

Abstract

Within Southeast Asia, particularly Thailand, countries have become an increasingly attractive destinations for Western tourists and long-term immigrants in recent years. This study investigates and examines international respondent's immigration issue and choice of Hua Hin, Thailand as a long stay retirement destination. It specifically attempts: To test whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the factors (location, nature and culture, cost of living, quality of living, medical backup and safety) and the choice of Hua Hin as a long stay retirement destination. Thailand has become one of the top spots, not only for vacationing or working but also as a retirement option for elderly Western retirees.

The research in this study was conducted in Hua Hin, in the Prachuap Khiri Khan province, in Thailand which is known as the "retirement haven" of Thailand. In this study, the target respondents were foreigners holding long stay retirement visas residing in Hua Hin. The sampling method for this research is the non-probability convenience sampling method. A well structured questionnaire was distributed to 239 respondents over a period of four days in the month January 2013.

The respondents have no desire to make a living or to earn income, but come to pursue their own personal interests. They have regular income from their past savings or other sources of funds from their home country. The main reason for migrating to Hua Hin was to enjoy their retirement as people, who admire peace, cleanliness and easy going Thai lifestyle.

The findings revealed that location, cost of living and medical back up had significant relationships with the choice of Hua Hin as a long stay retirement destination. With correlations of $r_{\text{location}} = 0.312$, $r_{\text{cost of living}} = 0.575$ and $r_{\text{medical backup}} = 0.417$ respectively, they all have low to moderate positive correlations. Recommendations based on the findings suggest that the tourism industry and the government need to enhance infrastructure, natural heritage sites and publicize attractions, improve the streets, transportation, airports and improve medical care/standards in Hua Hin. These efforts will help draw more international tourists with high-purchasing powers from Western countries.