

# **Human Resource Development of Small Hotel Business in Special Economic Zone, Chiangrai Province**

## **การพัฒนาทรัพยากรมนุษย์ในธุรกิจโรงแรมขนาดเล็ก ในเขตเศรษฐกิจพิเศษ จังหวัดเชียงราย**

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### **Abstract**

Human resources development is a process that encourages personnel to increase knowledge and skills to have proper working behavior with responsibility to be able to work efficiently. Although the organization requires the qualified personnel, they must provide more knowledge and skills due to changes in the environment and other subsystems of organization. According to tourism services development plan for supporting free flow of services 2016-2017, it was indicated that tourism personnel, whether in public or private, there were problem issues for the development of tourism, especially knowledge and skills in areas such as management, marketing, innovation, technology, language, and creative thinking. In addition, the findings of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yongyuth Chalamwong, and TDRI team presented to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports showed that Thai labor did not have outstanding in professional performance, especially problem-solving skills, computer skills, teamwork, technical performance and the weakness of this professional personnel of Thailand is foreign languages, especially English, and the ability of management. Especially hotels, restaurants, food shops, restaurants and Thailand's performance did not meet the expectations of most entrepreneurs.

This article aims to present the importance of human resource development, problems of personnel in various fields of tourism, problems of personnel operating in the Special

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## Introduction

Human resource development is a process that encourages staff to increase knowledge and skills, and behaviors that are appropriate to the job responsibilities to work efficiently (Tansaenee, <http://www.drpracha.com/index.php?topic=1014.0;wap2>, 2016). Whether the organization supplies well qualified staff and equipped for any reason, in fact, the organization also needs to have more knowledge and skills due to the changes in environmental and other subsystems of the organization. Regarding the importance of human resource development, it has been much concerned on the importance of the human resources development process in the developed countries because they believe that if human resources have quality, it will create a potential human capital and have an opportunity for success. When the organization operates any business, they need to have investment. It is required to "purchase" or "supply" of resources to continue the production of the goods or services that are used in their business starting from places whether purchased or rented by an organization, with the building, improved or decorated in the condition that can engage in business purposes in all aspects such as marketing objective and production objective. Then the enterprise also needs to invest or supply other resources to invest in the operation, such as machine tools, furniture, and so on, including "human". Therefore, organizations need to formulate guidelines to develop their needed knowledge, skills and attitudes to change the needed qualifications, the most important is the knowledge of these characteristics can lead to real practice and it will make changes to fruition.

## Necessity of Human Resource Development

From the study of the causes of the necessity of human resource development, it showed the main causes as follows:

1. Backwardness (Underdevelopment) of employees: the employees' knowledge and ability are not qualified.
2. Technology progress: staff training is necessary to increase the evaluation because it needs the development of human resources in the future.
3. The resignation of employees: to arrange a program for the development of human resources to develop and train the staff for the performance for employees who resigned.
4. Competitive hiring employees, both domestic and abroad: the use of female workers, many alternative male employees due to low wage compensation. Therefore, training and development programs should be provided in female employees working instead of male employees. (Suntarotok, 2004). In addition to the human resource development in the tourism industry, according to tourism services development plan to support the opening free travel service from 2016-2017, it showed that tourism personnel of public or the private sector had problems of tourism development in Thailand, specifically, the lack of knowledge and skills in areas such as management, marketing, innovation, technology, language, and creative ideas. In addition, the findings of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yongyuthot Chaelomwong and his team from the TDRI study for the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, it indicated that Thai labor do not have much outstanding professional performance, especially problem-solving skills, computer skills, working together as a team, technical and operational skills. Furthermore, foreign language is also their weakness, particularly English. Moreover, other management abilities such as the personnel in hotels, restaurant and food shop do not meet the expectations of most entrepreneurs. (Chaelomwong and TDRI team, <http://tdri.or.th/research/labor-protection-system/>, 2016)

What is more, training and efficient employees are committed towards their jobs which are possible through human resource development. If employees are provided with proper training and development opportunities, they will feel committed to the work and the organization. In addition, for small businesses human capital is critical because many smaller companies have employees who perform cross-functional duties. With a smaller workforce, if just one employee leaves, it leaves the company with a huge gap to fill and a potential threat to the company's profitability.

With respect to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Maslow stated that people are motivated to achieve certain needs and that some needs take precedence over others. Besides, he also indicated that every person is capable and has the desire to move up the hierarchy toward a level of self-actualization. Apart from the need of the organizations on the of human resources development, the employees also wish to achieve for their lives.

