

FACTOR RELATED TO DECISION MAKING ON SELECTION OF AIRLINE FOR THE UPPER MIDDLE CLASS ELDERLY PEOPLE IN BANGKOK AND METROPOLITAN AREA AFTER COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to study the factors related to decision making on selection of airline for the elderly people in Bangkok and metropolitan area after Covid-19. The benefits of the study were to develop service quality provision for the elderly in Thailand to meet their requirement after Covid-19. The research instrument was the questionnaires consisting 3 parts as 1) personal data 2) factor related to decision making on selection of airlines for the elderly people in Bangkok and metropolitan area after Covid-19 and 3) suggestions. The results of the study found from the sampled 200 respondents who were the upper middle class elderly people in Bangkok and metropolitan area that the elderly changed their travelling behavior. For example, 189 respondents consider that the cleanliness was the priority for them. They would like choose the seats and learn more about airline service. 160 respondents preferred to travel with their families and friends they trust. The elderly people whose age are over 75 do not want to sit on long-flight which duration more than 3 hours because of their physical conditions such as backache and knee aches. The recommendation of the study was the airlines should provide more information to convince the elderly people to trust the airline, particularly cleanliness, safety and privacy and select the right media to provide information in order to increase this market share.

Keywords: Decision Making, Elderly People, Airline, Post Covid-19

INTRODUCTION

Thailand is one of the fastest-ageing countries in the world. It expected that the population ages 60 and over will increase from 13% in 2010 to 33% in 2040. This may affect some business in the future such health care, transportation service, product and services for older people (Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia, 2021). Nowadays, Thai government tried to promote the campaign travelling on 'working day' which aimed to find new market of Thai elderly people who are retired but still have income to travel. The cost of travelling could be somewhat lower than holiday and weekend (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2022). One of the reason was many elderly people have some purchasing powers from their retirement such as pension, their passive income, children money gift and government pay & discount. Since the recovery of Covid-19, the elderly people are the new targets for airlines in Thailand, particularly upper middle class elderly people who can afford airline tickets. However, the covid-19 changed the behavior of travelers around the globes. This research aimed to study the factors related to decision making on selection of airlines for the upper middle class elderly people in Bangkok and Metropolitan Area after Covid-19.

Objectives

To study the factors related to decision making on selection of airlines for the upper middle class elderly people in Bangkok and metropolitan area after Covid-19

Research Questions

What are the factors related to decision making on selection of airlines for the upper middle class elderly people in Bangkok and metropolitan area after Covid-19?

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORY

The literature review and theory in this study included 1) Elderly People Concept 2) Social Class Concepts 3) Airline Decision Making Concepts 4) Covid-19 as:

Elderly People is defined as people whose age is over 60 years old (World Health Organization, 2022). Though, today's definitions could be varied. World Health Organization defined healthy ageing as the elderly people who can meet their basic needs, learn, grow and make decisions, mobilize, build and maintain relationship and contribute to society. (Beard, Officer, De Carvalho et al, 2016). These elderly people could still be consumers and producers in the market since they consume and produce at the same time.

Though majority of the elderly people in Thailand were vulnerable during Covid-19. They do not afford some food and accommodation during Covid-19 pandemic (Jumnianpol, Nuangjamnong, Chimmamee, and Buathong, 2023). However, some upper middle class elderly people have less affected to the Covid-19 than the majority because their education, retirement, passive income and children support (UNFPA Thailand, 2020).

Airline decision making concept is process of decision making on using airline, which is determined by the passengers' conditions such as money, urgency and types of airlines. The decision making of using airlines is difficult to predict since the influencing factors are time, destination, promotion, pricing strategies and so on. Some factors such fuel price, employee strikes, climate affect the airlines. The reschedule and pricing is therefore changeable. This problem were huge during Covid-19 pandemic. The research found that during Covid-19, price, service level and safety are very important factors for airline success (Thepchalerm, Ho and Kongtaveesawas,2021) whereas in the normal situation, the price and flight are the important factors.

Covid-19 is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. People infected with virus by air and through respiration. Since Covid-19 spread through air easily, it becomes problem for many services particularly aviation industry. The vaccines have been developed to protect passengers and tourists. Numbers of airlines implemented the system and programs to prevent the problems from Covid-19. Though, after Covid-19, the passengers considered Covid-19 prevention for airlines are necessary and it becomes factors related to decision making on selection of airlines, particularly the elderly people.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher used the questionnaire which is quantitative research instrument. The questionnaire consist of 3 parts as 1) respondent profile or the elderly people 2) factor related to decision making on selection of airlines for the upper middle class elderly people in Bangkok and metropolitan area after Covid-19 and 3) suggestions. The population of the elderly people in Bangkok and metropolitan area who used the airline services are unknown the researcher applied unknown sample size formula with additional samples as 400. Then, the researcher reduced the half of sample size for the ratio of upper middle class to be 200 respondents. Therefore, the sample size is enough to the study. The researcher distributed the questionnaires in Bangkok, Nakhon Pathom, Pathum Thani, Nonthaburi, Sumut Prakan and Samut Sakhon and determined purposive sampling based on the income, social class, organization and education. There were some questions asking before screening the respondents regarding the upper middle class. The data were gather from September-October, 2023. The reliability analysis was 0.76. The researcher used frequency and percentage as descriptive statistics to analyse the data in the part 1 and 2 since this was a survey research. In part 3, the researcher used content analysis and presented the data.

