

## Factors Underlying International Mature Travelers' Differentiation

### Value Drivers Toward Small and Medium-Sized Hotels

#### ปัจจัยตัวขับเคลื่อนคุณค่าด้านความแตกต่างของนักท่องเที่ยวผู้สูงอายุชาวต่างชาติ ที่มีต่อโรงแรมขนาดกลางและเล็ก

◆ Daosook Boonyasarn

Ph.D. Student, Integrated Tourism Management Program,

National Institute of Development Administration, E-mail: daosook@hotmail.com

ดาวศุกร์ บุญญะสานต์

นักศึกษาปริญญาเอก การจัดการการท่องเที่ยวแบบบูรณาการ สถาบันบัณฑิตพัฒนบริหารศาสตร์

◆ Rugphong Vongsaroj

Assistant Professor, Ph.D., Graduate School of Tourism Management (GSTM)

and Vice President for Planning, National Institute of Development Administration,

E-mail: rugphong@gmail.com

รักษ์พงศ์ วงศาโรจน์

ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์ ดร. ประธานคณะกรรมการจัดการการท่องเที่ยว และรองอธิการบดีฝ่ายวางแผน

สถาบันบัณฑิตพัฒนบริหารศาสตร์

*Received: November 20, 2019 ; Revised: December 13, 2019 ; Accepted: December 23, 2019*

---

## Abstract

This paper is aimed to examine the components of differentiation value drivers of mature travelers toward small and medium-sized hotels. The research explored perspectives of 384 international mature travelers aged 55 years old or older, who traveling to Thailand for leisure and experiencing to stay at small and medium-sized hotels in Thailand. A questionnaire with a seven-point Likert scale is applied to measure mature travelers' expectations toward small and medium-sized hotels. Using exploratory factor analysis, the four dimensions are identified and labelled 'Better health and security', 'Better atmosphere', 'More responsiveness', and 'Better accessibility and more affordable'. The findings of this research practical recommendations are made to help hoteliers gain substantial insight to develop meaningful and attractive points of differences targeting this particular market segment.

**Keywords:** Differentiation Value Drivers, Mature Travelers, Small and Medium-sized Hotels

## บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาองค์ประกอบของตัวขับเคลื่อนคุณค่าด้านความแตกต่างของนักท่องเที่ยวผู้สูงอายุที่มีต่อการเลือกใช้บริการโรงแรมขนาดกลางและเล็ก กลุ่มตัวอย่างคือ นักท่องเที่ยวผู้สูงอายุชาวต่างชาติ จำนวน 384 คน ที่เดินทางเข้ามาท่องเที่ยวและเคยมีประสบการณ์เข้าพักในโรงแรมขนาดกลางและเล็กในประเทศไทย โดยใช้แบบสอบถามชนิดมาตรวัดแบบลิเคอร์ท 7 ระดับเพื่อใช้วัดความคาดหวังของนักท่องเที่ยวผู้สูงอายุที่มีต่อการเลือกใช้บริการโรงแรมขนาดกลางและเล็ก จากการวิเคราะห์องค์ประกอบเชิงสำรวจ พบว่า องค์ประกอบของตัวขับเคลื่อนคุณค่าด้านความแตกต่างมีจำนวนทั้งสิ้น 4 องค์ประกอบ ได้แก่ 1) สุขภาพและความปลอดภัยที่ดีขึ้น 2) บรรยากาศการเข้าพักที่ดีขึ้น 3) การตอบสนองความต้องการที่ดีขึ้น และ 4) การเข้าถึงผู้ให้บริการได้ดีขึ้นและราคาที่สามารถจ่ายได้ ผู้ประกอบการโรงแรมขนาดกลางและเล็กสามารถนำผลการวิจัยไปใช้ในการพัฒนาผลิตภัณฑ์และบริการให้มีความแตกต่างเพื่อสามารถตอบโจทย์ความต้องการของกลุ่มนักท่องเที่ยวผู้สูงอายุได้

**คำสำคัญ:** ตัวขับเคลื่อนคุณค่าด้านความแตกต่าง นักท่องเที่ยวผู้สูงอายุ โรงแรมขนาดกลางและเล็ก

## Introduction

Today, the world population has been facing significant aging since the social structure forward to aging society (United Nations, 2015). This phenomenon of an aging wave allows the aging population to become one of the most considerable consumer segments which could create tremendous opportunities for various industries, particularly in the tourism industry.

