

# Strategic Regional Identity for Health and Wellness Lodging

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**Abstract**—This research aimed to study the competency of health and wellness hotels and resorts in developing use the local natural resources and wisdom to conform to the national health and wellness tourism (HWT) strategy by comparing two independent samples, from Aumpur Muang, Ranong province and Aumpur Muang, Chiangmai province. And also study in the suggestive direct path to lead the organization to the sustainable successful.

This research was conduct by using mix methodology; both quantitative and qualitative data were used. The data of competency of health and wellness hotels and resorts (HWHR) in developing use the local natural resources for HWT promoting were collected via 300 set of questionnaires, from 6 hotels and resorts in 2 areas, 3 places from Aumpur Muang, Ranong province and another 3 from Aumpur Muang, Chiangmai province.

The study of HWHR's competency in developing use the local natural resources and wisdom to conform to the national HWT strategy can be divided into four main areas; food and beverages service, tourism activity, environmental service, and value adding. The total competency of the Chiangmai sample is importantly scored p value 0.01 higher than the Ranong one while the area of safety, Chiangmai's competency is importantly scored 0.05 higher than the Ranong's competency. Others were rated not differently. Since Chiangmai perform better, then it can be a role model in developing HTHR or HWT destination.

From the part of qualitative research, content analysis of business contents and its environments were analyzed. The four stages of strategic development and plans, from the smallest scale to the largest scale such a national base were discussed. The HWT: Evolution model and strategy for lodging Business were suggested. All those stages must work harmoniously together. The distinctive result illustrates the need of human resource development as the key point to create the identity of Thainess on Health and wellness service providing. This will add-on the value of services and differentiates ourselves from other competitors. The creative of Thailand's health and wellness brand possibly increase loyalty customers which agreed to be a path of sustainable development.

**Keywords**—Health and Wellness Tourism (HWT), Strategic Analysis, Health and Wellness Hotels and Resorts (HWHR), Lodging Firms.

## I. INTRODUCTION

IT is hard to deny that the tourism industry is currently the world's largest and most diverse business sector since it serves as a primary source for generating revenue, employment, private sector growth, and infrastructure development for many countries.

Tourism development is not only stimulates the growth of the industry, but also triggers overall economic growth which is not only Thailand, many countries in the world [1].

Thailand comprises a rich diversity of cultures and traditions. With its self-reliant history, tropical climate and renowned hospitality, Thailand, therefore, offers great potential in tourism development [2]. Despite the great importance of the Thai tourism industry to the Thai economy, since it accounts for millions of jobs and a substantial fraction of export earnings and a wide range of other industries, there has been no previous study exploring the effect of the tourism sector on economic expansion in the Thai context [1].

During the National Tourism Policy Committee Meeting in April, 2009, Thailand's revenue earned from tourism industry was explained that earnings over the past five years also grew by 11.9 percent on average, from about 367.4 billion baht in 2005 to almost 586 billion baht in 2010. The country's income from tourism came mainly from Europe, followed by East Asia, ASEAN, the Americas, Oceania, South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa [3].

And the Ministry of Tourism and Sports also presented within the same meeting about Thailand's tourism situation that tourist on arrivals increased steadily from 2005 to 2010, at 7.5 percent a year on average, from 11.5 million in 2005 to 15.8 million in 2010.

The strategic plans and vision of Thailand's National Tourism Development were identified as a quality tourism destination with tourism competitiveness at the international level, thus enabling the country to generate more income and distribute wealth on a sustainable basis [3]. The objective is to move Thailand's tourism competitiveness up at least 15 places, which would put it among the top five destinations in Asia. The plan also intends to increase tourism income by at least 5 percent during the five-year period. In order to achieve the aim, there are five strategies have been set for implementation. First, develop the infrastructure and logistics system to link the domestic one to the international one. Second, Tourism sites development via the improvement of various rules and regulations to enhance the country's potential for accommodating more tourists on arrivals. Third, to launch the creativity of the new products and services, while, incentives for tourism trade and investment will be offered and human resource development will be emphasized. Forth, seeking and creating the reputation and confidence on Thailand has a good image among visitors. Fifth, gathering the participations of the public sector, civil society, and local administrative organizations in tourism management [4].

