

A GUIDELINE FOR ACCOMMODATION BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN PHETCHABURI PROVINCE IN PREPARATION FOR FORMULATING A SERVICE STANDARD FOR SENIOR TOURIST GROUPS.

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ABSTRACT

The study of a Guideline for Accommodation Business Development in Phetchaburi Province in Preparation for Formulating a Service Standard for Senior Tourist Groups, is aimed to 1) assess the potential of accommodation business development in Phetchaburi Province for senior tourist groups; 2) measure behaviors and needs of tourists towards accommodation business development in Phetchaburi Province for senior tourist groups; and 3) evaluate the guideline for accommodation business development in Phetchaburi Province to correspond to the needs of senior tourist groups. The sampling respondents were 400 senior tourists traveling and staying overnight in Phetchaburi Province whereby the coincident sampling technique was used, and the research instrument was a questionnaire. The value of the questionnaire reliability was 0.891. The deployed analytical statistics was namely frequency, percentage, average, deviation standard and analysis of different values between variables.

The study result was found that 1) The potential of accommodation business in Phetchaburi Province revealed the overall mean value at the moderate level, while the potential of environmental and facilitating business was at the top level of mean value, followed by the management respectively. 2) The seniors traveling around and staying overnights in Phetchaburi areas, preferred to travel by private cars and tourist coaches. They spent one or two nights in Phetchaburi mostly on public holidays and weekends. The accommodation rates ranging from 501-1,000 Baht which were affordable, while the accommodations were easily accessible and adequate for the seniors' needs. It was also found that the needs of the senior tourist groups towards the accommodation business in Phetchaburi areas, were generally at the top level. When considered each aspect, it was shown that the top aspect needed by the seniors, was management, followed by environmental and facilitating, and services respectively. 3) The guideline for accommodation business in Phetchaburi areas, had to be improved in terms of provision of qualified service providers for the seniors; an Updated Elder Services Guide Info in written form; household remedies and quality sets of nursing/first aids kits. Moreover, it was necessary to have such humble and polite service providers for the senior tourists including standard handrails and direction signs indicating all of the elderly's facilities.

Keywords: accommodation business; senior tourists; Phetchaburi Province

INTRODUCTION

Accommodation business was considered a key element in the tourism context that cannot be overlooked or dispensable, since it plays a major role in promoting or making the business cycle to prosper, for example, overnight stays in accommodations reflected the

additional expense that generated the increasing national revenue. Nonetheless, Thailand's accommodation business sector became well-aware of the trend of booming senior tourism, it delayed in taking actions against changes or improvements needed. As a result, it was a must for related government and non-government agencies to act as a key driver for needed improvements and changes of accommodation business for senior tourism.

Phetchaburi is one of the western province of Thailand with the continually increasing growth rates of both foreign and Thai tourists, based on the provincial tourism statistics, Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2018, (data collected in May 2018). It was found that the last year's increasing growth rates of both foreign and Thai tourists reached 719,797 people, and 310,725 of them were overnight staying visitors, while the 2018 tourism revenue was over two billion Baht. When considering the statistical rates of overnight staying in accommodations combining with the senior tourism growth as well as the high potential of tourist spots attracting senior tourist groups, naturally and culturally in Phetchaburi areas; the researcher of this study deemed it necessary to conduct the study of a Guideline for Accommodation Business Development in Phetchaburi Province in Preparation for Formulating a Service Standard for Senior Tourist Groups. The study results were considered to be so important and interesting that enable the accommodation business, a crucial tourism factor, to be improved in preparation for formulating a service standard to be ready for practically satisfy all the needs of senior tourist groups.

OBJECTIVE

- 1) To study the potential of accommodation business in Phetchaburi Province for senior tourist groups
- 2) To measure behaviors and needs of tourists towards accommodation business in Phetchaburi Province for senior tourist groups
- 3) To evaluate the guideline for accommodation business development in Phetchaburi Province to correspond to the needs of senior tourist groups

METHODOLOGY

Population and Sampling Group:

1. The population used in this study was Thai senior tourists traveling and staying overnights in accommodations in Phetchaburi Province
2. The sampling group used in this study was the group of 400 Thai senior tourists traveling and staying overnights in accommodations in Phetchaburi Province

Research Instrument:

The research instrument used in this study was a questionnaire given to Thai senior tourists traveling and staying overnights in accommodations in Phetchaburi Province, passing the test of confidence interval (30 respondents) with Cronbach's Alpha value = 0.891.

