THE STUDY ON HEALTH TOURISM BEHAVIOR OF ELDERLY TOURISTS IN PHRA NAKHON SI AYUTTHAYA, THAILAND

[1]AKARAWIN SASANAPITAK, [2]JATUPON DONGJIT, [3]NAPHASANAN THONG-IN

[1]Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Rajabhat University, Thailand
[2]School of Law and Politics, Suan Dusit University, Thailand[2],
[3]Faculty of Management Science, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Rajabhat University, Thailand
E-mail: [1]akarawins@gmail.com, [2]dongjit@hotmail.com, [3]naphasanan_aru@hotmail.com

Abstract - This study aimed to survey the health tourism behavior of the elderly in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province, Thailand. This was quantitative research, and data were collected through questionnaires from people aged 50 years old and above, including people living in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, tourists, and people living in nearby provinces by accidental random sampling, totaling 400 sets. The findings revealed that 334 (83.50%) elderly tourists traveled by private cars. 309 (77.25%) elderly tourists traveled with family or children. 184 (46%) of them traveled on weekends. 307 (76.75%) of them had uncertain travel months, and 256 (64%) of them had a one-day trip. Regarding the purposes of travel, 276 (69.00%) of them traveled for leisure. Regarding the news on health tourism through online media, 263 (65.75%) of them received the news via Facebook. For offline channels, 231 (57.75%) of them received news through acquaintances. The level of interest in health tourism activities overall was at a moderate level ($\bar{x}$ = 3.24, S.D. = .888). When considering each activity, elderly tourists were interested in recreational activities at the highest level ($\bar{x}$ = 4.43, S.D.= .676), followed by Thai massage activity at the high level ($\bar{x}$ = 3.47, S.D.= 1.146).

Keywords - Health Tourism, Tourism Behavior, Elderly Tourists, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Thailand

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism plays a great role in economic development at the global, regional and national levels. To clarify, according to data from the World Tourism Organization [1] in 2016, there was a steady increase in global tourist growth rates and year-round growth of 4.6%. Asia and the Pacific showed growth of 5.6%. ASEAN ranked 1st in growth rate with 7.6% and Africa had a minus tourist growth rate of 3.3%. In Thailand, there have been foreign tourists visiting until the coronavirus (Covid-19) epidemic. Then, foreigners must stop, and only domestic tourism remained, which is still one of the driving factors of the country's economy.

For in the central region of Thailand, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya is considered an area with income from tourism with a large number of tourists. Most tourists had various purposes, such as cultural tourism or health tourism since it is an old capital, so there are many ancient monuments and artifacts. In 1991, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) resolved to register the historical city of Ayutthaya on the World Heritage List [2]. Despite the disruption to economic volatility, there are still many tourists visiting Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya for many reasons, such as its location near Bangkok, making it convenient for transportation along with archaeological sites as a great cultural and traditional tourist attraction. Additionally, another form of tourism that should have the potential to promote tourism in Ayutthaya province is wellness tourism, especially for elderly tourists.

Considering the proportion of the current population, Thailand has already entered an aging society. According to the data from the Department of Older Persons, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, there are more than 11 million elderly population, or 17.66% of the country's population in Thailand (data on December 31, 2020), which is a relatively high proportion. There was also a trend in many countries beginning to extend their retirement beyond the age of 60 [3]. Moreover, considering area analysis, provinces close to Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, such as Singburi, Chainat, Samut Songkhram, and Ang Thong had the highest elderly rate, ranked 2nd, 5th, 6th, and 7th in the country, respectively. Most of these provinces are adjacent to Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province.

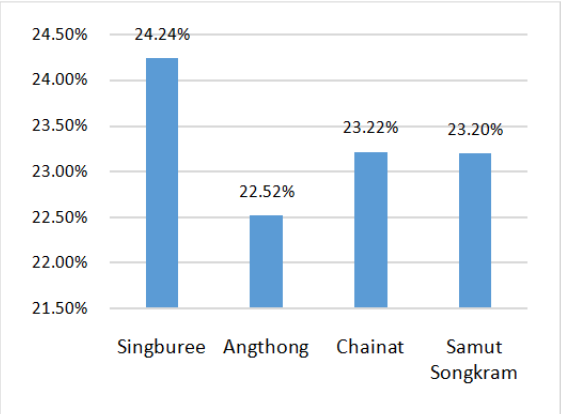


Figure 1: The percent of the elderly person

The Tourism Authority of Thailand [4] defined elderly tourists as tourists aged 55 years old and above with high purchasing power and quality. In addition, a study by Ranee Isichaikul and Chatchaphon Songsunthornwong [5] further stated that elderly tourists mainly aimed for relaxation, and most of them

were aged from 55 to 65 years old. Based on the data, elderly tourists are likely to be tourists with high income and affordability. For Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya which is located next to the provinces with a high elderly rate, there is a high probability that elderly tourists will choose Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province as one of their travel destinations. This is a significant opportunity for the province to attract elderly tourists.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To survey the health tourism behavior of the elderly in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province, Thailand

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This was quantitative research and the data were collected through questionnaires from people aged 50 years old and above, including people living in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, tourists, and people living in nearby provinces to survey the health tourism behavior of the elderly in Phranakhon Si Ayutthaya in Thailand by accidental random sampling, totaling 400 sets. For data analysis, descriptive analysis was used to describe the personal data of the sample, consisting of frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation (SD).