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In many social groups in developed countries, however, the purchase of healthcare overseas is part of a general pattern of consumption of foreign goods and services, which either cannot be found, or are deemed to be lower quality in their home countries. The dynamic of modern living was spread over every society [5]. Related to the fact that many developed countries are now becoming ageing societies presents both opportunities and threats for the health and wellness related business in many developing country. Consequently, HWT is a rapidly growing sector of today's thriving tourism industry. The Industry continues to grow in importance as same as to the Thai economy while at the same time the competitive within the market is cruelly increasing.

The Abortive East Asian Economic Caucus (EAEC) idea, raised by the Prime Minister Mahathir of Malaysia in early 1990s, the concept of 'East Asian' regional identity were analyzed and stressed on the significant of emergence and increasing acceptance of the concept [6].

Beside the corporate benchmarks, the characteristic of locals appear to be important part of purchasing factors. Thailand has greater opportunities to expand the market for healthy goods and services, healthy foods, local wisdom and traditional medical practitioners, tourist destinations, and long-stay residence for the aged. Then the opportunities exist to create value-added from the intellectual capital of Thai local wisdom.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Health and Wellness Tourism (HWT)

Healthcare tourism or healthcare travelling as "...the attempt on the part of a tourist facility (e.g. hotel) or destination (e.g. Baden, Switzerland) to attract tourists by deliberately promoting its health-care facilities, in addition to its regular tourist amenities."

More recently, in 2005, Travel from developing countries to developed countries to obtain higher or more sophisticated medical services [7]. The mass culture of health tourism is apparently popular, for all people, all ages. People travel long-distances to overseas destinations such as Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and India to obtain medical, dental or surgical treatment while taking holidays.

The term of 'Wellness' is widely used in a global tourism industry as same with HWT, Wellness tourism (WT), Wellness travelling, and Healthy trip for example. Many authors defined WT as a part of health tourism. [8], [9].

The trend in healthy holidays has returned as a new and distinct niche in the tourist industry: Medical tourism (MT) which specifically referred as the procurement of "cost effective" private medical care in collaboration with the tourist industry, for patients who need affordable surgical or other special treatment [10]. MT pattern of travel is from one's place of residence to a destination where medical or surgical treatment is provided or performed better [11].

From the customer's perspective, MT is a product of the healthcare services which are delivered out of the home countries of the customers [9]. Then from the economic

viewpoint, the global dynamics and developing in the field of patient migration were widely analyzed [12].

There are various tools or practices such complementary, supplementary or alternative treatment that have been known and used by various ancient civilized regions such as Egypt, Persia, Greece, China, and Thailand [13]. The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) confirm it as a group of diagnostic and therapeutic disciplines that are used together with conventional medicine [14]. Complementary therapy can help release a patient's pain after surgery. Several studies demonstrate using complementary treatments as a tool to boost health and enhance wellness, like medicine [9], [13].

A spa tourism was identified as a component of HWT that relates to the provision of specific health facilities and destinations which traditionally include the provision of mineral waters but which may also be used to refer to tourist resorts that integrate health facilities with services [15].

The quality dimension of wellness services was discussed and increasingly becoming the decisive competitive factor and recommend the wellness hotels to specialize in health information, individual care and a wide range of cultural and relaxation programs [16].