Similar to most other tourism destinations, Thailand has considered the international mature traveler market as a potential segment. The significance of this segment is recognized in terms of its current size, potential growth and purchasing power (Batra, 2009). Interestingly, the characters of current mature travelers differ from those in the past, that is, they are active aging, healthier, wealthier and spend more than other groups, better educated, more experienced, and more independent. Most of them value travel experience as the essence of retirement as they have an abundance of time to travel and the duration of stay (Vojvodic, 2015). Hence, this segment has become a lucrative market and is considered as the growth engine of the tourism industry.

In an aspect of hotel business in Thailand, though the rising number of tourist arrivals drives the growth of hotel business, also causes the fiercely competitive environment since it stimulates the extensively expanding of large hotels and other accommodation types. As a result, it affects small and medium-sized hotels' competitiveness to compete with competitors

and challenges them for survival (Thai Farmers Research Centre, 2016). To remain in this intense competition, it is crucial for small and medium-sized hotels to increase their competitive advantage to meet the challenge by adjusting themselves in relation to their strategies to attract the potential market. The segment of mature travelers is one of the most appealing potential markets. This segment is a niche market which largely spends on their travels for high-quality lodging, better personalized products and services, unique experience and differentiation (Batra, 2009). This attractive profile of mature travelers can compatible with the strengths of small and medium-sized hotels as they can leverage their advantage of size, namely being closer to the customer, more flexible, and more authentic which allow them to offer unique and personalized service with quality. Moreover, the rising expansion of digital economy enables small and medium-sized hotels possibly access to the global tourist market more effectively not less than those large hotels. Consequently, this can be the enabling factors for small and medium-sized hotels to reach the potential market of mature travelers.

To create differentiation value of product and service offering is an approach to satisfy the demands of today's mature travelers. However, from the literature review found that the studies of differentiation value drivers in a context of small and medium-sized hotels are hardly found, especially on the segment of mature travelers (Mungall & Gherissi Labben, 2009). Most researches have generally focused on the mature travelers' generic value drivers in an area of a conventional hotel. Very few studies have been written about differentiation value drivers targeting this segment in the setting of small and medium-sized hotels (Caber & Albayrak, 2014). As a result, knowledge for entrepreneurs in this hotel type about creating differentiation value drivers for the mature segment is still restricted. Besides, many hospitality businesses in Thailand still operate their business with inadequate knowledge directed at understanding current mature travelers (Batra, 2009).

From the aforementioned problems and the significance of study, it is necessary to study "factors underlying mature travelers' differentiation value drivers toward small and medium-sized hotels" to identify the components of differentiation value drivers of mature travelers in order to fill the academic gap and enable the hoteliers to develop products and services in response to the demands of this segment and to create the customer satisfaction and ultimately to contribute to the competitive advantage to their business.

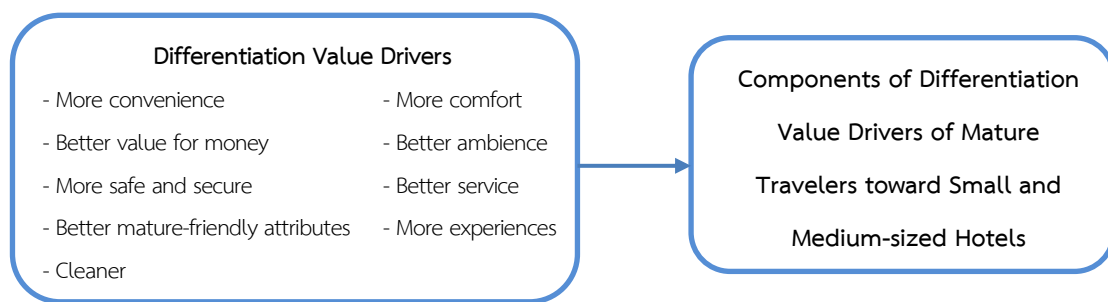
## Objective

To identify the components of differentiation value drivers of the mature travelers toward small and medium-sized hotels.

## Scope of the Study

This quantitative research examined the components of differentiation value drivers of mature travelers toward small and medium-sized hotels. The 384 questionnaires were distributed to the international mature travelers aged 55 years old or over, who experiencing small and medium-sized hotels in Thailand. This study explored in Bangkok, one of the most popular destinations for mature travelers, where representing a great number of small and medium-sized hotel business.

