
International retirement migration in Thailand
Stakeholders’ views: a Japanese case study

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Abstract

Increasingly, residents of developed nations such as Japan who retire from work are choosing to live in Thailand or other less-developed countries. Such international retirement migration (IRM) is due, in part, to the baby-boomer generation entering into retirement and living longer. This paper investigates Thai stakeholders’ perceptions of the developments required to cater for international retirement migrants. Focus groups and in-depth interviews were undertaken with 35 industry participants in Chiang Mai and Bangkok, Thailand. Content analysis of the transcribed recordings found considerable new real estate development and services specifically for these retirees has been created in recent years, but that there is lack of stakeholder collaboration in catering to this market, deficiencies in local resident knowledge and skills of the retirees’ culture and language; along with a need for policy and planning support from government. The study highlights the importance of retirement accommodation, medical services centres, professional staff, safety and security and convenience to retirees.
Keywords: Destination development, International retirement migration, Japan; Thailand, Migration tourism, Niche market development

Introduction

Members of the baby-boomer generation, born between 1946 and 1964 (Tassiopoulos and Haydam, 2008), are reaching retirement age. An important result of this megatrend and one, which many destinations are grappling with, is how to respond to a significant rise in international retirement migration (Miyazaki, 2008, Padojinog and Rodolfo, 2008, Glover and Prideaux, 2009, Vieregge et al., 2007, Stimson and McCrea, 2004). In Japan in particular, the number of persons aged 65 or above is set to rise continuously till 2040 with their proportion of the total population increasing from 26.8% in 2015 to more than 39.9% in 2060 (Japanese Ageing Research Center, 2014). Similarly, travel by those 65+ years has increased rapidly while the number of people aged below 65 years travelling overseas is in decline (Hongsranagon, 2005).

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
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<th>Age 0-14</th>
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<td>33,952</td>
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<td>14,568</td>
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While international retirement migration is increasing in popularity, the phenomenon has been noted since the early 1900s, when English retirement communities formed in coastal towns and adjacent rural areas of France, and later on the Belgian, Italian and Spanish coasts (Wong and Musa, 2014). Different terms have been used to describe IRM-related phenomena: long-
stay tourism, second homes, retirement migration or migration tourism, senior migration tourism, mature travel and snowbirds (Ali, 2013, Fukahori et al., 2011, Feng and Page, 2000, Wong and Musa, 2014, Warnes, 2009, Phiromyoo, 2011, Vagner and Fialova, 2011, Pedro, 2006, Vieregge et al., 2007, Glover and Prideaux, 2009). IRM may be seasonal, such as retirees travelling to warmer places during winter, or permanent (Warnes, 2009, Vieregge et al., 2007, Haung et al., 2007, Lundberg et al., 2009). In this paper, IRM is defined as involving retirees, aged over 55 years, who travel to live in another country for three months or more.

Despite this long history, IRM began to receive academic attention only in the late 1990s, and with a focus on Japanese, German, UK, and USA retirees (Warnes, 2009, Ali, 2013, Aminudin et al., 2013, Gheasi et al., 2011, Wong and Musa, 2014, Vagner and Fialova, 2011). Research has examined destination choices amongst retirees and factors motivating them (Wong and Musa, 2014, Lunt and Carrera, 2010, Rodriguez et al., 2004); the development of IRM and retiree decision models (Warnes, 2009); and destination attractiveness (Aminudin et al., 2013, Barros and Machado, 2010). Studies have also examined particular groups of retirees such as Japanese lifestyle migration to Australia (Nagatomo, 2009), Japanese retirees using Philippine tourism and retirement services (Padojinog and Rodolfo, 2008) and retired “snowbirds” who travel to avoid snow and cold temperatures (Viallon, 2012, Vieregge et al., 2007). However, few studies have investigated barriers and constraints to IRM development in a destination country, especially from the perspective of business owners and government stakeholders (Alegre and Pou, 2006, Hongsranagon, 2005, Hongsranagon, 2006).