RESULTS

The results showed 1) respondent profile or the elderly people 2) factor related to decision making on selection of airlines for the upper middle class elderly people in Bangkok and metropolitan area after Covid-19 and 3) suggestions

Table 1 *Respondent Profile Results (n=200)*

Profile Factors	Particulars	F	%
Gender	Male	72	56.25
	Female	128	64.00
Age	60-65 yrs.	35	17.50
	66-70 yrs.	55	27.50
	75-80 yrs.	92	46.00
	Above 80 yrs.	18	9.00
Education Level	Lower than Bachelor Degree or the Equivalent	35	17.50
	Bachelor Degree or the Equivalent	154	77.00
	Master Degree and Higher	11	5.50
Income (Per Month)	Less than 50,000 Baht	54	27.00
	50,000-60,000 Baht	96	48.00
	60,000-70,000 Baht	19	9.50
	More than 70,000 Baht	8	4.00
Marital Status	Married	166	83.00
	Single	7	3.50
	Divorced	19	9.50
	Separated	11	5.50

For part 1, the results of the study found that the respondent's genders were 128 females (=64.00%) and 72 males (=56.25%). The majority of the respondents' age was 75-80 years old (=46.00%). Mostly, the respondents graduated bachelor degree or the equivalents (=77.00%) and mostly, their income per month was around 50,000-60,000 baht (=48%). The majority of the respondents' marital status was married (=83.00%).

Table 2 Factor related to decision making on selection of airlines for the upper middle class elderly people in Bangkok and metropolitan area after Covid-19

Questions	Decision Making of the Airline	F	%
1. Travelling or Not?	Yes	186	93.00
	No. Because of Health Condition	8	4.00
	No. Because of Fear of Covid-19	4	2.00
	No. Because of No Company	2	1.00
2. To Whom you are travelling with?	Alone	35	17.50
	Travel Agency and Families	22	11.00
	Travel Agency and Friends	84	42.00
	Relatives	16	8.00
	Friends	27	13.50
	Undecided	16	8.00
3. Which Class (and Reasons for Seats)?	Business (Privacy Reason)	17	8.50
	Business (Safety Reason)	12	6.00
	Premium Economy (Inexpensive)	19	9.50
	Premium Economy (Comfortable)	6	3.00
	Premium Economy (Safety Reason)	13	6.50
	Economy (No Fear of Covid-19)	89	44.50
	Economy (Limited Budget to Fly)	44	22.00
4. Willingness to use Premium or Low Cost Airlines?	Use premium airlines	189	94.50
	Not use premium airlines	9	4.50
	Undecided to use premium airlines	2	1.00
	Use low cost airlines	137	68.50
	Not use low cost airlines	2	1.00
5. Sit in Long Flights (Hours)?	Undecided to use low cost airlines	6	3.00
	Yes	167	83.50
	No (Physical Conditions)	33	16.50
6. Influencers for Buying the ticket	Myself	10	5.00
	Family	48	24.00
	Friends	30	15.00
	Social Media	10	5.00
	Others	2	1.00

For part 2, the results found that the upper middle class elderly people in Bangkok and Metropolitan Area were confident to travel with airlines (=93%). The upper middle class elderly people travel with travel agency and friends (=42%). They did not fear of Covid-19 (=44.50%). They were willing to use premium airlines (=94.50%) over low cost airlines (=68.50%). They could sit in long flights (=83.50%). Mostly, the influencers for buying tickets were family (=48.00%) and then friends (=30%).

For part 3, the results of content analysis showed that the upper class elderly people were not afraid of Covid-19 since they would like to travel by the airlines. However, they selected the premium airlines which they believed that the service could be better than the low cost airlines. The major reasons of using premium airlines was privacy and safety reason. However, some of them answered that they could use low cost airlines because they would like to save budgets. They did not fear of long flights to sit but many of them avoid the long flights due to their physical conditions such as backache, knee ache, etc. The respondents informed that they rather listened to the families and friends most when they bought the airline tickets.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study found that the upper middle class elderly people in Bangkok and metropolitan area were confident with the airlines, particularly premium airlines. They were willing to pay more since they perceived that the airlines were private and safe. Some of them might use the low cost airline which save the budgets and they did not fear of long flights to sit in. the major reasons of not using the long flight were from their physical conditions such as backache, knee ache, etc. Many of them preferred to travel with organized travel agency and friends. Their influencers were families and friends who went travelling with them.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The results of the study found were similar to the other researches that the elderly people were afraid of Covid-19 in the beginning and after 12 months, they tended to adjust themselves later on. The elderly people considered health, safety, comfort and price when they buy tickets. They plan more for travelling and schedules. The study found that the elderly people started to develop digital skills and learned social media because of Covid-19 (Gao, Lee, Ozbay, Zuo, Chippendale, 2023). The attitudes of ageing passengers in air travel since the Coronavirus pandemic found that the elderly people tended to be much flexible after 12 months. The elderly people started to learn technology and they checked the information before they used the airlines. Some elderly people learn self-service technology because they needed cleanliness and preferred safety (Graham, Kremarik and Kruse, 2020). The study in Thailand also found that not only the elderly people but also people in other ages have the similar adaptive behavior. They selected more information before using the airline from social media. People should the airlines because of service quality consideration and reputation (Pepheenee, Srisaard, Kajontraidech and Aussawariyathipat, 2023).

Since this study is survey. Therefore, it may not include the other factors for exploring in the elderly people. The qualitative study such as interview and focus group should be used. Regarding the study, the results found that the after Covid-19, the elderly people developed their digital skills, particularly IT skills. Some research topic regarding IT skills to cope with uncertainty or pandemic should be explored.

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