothesis one (H1) and hypothesis 2 (H2) confirmed the third hypothesis (H3) that based on Tooney Toy Museum customer satisfaction levels, smart tourism is encouraged by start-up entrepreneurs. Considering and following the example of Tooney toy museum, smart tourism is a considered to have positive and significant satisfaction levels on the visiting tourists or customers. It is therefore recommended that the start-ups should consider venturing in this new and promising business opportunity.

In conclusion, this study investigated the adoption of smart tourism by start-up business through a case study of Tooney Toy Museum in Thailand. The study was guided by three objectives, to determine the effect of Tooney Toy museum on tourists/customers satisfaction level, determine how individual aspects of Tooney Toy museum influences customer satisfaction levels; and to develop a recommendation to the start-up business entrepreneurs on smart tourism. The study was carried using primary data using a sample of 311 sample size who were composed of people who have visited Tooney Toy Museum. The validity and reliability of the model found to be satisfactory. The study found out that Tooney toy museum factors have a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction, and “8P’s marketing mix of Tooney Toy museum have positive effect on customer satisfaction”. Based on the findings of hypothesis one (H1) and hypothesis 2 (H2) the study concluded that smart tourism is should be encouraged by start-up entrepreneurs since it would result to positive customer satisfactions.

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