Scholarly attention to how destination stakeholders develop IRM is important to support government, entrepreneur, retiree and community decision-making. Previous research has indicated that governments wanting to cater for IRM must have the necessary policies on retirement migration, and provide local entrepreneurs access to investment opportunities (Haung et al., 2007), and ensure local community support and benefit from it (Miyazaki, 2008). Business stakeholders require research to direct improvements in product and service quality (Neal et al., 2007, Gokovali et al., 2007), help minimize risk perceptions and improve the retirees’ quality of life in the host destination (Chen and Wu, 2009, Stimson and McCrea, 2004, Neal et al., 2007). Communities require information on the impact of IRM on their residents. This study focuses on stakeholders’ opinions concerning Thailand’s destination and
place development for the IRM group, as these stakeholders are leading the development of this niche market. This paper aims to investigates Thai stakeholders’ perceptions of developing a destination for international retirement migration (IRM).

**Stakeholders and niche market development**

Niche market development is crucial for tourism growth and stakeholder prosperity (Tassiopoulos and Haydam, 2008, Andrews and DeVault, 2009) and requires value products and services, and an understanding the consumer through market research (Parrish et al., 2006a). Such development leads to new job creation and lower unemployment rates (Rodriguez et al., 2004). Numerous types of niche market development have been identified, such as ecotourism, golf, and food tourism (Menrad, 2003, Andrews and DeVault, 2009, Parrish et al., 2006b). Development of an ecotourism destination requires understanding consumer preferences, and developing business strategy and government policy (Andrews and DeVault, 2009). Sports tourism products, such as golf, need to provide a diversity of experiences and promote golf tourism packages and activities around the destination (Tassiopoulos and Haydam, 2008).

Specific niche markets may be willing to pay a higher than other tourists if the products and services they value are available (Parrish et al., 2006a, Kotler, 2003). Value can refer to emotional, social, quality/performance, as well as cost (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001). Furthermore, various niche markets are of different size, potential growth, and benefits for a destination (Kotler, 2003). When developing a niche market destination stakeholder both non-profit and profit organization should examine a number of key issues: first, develop up-to-date market information; second, co-operate and improve specific products and other cultural experiences at the regional or sub-regional level; third, increase knowledge and customer service performance by starting educational programs and accreditation; fourth, monitor service quality when delivering products to the consumer; and fifth, undertake regional planning that provides assistance in growing businesses and facilitating networking among key stakeholders (Tassiopoulos and Haydam, 2008). In this study, international retirement migration is seen as a niche market providing services to a specific product-market (Parrish et al., 2006a).

**Developing international retirement migration**
Previous research has identified factors or proposed strategies relevant to developing a destination for IRM. The destination development strategies of countries in Asia and Oceania have been found to be influenced by four stakeholder groups: firstly, government policies on retirement migration (e.g. establish foreign government tourist information offices and create a certification for Long Stay Advisors) (Miyazaki, 2008); secondly, by the actions of developers, service suppliers, real estate agents and the media (who write about life overseas after retirement, and provide practical information on visa requirements and regulations on working overseas; thirdly, individual retiree’s life strategies, for example how to fit in with the locals and a different culture, learning the local language, and dealing with emotions due to separation from their home country; and lastly, the attitude of locals toward IRM and their friendliness. A conceptual model of elderly migration has been developed comprises of five interrelated components: economic, environmental, infrastructural, social and political factors. These are categorized into three stages of development: emergence (increasing immigration); restructuring (continued immigration); and new concerns (controlled growth/overcrowding) (Rowles and Watkins, 1993).

Likewise, within the IRM context four major areas to be considered when developing a destination, namely: government policy, intercultural training schemes, healthcare services, and destination attributes (Ashton, 2015). Governments have a significant influence on IRM through their immigration policy, providing safety and security, support for both profit and non-profit organizations, and also provision of accurate and easily accessed information on the destination. The retirees want convenience, particularly in obtaining visas, and would welcome some form of local identity card (Viallon, 2012). Japanese retirement in Malaysia is of longer duration than in other countries because of the availability of a 10-year international retirement migration visa (Ono, 2008). Retirees have also been found to focus on issues such help in emergencies, and connecting with others from their home country through the availability of clubs and societies (Malhotra and Venkatesh, 2009).