## Conceptual Framework



## Literature Review

### Mature Travelers' Hotel Generic Value Drivers

Knowing key differentiation value drivers that determine accommodation choices which mature travelers concern is essential for small and medium-sized hotel operators to make best possible lodging development decision. In this study, value drivers mean hotel attributes of products and services that the hotel offers to customers to drive customer satisfaction. As for mature travelers' hotel value drivers, most of the previous studies have explored the important value drivers in terms of generic value drivers that influenced mature travelers when selecting accommodation. From the analysis of literature, it can be classified these generic value drivers into nine dimensions, namely convenience (Chen, Wang, Luoh, Shih, & You, 2014; Hudson, 2010; Victorino, Verma, Plaschka, & Dev, 2005), price (Moschis & Ünal, 2008; Mungall & Gherissi Labben, 2009), safety and security (Anuar, Musa, Khalid, & Anderson, 2017; Vieregge, Phetkaew, Beldona, Lumsden, & DeMicco, 2007), cleanliness (Anuar et al., 2017;

Vieregge et al., 2007), comfort (Chen et al., 2014; Vieregge et al., 2007), mature-friendly attributes (Chen et al., 2014; Mungall & Gherissi Labben, 2009), ambience (Caber & Albayrak, 2014; Hartman & Qu, 2007), service (Anuar et al., 2017; Mungall & Gherissi Labben, 2009), and experiences (Hudson, 2010; Mungall & Gherissi Labben, 2009). However, to enable small and medium-sized hotels' products and services to be different from those competitors, differentiation is a solution as the main source of a competitive factor in the hospitality business. Hence, hotel operators need to combine generic value drivers with differentiation features to provide best value propositions to target customers.

#### **Mature Travelers' Differentiation Value Drivers toward Small and Medium-Sized Hotels**

Based on the classification of generic value drivers, the researcher explored mature travelers' differentiation value drivers grounded on these nine dimensions of generic value drivers. In this context, differentiation value drivers mean attributes that add worth to products and services to enhance its value to the customer, be differentiated from competitors, and gain a competitive advantage to a business. Differentiation value drivers also refer to the attributes that function as a gain creator or a pain reliever in response to mature travelers' demands and to deliver them with greater satisfaction. In this study, differentiation value drivers are illustrated as follows.

*More convenience* - convenience is one of the most frequent attributes used in studies. Mature travelers are convenience-oriented, they prefer products and services that are easy to use and minimize problems (Moschis, 2003). Besides, they also perceived time as precious for them, so they tend to be willing to pay for convenience (Denny, 2009). Speed and flexibility of check-in and check-out process, convenience in reaching service provider (Gunasekaran & Anandkumar, 2012), and high-tech facilities (Wang, Wu, Luo, & Lu, 2017) were included as preferable attributes for this segment which provide them with the sense of more convenience.

*Better value for money* - though today's mature travelers have been known as customers with purchasing power, however, they are more concerned about value for money they spend. As they are value-oriented, price and quality must be together. Adding differentiation value to price by offering customer-oriented price strategies, incentive price or augmented benefits can fulfil their requirements of value for money (Mungall & Gherissi Labben, 2009). This can make them feel more sense of more competitive pricing and better value for money.

*More safe and secure* - since mature travelers are more vulnerable than the younger, safety and security are perceived as more important and rated with high priority for them when choosing a hotel (Batra, 2009). Designing architectural and interior features specially adapted to seniors and employing technology to improve hotel security both in rooms and public area (Anuar et al., 2017) can provide mature travelers with a better feeling of safety and security.

*Cleaner* - cleanliness has been cited by numerous studies as the most desired value driver of mature travelers when choosing accommodation (Anuar et al., 2017; Caber & Albayrak, 2014). As being older, mature travelers are more vulnerable and less disease resistant than the younger (Vieregge et al., 2007). Therefore, hotels can upgrade their services by offering the customer with a clean environment and adopting innovative cleaning practices (Anuar et al., 2017) to provide them with the sense of cleaner than ever.

*More comfort* - as the increasing age, mature travelers face the deterioration of body functions. Sleep disorder is a common dilemma within the ageing group, which impacts on their health-related quality of life (Huber, Milne, & Hyde, 2018). Thus, this becomes a major concern among ageing travelers. To design elements that provide a supportive environment for sleep quality is crucial to enhance individuals' quality of life, wellness, and health.

*Better mature-friendly attributes* - the deterioration of health condition discouraged ageing travelers from traveling. Mature travelers with health limitations are more concerned about the difficult problems that might arise if the hotel facilities are not user-friendly. Furthermore, as they are comfort-sensitive, mature-friendly attributes perceived utmost crucial for them when choosing a lodging (Mungall & Gherissi Labben, 2009). Consequently, providing mature-specific attributes, and health and dietary needs enable an establishment to deliver better mature-friendly facilities to enhance travelers' satisfaction.

