

# DEVELOPING AN ENHANCE AWARENESS AND THE CAPACITY PROGRAM FOR HUMAN RESOURCE IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

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**Abstract-** This study aims to establish a program that will enhance awareness and the capacity of human resource in hospitality industry focus on Thai tour guides as well as those who are involved with tourism activities in Khonkaen, Nan, Nakhon Srithammaraj, and Chonburi. Focus groups were organized to study the needs and to develop the program; they were comprised of following topics 1) the development of local creative tourism routes 2) search for products and services to increase income 3) knowledge about contemporary tourism and service industries 4) test of the trial program with 430 Thai tour guides and a comparison of the levels of participant's understanding before and after participating the study. The results of the study showed that the participants have statistically improved in all aspects. The result of this study is relevant to human resource development in hospitality industries.

**Index Terms-** Hospitality Industry, Human resource Development, R&D strategies.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Tour guides and those who are associated with tourism activities are part of a tourism supply chain. They play important roles in increasing income from tourists—in stimulating purchase (creating demand) as tourists generally feel that they are not as knowledgeable as the tour guides or those who are associated with tourism activities (Asymmetric Information). Thus, tour guides, and those who are associated with tourism activities, can persuade and convince tourists to demand tourism products (Inducing Tourist's Demand). If tourists and those who are associated with tourism activities apply the advantages achieved by this study, they can thoroughly understand tourist's demands, recommend tourism products that are suitable to the needs of the tourists, and stimulate purchase of tourism products. By doing so, tourists would be impressed by their experience, and Thailand would receive higher income from tourism. The vital objective of this study is to encourage development of tour guides and those who are associated with tourism activities in Thailand to enhance their capacity and help them meet the current demands.

## II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 2.1)** To analyze gaps between the awareness and capacity of Thai tour guides, as well as those who are associated with tourism activities, that could increase income from tourists through means that are responsible to society and tourists.
- 2.2)** To create a program that promotes the awareness and capacity in the identified aspects of Thai tour guides, as well as those who are associated with tourism activities in Khon Kaen, Nan, Nakhon Srithammaraj, and Chonburi.
- 2.3)** To train and provide consultation for Thai tour guides, as well as those who are associated with tourism activities, to prepare them to increase income

from tourists through means that are responsible to society and tourists.

- 2.4)** To analyze problems and obstacles that obstruct tour guides and those who are associated with tourism activities, and provide recommendations for various relevant aspects.

## III. RESULT SUMMARY

The result can be summarized based on objectives of the project as follows:

- 3.1)** Gap analysis between the awareness and capacity of Thai tour guides, as well as those who are associated with tourism activities, that could be used to increase income from tourists through means that are responsible to society and tourists. The focus group, of 10 respondents, was comprised of tour guides for Thai and foreign tourists included the key interview point as follows:

The identification of capacity points of Thai tour guides, and those who are associated with tourism activities, to be improved in order to increase income from tourists through means that are responsible to society and tourists. Tour guides are the individuals that create, and transfer, awareness about the country to the tourist. It was found that –

1. Develop a supply chain for marketing services- The system organized by the government is not strict enough to control or manage foreign entrepreneurs who operate their businesses, through offering commercial stores, restaurants, and other services, for tourists from countries such as China, Japan, Korea, Russia, etc. The term 'foreign entrepreneurs' refers to both owners and managers of businesses. Their services begin at their country of origins; continue as the tourists arrive and travel around Thailand; and finish when the tourists travel back to their countries. Tourists receive services from entrepreneurs who have the same nationality; therefore Thai entrepreneurs

would not receive any benefits from this supply chain at all. Tour guides would also be those with the same nationalities, making Thai tour guides and those who are associated with full-service tourism activities unable to receive the benefits. Received income would then still fall into the pocket of foreign entrepreneurs.

Tour guide development can be divided in following two ways:

1) Tour guide development program—As the existing program is not efficient and cannot reach the maximum capacity of tour guides, the government needs to put emphasis on developing a quality program more seriously.

2) Tour guide development—As tour guides still lack potential, part of the development includes knowledge enhancement in order to increase service capacity, and creativity development in order to propose exciting and innovating tour programs. Generally, once tour guides receive their Tour Guide Card, they usually stop self-improvement as they feel that they have already achieved the Card and there is no need to improve further.

2. Tour guide capacity development to increase income—It was found that tour guides need to improve in the following four key aspects:

1) As innovative tour guiding requires experience, judgement, wit and quality management, tour guides require continuous learning in order to develop their knowledge and apply it to their work.