The interpretation of the mean was determined by using the interval scale [6] with the formula for calculating the width of the interval scale as follows:

1.00 – 1.80 Lowest level of interest
1.81 – 2.60 Low level of interest
2.61 – 3.40 Intermediate level of interest
3.41 – 4.20 High level of interest
4.21 – 5.00 Highest level of interest

IV. RESULTS

A. General Information of the Respondents

201 respondents (50.25%) were females. 165 respondents (41.25%) lived in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya. Most of the respondents (37.50%) were aged between 50-55 years. 251 respondents (70.25%) were married. Regarding occupation, 131 respondents (32.75%) were general contractors, followed by 120 respondents (30%) having private/trading businesses. Regarding income, 222 respondents (55.50%) had income less than 10,000 baht

B. Health Tourism Behavior of the Elderly in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province

Travel Style	Frequency	Percent
Public bus	29	7.25
Private car	334	83.50
Public van	15	3.75
Group tour	6	1.50
Private motorcycle	14	3.50
Others	2	0.50

Table 1 Number & Percent of Travel Modes of Elderly Tourists

From Table 1, 334 (83.50%) elderly tourists traveled by private car, followed by 29 (7.25%) traveling by bus, 15 (3.75%) by van, 14 (3.5%) by motorcycle, 6 (1.50%) traveling in a group, and 2 (0.5%) by other modes.

Persons traveling with elderly tourists	Frequency	Percent
Traveling alone	46	11.50
Traveling with family	309	77.25
Traveling with friends	45	11.25

Table 2
Number & Percent of People Traveling with Elderly Tourists

From Table 2, 309 (77.25%) elderly tourists traveled with family or children, followed by 46 (11.50%) traveling alone and 45 (11.25%) traveling with friends, respectively.

During the day of travel	Frequency	Percent
Saturday - Sunday	184	46.00
Public holiday	158	39.50
Week day	46	11.50
Other	12	3.00

Table 3
Number & Percent of Elderly Tourists Traveling Days

From Table 3, 184 (46%) elderly tourists traveled on Saturdays and Sundays, followed by 158 (39.50%) on public holidays, 46 (11.50%) on weekdays, and 12 (3%) on other days.

From Table 4, 307 (76.75%) elderly tourists had uncertain traveling months, followed by 37 (9.25%) traveling from November to February, 31 (7.75%) traveling from March to June, and 25 (6.25%) traveling from July to October, respectively.

During the month of travel	Frequency	Percent
March – June	31	7.75
July – October	25	6.25
November – February	37	9.25
Uncertain	307	76.75

Table 4
Number & Percent of Traveling Months of Elderly Tourists

Number of days to visit	Frequency	Percent
1 day	256	64.00
2 day	91	22.75
3 day	26	6.50
More than 3 day	27	6.75

Table 5
Number & Percent of Traveling Days of Elderly Tourists

From Table 5, 256 (64%) elderly tourists traveled in one day, 91 (22.75%) in 2 days, 26 (6.75%) in 3 days, and 27 (6.50%) in more than 3 days, respectively.

Purpose of tourism	Frequency	Percent
Relax	276	69.00
Private business	75	18.75
Visiting relatives & friends	40	10.00
Sight-seeing	7	1.75
Health tourism	2	0.50

Table 6
Number & Percent of the Purposes of Traveling in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province of Elderly Tourists

From Table 6, 267 elderly tourists, or 69.00% had the purpose of traveling to Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province for relaxation, followed by 18.75% for doing private business, 10.00% for visiting relatives and friends, 1.75% for sightseeing, and 0.50% for health tourism, respectively.

Channel for receiving activity of travel news (Online)	Frequency	Percent
Facebook	263	65.75
Twitter	4	1.00
Instagram (IG)	22	5.50
Line	110	27.50
Other	1	25.0

Table 7
Channel for Receiving Activity of Travel News (Online)

From Table 7, for channels for receiving news on health tourism activities through online media, 263 (65.75%) respondents received the news via Facebook, Line by 110 respondents (27.50%), Instagram (IG) by 22 respondents (5.50%), Twitter by 4 respondents (1%), and another channel by 1 respondent (0.25%), respectively.

Channel for receiving activity travel news (Offline)	Frequency	Percent
T.V.	105	26.25
Ratio	14	3.50
Brochure	23	5.75
Newspaper	8	2.00
Magazine	10	2.50
Travel booths	9	2.25
From acquaintances	231	57.75

Table 8
Number & Percent of Channels for Receiving News on Health Tourism Activities through Offline Media

From Table 8, regarding channels for receiving the news on health tourism activities through offline media, respondents received news about health tourism activities through acquaintances by 231 (57.75%) respondents, television by 105 (26.25%) respondents, brochures by 23 (5.75%) respondents, radio by 14 (3.50%) respondents, magazines/journals by 10 (2.50%) respondents, travel booths by 9 (22.5%) respondents, and newspapers by 8 (2%) respondents, respectively.