*Better ambience* – as this market segment is characterized as customers who stay longer and enjoy more time in hotel compared to other segments (Mungall & Gherissi Labben, 2009). Most of them value vacations which providing senses of rest and relaxation, and expect a good time during their stay. The hotel ambience is an approach to create value to the customer. Many studies supported that this value driver served as an influential factor affecting their choices of hotel selection (Caber & Albayrak, 2014; Hartman & Qu, 2007). To provide the pleasant environment of quality hospitality atmosphere in terms of architectural and interior design, aesthetic, color harmony, warm welcome and home-like setting can create the special

environment to satisfy the specific needs of mature travelers and enhance their satisfaction (Caber & Albayrak, 2014).

*Better service* – today, mature travelers are not looking for ‘cookie-cutter’ offering. Instead, they want something different and more personalized. They are customers with self-indulgent who expected individualized service (Mungall & Gherissi Labben, 2009). An enjoyment of comfort and pampering are highly emphasized by this segment as a significant value driver. Hence, to deliver personalized customer service can create differentiation add-value to mature travelers and direct to their satisfaction (Anuar et al., 2017). This can provide them with a sense of more individuality rather than treating them as ‘me too’ offering.

*More experiences* – mature travelers expect their increasing age to be a time for discovering new things. Consequently, there is an increasing demand for mature travelers for learning experiences as a part of their vacation (Hudson, 2010). To add differentiation value of learning experiences through traveling, can respond to mature travelers who actively seek new experiences. By providing the creation of specific programs in areas of their interests such as wellness, health, art, cultural, cuisine, and so forth, can drive them more enriching personal experience (Hudson, 2010; Mungall & Gherissi Labben, 2009).

Based on the nine dimensions of mature travelers’ differentiation value drivers in accommodation services, these attributes were determined to explore their expectations toward small and medium-sized hotels.

## Research Methodology

In this study, the quantitative approach was conducted using a survey technique. The respondents included 384 international mature travelers aged 55 years old or older, travelling to Thailand for leisure, and had experienced staying in small and medium-sized hotels. In this study, small and medium-sized hotels are defined as the non-large hotels or the hotels that offer less than 149 rooms according to National Statistical Office (2015). The respondents were identified employing a multi-stage sampling technique, including purposive sampling to the potential areas in Bangkok, namely, phranakorn, Sukhumvit, Silom, Sathorn, and Rajthevi where are the popular destinations for international mature travelers and have a high concentration of small and medium-sized hotels. Then, stratified sampling and accidental sampling were used. At this stage, the respondents were approached and asked to identify their hotel name, then, the researcher verified by checking against with the hotel list of small and medium-sized

hotels in Bangkok. The respondents had to meet the pre-screen criteria such as bona fide guest at small and medium-sized hotels, and independent traveler.

The data collection instrument consisted of two parts. The first part was designed to gather travelers' profiles. The second part had 33 variables of differentiation value drivers with a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) 'not at all important' to (7) 'extremely important'. The questionnaire was developed from a review of previous literature and identified the content validity by tourism academics. Then, a pilot test was conducted with 30 respondents to obtain feedback on the appropriateness and clarity of questions. Cronbach's coefficient alphas were calculated and revealed the value of 0.955, reflecting a high level of reliability.

Data analysis included three steps. First, a profile of the respondent was derived from the socio-demographic questions. Second, principal component factor analysis with varimax rotations approach was conducted to delineate the underlying components of each set of 33 items of differentiation value drivers. Third, descriptive statistics were performed to compute the mean scores for items of differentiation value drivers in terms of importance to consider which items served as major differentiation value drivers.

## Results

### 1. Profile of respondents

Of the 384 samples, 52.34% were male, half of the respondents (54.43%) were in the age group of 55-60, followed by 61-65 years old (35.16%), and 10.42% were aged 65 or older. Most of the respondents were married (69.01%), and one-third of the respondents were from Europe (33.07%). Mostly half of the respondents had earned a bachelor's degree (54.69%). 54.95% still employed full-time, while 30.21% were retirees. The two majority groups of respondents marked their total receivable revenue of between \$30,000 - \$44,999 yearly/per household (29.69%) and \$45,000 - \$59,999 yearly/per household. Nearly half of the respondents identified their self-perceived health status as 'excellent' (49.22%).