2) Tour guide skill development in various aspects, e.g. tour guide service skills, communication skills, human relations skills, management skills, team work skills, and change management skills.

3) Development in attitude, thinking and feelings towards a situation or an environment, including 'pride of being Thai, and pride of being (him/her) self'.

4) Service development, which includes service helpfulness and sincerity, understanding, generosity, the provision of quality information, language skills, and tour guide ethics.

From the study, the researcher has designed development framework tools in order to be the criteria to evaluate the awareness and capacity of Thai tour guides and personnel which includes 4 skills, 27 indicators, and 73 result summaries.

**3.2) Programs to enhance the awareness and increase capacity in topics essential to those who are associated with tourism activities in Khon Kaen, Nan, Nakhon Srithammarat, and Chonburi have been established by selecting the indicators in the highest demand for each skill from the results of the awareness and capacity evaluated of Thai tour and those who are associated with tourism activities. The list of development topics is as follows:**

1) The development of local creative tourism routes – Topics include: local information in respect to tour guiding, transportation, accommodation, restaurants, souvenirs and local product shops, and

local tourism route guidelines.

2) Search for products and services to increase income – Topics include: information about the type of new tourism products and services, tourism products and service integration guidelines to increase income, and information hubs to search for tourism products and services.

3) Knowledge about contemporary tourism and service industries – Topics include: knowledge and channels regarding contemporary tourism and service industries, enhancing and developing tourism networks, and network collaboration skills.

**3.3) Training and consultation aimed towards awareness and capacity enhancement programs for Thai tour guides and those who are relevant with tourism activities in Khon Kaen, Nan, Nakhon Srithammarat, and Chonburi.**

This study has tested the awareness and capacity enhancement program for Thai tour guides and those who are associated with tourism activities. The program has been conducted 4 times with 430 participants in Khon Kaen, Nan, Nakhon Srithammarat, and Chonburi. The results from the tests regarding participants' understanding before and after participating was significantly different at 99 per cent confidence in all development topics. Thus, it can be concluded that participants improved their skills in all aspects.

**3.4) To analyze problems and obstacles that obstruct tour guides, and provide recommendations for various relevant sectors.**

From the tour guide practice analysis regarding mechanics to increase income from tourists, it was found that problems and obstacles that need to be enhanced could be divided into 4 points, in order to achieve success, with details as follows:

1. The development of administrative and management structure for the Thai tourism industry

Income distribution of the tourism industry is not systematic, as tourism entrepreneurs have been established/identified in advance to cater tour groups consisting of members from their native countries—e.g. Chinese entrepreneurs would be assigned and target Chinese tourists specifically. As a result, Thai entrepreneurs and Thai tour guides would be left with a typical tour agenda (tour program) which would result in a decrease in income for Thai entrepreneurs and Thai tour guides, as majority of tourism generated income would go back to the tourist's country of origin.

2. Develop a body of knowledge of tour guides Knowledge and the ability of Thai tour guides and those who are associated with tourism activities is still at a stage where it requires self-improvement in order to help increase income. Since knowledge about each location, service center, and attraction—including geographic, historical, and cultural tourism—depends on the ability of each tour guide,

self-learning and knowledge development is needed for each tour guide.

### 3. Develop tour guide training programs.

Tour guide training is important and essential, especially during today's fast-paced world. Tourism, as a key and important income generator, needs to adjust to be up-to-date. Up-to-date tour guide training development is, therefore, vital. However, those training-program developers also need to consider the timing of the training as tour guides generally have unpredictable working hours. Thus, technology, like e-learning, could be employed in order to increase accessibility for tour guides. Plus, a concise and get-to-the-point timeframe is also recommended.

### 4. Tour guide and service standard developments.

Even though Thailand requires tour guides to pass legally specified training and standardized tests, this is only basic training and, most importantly, only a one-time session. Once the approved tour guide card has been received, there is no other legal measure to require them to train or pass any other process again. That said, there could be lack of monitoring, procedures for improvement, or a lack of encouragement for them to maintain and develop tour guide and service standards. Thus, relevant agencies should review additional measures for tour guides in order for them to maintain and develop their standards consistently—e.g. a measure about brief additional training before renewing their tour guide card. All in all, flexible timing should also be considered as they generally work unpredictable hours.

## IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

In order to make the study more inclusive and clearer in the future, the researcher has recommended that this research to be conducted again in secondary tourism areas of each region in order to compare the needs for personnel development for those who are associated with the Thai tourism. By doing so, the future study could explore differences between the studied primary tourism areas and the future secondary tourism areas. Furthermore, it could also help develop guidelines to be used as the standard program in the future.

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