Governments have a central role in addressing potential concerns about crises and safety issues in the host country and their effectiveness differs between countries. For instance, during the 2004 tsunami or SARS outbreak, the Thai Government’s response was considered relatively ineffective, whereas the Hong Kong Government reacted more promptly and effectively (Malhotra and Venkatesh, 2009). Such actions affect potential migrants’
perceptions of a country’s risks, and how a government takes action to address them, is a factor in the growth of IRM. The retirees want to feel comfortable in a safe and secure destination (Warnes, 2009, Tourism Australia, 2013). Intercultural training schemes help retirees and locals to live together. Through such training, retirees gain knowledge of the local culture, how to respond to local conditions and climate, and show respect for the local religion (Haung et al., 2007). Local residents can learn how to deal with IRMs by developing an understanding of the retirees’ culture, and to tolerate seasonal migrants, who may often not want to live like locals (Haung et al., 2007, Sunil et al., 2007).

Healthcare services are an important feature of a host destination for retirees. IRM requires reliable, high-quality, safe and affordable medical goods and services and must be available in a number of convenient service centres, and in attractive packages, such as that created by joint-venture partnerships between a medical facility and a luxury hotel (Hume and De Micco, 2007). Crucially, policies such as respect for patient autonomy and the right to self-determination in medical decision-making (i.e. to choose or refuse medical treatment) are required (Kim et al., 2010), and translation services during medical intervention and treatment (if required) must be reliable and not too costly. In one study, for instance it was found that over 60% of elderly Japanese felt their medical translator was reliable, but their cost was high (Fukahori et al., 2011).

Lastly, destination attributes such as availability of basic products and services, local activities, and opportunities for interaction with local people and places, have been found to facilitate IRM (Gnepa and Petrosky, 2001, Gnoth, 2007, Hankinson, 2004). Destinations must ensure the availability, affordability and quality of basic needs such as accommodation, food and beverages. Accommodation-related services such as reliable real estate agents and solicitors have been identified as important in dealing with IRM needs. Retirees want honest local employees and not to be over-charged for services such as house repairs (Hongsranagon, 2006, Viallon, 2012, Mings, 2002, Haung et al., 2007).

IRM accommodation can include simple cottages, luxury hotels, caravans/mobile homes, serviced apartments and retirement villages, some of which may have elements of a hospital or nursing home (Haung et al., 2007, Vieregge et al., 2007, Mings, 2002). Retirees make their accommodation choice at a given destination based on five main factors: the place, price, perceived quality, security and convenience (Vieregge et al., 2007). Retirees have been found
to evaluate a medical centre based on the factors of quality, service, safety, ethical and legal factors and the ability to communicate effectively (Yanos, 2008, Connell, 2006, Lunt and Carrera, 2010). This study focuses on the international retirement migration (IRM) product market and determines factors influencing its development in Thailand.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach using focus groups and in-depth interviews for data collection (Kitzinger, 1995, Creswell, 2003) in order to provide for flexible, free flowing patterns of communication with participants. In turn, the resulting unstructured, spontaneous responses are expected to surface relevant opinions and ideas in a short time-frame (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). Focus groups allow the researcher to ask participants to respond to a question, encouraging them to speak out to one another and comment on each other’s opinion, allowing the researcher to look for convergence and a variety of ideas at the same time (Kitzinger, 1995, Ritchie et al., 2004, Berg and Lune, 2004).

The participants for this study were business stakeholders from Chiang Mai and Bangkok, Thailand. Thailand was chosen because it has become a popular destination for Japanese IRM due to the environment and climate, convenient air travel time, rich culture and variety of activities available. The participants were Thai nationals who were or are involved with Japanese retirement migration. The participants were separated into groups of 5-7 people for focus group discussions. In-depth interviews with participants were also conducted after the focus group session was completed. The participants included the owners of a condominium targeting IRM, business owners providing services to IRM such as organic fruit and vegetables, the executive manager of a shopping centre, a car rental company, a Thai art and craft souvenir shop, a medical doctor involved with IRM, representatives of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the Japanese Consul, members of an Alumni Association of a Japanese university who live within one of the IRM locations studied, representatives of the Thai Cultural and Language Association, a Thai immigration officer, and the manager of a magazine for IRM and expatriate groups (see Appendix 1 and 2). The participants were identified through contact with an expatriate social club, and through intercepts in locations where Japanese retirees clustered. After agreeing to join the focus group a formal letter was sent to the participants with an appointment date and venue. The focus groups took place in
June and July 2014 in Chiang Mai and Bangkok, and were conducted in a meeting room at a five star hotel, with a complimentary gift and lunch provided after the session concluded.