### 2. Exploratory factor analysis of mature travelers' differentiation value drivers

Before performing factor analysis, there are requirements for a dataset to be suitable for factor analysis. According to Pallant (2016), the sample size and strength of the intercorrelations among the variables need to be concerned. For the sample size, Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010) suggested that minimum five or hopefully ten cases per variable are considered adequately in most cases. In this study, the researcher determined 384 cases



and 33 items which indicated appropriate for analysis. As for the relationship among the variables, the results of KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) was 0.960, indicted high sampling adequacy. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity appeared had an approximate distribution of Chi-square value of 5946.640 with significance at 0.000, interpreting the suitability for employing factor analysis techniques.

To conduct exploratory factor analysis, Principle Component Analysis (PCA) was employed to approach the factor extraction to determine the number of underlying factors. Refer to Kaiser's (1974) criteria, only factors with eigenvalues of 1.0 or greater have remained in a final factor structure. Varimax factor rotation with orthogonal rotation method was approached, the factor loading of 0.50 or greater was set as a criterion for variable inclusion and retained for further analysis (Hair et al., 2010). Four components were extracted from the factor analysis of 33 items. However, according to Hair et al. (2010), the 13 items with factor loading under 0.50 were eliminated. Finally, the 20 items were retained for each factor grouping. Differentiation value drivers were depicted in Table 1.

**Table 1** Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis of Mature Travelers' Differentiation Value Drivers Toward Small and Medium-Sized Hotels

Factor/Items (reliability alpha)	Factor Loading	Eigen Value	% of Variance	Mean Scores
<b>Factor 1: Better Health and Security</b> (alpha = 0.803)		<b>5.106</b>	<b>15.472</b>	<b>5.60</b>
Providing of clean and hygienic rooms	0.674			
Comfortable bed, mattress and pillow	0.641			
Providing of clean and hygienic environment	0.635			
Providing of clean and hygienic food	0.593			
Availability of security system in hotel's public areas	0.551			
<b>Factor 2: Better Atmosphere</b> (alpha = 0.824)		<b>4.300</b>	<b>13.029</b>	<b>5.52</b>
Flexible check-in and check-out policies	0.654			
Availability of products/services aimed at mature travelers	0.624			
Creation of leisure activities for enriching learning experience	0.591			
Individual attention for customer	0.569			
Homely atmosphere	0.547			
Personal warm care given by staff	0.509			
<b>Factor 3: More Responsiveness</b> (alpha = 0.806)		<b>3.801</b>	<b>11.517</b>	<b>5.44</b>
Availability of modern technologies in room service and hotel facilities	0.705			
Availability of in-room entertainment technology amenities	0.619			

Factor/Items (reliability alpha)	Factor Loading	Eigen Value	% of Variance	Mean Scores
Availability of privileges offering through loyalty programs or access to partner discounts/rewards	0.613			
Fast payment and billing process	0.591			
Speed of check-out process	0.507			
<b>Factor 4: Better Accessibility and More Affordable</b> (alpha = 0.788)		<b>3.753</b>	<b>11.372</b>	<b>5.56</b>
Ease of contacting service provider	0.740			
Convenient online reservations	0.676			
Easy to access hotel information online	0.558			
Reasonable room rate/ value of money	0.517			
			<b>51.390</b>	<b>5.53</b>

According to exploratory factor analysis, the four factors were extracted with 20 variables. All constructs had factor loadings ranged between 0.507 - 0.740 considered as practically significant (Hair et al., 2010) and the eigenvalues for these factors constituted from 3.753 - 5.106 which yielded into four factors, and collectively explained 51.390% of the total variance.

These four factors were named on the common characteristics of the variables included. 'Better health and security' factor included five items and had factor loadings ranged between 0.551 - 0.674, and explained 15.47% of the total variance. The second factor, 'Better atmosphere' composed of six items, factor loadings were recorded between 0.509 - 0.654, accounted for 13.029% of the variance. 'More responsiveness' was the third factor which comprised five items. This construct had factor loadings ranged between 0.507 - 0.705 and explained 11.517% of the variance. The last dimension was named as 'Better accessibility and more affordable'. This construct included four items with factor loadings ranged between 0.517-0.740, with 11.372% variance. Furthermore, to ensure that the variables in each dimension were internally related, Cronbach's alphas were computed to confirm the internal factor consistency. The resulting values ranged from 0.788 – 0.824, indicating a high level of reliability in each construct, that is, greater than 0.7.

### 3. Descriptive statistics of the study factors

In addition, descriptive statistics of variables in this study were also illustrated in Table 1. The means for each construct were measured to understand the variability of the subscales obtained from the factor analysis. Considering the importance of factors, the

overall findings indicated the average total score of 5.53, interpreting that the overall expectation of mature travelers toward differentiation value drivers was at a very important level.