### **The Importance of Human Resources Development towards Tourism Industry**

The tourism industry is an important industry for economic, social and politics, and international cooperation. It increases the major amount of income each year by the value of gross domestic product (GDP Direct Tourism: TDGDP). In the year 2016 of the total 3 quarters, the value is at 545,561 million baht (Office of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2015). This causes the employment and generates revenue and distributes local development. The government has used the tourism as a tool to manage appropriately in the development of tourism; they do not only focus on the development of tourist destinations and, but they also develop tourism personnel in term of their quality in service. If the personnel of the tourism industry have excellent quality in service, it will lead to the happiness and impressions of the tourists.

However, when considering on tourism industry, it should not only focus on benefits, it should be supported and promoted to have more growth and progress, particularly in tourism management and human resources development. Their potential is needed to develop to enhance skills and knowledge to be able to compete in the global market (Strategy Thailand Tourism, 2015 –2017). Overall, tourism personnel of Thailand, they can compete in local or domestic, but they lack the ability to compete internationally. This is due to many reasons, such as restrictions on the recognition, the entrepreneur of business services is lack of information, coordination from the government sector in case of travel liberalization, knowledge and skills in business management due to most business comes from the family business, so they lack knowledge in management or task management system or they cannot do aggressive marketing, as a result. In addition, they do not have languages skill, technological knowledge and skills, infrastructure such as

internet networks, especially, resources and funds. Nowadays, although the government has established agencies to support entrepreneurs in terms of loan and guarantee, but the procedure is quite complex and it takes time, and lots of condition. Moreover, the current small and medium-sized tourism business services network are still not able to compete with large foreign companies, etc.

To promote tourism as an instrument for economic development, it can, however, be achieved only by initiating specific measures for human resource development in various segments of the tourism industry high standards of quality and efficiency in tourism services to develop international tourism is well-recognized. However, there were many problems caused by tourism personnel found by these studies.

### **Most of the Problems Caused by Tourism Personnel**

Unlike the personnel in other fields, the tourism industry has used the human resources or personnel in various levels and types to provide services ranging from unskilled personnel until the executives, especially the operating level personnel. They need specific knowledge and skills to the characteristics of work. The followings are the examples of the problems founded in the tourism personnel's service problems. For instance, the study of Supalak Suriya, she studied on "Guidelines for service quality development of hotel's front office department to support Asian Tourists: a study of Boutique Hotels in Bangkok", the result indicated that providing reassurance to customers; the delivery services of reception is not good enough for the service because of the gap between the expectations and perceptions of Asian tourists at the most level towards the quality features of the other service quality (Suriya, 2013). Besides, the study of Jedsarid Sangkapan, he studied on "Tourist Satisfaction towards Klong Hae Floating Market, Hat Yai District, Songkhla Province", the result showed that the tourists were satisfied with the service and safety lower than other aspects. Therefore, Muang Klong Hae Municipality should give priority to the service and safety, especially reception and arranging guards for tourists (Sangkapan, 2016). Regarding to the problem on the staff's skill on language, it was found in the study of Namfon Channual. She studied on "Factors influencing the decision making of Chinese tourists travelling in Thailand". The samples of the study

were Chinese who travel in Thailand based on the survey data from the service of Thai AirAsia. The survey was conducted from the flights to Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Chongqing, and Xi'an to Donmuang Airport. Data collection was supported by Miss Jariya Songthit; the flight attendant. The study revealed that there were some problems on the marketing mix in terms of personnel. They were not able to communicate in Chinese or the people who know Chinese are very little. Besides, service places and other places were also not convenient to Chinese tourists. (Channual, 2012). On the contrary, the study of Chontinee Yookong (2012) on “Customer satisfactions from domestic tourists of hotel in Ranong province”, it showed that service users were satisfied with the employees in terms of their knowledge and the abilities the most. The samples used in the study were 400. The hotel which has the highest proportion of the guests was Tinedee Ranong Hotel, Ranong province (197 guests). The service users were satisfied with the staff in terms of their knowledge and abilities the most because the hotel had conducted the staff training regularly. In addition to service quality, Komkrit Bunbodhi studied on “The satisfaction of foreign tourists at hotels in Bangkok district, Bangkok”. The objectives were to study the personal factors and services quality of hotel services satisfaction of hotel services and analysis of relationship between service quality satisfactions with hotel service. The population was foreign tourists in Bangkok. The findings showed that: 1) as for the satisfaction with the hotel service, most of the respondents rated the service at a prominent level. When analyzing each aspect, it is found that the satisfaction with public relation got the highest mean and the satisfaction with service inside tourist places got the lowest mean, 2) for the service quality of hotel services, the respondents rated their opinions at an appropriate level. When analyzing each aspect, it is found that the service systems were average at the highest level and the facilities were at the lowest level (Bunbodhi, 2015). Undoubtedly, these two studies indicated that the personnel service's service influenced the tourists' satisfaction. Therefore, the development of personnel is needed in the hotel or in the tourism industry.