The participants were asked to respond to a series of questions designed to assess the way in which they responded to Japanese IRM and to identify barriers to IRM growth. The researchers began by generating general discussion about the respondents’ businesses and their involvement in developing their destination for IRM. Data were recorded, transcribed and the text analyzed. Content analysis allowed the researcher to analyze the large amount of textual information that had been recorded by identifying the existence of specific key words, concepts, themes or sentences. The data were coded into categories and then analyzed to inform the research questions (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). The findings of the research are discussed below.

Results

The aim of this study is to investigate Thai stakeholders’ perception of developing a destination for international retirement migration (IRM). The results reveal that stakeholders considered there had been considerable development of infrastructure and facilities for this product market, such as availability of organic food products catering specifically for retirees, and establishment of a local magazine that advertises news relevant to them. An increasing number of entrepreneurs are interested in this growing market and our establishing and building retirement villages complete with a medical centre and security personnel. Stakeholders interviewed identified challenges such as a lack of stakeholder collaboration, a lack of local knowledge and skills and need for further support by government. The findings are detailed below.

Destination development for international retirement migration

When asked about the IRM phenomenon within their region, participants identified a number of changes and improvements undertaken in the destination to cater for this market. These were firstly, specific infrastructure and facilities; secondly, increasing interest by entrepreneurs in developing products and services, such as real estate companies that build to suit retiree needs including medical services and activities. Details are shown below.
Improving infrastructure and facilities

Respondents considered that the IRM market was developing and had had a positive impact on the economy of the receiving regions. Participants noted a growth in real estate sales, professional services (e.g. visa, life insurance, solicitors), local restaurants and farmers supplying local produce, especially organic vegetables and fruit. They also noted a growing number of accommodations with a likely increase in local employee income.

“Imagine if approximately 6000 Japanese IRM stay for a relatively long time, the overall earning from this group will be no less than ฿1000 million per year or the average of ฿300,000 (AUD$ 12,000)/person/year. Hence, the business potential to support this group will be developed and improved, such as restaurant services and activities. The business of villas and condominiums will collaborate with local investors and the Japanese investors from Japan who tend to invest their businesses in Thailand. They plan to build the villas and condominium on 18 acres in the rural area of Mae-Taeng sub-district, Chiang Mai province” [President of the real estate investor group.]

Accommodation for IRM was found in many places in Thailand, with hotel owners interested in developing their property to suit IRM, especially in towns such as Sriracha (called little Osaka), Chiangmai, Chiangria and Hua-Hin (three hours from Bangkok). Participants considered that locations suitable for retirees must be authentic and surrounded by a natural environment. Good quality retirement facilities were needed to fulfill the needs of the elderly community for healthcare and to provide a good standard of life after retirement.

Discussions indicated that the development of IRM has been on the increase. In 2015 approximately 4000 Japanese had formally registered with the authorities, and 2000 had informally registered that they are living in Chiang Mai province (Prachachat Turakij Newspaper, 2015). The participants considered that the number of Japanese migration retirees will increase significantly in future due to changes in government rules and globalization:

“At the moment in Japan several trends favour IRM: firstly, each family now will have only two children maximum. Secondly, the people nowadays live longer, hence the proportion of younger people will decline and the elderly will increase. Thirdly, the number of caregiver staff is also
reducing due to the choosing of better careers, and this situation has a direct impact on government regulations. Currently, welfare and benefits for pensioners is reduced, resulting in people leaving the country after retirement to a place where the cost of living is cheaper and comfortable. Business owners must meet the IRM demand, and real estate companies plan to build more accommodation that suit the needs of the IRM group.” [Real estate developer.]

**Interest from entrepreneurs**

The stakeholders indicated that suppliers and entrepreneurs our starting to get involved in the IRM market, including souvenir shops, expat magazines providing information about IRM, medical service centres, retirement villages, and small hotels. For example, a participant from a small hotel wanted to know how to improve the accommodation to meet the IRM demand. He said:

“I have heard about long-stay retirement (very common in Thailand, called IRM group or long-stay tourist) and I don’t know what it means and who this tourist group is. I would love to learn more about it and what my business can do to gain more benefits from providing products and services to meet their needs.” [Chiang Mai hotel and resort manager.]

