

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter details research design for guiding the study and methods used to collect information needed to analyze the readiness of the Chiang Mai tourism industry²⁰ for the liberalization of labor restrictions which will allow ASEAN tourism professionals from the 10 ASEAN countries to compete directly with Thai tourism labor in Chiang Mai. The chapter covers the approach underpinning research design, the way participants are selected, tools used for in-depth interviews of focus groups, the way data will be carried out and cross case analysis in the data analysis presented in this chapter.

For this research, readiness is defined as the willing acceptance of the MRA-TP and the capability to implement it.

3.2 Research Design

It's important for this analysis to have a systematically logical approach to data collection for replicability purposes. Due to the direct and indirect impact tourism has on the region, it is possible there will be wide interest on this research. Replicability will allow others to emulate this research and possibly apply it to other regions as well to either confirm or discredit my methods and results (Bui, 2014, p. 138).

How will this research be carried out and how will the research design logically explains the validity of the research findings? To answer these questions this research is designed as qualitative research.

Bui (2014, p. 14) explains the qualitative approach collects non-numerical data (words) to answer the research question. Using inductive reasoning, he argues a researcher starts with a

²⁰ The World Trade Organization (2015) defines tourism and travel-related services as being “services provided by hotels and restaurants (including catering), travel agencies and tour operator services, tourists guide services and other related services.”

specific situation (facts) which is examined for any patterns or themes in order to formulate hypotheses, theories or conclusions.

Patterns such as those from the World Bank's global migration data and how it might give clues to how the ASEAN MRA-TP might shift existing migratory patterns.

Other patterns such as each ASEAN country has different English language abilities. The high skilled Common ASEAN Tourism Curriculum (CATC) is 100% in English. Earning a CATC based certificate is 100% dependent on being able to communicate in English in accordance with the CATC. This fact alone may be important enough for a potential employer to hire an English speaking ASEAN certificate holder over a local Chiang Mai tourism professional who does not have a certificate.

Additionally, the CATC for the MRA-TP was designed by the William Angliss Institute in Australia. The William Angliss Institute is a government registered training organization in Australia that focuses solely on tourism, hospitality and food industries. They have 25,000 students annually with more than 100,000 of their graduates working in more than 30 different countries around the world (ASEAN Tourism Forum, 2014). They are tourism subject matter experts and ASEAN has placed all the tools designed by the William Angliss Institute online for any organization to download and implement into their organization's training program.

Preliminary research suggests a general lack of awareness of the MRA-TP. In order to collect information about the propensity to do or not to do something, the awareness of the individual tourism professionals and their management about the MRA-TP will have to be addressed. To do this, an informative description of the MRA-TP will be given to the person whom the data are being collected from. From a quantitative point of view, this would likely introduce an unacceptable amount of research's bias into the data. From a qualitative point of view, the bias is acceptable since respondents will be giving their opinions to the questions I will be asking.

Consideration of research objectives are important for the readiness analysis of the ASEAN MRA-TP. The objectives are the benchmarks which the opinion of "Chiang Mai MRA-TP Ready" will be based. As shown in the conceptual framework, the independent variables of ASEAN awareness, migration, English ability and MRA-TP training will impact the 3 areas

of the identified tourism industry of hotels, restaurants and tourism agencies. The tourism industry does not only consist of tourism organizations but also of people in these organizations. Management and employees in each section of the tourism industry will have their own motivations for either supporting or not supporting the MRA-TP and benefiting from its design. Questions will be open ended and participants will be prompted to expand on their answers.

3.3 Population of the Study

The MRA-TP covers hotels, restaurants and tourism agencies. The tourism organizations chosen for this research is based on TripAdvisor popularity in Chiang Mai. Some of the most desirable places to work in Chiang Mai offer the best salaries and benefits as well as having excellent HR and training departments which increases the employee's worth with additional training that benefits not only to the individual but also to the organization to which they belong. Two people from each targeted organization will be interviewed. One senior manager from the training or HR department and one employee. Both individuals need to be able to speak English.

As per academic instruction to this research paper, the names and organizations of the population are to be protected and not mentioned in this paper. However, if requested, field notes and written permissions from interviewees can be provided.