Focusing on each factor, ‘Better health and security’ (mean = 5.60) had the highest mean compared to other factors. That is, mature travelers placed the most important on health and security issues when choosing small and medium-sized hotels. Furthermore, the findings have shown that ‘Better accessibility and more affordable’ (mean = 5.56) and ‘Better atmosphere’ (mean = 5.52) were factors that mature travelers highly concerned. On the other hand, the descriptive statistics identified that ‘More responsiveness’ (mean = 5.44) had the lowest mean. However, it could not signify that this factor was not important since this mean score still indicated the level of very important for mature travelers.

## Discussion

Among the four identified factors, ‘Better health and security’ was viewed as the most important differentiation value drivers for mature travelers. This component highlights the interior attributes of the servicescape, in terms of health-related attributes and security attributes. The findings were in line with previous studies confirmed that mature travelers considered the cleanliness and safety (Anuar et al., 2017; Caber & Albayrak, 2014) as well as the comfort as the high priority factors when deciding a hotel selection (Caber & Albayrak, 2014; Vojvodic, 2015) since the current mature travelers become more active travelers with health-conscious, placing importance on their physical and mental health (Vojvodic, 2015). Increasing the age made them less resistant to disease and more vulnerable than young people. Consequently, cleanliness and hygiene were critical to them. Furthermore, various studies also confirmed that they also preferred a high level of comfort and paid particular attention to a security issue (Vieregge et al., 2007; Vojvodic, 2015). Accordingly, hoteliers need to provide service in a sanitary, safe, and comforting environment to best meet these particular needs of mature travelers to offer them differentiation value drivers with a sense of better health and security.

The factor of ‘Better atmosphere’ was cited as a very important value driver by the respondents in this research. This component reflects a preferable service atmosphere deriving from the flexibility and personalization of services, and the ambience. ‘Self-indulgent’ is well defined as the character of mature travelers because they prefer

personalized service, personal attention, and expect to be treated as an individual (Mungall & Gherissi Labben, 2009). To deliver effective and warm personalized service, the empathetic and sympathetic of staff toward the customers are critical concerned for lodging business. Hence, training staff to the specific needs and differences of the ageing customers are needful. For product customization, the findings found similar to Wuest, Emenheiser, and Tas (2001) and Caber and Albayrak (2014) that products and services offering specifically intended to mature travelers' needs were found important to them. As for the enriching experience, some studies pointed out an increasing demand for mature travelers focusing on learning experiences as an opportunity for self-development when traveling (Hudson, 2010). Thus, hoteliers should contribute to encouraging the creation of specific programs for enriching mature travelers' holiday experiences by considering their intelligence and psychological awareness. Additionally, since mature travelers are comfort-sensitive (Hartman & Qu, 2007), creating a concept of home-like setting is considerable for hoteliers when furnishing their hotel to satisfy the needs and lessen their fear and discomfort when away from home. Importantly, the distinctive attributes of 'Better atmosphere' enable small and medium-sized hotels to compete with large hotels.

The 'More responsiveness' factor stresses the needs for modern amenities, efficiency and speed of service, and privilege offerings. In this study, this factor was evaluated by the respondents as a very important element when making hotel decision. Since mature travelers are convenience-oriented (Moschis, 2003) and prefer to try new things to seek for new experiences (Correia & Elliott, 2006), innovative and up-to-date in-room technologies enable them to stay conveniently and heighten their experiences. Previous studies confirmed that the new generation of mature travelers especially who are still active in the labor market cited modern in-room technologies as one of the great significant amenities when evaluated a hotel (Wang et al., 2017). Thereby, hoteliers should become early adopters of technology, keep pace with the up-to-date technological trend and make the selection accordingly to satisfy the current customers' needs. In addition, this segment also perceived time as precious to them and willing to pay for convenience (Denny, 2009), so providing speed and convenience of service was found significant for mature travelers which confirmed by several studies (Chen et al., 2014; Hudson, 2010). For privilege offerings, the findings were similarly agreed with Hartman and Qu (2007) and Moschis and Ünal (2008) that discounts were

important in mature travelers' patronage decision. Additionally, the study of Chan and Wong (2006) also confirmed that hotel's incentive privileges were more concerned among the travelers. Therefore, it is considerable for hoteliers to offer privileges to aimed at increasing brand loyalty among the customers and customer satisfaction. According to this factor, hoteliers can provide accommodation service with the sense of more responsiveness to cater for these particular needs of mature travelers.

