

Healthy-living Behavior Status and Motivational Characteristics of Foreign Tourists to Visit Wellness Facilities in Bangkok

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the characteristics of a healthy-living market segment and its motivational behavior to wellness facilities in Bangkok, Thailand. Both qualitative and quantitative techniques are presented. This study was explored by nine interviews and 164 survey questionnaires at eight hotels and resorts, 16 day spas and one wellness center in Bangkok from February to April in 2009.

This research observes that foreign tourists ‘often’ followed healthy-living habits in safety and ‘sometimes’ in exercise and diet respectively. It also maintains that recreation, relaxation, enhancement of quality of life, and social activities are the top four motivation issues when visiting wellness facilities. The Spearman’s correlation results revealed that there were relationships between healthy-living behavior statuses with regard to diet, smoking status, and safety and motivational behavior to visit wellness facilities in Bangkok. Finally, recommendations are presented to support the development and marketing of hospitality and tourism products and services for foreign travelers who have a healthy-living oriented lifestyle.

Keywords: foreign tourists, wellness tourism, healthy-living behavior status, motivational behavior

1. Introduction

Over the past six decades, tourism has experienced continued growth and diversification to become one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world. Over time, more and more destinations have opened up and invested in tourism development, turning modern tourism into a key driver for socio-economic progress ^[1]. As society advances, travel patterns have also shifted. Tourists are able to improve their quality of life through a variety of touring experiences at various vacation destination of interest ^[2]. Moreover, due to the recently emerging community health issues, such as obesity, goods and services targeted boosting personal health have become popular. In the tourism sector, merchandise catering to individuals’ health

has been particularly quick to develop in the last decade. For example, healthcare tourism has emerged in the tourist market place as lucrative in the years to come. It is defined as the attempt on the part of a tourist facility (e.g. hotel) or destination (e.g. Baden, Switzerland) to attract tourists by deliberately promoting health-care services and facilities in addition to regular tourists’ amenities ^[3]. Similarly, wellness tourism, a term that is defined as people traveling from their place of residence for health reasons, has gained increasing popularity.

In the magazine ‘Thai Spas’^[4], Sommers stated that Thai spa industry has gone from strength to strength with the appearance of all types of spas catering for a wide range of markets, both the local and international tourists. According to an