### B. Strategic Analysis

SWOT Analysis is almost certainly the most basic of all the strategy analysis tools and techniques. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Using SWOT Analysis can be incredibly useful as quick and clear strategy analysis, a precursor to assist in planning a more comprehensive strategy analysis and selecting the most appropriate more complex tools to use, or as a means of collating and summarizing the outputs from more sophisticated techniques. The Strengths and Weaknesses represent the internal dimension of the business unit under consideration. Following a McKinsey 7S analysis is a direction to complete it by covered all business bases. Then, The Opportunities and Threats represent the business unit's external environment which occupying the Porters 5 Forces model, is a good way of going after these.

### C. PEST Analysis

PEST analysis (Political, Economic, Social and Technological analysis) describes a framework of macro-environmental factors used in the environmental scanning component of strategic management.

### D. Porter's Five Forces Analysis

Porter's five forces analysis is a framework for industry analysis and business strategy development developed by Michael E. Porter of Harvard Business School in 1979. It uses concepts developed in Industrial Organization (IO) economics to derive 5 forces that determine the competitive intensity and therefore attractiveness of a market. Porter referred to these forces as the microenvironment, to contrast it with the more general term macro-environment. They consist of those forces close to a company that affect its ability to serve its customers

and make a profit. A change in any of the forces normally requires a company to re-assess the marketplace.

### III. METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted by using mixed methodology; both quantitative and qualitative data were used. Quantitative data of competency of health and wellness hotels and resorts (HWHR) in developing use the local natural resources for HTW promoting were collected via 300 set of questionnaires, from 6 hotels and resorts in 2 areas, 3 places from Ranong province and the rest from Chiangmai province. The quantitative analysis was done via the famous Statistical packages called the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) version 17. The Contents analysis regarding to HWT, business strategic analysis, Thai alternative medicine and cures, and the HWHR organizational situation, including business environments were analyzed. Finally the suggestions on HWHR developing were given.

### IV. RESULT

Section I: Demographic information and the study of sample's interest of additional tourism activities illustrate that majority of samples are women age between 31 and 40, bachelor degree is an average level of education and the average of income is between 300 to 900 USD per month.

Occupation are rated different, in Chiangmai majority of samples are those employees from various private company, while, the majority of samples from Ranong are those government officers

The multiple answer of the interest in various types of tourism activities also studied and analyzed by linking to the demographic data which demonstrate that in Thailand has become health concerning society; most of samples give the important and interested in HWT activity. They are more interest to join the activity if the hotel provides the healthy options. The interest of tourism activities (ITA) bond with aging information found that samples age between 31-40 concern about their ages and living wellness more than other age group, although, the second preferable activity during their trip is to find something more excited in adventure tourism activities, third, agritourism and fourth, eco-tourism. The youngest group with the age less than 20, they also rate interested in HWT most, and then adventure tourism, eco-tourism and agritourism. The young age, between 21-30, giving the ITA from the highest score to the lowest one as adventure tourism, eco-tourism, HWT, and agritourism. Contradictory, the age groups 41-50 and 51-60 score ITA, from the highest marks to the lowest marks as agritourism, HWT, eco-tourism and adventure tourism.

Section II: The study of HWHR's competency in developing use the local natural resources and wisdom to conform to the national HWT strategy can be divided into five main areas, accommodation service, food and beverages service, tourism activity, environmental service, and value adding. By comparing the result of the competency of HWHR in developing use the local natural resources for HW Services

from two different areas, Ranong province and Chiangmai province. The result illustrate that total sample from Aumpur Muang Chiangmai province can adapt used the local natural resources for HWT and perform better than the samples from Aumpur Muang Ranong province.