Data Analysis and Deployed Statistics:

The completed questionnaire was returned to the researcher for data analysis deploying a statistic software package and proceeding the data analysis as follows

Statistics deployed for data analysis:

1. Descriptive Analysis consists of data relating behaviors of senior tourists, and the statistics deployed was frequency and percentage distribution, while the data analysis relating

the evaluation on service standard and needs of senior tourists towards the accommodation business, was mean and standard deviation (S.D.).

2. The comparison of GAP statistic was deployed to determine the gap between senior tourists towards the accommodation business, and the current services available so as to seek a guideline for accommodation business development in Phetchaburi Province in preparation for formulating a service standard for senior tourist groups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. In terms of **behaviors** of Thai senior tourists traveling and staying overnights in accommodations in Phetchaburi Province, the study result revealed that those Thai elderly groups, both males and females had a similar age proportion with ranging age between 61-70 years old; followed by 71-80 years old respectively. For educational levels, most of them completed primary education, and followed by secondary education and vocational certificate; for occupations, the majority one was private business /trading while the minor one was farming; monthly income ranging from 20,001-30,000 Baht or more for the rest, all were married.

For the seniors traveling and staying overnights in Phetchaburi areas, 30 percent of them traveled by private cars and tourist coaches. They preferred to spend one night on public holidays; and two nights on weekends in Phetchaburi. The accommodation rates ranging from 501-1,000 Baht which were affordable, while the accommodations were easily accessible and adequate for the elderly's requirements. That corresponded to *Benjaporn Chuaphueng, et.al.(2018)*, stating in *the Study of Hotel Services Management for Thai Elderly Tourists Staying at PhraNakhonSi Ayutthaya Province* that the number of 400 Thai elderly tourists staying overnights in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province, were females greater than males and age range between ages 55-64, and married. Most of them completed secondary and vocational education. They earned their income from working and also had some burden to take care of that were the elderly in their families and relatives. In terms of traveling behaviors, it showed that the respondents took the opportunity to enjoy traveling with their family members in a new environment. In addition, they were able to meet and visit their friends, relatives, grandchildren as well as get an opportunity to visit the historic city of Ayutthaya, one of the most famous UNESCO World Heritage Sites at the same time. Some tourists repeatedly came to Ayutthaya more than three times with their family members by private cars and usually spent 1-3 nights in Ayutthaya's accommodations. They also reserved rooms by themselves with affordable room rates about 501-1,000 Baht/night. Another research result matching with this study was conduct by *Kulwadee Klaewklum (2007)* revealing that the sampling groups tended to travel mostly on weekends when their family members, relatives or friends had the same days off. For the overnight staying behaviors of the government official retirees, it was found that they took two- night stay most.

2. In terms of **assessing the potential** of accommodation business development in Phetchaburi Province for senior tourist groups, it showed that the needs of the elderly tourist groups towards accommodation business in Phetchaburi Province, were generally on the top level, when considering in each aspect, it was found that the most needed aspect for such a group, was the management, followed by the environment and facilities, and services respectively. However, the potential of accommodation business in Phetchaburi Province in general, was averagely at the moderate level. Whereas, the environment and facility aspect was averagely at the top level, followed by the management one. When comparing the different values between the current potential of accommodation business and the needs of senior tourist groups, it revealed the service aspect with the widest gap = 1.28 referring to the lodging inadequacy in the areas of Phetchaburi which was not able to accommodate the needs