C. Interest in Health Tourism Activities

Health tourism activities	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Interested level
Relax	4.43	.676	Most
Thai massage	3.47	1.146	High
Facial massage	2.93	1.222	Moderate
Herbal baking	3.21	1.171	Moderate
Spa	2.84	1.283	Moderate
Foot massage	3.00	1.404	Moderate
Yoga	2.58	1.268	Moderate
Buddhist meditation practice	3.34	1.141	Moderate
Learning to cook healthy food	3.26	1.105	Moderate
Healthy eating	3.36	1.127	Moderate
Total	**3.24**	**.888**	**Moderate**

Table 9
Mean, Standard Deviation, and the Level of Interest in Health Tourism Activities of Elderly Tourists

From Table 9, the interest in health tourism activities among elderly tourists overall was at a moderate level ($\bar{x}$ = 3.24, S.D. = .888). When considering each activity, elderly tourists were interested in relaxing activities at the highest level ($\bar{x}$ = 4.43, S.D.= .676), followed by Thai massage at a high level ($\bar{x}$ = 3.47, S.D.= 1.146), health tourism activities, such as eating healthy food at moderate level ($\bar{x}$ = 3.36, S.D.= 1.127), Buddhist meditation practice ($\bar{x}$ = 3.34, S.D.= 1.141), learning to cook healthy food ($\bar{x}$ = 3.26, S.D.= 1.105), herbal baking ($\bar{x}$ = 3.21, S.D.= 1.171), foot Massage ($\bar{x}$ = 3.00, S.D.= 1.404), facial massage ($\bar{x}$ =2.93, S.D.= 1.222), spa ($\bar{x}$ = 2.84, S.D.= 1.283), and yoga ($\bar{x}$ = 2.58, S.D.= 1.268), respectively. Therefore, elderly tourists were interested in traveling to Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province for relaxation. This is consistent with the behavior of other tourist groups who mostly traveled to Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya for relaxation as well.

V. DISCUSSION

Based on the results, several interesting findings have been found. Most elderly tourists traveled to Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya by private cars. Apart from the fact that tourists had affordability and readiness to travel, it may reflect that the public transportation in the province is still not comfortable or has inadequately developed transportation to meet the needs of tourists. Moreover, most of them traveled with family due to health problems of the elderly. For the time of travel, most of them traveled on holidays

and public holidays when everyone in the family has time. However, the interesting thing is a traveling month which is uncertain. In other words, tourists have no seasonal restrictions to travel. With a location near the capital, traveling between cities is quite comfortable. As a result, most tourists prefer to travel for one-day trips from the morning to the evening. However, this type of travel may have a negative effect on the hotel and accommodation business in the province.

Most elderly tourists had the purpose of relaxing tourism, but the last priority was health tourism. Therefore, tourism-related agencies in the province must promote health tourism more. Regarding receiving online media, elderly tourists received travel news via Facebook, followed by Line. This indicates that the elderly nowadays have more potential to access information online. Moreover, for offline channels, many tourists received information from acquaintances. This indicates that personal media is still important today for this group of tourists. Therefore, for tourism public relations, tourism agencies should promote public relations both online and offline channels.

Ultimately, the results revealed that elderly tourists were also very interested in relaxing activities and Thai massage. Therefore, to attract elderly tourists with the aim of health tourism, public agencies may need to pay particular attention to relaxing tourism activities and Thai massage since these are suitable for the elderly and help restore the physical and mental condition of this group of tourists as well.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This study is a part of a study on “A Model of Health Tourism Management for Senior Tourist in Phranakon Si Ayutthaya Province (World Heritage City)” funded by the Research Network for High Education in Upper Central Region, Office of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation (MHESI), Thailand. I would like to express my gratitude here.

REFERENCES

[1] World Tourism Organization, 2016 World Tourism Organization Annual Report, 2016.
[2] Document Processing and Archives Committee, Culture, Historical Development, Identity and, Wisdom of Ubon Ratchathani Province, Bangkok: Teachers Council, 1999.
[3] Akarawin Sasanapitak, “Extending the age for retirement in aging society”, Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Thonburi University, Vol.10, No.24, pp.90-96, 2017.
[4] The Tourism Authority of Thailand, “ The Behavior of Senior Tourists”, E-TAT Tourism Journal, 2(2), pp.1-7, 2007.
[5] Ranee Isichaikul and Chatchaphon Songsunthornwong, Slow Tourism: Learning Through Interpretation for European Senior Tourists, Journal of Thai Hospitality and Tourism, 7(1), pp.41-57, 2012.
[6] Siriwan Sereerat et al., Marketing Research, Bangkok: Thamasat, 2006.

★★★