TABLE I  
COMPARISON OF THE COMPETENCY OF HWHRs IN DEVELOPING USE THE LOCAL NATURAL RESOURCES FOR HW SERVICES FROM TWO DIFFERENT AREAS, RANONG PROVINCE AND CHIANGMAI PROVINCE

Competency	N	Average	S.D.	t-test	p-value
<b>Accommodation</b>	150	3.074	0.567		
RanongChiangmai	150	3.400	0.582		
<b>F&amp;B</b>	150	2.52	0.806		
RanongChiangmai	150	2.77	0.861	-4.874	0.009**
<b>Environmental</b>	150	2.600	0.846		
RanongChiangmai	150	2.880	0.879	-2.810	0.005**
<b>Tourism Activities</b>	150	2.322	0.965		
RanongChiangmai	150	2.815	0.895	-4.592	0.000**
<b>Value Adding</b>	150	2.348	0.883		
RanongChiangmai	150	2.768	0.989	-3.878	0.000**
<b>Overall</b>	150	2.278	0.613		
RanongChiangmai	150	2.387	0.678	-3.791	0.000**

<sup>a</sup> Note:\*\* P-value <0.01, \* p-value <0.05

Result of The overall competency of the Chiangmai sample is importantly scored p. value 0.01 higher than the Ranong one while the area of safety, Chiangmai's competency is importantly scored 0.05 higher than the Ranong's competency. Others were rated not differently. Since Chiangmai perform better, then it can be a role model in developing HTHR or HMT destination.

Section III: Contents Analysis. First, SWOT analysis is a structured planning method used to evaluate the situation of the organization or project. SWOT is abbreviation of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats involved in this project. SWOT Analysis, of the HWHR Analysis were carried out and concluded as follow:

The Macro Environment Analysis via the PEST model first presents the distinctive political environments of the unstable situation of Thai political situation which strongly affect to the economic and the image of the country. Thailand tourism national plan of developing to the excellent medical hub in Asia and wellness capital were planned to conform to the national economic plan fiscal year 2007 to 2011 [5]. For fiscal year 2012-2016 the strategic were identified as increasing the tourism competitiveness at least to reach number 15<sup>th</sup> of the world [4].

TABLE II  
HWHR SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS (SWOT ANALYSIS)

<p><b>Strength</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Full quality of Services</li> <li>- Verities and Ranges of Services</li> <li>- Competitive price</li> <li>- Rich Natural resources and local wisdom.</li> <li>- Rich of regional identity and cultural resources</li> <li>- Reputation of well hospitality</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weakness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of knowledge integration</li> <li>- No strong government support/initiative to develop the HWT in the local areas.</li> <li>- Less coordination between the various players</li> <li>- Political problems etc.</li> <li>- Undeveloped Public Transportation</li> <li>- Some cheating behaviour by the local people</li> <li>- Developing the local product</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased demand for healthcare services from countries with aging population (US, UK)</li> <li>- Fast-paced Health concerning life style increases demand for HWT and alternative cures.</li> <li>- Shortage of supply in National Health Systems in many developed countries</li> <li>- Demand from countries with underdeveloped healthcare facilities.</li> <li>- Demand for retirement homes for elderly people especially Japanese.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Aggressive competition within the market especially from the neighbour countries.</li> <li>- Many New Entrants to the industry.</li> <li>- Many substantial product</li> <li>- Some alternative medicines are lack of international accreditation.</li> </ul>

Reference [4] also refers some new Thailand Policies for the Tourism development, First, promoting the development of infrastructure to support tourism, expedite improvement in the standard of facilities, safety and hygiene, with consideration given to accessibility to tourist destinations for the disabled and the elderly, second, Develop, restore, and revive existing natural, historical, and cultural tourist destinations; promote the development of new destinations in areas with potential for linking nature, culture and local lifestyles, in accordance with the tourism development plan, which sets the framework for the development of tourist destinations, and encourage investment by the private sector and local administration, third, Raise and maintain the standard for tourism services to meet international standards; improve the standards of personnel in the tourism sector; and, improve public services in order to attract and be able to efficiently service the market for quality tourists, forth, Promote the market for quality tourists, both inbound and domestic, through proactive marketing strategies targeting various groups in Thailand and abroad; making Thailand a world-class tourist destination, a centre for international meetings and exhibitions, as well as a medical tourism hub, fifth, Promote tourism activities to add value to the tourism sector; improve the quality of tourism services; promote Thailand as a filming location; and, support Thailand's bid to host international events, sixth, Promote inter-agency cooperation to provide quality service to tourists; improve the quality of tourism personnel to meet the demands; revise laws and regulations and improve the effectiveness of law enforcement to facilitate tourism; ensure safety; prevent the exploitation of tourists; resolve environmental problems; and, develop a sustainable tourism industry, seventh, Improve

marketing and public relations; promote the roles of local administration and the private sector in designing marketing and public relations policies and strategies to make Thailand a globally recognized tourist destination [4].