of such a tourist group. For the service aspect, the results revealed the similarity between the aspects of services and management; the existing business potential for services was unable to satisfy the increasing needs of the elderly tourist groups. Regarding environment and facility aspect, it showed the business potential at the moderate level while the needs for this aspect was high, with the different value =0.42. That was in line with the study on “*The readiness of Pattaya city to receive Russian senior tourists* by Paritta Charoensuk (2014) claiming that currently, there are no specific tourism policies specifically set up to serve needs of the elderly tourists in Pattaya City. Only the 14 urgent guidelines related to the elderly along with the implementing Universal Design Project, were prepared for the benefits of facilitating the disabled and the elderly. In this regard, the sampling group of the Russian elderly, had the moderate level of satisfaction towards the facility provided for the seniors along the beaches of Pattaya City, both internal and external buildings. Considering the service and safety aspect derived from the potential readiness of Pattaya City, it was found that the city has its potential in providing the needed facilities as well as having its readiness for accommodating the needs of the elderly tourism market, even though there are no specific tourism policies set up for that purpose. Nonetheless, *the Department of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism and Sports. (2012)*, already made the service standard for the elderly tourists in the overall aspects in terms of management, services, facilities, environment for accommodations provided to the elderly tourist groups. Moreover, *Sunantha Taweephol (2007, p.13)* added that the benefits and services provided by an organization, must be able to respond to the needs of the majority of people as well as serve the best benefits as a whole, not for any particular groups of people. Otherwise, it is not worth making it the optimal use. Besides, services must be performed continuously and consistently, by reliable and trustworthy service providers or operators based on the principles of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit.

3. The guideline for accommodation business in Phetchaburi areas had to be improved in terms of **provision** of qualified service providers for the seniors; an Updated Elder Services Guide Info in written form; household remedies and quality sets of nursing/first aids kits. Furthermore, it was necessary to have such humble and polite service providers for the senior tourists including the standard handrails and direction signs to all the elderly’s facilities. That corresponded with the study results of *Paweena Ngamprapasom (2017)* regarding the potential assessment and the preparation for community-based tourism management with participation for the elderly: a case study, Ban Mo Luang community tourism, Mae Mo District, Lampang Province, it was found that the guideline to make the community tourism of the Mo Luang capable to accommodate the elderly tourist groups, should be proceeded as follows:

1) Making improvements of tourist attractions to be able to fully accommodate the elderly tourist groups, for example, installing handrails in the compound of tourist attractions; installing handrails in the restrooms, and so on

2) Encouraging the provision of nursing facilities and quality sets of nursing & first aid kits as needed

3) Seeking opportunities for the tourism committee to be further trained or educated about services for the elderly tourism, given by related agencies

4) Promoting tourism activities to be held in the manner of community resource-oriented

5) Encouraging communities to have homestays which belong to villagers, with convenient services available for tourists of all age groups, both in terms of food, drinks, and activities

6) Arranging a shuttle service for tourists to go back and forth to the homestays or go to additional tourist attractions

In this regard, a study by *Jakkrit Saenprom (2013) the Necessity of Facilities for Local Elderly and Senior Tourists, a Case Study of Satellite Phra That Phanom, Nakhon Phanom*

Province, added that senior tourists needed signs showing information and maps and the signs must be visible both day and night. While the local elderly needed parking lot.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recommendations for using the study results:

Based on the study results on a guideline for accommodation business development in Phetchaburi Province to satisfy the needs of senior tourists, the researcher makes recommendations as follows

1.1 In terms of management: hotels and accommodations in Phetchaburi Province should have service providers with certain knowledge and understanding about the elderly services as well as providing an Updated Elder Services Guide Info in written form.

1.2 In terms of services: hotels and accommodations in Phetchaburi Province should have quality sets of household remedies and nursing/ first aids kits including qualified service providers with polite and humble manner for the seniors; an Updated Elder Services Guide Info in written form.

1.3 In terms of Environment and Facilities: hotels and accommodations in Phetchaburi areas should have a horizontal handrail installed about 60-70 centimeters above the ground, 25-30 centimeters projecting from the front side of toilet bowl as well as a vertical handrail connected from the horizontal handrail at least 60 centimeters including a sign indicating directions to the seniors' facility.

2. Recommendations for further study:

2.1 It is recommended to study tourism models for the elderly tourists in Phetchaburi Province in order to get information for preparing additional guidelines for the development of accommodation business in Phetchaburi Province.

2.2 It is recommended to explore the traveling routes of the elderly tourists so as to make a link of traveling routes in the west coast group.

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