Furthermore, medical services and facilities are considered important in developing IRM. This was considered especially true in rural areas where retirees tend to congregate. “Medical services are very important and is the top priority for a destination to develop for the elderly IRM group.” [Doctor involved with IRM business development.]

“There is a need to build more complete medical service centres, and as such the construction of the residential facilities must be built to suit the elderly, and those who rely on nurses or caregivers (caregiver is a person who is responsible for attending to the needs of a dependent adult). These kinds of places are still minimal and needs business and housing developer attention. [Doctor involved with IRM business development.]
Respondents suggested a need for retirement villages, with safety and security systems in a peaceful, tranquil and natural environment (near rivers or mountains). Transportation availability was also considered important. Supporting health care services, such as a 24-hour availability of ambulance to service the retirement village were also required.

In addition, participants highlighted the need for more healthy products, such as organic food and the destination must have a clear vision of how to create a happy and peaceful environment. One participant involved in organic agriculture noted that the Japanese retirees liked to be healthy and consume healthy products, such as organic food. There was a need for farmers to develop organic products to supply to this group and farmers’ markets should be organized and regulated. Retirees liked to shop at local markets and some even used their own food chemical measurement equipment when shopping for fruit and vegetables.

**The challenges for the development of IRM**

Stakeholders were asked about challenges of developing a destination for an IRM. They noted a number of situations which were perceived as slowing the development of IRM in Thailand: a lack of collaboration among business owners and stakeholders, a lack of locals’ knowledge and skills, and a lack of full support from government.

**Collaboration among stakeholders**

A lack of collaboration between stakeholders was noted, with organizations working individually rather than together.

“...*The government should be the main organization to coordinate stakeholders and [get them to] collaborate together; now they seem to be working individually.*”
[Medical centre president.]

“I found businesspersons working separately, creating damage rather than promoting the industry, such as when an organization does a roadshow to promote a destination individually.” [Business owner.]
"If all stakeholders worked together and promoted as a team to create a one-stop product and service, this would in turn help to increase good image and gain tourism destination value.” [Head of an international hospital.]

Respondents felt they needed to provide a cohesive “package” that responded to the needs of retirees. Businesses were considered hosts for retirees in a destination and therefore required to be able to answer all enquiries that may arise. Respondents agreed that there is a good opportunity to obtain more Japanese retirees into the region, and they also believe that they could also attract more Europeans.

**Locals’ knowledge and skills**

Respondents identified a need to prepare a destination residents for increasing numbers of international retirees. *Many employees lack knowledge and understanding of the languages and cultural backgrounds of migrant retirees [Representative of the chamber of Commerce].* Residents considered retirees from Japan or Western countries as wealthy, hence some business owners would try to rip them off by charging higher than normal prices. For example, one participant said:

> “a Japanese pensioner receives approximately the equivalent of 25,000 to 36,000 Thai Baht per month, and if all business owners’ prices are too high then Thailand can lose customers to its neighbours. Honesty is of great concern for all Japanese retirement migrants who are willing to buy property for staying or investment; they need to have an honest real estate legal team that can be trusted.” [MD of international hospital.]

Stakeholders considered they were lacking information, training and funding to develop the resources or services needed for Japanese IRM. For example, there was a lack of caregivers to look after retirees if they became sick. Nursing home owners were providing staff with overseas training, so that after returning they are able to perform their task efficiently. A caregiver needed to know about the retiree’s culture background and language. They also needed training in such skills as elderly patient cleaning and bathing, feeding, medication, and
providing day-to-day support such as shopping for people with restricted mobility. Some participants said:

“To give staff knowledge and an understanding of different cultures, the business owners of a big company can send their staff to train at the origin country of their customers, for example, Japan.” [Hospital manager.]

“They need to learn more about IRM behaviour and characteristics before getting the product and service ready to meet their expectation.” [Hospital manager.]

**Government support**

Participants considered that the government played an important role in destination development for IRM. A medical centre manager and a retirement village developer considered that the government had an important role to play in training and developing support services. In addition, government needed to clearly define responsibility for IRM.

“The critical issue now is unclear authority; what department will be responsible for granting regulations about building hostels or accommodation for international migration of the elderly, and who should provide information about this issue accurately.” [Accommodation owner.]

Additionally, visa processes were considered to be causing Thailand to rank below other destinations for the IRM market.