The 'Better accessibility and more affordable' mentions the needs of convenient accessibility to reach hotel service and information, and value of the dollar they spend. This factor was rated as the second most very important in this study. Since mature travelers are convenience-oriented, they prefer products and services that minimize problems and easy to use (Moschis, 2003). The findings were supported by the study of Moschis and Ünal (2008) confirmed that ease of reaching the service provider was among the top five attributes for mature travelers when choosing their accommodation. Providing mature travelers with convenient accessibility, differentiation features should be adopted, such as user-friendly reservation systems which perceived as one of the significant attributes according to the study of Radder and Wang (2006). Convenient online reservation system also found at the forefront of hotel selection attributes for today's travelers (Victorino et al., 2005). In addition, previous studies also similarly confirmed that social media served as an influential communication channel for the current mature travelers to obtain their travel information (Mohmed, Omar, & Tay, 2016). At this point, hoteliers need to carefully choose the appropriate reservation system and effective communication channels to respond to the needs of customers by considering the customer trend and their behavior. As for reasonable room rate/ value of money, this study was also found in line with previous research confirmed that mature travelers underlined reasonable room price/ value of money as the key consideration when choosing a hotel (Caber & Albayrak, 2014; Vieregge et al., 2007). It can imply that mature travelers are 'value minded', they value quality over cost. Accordingly, offering accommodation with a price yet quality can give them a sense of good value for dollars spent.

## Recommendation

### Recommendation from this Study

Understanding the key factors in choosing this type of accommodation will offer hoteliers some directions in shaping accommodation choices, facilities, products and services, marketing decision, and developing the guidelines or strategies in the service business to capture this market by understanding their expectations and desires of this market segment.

Considering to each dimension of the findings, for the factor of ‘Better atmosphere’, this component emphasized the significance of health-related attributes and security attributes. Hoteliers need to focus on providing services in a sanitary, safe, and comforting environment such as safety surrounding, personal safety, high standard of hygiene, availability of healthy cuisine, designed guestroom incorporating to the aging ergonomic and safety aspects to best meet the particular needs of mature travelers and offer them differentiation value drivers with a sense of better health and security.

Regarding to the factor of ‘Better atmosphere’, the flexibility and personalization of services, and the ambience were highlighted as important differentiation value drivers for mature travelers. These attributes are considered as the distinguished advantages for small and medium-sized hotels to differentiate themselves and to compete with large hotels. Hoteliers should leverage their benefits of small-scale accommodation by emphasizing on their cozy places with a warm and homely atmosphere, the unique of the distinctive physical environment and ambience, and significantly, the outstanding personalized services and special activities or events to create mature travelers with a better atmosphere of staying experience.

As for the factor of ‘More responsiveness’, the findings pointed up modern amenities, efficiency and speed of service as the considerable differentiation value drivers for mature travelers. It is necessary for hoteliers to consider hotel technology implementations, for example, in-room modern and comfort technology facilities, as innovative differentiation value drivers to provide mature travelers with more convenience, faster and better service responsiveness, and enhancement of new experiences. Thus, hoteliers should keep pace with the modern technological trend and make the best selection to meet the needs of today’s mature travelers.

Regarding to the factor of 'Better accessibility and more affordable', the needs of convenient accessibility to reach hotel service and information, and value for money were mentioned as the important attributes for mature traveler. Differentiation features such as multi-channel booking system with user-friendly features, convenient online reservation system, effective communication channel like social media should be adopted to respond mature travelers' convenience-oriented characteristics by considering to the customer trend and behaviors. With respect to value for money, since mature travelers are discerning consumers and value-oriented, low price or discounting alone may not be able to attract this market segment. Thus, price and quality must be together. Offering incentive price and augmented benefits, or designing and promoting experience through hotel differentiation products and services that engage and create customer's memorable experience can help hoteliers to enhance mature travelers with a sense of better value for money.

By having these factors, it will also allow small and medium-sized hotels to be ready to meet or even exceed what mature travelers want and to create meaningful points of differences and enable them to provide mature travelers with accommodation attributes different from those competitors or large hotels.

### **Recommendation for Future Research**

For academic contribution, knowledge from findings can further develop. The researcher can use a set of differentiation value driver variables derived from factor analysis to develop further studies related to mature travelers in a different context or culture, in other tourism-based business and other business.

