

Preparing for Senior Tourists: A Case Study of Phuket Province

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Abstract

The increase in the number of senior people continues, whether they are foreigners or locals in Thailand. This research aims to study the perspectives of entrepreneurs in managing the tourism business for senior tourists. It is qualitative research by key informants, and experts, divided into 2 parts: interviewing 5 individuals and organizing focus groups of 2 committees: 5 members of the Southern Hotel Association and 5 members of the Phuket Tourism Business Association. Used a purposive sampling and content analysis.

It was found that the infrastructure for senior tourism is an important factor in attracting tourists. Safety, secondary factors are convenient and easily accessible transportation, including accommodation services. If any place has all these factors, the tourism business will be successful. Convenient transportation, friendly welcome, impressive friendship, all types of facilities, transportation components that can reach tourist attractions, which will help encourage senior tourists to travel conveniently and can also travel to other tourist attractions conveniently in the vicinity, including facilities that make tourists comfortable and enjoy traveling, both in terms of experience and knowledge in participating in tourism activities. The government should accelerate the implementation of civilized architecture to facilitate the convenience of senior tourists. Civilized countries and the business sector must arrange facilities and design the interior of accommodations with civilized architecture to facilitate the convenience of the senior and all tourist attractions.

Keywords: Senior Tourists, Entrepreneurs, Phuket Province, Government Sector, Tourism Infrastructure

Introduction

Currently, the tourism industry generates the highest income for the country and in many countries, income from the tourism business is an important source of the country's Gross Domestic Product. Therefore, many countries have policies to promote tourism as a priority. There are many types of tourism in various countries, including new types of tourism that have entered the tourism industry, especially slow tourism in many countries to meet the new demands of the senior who have become an important part of the population structure.



From the trend of changes in the population structure of the country over the past few decades, the proportion of the country's senior population has clearly and continuously increased due to the development of health care, more advanced medical science, and the awareness of people who have turned to taking better care of their health until they have successfully managed and promoted health systematically. Many agencies, both public and private, have promoted longevity for Thais, which is a basic factor directly affecting the number of Thai senior tourists. Finally, from the report of the official registration statistics system, it is shown that in 2022, Thailand has fully entered an aging society.

World Population Prospects 2022 predicts that the world's population will reach 8 billion, with around 10 percent of people over 65 years old and expected to increase to 16 percent by 2050, more than double the number of children under 5 years old. The number of people aged 80 and over will triple from 157 million to 459 million in the next 30 years. According to this data, the number of elderly people continues to increase, whether they are foreigners or Thais. This group of elderly people still needs to travel for leisure, change the monotonous life of staying at home to raise children, or travel to buy necessities nearby. However, these elderly people still need to travel to new places. The tourism industry has not truly reached this segment of the population. Advertising and public relations information to attract senior tourists has not mentioned very little about the data and research on the senior. But in fact, senior tourists or senior tourists have forgotten that they have twice the spending capacity of younger generations if they can save money before retirement.

Not all types of tourism are suitable for the senior. The government and tourism businesses have not supported the travel of senior tourists, especially in the context of Thai tourist attractions, because there is still a lack of awareness of the turning point of the population structure of Thailand, which has entered a completely aging society. For this reason, many tourist attractions do not have a clear understanding of this problem and are not prepared with specific facilities and services to help senior tourists, or it can be said that senior tourists are not accepted. As a result, most tourist attractions are not ready to accommodate and provide convenience to elderly tourists.