Reference [16] reports that since the result of world economic slowed down, the economics of the country, therefore affected and weaken in many areas, such an export industry for example. Contradictory, the numbers of overseas tourist on arrival are 8% increased from the same period in the last year (2011). The analysis also recommends paying attention to the Chinese, Vietnamese and the neighbour country tourist market as an emerging potential market. The western tourist is in returning to travel in Thailand again after the London Olympic 2012 was complete.

By consider the social factors, trend of healthy eating, health concerning living style, health and wellness service and products, including beauty treatments and HWT are became famous recently as a trend for everyone. It is no limitation on gender or age. But interestingly, noticeable increase numbers of elderly population around the world have implied the opportunity to the HWHR development to serve the demand in HWT.

Technology today was fast developed; hotel technology will be entrenched in every phase of hotel management, marketing, and operations. Smaller and smaller powerful microchip technology provides dramatic increases in power per dollar invested. High-speed, high-capacity fiber-optic cable will link the world for faster, less costly telecommunications and will help change how hotels communicate with their guests and with headquarters. Telephone sets, and voice messaging systems will improve guest service, while the arrival of wireless pocket phones will mean that hotel guests carry their communication devices with them. Interactive, three-dimensional, high-definition television will change how and what TV-based guest- room services are delivered, while private videoconferencing networks will impact hotel revenues as more businesses use them to reduce travel and hotel costs. The TV set, the telephone, and the computer will be linked in the culmination of the growing trend already under way to merge communications technologies. Many other new tech-based tools and challenges will emerge.

Analysis of Industrial Competitors via the Porter's five forces model can be concluded as follows:

#### A. Threat of New Entrants

Thai wisdom based health related service is a perfect combination of arts and sciences filled with many complicated and delicate details. It is essential to be well trained before becoming a professional health service provider. But recently as the rapid grow of the industry, the mass need of service servers dramatically increased therefore, it is easier to become service server today. The short term trainings were improvised and many work agencies are ready to help all the new entrants with load of experiences.

National policies and supporting from many government organizations are really helpful and raising numbers of new entries.

Product and service differentiation are in the level that easy to be copied. The affordable new entries can copy and entry to the industry easily. In addition, starting new business within the industry can start from a small firm if the budget was limited and no need for the huge investment.

Many hotels and resorts are providing SPA and massages within the hotel as the result of the advantages on saving from the economic scale and scope. And the investment policies are open for the outsource investors. And the government support on initiate individual SPA business.

#### *B. Intensity of Rivalry among Existing Firms*

All health and beauty business continue growing as the consequently of the expanding of health and beauty concerning society and plus with government supports. Hence, the strategic of HWT can be useful to adapted use within lodging business context. Many HWHR choose to serve the SPA services inside the hotel as an alternative activity while add the value into the hotel service. The additional health and wellness service within the hotel are not limited for five-star or big chain hotel but can be functional to all kinds of lodging, from the home stay to the high-end service apartment. Increase of such HWHR made no difference on customer service perception on consuming health and wellness services. This led to an intense competition among the health, wellness and beauty service server companies within the market.

#### *C. Bargaining Power of Buyers*

Regarding to the high competition within the market, the price offered by the provider must be competitive or cheaper. In addition, customer have a strong bargaining power against the seller since there are huge numbers of consumers who can accessed to many online data especially existing data of health, wellness and beauty concerning services where the high quality come in the lower price.

