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DON MUNG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT SERVICE FACILITY FOR THE AGING SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed 1) to study the present condition of the aging facilities services at Don Muang International Airport, 2) to study the obstacles and the need for facility design serving the aging society and 3) to propose guidelines for providing services that are designed to facilitate the elderly at Don Muang International Airport. The research method was in-depth interview and focus group. The key informants consist of 4 senior staff members of Airports of Thailand (AOT), 5 airline supervisors working at Don Muang International Airport, and 50 elderly customers whose frequency of using the services about 10 times. The findings showed that (1) Don Muang International Airport has facilities designated for elderly people as specified in the ministerial regulations. However, the facility is insufficient to meet service demand and includes leading, senior, wheelchairs, and up-and-down vehicles that are currently unavailable. Restrooms, elevators, reserved seating, and signs were among the concerns affecting an older society, and the most requested elements were signage indicating equipment or facilities, contact information, an information desk, and travel information and parking spaces (2) There are some facilities that the elderly shouldn't access because of their poor condition. Airports should always monitor and inspect the facilities, especially those that can be harmful to the elderly. The recommendations of this research were that a budget should be provided to AOT, particularly for facility development. "Design for Everyone" which implies that the Don Muang International Airport should apply "civilized architecture," which is a set of design principles that work for everyone, in the design of all aspects of the airport.

Keywords: Aging society, Universal Design, Don Muang International Airport

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, Thailand has dramatically increased the size and proportion of its aging population, providing Thai society a fast-paced entry into older society data from the Health Department indicate that in 2020, Thailand would have a population of more than 12 million people aged 60 or older, or 18% of the population, rising to 20% in 2021. The National Bureau of Statistics predicts that Thailand will enter an aging society and will become a completely aging society over the next few years. The National Bureau of Statistics predicts that Thailand will enter a fully aging society in 2022, and, in 2030, will have an increase in population of 26.9 percent for the whole country (National Bureau of Statistics, 2021)

Air travel is popular, and elderly passengers are more likely to use Don Muang International Airport for the domestic flights. Though, the elderly might find it hard or impossible to travel because of their physical and mental limitations. There is a need for airport facilities to accommodate the elderly. In this study in the beginning, the researcher reviewed laws governing the design of facilities for the elderly and the universal design principles because the airports need to comply with the Ministerial Regulations specifying facilities in buildings for the disabled and the elderly (Department of Interior, 2022) and the Universal Design Principles, which is designed for all, such the disabled, pregnant women, the elderly and people. Though, the universal design is not compulsory like the ministerial regulation. However, it showed civilization, Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) and national tourism development in the future (Iamsaard and Sonsuphap, 2017).

Based on the above problems, this research aimed to explore the current condition of facility service, identify the obstacles and requirements for aging facilities and to provide the guidelines for providing facilities to support the elderly passengers of Don Muang International Airport.

Objective

1. To study the present condition of the aging facilities services at Don Muang International Airport.
2. To study the obstacles and the need for facility design serving the aging society
3. To propose guidelines for providing services that are designed to facilitate the elderly at Don Muang International Airport.

Research Questions

1. How is the present condition of the aging facilities service at Don Muang International Airport?
2. What are the obstacles and the needs for facility design serving the aging society?
3. What are the guidelines for providing services that are designed to facilitate the elderly at Don Muang International Airport?

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORY

This research included concepts and related study on aging society, airport service facilities for aging society and the design concept as the following:

1. Aging or the senior citizen is defined as people whose age are more than 60 years old. (WHO, 2019). Statistically, the senior citizen will increase in numbers and they are the potential customers who use service from the airline and airport since many of them can learn technologies and services from their children and media (Witthawassamrankul and Nanthasing, 2021).
2. Airport service facilities is broadly defined as physical, informational and assistant service. Legally, airport service facilities are required by ministerial laws. However, the supply and the quantities of airport service may not be enough. The research titled guidelines of service facilitation serving the aging society of Suvarnabhumi International Airport showed that some airport service facilities which are need to be improved for Suvarnabhumi Airport were lifts, toilets and toilet bowls for the seniors. Signal, pathways and informaiton service are needed to improved (Anusorn, Apirada and Srisil, 2019).
3. The design concept of service facilities for the senior or the elderly included physical safety, accessiblity, mental and use inspriation, and easy maintainance. The resasons of the design are the senior may have some limitation of their physical movement due to seeing, moving, and their congenital disease. In addition, they may find it difficult to the service facilities. Thererfore, the design needs to be accessible and simple. The design should inspire the senior to use such as shape and color which encourage the senior to use (*Klaikleung*, 2017).