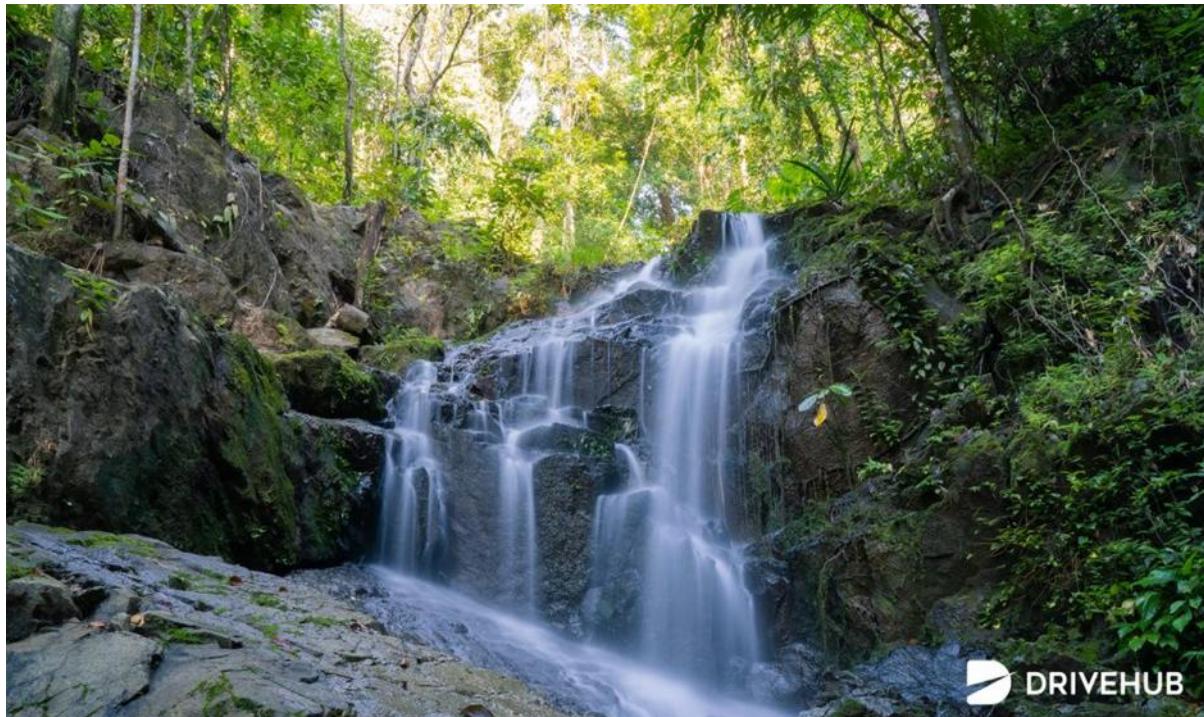
With these many factors, the research team is interested in preparing to welcome senior tourists by providing facilities for seniors both domestically and internationally, which will increase every day. They see that Thailand's main income comes from tourism. Therefore, every province should prepare to promote tourism for seniors. For this research, the research team would like to use Phuket as a case study. It is suitable in many ways, such as having beautiful and diverse natural resources that are popular with both domestic and international tourists, and is known throughout the world for its beautiful beaches, seawater, and natural islands.



Surin Beach is one of Phuket's most beautiful beaches with fine white sand



Laem Promthep, a viewpoint and place to watch the sunset



Ton Sai Waterfall



Wat Phra Thong, Phra Phuttha Ming Mongkhon Ekanakiri, a cultural tradition that is still preserved, a sacred place



Phra Phuttha Ming Mongkol Ekanakkiri, simply known as Wat Phra Yai, is home to the largest Buddha statue in the Mara-Vijaya posture on Phuket Island. It is made of white jade marble imported from Burma and weighs approximately 135 tons.



Local food of Phuket province



Sino-European: The fusion of ancient and modern cultures, such as Phuket Old Town, a Sino-European style culture with outstanding architecture that attracts visitors to Phuket Province.

Objective of Research

To study the perspectives of entrepreneurs in managing the tourism business of senior tourists.

Literature Review

The United Nations defines an aging society based on the proportion of the population aged 60-65 years and over. Divided as follows:

1. Aged Society: The elderly population is more than 7 percent of the total population of the country.
2. Complete Aged Society: The senior population is more than 14 percent of the total population of the country.
3. Super Aged Society: The senior population is more than 20 percent of the total population of the country.

A country that has entered an “aged society” will be considered by the proportion of the population aged 65 and over being more than 7 percent. A country with an senior population of more than 14 percent is considered to have entered a “completely aged society”. If a country has an senior population of more than 20 percent, it indicates that the country has entered a “super-aged society”.