“The visa is the most important issue and should solve the problem of how difficult it is when applying for a retirement visa; our government should have an agreement between countries regarding granting visas for international retirement migration.” [Medical doctor.]

Another participant indicated that the IRM visa process in Thailand was worse than in other countries, such as Malaysia:
"Their immigration office provides a 10 year visa for IRM, unlike Thailand, one year only (including several legal requirements, such as a criminal check and sufficient funding in the bank), and every three months IRMs have to go out of the country to do a re-entry visa or must report at the immigration office."

[Foreign and Thai Friendship Association representative]

Discussion

Reflecting on the research findings and in response to the research aim to investigate Thai stakeholders’ perception of developing a destination for IRM, it appears that firstly, the IRM market needs to develop and build adequate infrastructure and facilities to match this product market need. For example, unique accommodation is needed that suits the retirees’ background, interest in activities (learning cooking, language and sport), and provides medical facilities and safety and security. Significant infrastructure and facilities has already been established, but is insufficient considering the potential growth in demand. The existing accommodation provided includes condominiums built to meet retirees’ needs, close to a hospital with plenty of activities nearby. Clearly this product market has specific needs which are different from other visitors, for which they are willing to pay a premium for product value and service delivery (Kotler, 1993).

Facilities need further improvement, especially medical health service centres for elderly retirees, with an expectation that they provide the same level of service as “back home”: the quality of the medical service equipment, professional staff, ambulance, and staff communication. The need for local and organic food is also increasing and provides an opportunity for local farmers to expand to meet the demand from retirees. Retirees will expect a more multi-cultural environment, along more leisure activities and opportunities for socialization with the locals. At the moment these services are being provided by entrepreneurs. The increase of entrepreneurship attention to this niche market is leading to new IRM villages being built in the countryside; especially near places that have green environments and plenty
of space for activities (golfing/bush walking or shopping). These results are similar to those of Andrews and DeVault (2009) and Tassiopoulos and Haydam (2008).

In addition, the results also revealed a lack of stakeholders’ collaboration and a need for a host destination to provide a complete product and service package for retirees, including organizing the visa process, accommodation/buying house/apartment, medical services, insurance, legal office support, local culture activities and commodities perhaps through a joint venture (Hume & De Micco, 2007). Another challenge is a lack of local knowledge and skills, and it is important to provide staff/local guides who are capable and knowledgeable, and provide good quality service. Improvements and language skills would be Haung et al. (2007) and Methvin (2009) assert that IRMs prefer gatherings with locals because they want to live like locals and be part of the activities; as such, local knowledge and skill is essential.

In addition, for the challenge of how much the government will support this type of development for instance, in regard to the visa process, especially for the IRM groups, the duration of a visa to stay in a receiving country should be longer or at least 5-10 years, and reporting to the immigration office less frequent. This current finding is similar to Ashton (2015) contending that the government’s role is to help with the immigration policy and give consideration for IRM groups to make it easy and more convenient. The result is also similar to that of Andrews and DeVault (2009), proposing that for niche market development government assistance and cooperation with relevant stakeholders while the business is being developed is crucial. For instance, when developing a new village in a rich natural environment, both government policy advisor, community and business owners must try to ensure sustainability and avoid environmental damage.

**Conclusion and contributions**

It can be concluded that the stakeholders’ view for IRM destination development must include improving facilities and infrastructure to suit with IRM wants and needs. Especially, the specific type of accommodation for IRM requires a green nature based environment, more importantly a complete medical centre service with ambulance, and safety and security. The activities must be varied, such as bush walking, sports (swimming, tennis, golf), shopping (must be local) and interaction with local culture. Outlined are the three main challenges to
face when dealing with IRM market development at a destination: a lack of stakeholders’ collaboration; a lack of locals’ knowledge and skills; and a lack of full support from government. In the specific role of government, to consider the visa process for IRM where the length of stay should extend longer than other types of migration. Moreover, information about building places for IRM should be accurate and clear, such as what policy is in place and who are responsible for the policy, because its perspective is specially designed for the elderly people.