Therefore, it is necessary to provide a system of training and professional education with necessary support capable of generating manpower sufficient to meet the needs of the tourism and hospitality industry, both quantitatively and qualitatively to make

the human resource development through tourism industry. Although this may be true, there were the problems found in the study area of the special economic zone in Chiangrai province.

### **The Problems of the Hotel Staffs in a Small Hotels in the Special Economic Zone in Chiangrai province**

Chiangrai is the province which is developed as a special economic zone in phase 2. Its three districts are going to be developed as a special economic zone, for example, Mae Sai, Chiang Saen, and Chiang Khong district. Each district has its own outstanding. Mae Sai stands out in international trade connection between Thailand-Myanmar borders. While Chiang Saen district has its outstanding in terms of tourist attractions such as the Golden Triangle and cargo ships that have been imported and exported to the People's Republic of China, and Chiang Khong district is unique in being a gateway to the ASEAN at the newly-built bridge across the Mekong River. Thailand-Laos road is also connected to R3A and the People's Republic of China and the Lao People's Democratic Republic (ASEAN Information Center, <http://www.aseanthai.net/english/main.php?filename=index>, 2015). In 2014, the number of tourist arrivals in Chiangrai is 2,007,591 in total classified as 1,576,189 for Thai people and 431,402 for foreigners. The duration of stay in Chiangraiprovince is 2.63 days. The average length of stay for Thai foreigners is 2.50 days and the average length of stay for Thai people is 3.10 days respectively (National Statistical Office, online). From the survey of 350 cases of tourists across the country, it revealed that 51% of Thai tourists planned to travel in Thailand in the next three months. This ratio was close to the numbers of tourists in 2012-2013. The most popular destination in Q4/2014 includes Northern (24 percent), North East (21 percent) and Central (29 percent). The popular provinces are Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Mae Hong Son, etc. (Project Reports and Forecasts of Tourist Behavior and the Confidence of Entrepreneurs in the Tourism Industry of Thailand, 2014).

Accommodation business or hotel business is a core business related with tourism industry and the need of travelling makes hotel necessary for tourists and travelers. Visitors or tourists will spend money to get good services, comfort, and satisfaction

(VanaWutthichote, 2005). Therefore, providing accommodation for tourists has a wide variety of hotel styles to meet the needs of different tourists. As a matter of fact, Chiangrai is the most popular province in the North of Thailand. There are many attractions both natural attractions and shopping centers for tourists, such as Mae Sai border checkpoint, historic city of Chiang Saen; the Golden Triangle in Chiang Saen district, and tasting food from the Mekong River; Mekong giant catfish and crossing to Ban Houayxai, Laos at Chiang Khong district. Each year, lots of Thai tourists and foreigners travel to Chiangraiboth in high season and low season so there are more accommodation businesses or hotel business in Chiangrai province, as a result. Moreover, the hotel business competition has also increased in Chiangrai province (Wutthipongphipat, 2004). Nowadays, the entrepreneurs of large hotel chain likely aim at expanding the business into the three stars hotels. When comparing the hotels, the large hotel entrepreneurs are ready in both their reputation and experience, including their personnel and fund. The expansion is significantly impact towards the entrepreneurs of small-and medium-sized business.

The small-and medium-sized hotel businesses in those areas are needed to offer value added for the tourists by upgrading their quality of service to be equivalent to the large hotels. While their room rates are still lower than the large hotels and they also must be prepared to cope with price cuts between three-star hotels for business owners to attract tourists with medium purchasing power. Another problem of small hotels, Thailand still has difficulty with problems of the inconsistency between labor productivity and labor requirements because the students choose to study in higher education rather than vocational level. While the positions in the hotel industry needs workers, who graduated in vocational higher education rather than higher education (Thansettakij Online, <http://www.thansettakij.com/>, 2015). This means that there is a shortage of personnel problem in the hotel business except for the 4-5 stars because most of 4-5 stars hotel are likely to be administered by the international hotel chains. Besides, they have regular revenue as well as international marketing and professional management. Moreover, their hotel employees are the students who have just graduated but they want to work in these hotel classes. Furthermore, the 4-5 stars hotels have more opportunity to recruit and select the employees. All their new employees are assigned to attend the training to develop skills and abilities to do

their job better. The hotel has the department for improving the quality of the employees directly; the hotel has good hotel staff with high skills and abilities with the availability of the standards in other areas, as a result the business income is also high, and the employees receive high services charge even though the salary is not much different than the hotel in other levels.