In 2022, Thailand entered a completely aged society with a population of 70,080,000 people, with 12,116,199 senior people (18.3 percent) of the total population. (Information from the official registration statistics system) divided into 3 groups:

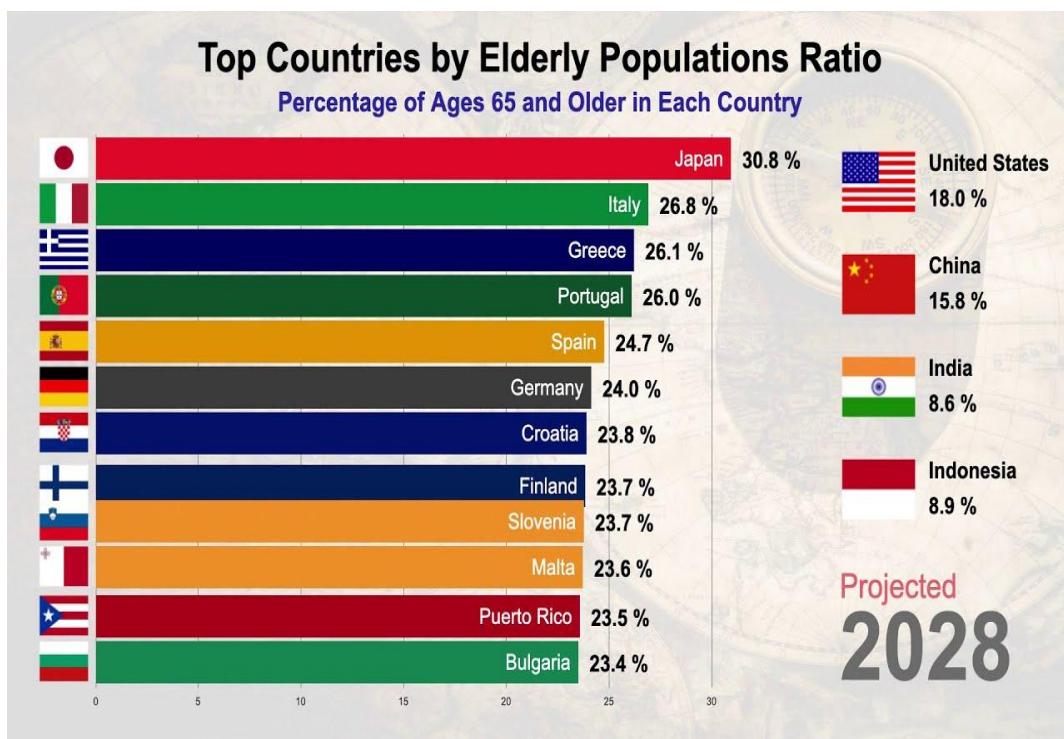
1. Age 60-69 years, 6,843,300 people (3,123,517 men) (3,719,783 women)
2. Age 70-79 years, 3,522,778 people (1,533,624 men) (1,989,136 women)
3. Age 80 years and older, 1,750,121 people (682,451 men) (1,067,670 women)

According to the United Nations' 2022 World Population Prospects Projection.

It is worth noting that many countries worldwide are entering the stage of becoming full-fledged “aging societies,” including Thailand. Data from the Population Reference Bureau (PRB) in the United States, an independent research organization on population and quality of life, has ranked the 50 countries with elderly populations aged 65 and over.

Asia and Europe have the highest senior populations in the world, with 28 percent of the population over 65 in Japan, 23 percent in Italy, and similar proportions in Finland, Portugal, and Greece, at 22 percent.

The countries with the highest number of people aged 65 and over are China, with 166.37 million, India, at 84.9 million, the United States, at 52.76 million, Japan, at 35.58 million, Russia, at 21.42 million, Brazil, at 17.79 million, Germany, at 17.78 million, Indonesia, at 15.16 million, Italy, at 13.76 million, and France, at 13.18 million. Thailand is ranked 17th with 7.61 million people.



Understanding the characteristics of the senior's travel is an important foundation for the tourism business, which is a new trend in this decade that will play a role in competing in the tourism business market.

Mill and Morrison (1992) said that tourist attractions must consist of beautiful attractions, impressive facilities, accommodations, restaurants, souvenir shops, or other services, especially factors such as communication systems and utilities, transportation, and a friendly and hospitable welcome.



Bhatia (1986) mentioned the basic elements of tourism that must consist of

1. Tourist attractions are considered the most important elements that help tourists travel to the destination, including cultural attractions such as ancient sites, important historical structures, etc., natural attractions such as landscapes such as plants, marine animals, mountains, public parks, festivals, etc., including exhibitions, art exhibitions, music, traditions.

2. Facilities are considered essential for tourists and are part of the attractiveness of hotels, entertainment venues, recreational facilities, and faster, safer, and more convenient access to the place. Therefore, the construction of basic factors such as transportation systems, communication systems, public utilities, electricity, and tap water are important in tourist attractions. Collier and Harraway (2001)

3. Accessibility of tourist attractions, accessibility is another important element that helps tourists reach points of interest, including transportation. Transportation includes routes, vehicles, stations, and operators, which must be convenient and able to take tourists to other interesting places. If any tourist attraction is not accessible, it will be less valuable. On the contrary, tourist attractions that are easily accessible can attract more tourists.