The contributions of the study derived from these findings are divided into two main parts. The theoretical contribution adds to the body of knowledge and underpins the destination development strategy for IRM niche market based on five components: destination attractiveness, destination attributes, government support, socialization, and healthcare centre service (As seen Figure 1). The IRM destination development for attractiveness emphasizes on an authentic environment and sustainable place management. For destination attributes, the study focused on accommodations, good quality of products/service with a standard price, healthy and local products (organic), transportation, and development of activities for the elderly. Socialization refers to a strategy that emphasizes on how locals and IRM can live peacefully within the same community, and importantly language skills for such as when they need help to survive in their daily life, including how to say when they need food, or medical assistance and transportation. Finally, the study focuses on destination development for IRM, particularly elderly group medical service centres which are a very important attribute.

As for the managerial contributions, IRM is a unique market because it has more special needs than traditional migration. Hence, this study provides guidelines for stakeholders, government and local communities. Especially, the role of government is to support with all IRM information where needed it most, the clear visa process information, legal document, and expenses. In addition, destination medical facilities, safety and security systems must come first and to make them feel safe and comfortable to live at a destination. Governments should educate locals and stakeholders who are interested and want to adapt their product to suit with IRM groups. Business stakeholders play an important role in helping a destination prepare for IRM, especially in developing a destination alongside local residents and government. Collaboration is necessary among relevant stakeholders, such as those who provide local food and activity programs for IRMs to participate in (cooking, language,
volunteer help in poverty areas). Crucially, the environment needs to be clean and safe, and provide good quality services.

A limitation of this study is that it explored only the perception of business stakeholders involved with Japanese IRM, a group of importance to the Thai government due to their increasing numbers. There are many other nationalities living in Thailand and future research should focus on the IRM behaviour of travellers from Germany, Austria, Switzerland, USA, Australia, France and England in terms of the decision making and influencing factors for choosing Thailand. Further study could look at local community attitudes toward IRM and how a community adapts to this new phenomenon. Researchers should also explore how the IRM developed over the past several years, and who and what factors were influential in the development of this market; additionally, study government roles and coordination, especially to review the overall migration rules to suit with each type of migration.
Figure 1: International retirement migration destination development model
Source: Developed for this study
References


ASHTON, A. S. Effectiveness of tourism destination development for the international retirement migration tourist In: WILSON, E. & WITSEL, M., eds. CAUTHE 2015: Rising Tides and Sea Changes: Adaptation and Innovation in Tourism and Hospitality 2015 Gold Coast, QLD: School of Business and Tourism, Southern Cross University School of Business and Tourism, Southern Cross University 43-54.


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Appendix 1: Stakeholders list, Chiang Mai

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The President</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>The Chiang Mai Chamber of Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The secretary of the project</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hospica Villa Chiang Mai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Executive sale and marketing manager</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Warabordee Development Ltd. (Real Estate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Vice president of operations</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Association of Tourism Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Agriculture (organic food supply)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Former university in Japan</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Managing director</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Long-stay guide magazine - Oriental Route Co. Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Committee member</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Thai-Japanese Friendship Promotion Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>General manager</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Chom-Doi House Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Managing director</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bee rent-a-car</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Business owner</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Pop Hobby Craft Souvenirs</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Culture relationship officer</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Old Japan Students’ Association, Kingdom of Thailand (OJSAT), North Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Tourism Department, Humanity Faculty, Chiang Mai University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Viang Chiang Mai Magazine (Japanese news)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Dean</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Faculty of Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Managing director</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Condominium owner</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Accommodation and Condominium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Japanese consulate</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Japan Consul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Academic advisor Chiang Mai University</td>
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</table>

Appendix 2: Stakeholders list, Bangkok

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The President and director MD (Japanese old residence)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Thailand-Japan friendship forum (Bangkok)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Relationship office communication</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Old Japan Students Association, Kingdom of Thailand (North region)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Managing director</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Real estate company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Managing director</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>International hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Project manager</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>The Japanese external trade organization (JETRO Bangkok)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Manager of cultural and language institute (Japanese)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Technology promotion association (Thailand-Japan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Medical doctor</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bangkok medical centre (retirement accommodation services)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Managing director</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>King fisher house and land development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Managing director</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Real estate development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Head of internal affair</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>International hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Japanese coordinator officer</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Position/Company</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Long-stay tourism developer</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Government officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Managing director</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>PC international group Ltd. (shopping centre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Lecturer 1 (tourism and hotel)</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Lecturer 2 (tourism and hotel)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Migration police officer</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Thailand immigration officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Executive vice president</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Siam Piwat Co., Ltd.</td>
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