

ADVISORY FACILITIES FOR LONG-STAY JAPANESE SENIOR TRAVELLERS IN CHIANGMAI

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Abstract

This paper is focused on the requirements of 63 long-stay Japanese senior travellers in Chiangmai, Thailand, regarding advisory facilities. Similar to other long stay Japanese senior travellers around the globe, these 63 senior travellers can afford to stay, in excess of one month as tourists, living off their pension fund. Their aim is to share in the daily life of locals during their stay. However, as newcomers, they must go through stages of cross-cultural adjustment during their long term stay in the province. It is recommended that Chiangmai set up advisory facilities capable of providing advice and orientation in the Japanese language to these senior travellers. This will upgrade the services offered by Thailand for long stay tourism, which is vital to its success and sustainability.

Introduction

In contrast to mass tourism, long stay tourism shifts the focus from the well-known 4As, (accessibility, attraction, accommodation, and actors) (McIntosh, Goeldner, and Ritchie, 1995: 21-23), to language learning and cross-cultural

exchange between the tourists, considered to be visiting guests, and the locals, considered to be hosts. Though the period of long stay is in excess of one month (JETRO, 2002: 1-25), all long stay tourists have to come back home ultimately. It is therefore not, by all means, a kind of migration or permanent living arrangement. With such extended periods of stay, senior travellers from Scandinavian countries, from the United Kingdom, from the United States of America, as well as from Japan have become one of the key target markets for long-stay tourism. They have completed their career and family care-taking responsibilities and thus enjoy a great level of personal freedom and choice. They also have a steady income from pension funds provided by their governments. It is also expected that the elderly tourist market will greatly expand as the number of senior citizens globally is rapidly rising. This is due to population structure changes in leading industrial nations, including Japan (Population Division, 2001: xxvii-xxxi, 48-49, and 286-287).

Thailand is one of the preferred destination countries for senior Japanese long-stay travellers (JETRO, 2002: 1-25). A reasonable cost of living, a good quality of life, the hospitality of the Thais, and good relations between Japan and Thailand are the factors which convince Japanese senior travellers to spend part of their retirement in Thailand.

Nevertheless, the fact that most newcomers to any foreign land need to go through the stages of cross-cultural adjustment cannot be ignored. Senior Japanese long-stay travellers are no exception. As a result, Thailand should prepare facilities for these senior travellers to assist them in coping with their new physical and social surroundings in Thailand. Subsequent to this adjustment, the

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