Research Methodology

A study on readiness for senior tourists: A case study of Phuket Province. The instrument used in this qualitative research was a questionnaire designed to cover the research objectives and be consistent with the research concept. The key informants were experts, divided into 2 parts: 5 individual interviews and 2 focus group discussions: 5 members of the Southern Hotel Association and 5 members of the Phuket Tourism Business Association.

Data collection

Data collection from experts and 2 focus groups. The researcher conducted the data collection as follows:

1. Write a letter to request permission from experts who provided important information in data collection, asking for permission to collect data from 5 individual experts and organizing 2 focus groups.

2. The researchers collected data from 5 individual experts from government and private sectors, namely the Phuket Provincial Tourism and Sports Office, the Southern Patong Thai Hotel Association, the Patong Beach Hotel Association, and representatives from the Southern Conference and Exhibition Organization, totaling 5 copies. For the focus group discussions, there were 2 groups of 5 experts, namely 5 members from the Southern Hotel Association Committee and the Phuket Tourism Business Association Committee.

3. The collected data from individuals and focus groups were checked for accuracy and completeness. The data were then drafted into guidelines.

The research team used the individual interviews of 5 people and the focus groups recorded on the issue of readiness for receiving senior tourists: a case study of Phuket Province, including 4 aspects.

- (1) Infrastructure and facilities
- (2) Transportation, both air, land, and sea, suitable for users
- (3) High-quality services such as accommodation, safety, health centers, hospitals
- (4) Activities, exhibitions, and tourist attractions that are suitable and create satisfaction for senior tourists

Results

The research team studied the readiness to receive senior tourists: a case study of Phuket Province. The infrastructure for senior tourism is an important factor in attracting tourists, namely safety because tourism is a way of relaxation. The secondary factor is transportation which must be convenient and easily accessible, including accommodation services. If any place has all the factors, the tourism business will be successful. Convenient transportation, a friendly welcome, and impressive friendships. Things that attract senior tourists must consist of important elements, namely, elements of attraction in tourist attractions, elements of all types of facilities, and elements of transportation that can access tourist attractions, which will help encourage senior tourists to travel conveniently and can also travel to other tourist attractions conveniently in the vicinity, including facilities that make tourists comfortable and have fun from traveling, gaining both experience and knowledge in participating in tourist activities.

In addition, the government should accelerate the implementation of civilized architecture to facilitate the convenience of elderly tourists. Civilized countries and the business sector must provide facilities and design the interior of accommodations with civilized architecture to facilitate the convenience of the senior, and all tourist attractions.

Discussion

The research team aimed to study the perspectives of entrepreneurs in managing the tourism business for senior tourists. Since there is very little research on this topic, and most of it is not related to the perspectives of managing the tourism business for senior tourists, it is considered a new topic because Thailand has entered a completely aging society and the countries are in the same situation as Thailand. It is believed that most senior people are healthy and still need to relax and change the atmosphere in their homes or big cities, which are boring, to relax by relaxing in other places. On this occasion, both the government and the private sector as a whole are not yet prepared to welcome tourism for senior people.

Phuket is a province with beautiful natural resources and easy access to transportation. There are many routes to choose from, both by land, air, and boat. There are beautiful places to stay, the sea and the environment are conducive to relaxation, and it is also ready in many



ways. The senior group is an interesting group that is increasing in number every day and has a lot of purchasing power. Therefore, it is not difficult to open the market for senior tourists both domestically and internationally, which will bring in a huge amount of income for the country and the province, including all provinces in Thailand that should pay attention to the senior tourist group business.

Suggestions

1. The government sector should support and be a major force for the private business sector, especially in creating civilized architecture that is suitable for the senior and the disabled, such as roads that must have slopes.
2. The government, the business sector, and all sectors should work together to coordinate in aspects consistently, especially land, sea, and air transportation, quality roads, and services while welcoming and facilitating senior tourists.
3. All sectors should prioritize property safety, medical, or health activity centers.
4. All sectors should provide training services to everyone in the province, be the public relations of the province, both in terms of providing services, friendliness, and having good interactions with tourists.

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