In contrast the single or sole proprietorship hotel, they have short-staffed problem because most of the new employees are the students who have just graduated, and some hotel staffs are from the international hotel chains. They rarely have knowledge and skills to work. However, the hotels need to employ them otherwise they do not have any staff. In addition to the personnel training policy, all new employees have not been trained seriously and they just learn from the supervisors. However, the supervisors are not able to teach, or they do not really know the hotel knowledge and skills. Of course, hotel job is very hard because of insufficient staff and their salary and service charge are low and is not enough for their expenses. The revenue of the small hotels is less than the international hotel chains. According to the hotel personnel, they are not well supported and developed in the field of learning. Most qualified hotel personnel have learned by themselves. If they have opportunity to apply for the jobs with higher income or they are purchased to the higher position, they will resign and work in another hotel. If the small hotel entrepreneurs do not give precedence to the mentioned situations, the shortage and the qualification problems of the employees will affect to the hotel personnel service and business operation.

According to the primary survey of hotel personnel in the Special Economy Zone, Sabai a Chiangsaen Hotel in Chiangsaen district has the problem in the turnover rate of the employees because they retired to work in the other hotels or companies. Most of employees do not graduate in tourism and hotel fields (Noppakhun Parichat, interviewee, November3, 2014). Besides, Mr. Sanguan Sornklinsakul; Deputy of Chamber of Commerce in Chiang Khong district (Sornklinsakul Sanguan, interviewee, September19, 2014) suggested that most hotel employees are from Laos due to the local people are not patient in working in the hospitality industry. They like working in downtown and other provinces. In case of the turnover rate problem in Maesai district, Mr. Sawetyon Srisamut (Srisamut

Sawetyon, interviewee, September11, 2014) also commented that the local people are not patient in working in the hospitality industry or it may be from the habit of northern people. He also suggested that the hotel is ready to employ the people from Myanmar and China.

Apart from the shortage of personnel, from the survey of the area, it was found the important problem affecting on hotel business directly is the service of the staff. The general manager of Mekong Delta Boutique Maesai Hotel and the committee of the Chamber of Commerce in Maesai District; Mr.Thanunchai Krueawit (Krueawit Thanunchai, interviewee, September25, 2014) said that the personnel of the hotel have the problem on foreign language, especially Chinese and Myanmar language. The selection of the personnel working at hotel, the manager will recruit and select the personnel with the ability to use English and Myanmar. If local people do not have these abilities, the hotel will hire the employee from Myanmar. While Mr. Tanawat Hadee; the consultant of Siam Triangle Chiangsaen Hotel (Hadee Tanawat, interviewee, September 28, 2014), recommended on the selection of the hotel personnel that if Thailand entered ASEAN countries "in the future, finding the people who work in the hospitality would be very hard. Therefore, it is necessary to hire foreign personnel to come to work surely. It must have an organization to monitor and evaluate the performance of Thai and foreign employees. In addition to the attitude in providing services and basic knowledge of the cultures of the foreigners, the employees in the special economic area are also lack of knowledge in these matters, too. Particularly, ASEAN's culture, employees or service providers should get teaching or training to be able to understand the customer's needs or service from such issues. Although those hotels suffer various problems in different areas, the most key factors in drawing customers to stay in hotels everlasting are good service and return customers as well as recommending other customers to use the service. Therefore, the hotel personnel must have knowledge, ability, and passion in service. If the hotel personnel development of each hotel provides knowledge and capabilities for their hotel personnel, they will inevitably have high effective in working and the hotel can survive and grow everlasting.

