

COMPLETION REPORT

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The research project “Implications of Spa and Thai Traditional Massage for Long-Stay Japanese Retirees: Policies and Characteristics in Chiang Mai, Thailand” revealed its current situations of a decrease in the number of long-stay Japanese retiree customers because of the COVID-19 pandemic and other foreign customers’ behaviors who tended to create unpleasant atmosphere while receiving services. From the policy’s side, the data from in-depth interviews with the representatives working in the management of middle to top level who were in charge of policy on the long-stay Japanese retirees living in Chiang Mai of local authorities revealed policy implementation consisting of its reference to the Medical Hub policy and related law, policy and budget adoption from multiple streams, non-existence of separate tasks for long-stay Japanese retirees, and law enforcement to control service standards. In addition, there were promotional measures including award system for developing service standards higher than those required under the law, coaching system among entrepreneurs, activities for promoting long-stay visitors and local culture, and adoption of Lanna wisdom into services. From the provider’s side, the data from in-depth interviews with the representatives from the spa and traditional Thai massage entrepreneurs giving services to the long-stay Japanese retirees revealed entrepreneurs’ participation in associations for proper servicing, behaviors of the long-stay Japanese retirees’ preference of traditional Thai massage over spa service using service package with promotion at services owned by Japanese entrepreneurs or at places where the Japanese language was spoken, the use of services in suburban area, and service recommendation among themselves in Japanese community and through social media. Furthermore, common standard of services of entrepreneurs for all customers and service strategies were revealed as the characteristics of spa and traditional Thai massage for the long-stay Japanese retirees. From the user’s side, the data from in-depth interviews with the representatives from the long-stay Japanese retirees who have used spa and traditional Thai massage services revealed nice weather, availability of Japanese restaurants, and medium-sized city with natural surroundings and slow living as their reasons of choosing to live in Chiang Mai. Their ways of traveling were public transportation, rental or driving cars, and walking. They preferred using traditional Thai massage services one to six times a year depending on their mood without a fixed schedule with the reason of reputation of traditional Thai massage in Japan for pain relief, getting healthy life, and reducing stress. The traditional Thai massage reflected culture and professionalism like in medical profession. As for disadvantages and difficulties in using services, there was excessive abuse on a body possibly reflecting in sexual harassment, inconstant hot and cold temperature, a language barrier, too strong massage pressure, and disturbing talking. Their recommendations included a making of their visit a special day, upgraded professional skills, ability to choose desired service provider with service history records to follow up regular customers’ symptoms, and more attentiveness in asking the level of pressure during massage.

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