The most popular hotels are 5 star or high end resorts in Chiang Mai. Most of the hotels in this category have proper training organization. Most also have fine dining establishments associated with them. It will be interesting to compare and contrast answers given by hotels with those given by stand-alone restaurants. Both have interchangeable tourism professionals.

The most popular Restaurants don't appear to follow the 5-star trend. Excellent restaurant ratings appear to be indicative of a successful business model and infer quality staff and training with superior employee retainability.

Tourism organizations on the surface appear to be loosely structured with an overall manager and 2 or 3 assistant managers controlling various tour guides as they take tourists to a variety of different destinations. Training appears to be on the job (OJT) and somewhat informal. However, some tourism agencies do appear to be able to satisfy the most demanding tourists.

3.4 TripAdvisor Observations

The following observations about TripAdvisor were made during the planning of this research. TripAdvisor is dependent upon the ratings of customers who, for whatever reason, feel compelled to leave a review of their experience of the business visited. It is not difficult for the business to be highly rated if all the customers who give reviews all give the same maximum rating. In order for the popularity of the business's review to have more significance, close attention should be given to the number of reviews for that particular business. It's more likely the validity of an excellent rating is more reliable if there are more than 200 to 300 reviews. Also, don't disparage businesses that don't rank high in popularity on TripAdvisor. Their high number of excellent ratings mixed in with some lower ratings can lower the ranking on TripAdvisor but the business can still be a quality establishment.

Businesses must be listed on TripAdvisor in order to be reviewed. Businesses not listed do not mean the business is not a quality business. It only means the owner or its customers have not taken the time to have the business added to TripAdvisor. This research does not consider all of the tourism businesses in Chiang Mai. Many businesses in Chiang Mai are unlisted even though they are high quality businesses that offer excellent services.

It's also worth noting that TripAdvisor is also in multiple languages. Searches in Thai still display the same results. However, it is not certain whether the Thai language TripAdvisor is a result of language software or actual Thai website designers. All English reviews are automatically translated into Thai when the language is changed which may indicate language software has more to do with the Thai TripAdvisor than an actual person.

3.5 Research Method – Interview Questions

The research questions are laid out in Appendix F for management and Appendix G for staff. Although the plan is to follow the line of questioning, the person being interviewed may deviate from the questioning. Also, depending on answers, additional questions may become inapplicable. For example, if a question asks about foreign labor, and the business has no foreign labor, then asking a following question on how they work compared to Thai workers would not apply.

3.6 Data Collection

The data collection process will depend on the acceptance of the request for interview by the tourism organizations. Dates and times for interviews also will depend on the tourism organizations; however, initial estimations set a conservative objective of 4 weeks to collect the data. Each week will be one organization interviewed per day from Monday to Friday. This results in a manager and a staff being interviewed at the organization. In order to maintain consistency questioning techniques, the hotels will be week one, the restaurants will be week two and the tourism agencies will be week three. An extra week is included in the schedule to accommodate any tourism organizations that may have problems scheduling an interview.

There will be two parts to the interview process. Part one will consist of an introduction to the ASEAN MRA-TP which will either consist of a hard copy presentation or a digital presentation with a computer. After checking for an understanding of the introduction, a predetermined set of questions will be asked. The end of the interview will conclude with answering any questions about the ASEAN MRA-TP the manager or staff of the tourism organization may have. The entire interview will be recorded with the Samsung Galaxy S4 phone. The name and contact information of the person being interviewed will be recorded in case follow up questions need to be asked.

3.7 Data Analysis

After data collection, interview data will be transcribed and examined for any possible themes that stand out. The ASEAN MRA-TP Readiness Guide in Appendix H and I were designed to be used as a guide to reflect possible decision making tendencies from the questions in Appendix F and G with the independent variables of as pointed out in the conceptual framework. Due to the large volume of data collected, responses will be categorized based on the apparent tendency towards readiness given by the respondents. Appendix J, K and L visually displays tendencies which are color coded in order to spot themes better. These efforts hope to point to the readiness of the Chiang Mai tourism industry for the ASEAN MRA-TP.