#### *D. Threat of Substitute Products and Services*

The existing substitute products and services are many. SPA or health related services served in the HWHR are easily replaceable but never be complete replacement since the special character of service product holding the value of intangible product. Therefore the perception on service can be very flexible and uncertain especially when it is influenced by many surrounded environments.

#### *E. Bargaining Power of Suppliers*

Bargaining Power of Suppliers divided into two parts, bargaining power of professional service server and bargaining power of suppliers. Bargaining power of professional service server is depend on their professionalism, the higher qualified they are the stronger power they could have. The supplier part, the oversea suppliers have stronger power caused of the brand loyalty made the demand on the branded product higher than the local one.

### V. DISCUSSION

Discussion on two separate independent samples, Chiangmai province and Ranong province, the Chiangmai

performance of HWT is highly success and well recognized more than the Ranong one. This is identically match to the data demonstrated that Chiangmai's HWHR's competency in developing use the local natural resources and wisdom are perform better than the Ranong one.

First, critical considering the demographic information found the similarity in age of consumer. Second, sample's occupation data given are different, majority of Chiangmai's samples are private company worker while, the majority of Ranong's ones are government officer. These two groups of occupation are considered some different preferences and needs. The consumer who work for the government have lower pay and not really concern in detail of tangible service while the private company workers who have a higher pay, cost conscious and pay attention to every small details from the first step into the accommodation.

The multiple answers on the interest of various tourism activities were studied and analyzed by linking to the demographic data which shows that in Thailand has become health concerning society; all ages give the important and interested in HWT activity. The healthy options provided in the hotel are attractive to the customer and also can raise the satisfaction in overall at the same time. The interest of tourism activities (ITA) associate with aging information found that samples age between 31-40 concern about their ages and living wellness more than other age group, they are seem to worried on their physical changes, while the mental set still want to enjoy preferable adventures. The younger group age between 21-30, they have such an extremely life style, the adventures come at the first stage, eco-tourism as the second then HWT, and agritourism. Contradictory to the elders, age groups 40-50 and 51-60, the result demonstrate the ITA preferences as agritourism as first priority, then HWT, eco-tourism and lastly adventure tourism.

Further discussion on these data, the HWT study of HWHR's competency in developing use the local natural resources and wisdom to conform to the national HWT strategy can be divided into five main areas, accommodation service, food and beverages service, tourism activity, environmental service, and value adding. Comparing the results of the competency of HWHR in developing use the local natural resources for HW Services from two different areas, Ranong province and Chiangmai province, the result illustrate that total sample from Aumpur Muang Chiangmai province can adapt used the local natural resources for HWT and perform better than the samples from Aumpur Muang Ranong province. Chiang Mai region is well recognized as a healthy retreat. However, with its mountain setting and Theravada Buddhist traditions, Chiang Mai has long been known as a place for healthy tourism, full of natures and a comfortable long-stay.

Chiangmai and Ranong both have its own distinctive local natural and cultural resources. Chiangmai is a big city in northern part of the country which has such long history, intelligent wisdom and unique natural resources. Ranong is a small antique province located in the southern part of Thailand

where the southern arts and natural resources were unbelievably different but beautiful.

As the result of the studies, HWHR in Chiangmai have demonstrated a higher ability in adapting use the local natural resources for HW Services. From the tangible such HWHR decorations, equipments and tools to the intangible such services in the HWHR the Northern Thai Arts were more obviously used in many decorations in every parts of HWHR in Chiangmai, from the roof, building body, floors pattern, staircase, SPA beds, front desk and pools for example. On the other hand, in Ranong, the southern Thai arts were not used as much as it is in Chiangmai.

An intangible side, the study of service in two different provinces, it is obviously that the gesture of the servers are totally different. According to the different of culture from different region made the performance from two completely different areas came out differently.

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