### **References**

- Anuar, J., Musa, M., Khalid, K., & Anderson, N. (2017). Hotel selection attributes among mature travellers at Redang island. *Journal of Tourism, Hospitality & Culinary Arts*, 9(2), 1-10.
- Batra, A. (2009). Senior pleasure tourists: examination of their demography, travel experience, and travel behavior upon visiting the Bangkok metropolis. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration*, 10(3), 197-212.
- Caber, M., & Albayrak, T. (2014). Does the importance of hotel attributes differ for senior tourists? A comparison of three markets. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 26(4), 610-628.

- Chan, E. S., & Wong, S. C. (2006). Hotel selection: When price is not the issue. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 12(2), 142-159.
- Chen, W.-Y., Wang, K.-C., Luoh, H.-F., Shih, J.-F., & You, Y.-S. (2014). Does a friendly hotel room increase senior group package tourists' satisfaction? A field experiment. *Asia pacific journal of tourism research*, 19(8), 950-970.
- Correia, S., & Elliott, R. (2006). An examination of Internet user profiles in the mature tourism market segment in South Africa. *Consortium Journal of Hospitality & Tourism*, 10(2).
- Denny, M. (2009). The generations manifesto. *The Undersea Journal, Second Quarter*, 42-52.
- Gunasekaran, N., & Anandkumar, V. (2012). Factors of influence in choosing alternative accommodation: A study with reference to Pondicherry, a coastal heritage town. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 62, 1127-1132.
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2010). Multivariate data analysis: Global edition. In: Pearson Higher Education Upper Saddle River, NJ.
- Hartman, J. D., & Qu, H. (2007). The senior travel market: Do's and Don'ts. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 8(2), 67-81.
- Huber, D., Milne, S., & Hyde, K. F. (2018). Constraints and facilitators for senior tourism. *Tourism management perspectives*, 27, 55-67.
- Hudson, S. (2010). Wooing zoomers: marketing to the mature traveler. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 28(4), 444.
- Mohmed, B., Omar, S., & Tay, K. (2016). A Cohort Comparison of the Travel Preferences of Future and Golden Seniors in Penang Island. *International Journal of Economics & Management*, 10(1).
- Moschis, G. P. (2003). Marketing to older adults: an updated overview of present knowledge and practice. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 20(6), 516-525.
- Moschis, G. P., & Ünal, B. (2008). Travel and leisure services preferences and patronage motives of older consumers. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 24(4), 259-269.
- Mungall, A., & Gherissi Labben, T. (2009). Hotel offer adjustments for senior citizen guests: perception of Swiss hoteliers. In *Advances in Hospitality and Leisure* (pp. 223-239): Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- National Statistical Office. (2015). The 2014 hotels and guest houses survey. Retrieved from [http://web.nso.go.th/en/survey/construction/tourism\\_08.htm](http://web.nso.go.th/en/survey/construction/tourism_08.htm)



- Pallant, J. (2016). *SPSS survival manual*: McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Radder, L., & Wang, Y. (2006). Dimensions of guest house service: Managers' perceptions and business travellers' expectations. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 18(7), 554-562.
- United Nations. (2015). World Population Aging 2015 – Highlights. Retrieved from [https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/WPA2015\\_Highlights.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/WPA2015_Highlights.pdf)
- Victorino, L., Verma, R., Plaschka, G., & Dev, C. (2005). Service innovation and customer choices in the hospitality industry. *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*, 15(6), 555-576.
- Vieregge, M., Phetkaew, P., Beldona, S., Lumsden, S.-A., & DeMicco, F. J. (2007). Mature travelers to Thailand: A study of preferences and attributes. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 13(2), 165-179.
- Vojvodic, K. (2015). *Understanding the senior travel market: A review*. Paper presented at the 3rd International Scientific Conference Tourism in Southern and Eastern Europe.
- Wang, W., Wu, W., Luo, J., & Lu, J. (2017). Information technology usage, motivation, and intention: a case of Chinese urban senior outbound travelers in the Yangtze River Delta region. *Asia pacific journal of tourism research*, 22(1), 99-115.
- Wuest, B., Emenheiser, D., & Tas, R. (2001). Is the lodging industry serving the needs of mature consumers? A comparison of mature travelers' and lodging managers' perceptions of service needs. *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing*, 8(3-4), 85-96.



Daosook Boonyasarn, Master of International Tourism and Hospitality Management, Western Sydney University, NSW, Australia.  
Lecturer, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Dhurakij Pundit University.



Assistant Professor, Rugphong Vongsaroj, Ph.D., Ph.D. in International Development, Nagoya University, Japan, Vice President for Planning, NIDA, Lecturer/Thesis Advisor, Graduate School of Tourism Management, NIDA.