

Abstract

Long stay tourism is considered a type of alternative tourism since it focuses on the deep host and guest relationship. By the concept, it reflects the notion of human touch and socio-cultural awareness within the destination country of long stay tourist's choice. The key principle of long stay tourism is thus the learning of language and cross cultural exchanges between long stay tourists, considered to be visiting guests, and local people, considered to be hosts. The period of long stay tourism is in excess of one month. Long stay tourists, mostly the pensioners, shall then depend solely on their steady income from pension funds provided by their government, before returning to their homeland upon the completion of their long stay period.

Nevertheless, the management of long stay tourism by the Thai's government unit since 2001 has instead shifted the focus to luxurious real estate-oriented project. The main aim is to gain in the monetary benefits from these high purchasing power tourists. It is then evident that such management scheme does not respond to the philosophy of sustainable development whose objectives are to preserve the environment and nature, to continually study the tourism market, and to develop human resources. Due to the lack of mutual natural interactions, not only have the pensioner long stay tourists no chance for cultural exchanges with the local Thais, but the local Thais are also in shortage of the opportunity to learn new and different cultures which might be applied or be adjusted appropriately to fit the Thai's way of life.

This study had Japanese pensioners niche market as the case study and presents the results and analysis of the needs of long stay Japanese pensioner tourists in the Chiangmai province of Thailand, and the readiness to respond to these identified needs by the local population. Two questionnaires were used in collecting data. The first was used with 342 Japanese pensioners, who were older than 60 years of age and currently living in Japan, and with another 63 Japanese pensioners staying in Chiangmai, as the demand side. The second type of questionnaire was used with 400 Thais in Tambon Suthep, Muang District, Chiangmai, as the supply side. The computer

program Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) was used for data analysis. The analysis of the data is presented with values of frequency distribution, percentage, median, mean, Chi-squared value, Lambda value, as well as Somers'd value. In addition to unstructured observation, general interview sessions with 3 officers in Japan and standardized open-ended interviews with 8 Chiangmai administrators and 32 members of group leaders at 2 villages in the Sanpatong District, Chiangmai, were conducted. The results of these interviews are presented in a descriptive manner from an interview transcript.

From the study, it has found that the Japanese samples' needs were to promote good relationship between Thailand and Japan through joint cultural exchange activities with the locals, and to get an access to required information for their cross-cultural adjustment through advisory facilities provided by the Thai government. These identified needs were well responded to by the Thai samples.

The researcher would then like to make a proposal to the Thai government for national policy review on long stay tourism project management for Japanese pensioner tourists. The initial aim is for all concerned parties to have mutual understanding on the philosophy of long stay tourism. The Thai government can then integrate the cooperation from relevant units so as to enable Thailand to have the differentiation in the long stay tourism project by providing service quality management in order to offer quality long stay tourism experiences, both to Japanese pensioner tourists and to the local Thais, in a sustainable manner.