## **The Necessary Knowledge and Skills in the Personnel Development in the Small Hotels in the Special Economic Zone in Chiangrai Province**

Human resource development for various organizations focuses on increasing both the quality and efficiency of human resources. It can be considered a worthwhile investment to develop the organization's stability in the future because the competition is not only, the quality of the product, price, after-sales services, methods of distribution and sales promotion, but they also must compete in terms of quality and value of people in the organization that will be able to create such a thriving business. In a large organization, many organizations will set up the human resource development and training exclusively in both government and private sector. This department will be responsible for analyzing and finding the training needs of the organization to use it as a guideline in determining the project plan as well as creating training courses in accordance with the policy and requirements of the organization. However, the characteristics of human resources development and training in the tourism and hotel business organization are as follows: (Isichaikun, 2004)

1. The tourism and hotel industry have budget allocation or investment in training relatively less than other industries.
2. The majority of business organization is small business, or they are sole proprietorship, so they lack funds allocated to training.
3. The employment is temporary or seasonal based on tourism; as a result, the training of these employees is difficult.
4. Because of serving customers throughout the day, the business organization is difficult to schedule training for all employees at the same time.
5. The organization has organized training for employees to have skills for working but they don't focus on staff development in the long term.
6. Organization of tourism and large hotel business realize the importance on employee development activities as part of the strategy of human resources management.

In human resource development in small hotels in the Special Economic Zone in Chiangraiprovince, the author would like to use the criteria of hotel classification according to size based on the National Statistics Office, The Ministry of information and communication

technology (2005), which were divided into three groups according to the number of hotel rooms as follows:

Small size hotel refers to the hotel with less than 60 rooms

Medium size hotel refers to hotel between 60-149 rooms

Enormous size hotel refers to the hotel with 150 rooms up

Structuring organizations for small hotels with less than 100 rooms will divide the department into Room Department, Housekeeping Department and Maintenance Department (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2002). In this study, it will mention about the employee's knowledge and skills required in small hotels of the Room Department. In the small hotels or economy size hotels, there are not lots of staff. Perhaps, there is only one hotel staff working in the front office. In the large hotels, there are several rooms that provide more services. In this case, the numbers of employees are more. When the guests need to stay in a hotel or wish to communicate with the hotel or contact with people who are staying in the hotel, the guests will contact prior to the reception. Therefore, the hotel reception is vital for the operation and service of the hotel. It is as the center of news and information in the hotel. To get services from the hotel staff, all the guests can do by informing at the hotel. In addition, the front part of the hotel is the first and most important part of the reception in the hotel since the guest arrival. The front hotel staff needs to impress the guests from the moment guests arrive in front of the hotel and the need to build good relationships with the guests, including personality, posture, manners, using language to communicate with the guests and to meet the needs of the guests.

From the interview of the entrepreneur of small business and the documents with the research related, basically, it was found that the knowledge and skills required in the personnel development in the small hotels in the special economic zone in Chiangrai province were as follows: 1) a good command of foreign languages, 2) computer program ability, 3) professional knowledge such as reservation, welcoming customer, customer service for check-in and check-out, problem-solving, communication with customers, knowledge about the tourist attractions and the nearby environment, and 4) personality development such as providing fast service; service that matches customers' needs, cognition in human relationships, willing to give service, understanding different cultures,

reliability and trust, personality and appropriate expression, dressing, manners, and using words.

As far as the knowledge and skills is concerned, Chinese skill training is one of the priorities to take consideration due to the vast number of Chinese tourists visiting to Chiang Khong district.

## **Conclusion**

If the establishment of Chiangrai Special Economic Zone is officially declared, the economy of the province is going to be vital to the economy of the country due to its tourism potential of border trade, investment and management of logistics. These potentials play a key role in the development of a gateway of trade and logistics hub linked to the Mekong Sub-region. Obviously, Chiangraitourism will grow up with lots of businesses and tourists in the border areas. Therefore, the tourism business entrepreneurs, especially the hotel entrepreneurs should realize in developing their hotel personnel to prepare for these mega changes. Although most hotel businesses in the Special Economic Zone in Chiangrai province have problems such as sole proprietorship management, lack of budget or capital for employee training. Therefore, the author would like to suggest the construction of curriculum based on the needs of self-development of employees for using as a handbook for the workshop training in the small hotels and the hotels nearby in Chiangraiprovince. According to the hotel training, the hotel entrepreneurs must realize the importance of the personnel development that their employees will have a lot more of knowledge and skills, so they can work more efficiently. Above all, there must be the cooperation from the employees or the hotel personnel themselves and their willingness of what they really need to develop.

To summarize, tourism directly generates services, products, employment and investments. However, the success of tourism industry depends on its ability to affect continuous improvement and provide quality products and services to its customer. This industry needs professionally qualified and trained personnel at all levels and requires every personnel in the organization to possess the requisite knowledge, skill, and attitude. For this reason, human resource development has a major role to play for the development of this study area.

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