METHODOLOGY

This research is qualitative. The data collection methods are mainly derived from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions after the study of related documents, particularly laws. Participants in this research are a group of people who have had direct experience with the issue. Therefore, the methods to collect data are interview, recording, and descriptive analysis. Participants in this study are chosen from 4 senior Airports of Thailand (AOT) staff members, 5 airline supervisors working at Don Muang International Airport, and 50 elderly consumers who have utilized the service approximately 10 times. The criteria selection of key informants in study was the experience of 5 years or more. The data were collected in December, 2022. The semi-structured questions were used. The content analysis was used.

RESULTS

The results of the study based on the questions were:

1. Present condition of the aging facilities services at Don Muang

International Airport was not satisfactory in both quantities and quantities based on the Ministerial Regulation B.E. 2548, Ministerial Regulation B.E. 2555, and Ministerial Regulation B.E. 2556, all 27 items (Iamsaard and Sonsuphap, 2017).

-The airport still lacks the necessary equipment to transport the elderly or those in wheelchairs up and down from the transportation. Elderly people are still unable to use the facilities properly. The huge problems were not enough toilets and readiness for use of the elderly.

-The facility is insufficient to accommodate service demand, although the number of facilities provided is up to standard, of all 3 ministerial regulations, such as elevators, toilets for the elderly, seats for the elderly, and a place to contact, public relations, or a service point for travel information specifically for the elderly.

-Assistants and equipment should be provided for convenience and safety such as light in the nighttime, platform for the elderly who could not walk or sit on wheelchair. In addition, there should be a man who could advice on floor at all time.

2. The obstacles and the needs for facility design serving the aging society were found from unawareness and inquiry of information from the elderly. One of the major obstacles were from not enough budget allocated. Furthermore, design was developed for long time and have not supported for the today use. The development and increase of facility design are not created based on the participation and opinions of the users. The design was delivered from the head and may not be enough for today change, particularly an increase in the elderly and international tourists.

3. Guidelines for providing services that are designed to facilitate the elderly at Don Muang International Airport included that develop skills of human resources to enhance the elderly needs and the facilities and equipment should be installed based on the required ministerial laws. The equipment should be provided with human assistants at all time. The monitor should be kept and rechecked regularly. The public relations or travel information desks for the elderly should be approachable and done via both online and offline. The manual, map, tags and signs should be post. Furthermore, the service facilities should be planned for the future, universal design principles should be concerned as equitable use, flexible use, simple and intuitive use, perception information, tolerance for error, low physical effort and size and space for approach and use, rather than 5 fundamental facilities as slope, toilet, parking lot, sign and symbol, information service (Follett, 2006). There should be long-term plan collaboration from both government and tourism industry sector, rather than centralized planning. (Hongsakul, B. and Sirisombat, 2022).

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The research results showed that the facilities and equipment services were very crucial for the airports, particularly for the elderly and disabled (Phonkankeaw, Namsang, and Srisil, 2019). The updated information services were also important for the elderly users, especially during Covid-19 pandemic

(Kitnukul and Pichitpatja, 2022). The safety confirmation can reduce the use of personal vehicles and reduced traffic jam and congestion inside the airport (Chang, 2011). Some planning should be well prepared such as reservation system and passenger expectation study (Chang, 2008). The research recommendation for AOT based on the findings of this study to improve the quality of life for elderly and disabled travelers traveling through Don Muang Airport were as:

1. Budget should be allocated in order to increase the quantities of facilities and equipment and be ready for use.
2. Don Muang International Airport should adopt design principles for all people, or "civilized architecture," to be utilized in the design of the facilities in every item in order to conform to the principles of "Design for All." It might be a huge cost in the beginning; however, the fixed cost would be lower when comparing to the amounts of users and global tourists in long-run (Hongsakul and Sirisombat, 2022).
3. Human and demonstration should be with the facility, equipment and technology. The airport service facility should have demonstration by human or officer. The problem of first-time users from language and physical problems, such as seeing, problems or moving will be none.

Regarding the further research, some topics should be studied including technology and application use for the airport since the technology and application are currently replacing the physical use. The research showed that the elderly are facing difficulty in using the application and technology (Suwansingha, 2017).

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IPA ANALYSIS OF TOURISTS' EVALUATION OF TOURIST TOILETS IN LANZHOU CITY, CHINA: A GENDER-BASED COMPARISON

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