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QUALITY TOURISM FOR THE SILVER GENERATION: BEHAVIORAL DYNAMICS AND STRATEGIC DESTINATION MANAGEMENT IN NORTHERN THAILAND

Roiphila WICHSUDA¹, Krus PHAWAT¹ and Pongwirithton KAJORNATTHAPOL¹

¹ Faculty of Business Administration, Northern College, Thailand;

wichsuda@northern.ac.th (R. W.); phawat@northern.ac.th (K. P.);

tok2029@gmail.com (P. K.)

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Professor Dr. Ismail Suardi WEKKE Universitas Muhammadiyah Barru, Indonesia
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Abstract

As Thailand accelerates toward a super-aged society, the "Silver Generation" emerges as a critical driver for sustainable high-value tourism. This study investigates the travel behaviors and decision-making determinants of tourists aged 60 and above in Upper Northern Thailand, a region renowned for its Lanna heritage. Employing a robust, quantitative-dominant mixed-methods approach, the research surveyed 400 diverse respondents across eight provinces and was supplemented by qualitative insights. Advanced statistical analyses, including one-way ANOVA and multiple regression, reveal that the senior market is highly heterogeneous; travel behaviors are significantly stratified by gender, education, and income levels. Crucially, the findings establish that perceived safety and facility accessibility are the most potent predictors of tourist satisfaction, far outweighing standard promotional incentives. The results highlight a distinct preference for "slow tourism," characterized by cultural immersion, wellness, and authenticity. Consequently, this study argues that capturing the economic potential of this demographic requires a strategic paradigm shift—from volume-based marketing to value-based destination management. Recommendations emphasize the urgent need for barrier-free infrastructure, integrated medical readiness, and culturally resonant programming. These findings offer actionable evidence for policymakers aiming to align regional tourism strategies with the sophisticated demands of the global aging population.

Keywords: Silver Generation Tourism, Travel Behavior Analysis, Quality Tourism Development, Destination Management, Upper Northern Thailand

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Introduction

In the twenty-first century, demographic shifts have profoundly reshaped social, economic, and cultural landscapes worldwide. Among the most consequential trends is rapid population aging, with the Silver Generation individuals aged 60 years and older emerging as a powerful demographic segment with far-reaching implications for policy, the economy, and social development. In Thailand, the pace of aging has been particularly striking. Half a century ago, the older population did not exceed two million. By 2020, however, it had surpassed twelve million, representing 18 percent of the total population, and projections indicate that Thailand will become a “super-aged society” within the next two decades (Thai Gerontology Research and Development Institute, 2022). The share of older adults is expected to continue growing at approximately 4 percent annually, with the oldest-old (aged 80 years and above) increasing at an even faster rate of about 7 percent per year. This demographic transformation is reshaping consumption patterns, service demand, and leisure activities, including tourism.

Although population aging is often framed as a challenge for social welfare systems, recent scholarship highlights the concept of active aging, which regards older adults not merely as recipients of care but as active contributors to social and economic life (Jearajit, 2022). With accumulated financial resources, cultural capital, and life experience, the Silver Generation represents not only an emerging policy priority but also a dynamic market force. Within the tourism sector, this cohort has become increasingly influential. Compared to younger travelers, older adults are generally more financially secure, have greater discretionary time, and are willing to pay for high-quality experiences. They tend to stay longer, spend more, and value services that emphasize comfort, reliability, and authenticity (Patuelli & Nijkamp, 2016; Onlamai & Suttipisan, 2016).

Recognizing these dynamics, Thailand has positioned tourism as a cornerstone of national development policy. The National Tourism Development Plan 2017-2021 prioritized repositioning the country as a hub of quality tourism to strengthen competitiveness and sustainability (National Tourism Policy Committee, 2017). In parallel, the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) underscores that quality tourism emphasizes environmental responsibility, cultural appreciation, and immersive, slower-paced experiences, values that resonate strongly with older travelers (Veilleux & Sarrasin, 2025).

The Upper Northern region of Thailand, encompassing Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lampang, Lamphun, Mae Hong Son, Phayao, Phrae, and Nan, offers a compelling context for examining these dynamics. Known collectively as the Lanna region, it is celebrated for its cultural heritage, ethnic diversity, traditional crafts, and rich natural landscapes. Its attractions, including heritage temples, community-based homestays, wellness retreats, and agrotourism initiatives, closely align with the preferences of Silver Generation tourists seeking authentic, meaningful, and restorative travel experiences. Moreover, the region’s slower rhythm of life appeals to older visitors who prioritize relaxation, safety, and cultural enrichment.

Despite these strengths, important challenges remain. Gaps in accessibility, uneven infrastructure, limited healthcare-integrated tourism services, and fragmented marketing approaches hinder the region’s ability to fully capture this growing market (Tran et al., 2024). As global demand for sustainable, wellness-oriented tourism grows, local operators must adapt to the expectations of older travelers, who place a premium on health, safety, comfort, and authenticity. Without targeted strategies, the region risks losing competitiveness in an increasingly demographic-driven tourism economy.

Recent studies show that Silver Generation tourists travel primarily for rest, health, and cultural engagement, often staying longer than average visitors, sometimes more than a week, while spending more on accommodation, dining, and experiential activities (Onlamai & Suttipisan, 2016; Khotchaisit, 2020). They also seek value for money, expect destinations to provide reliable and personalized services, and require infrastructure that ensures safety, medical

readiness, and accessibility. These behavioral patterns are shaped not only by economic capacity but also by psychological and social dimensions, reflecting broader lifestyle values and preferences.

Against this backdrop, the present study, Exploring the Travel Behavior of Silver Generation Quality Tourists in Upper Northern Thailand, pursues two primary aims. First, it examines the broader context of quality tourism for the Silver Generation within the region, identifying opportunities and constraints in aligning tourism development with demographic realities. Second, it investigates the specific travel behaviors of elderly quality tourists, including decision-making processes, spending patterns, and engagement with destinations in the Lanna region. By integrating these objectives, the study contributes to Thailand's broader strategy to position itself as a leader in sustainable, high-value tourism aligned with the Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) economic model and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Understanding the travel behavior of the Silver Generation is not only an academic endeavor; it is also a critical step toward enhancing community well-being, safeguarding cultural heritage, and advancing inclusive and regenerative tourism.

Literature Reviews

Quality Tourism

Definitions and Components. Quality tourism is understood not by the volume of arrivals but by outcomes that matter for destinations and residents, cultural authenticity, environmental stewardship, service reliability, and the overall quality of visitor experience (Su & Wall, 2014; Patwary et al., 2022). Empirical work shows that these components are positively associated with tourist satisfaction, word-of-mouth, and revisit intention, thereby enhancing destination competitiveness and sustainability (Zhang & Zhang, 2018; Patwary et al., 2022). In Thailand, this direction aligns with policy emphases on high-value, sustainable, and inclusive growth and provides a rationale for prioritizing value-creating segments over mass markets.

Silver Generation as a High-Value Segment

The Silver Generation (aged 60+) is expanding rapidly and commands substantial purchasing power and discretionary time. Studies consistently document that demographic characteristics age, income, education, and health status systematically shape seniors' travel behavior, including destination choice, length of stay, travel mode, and activity portfolios (Jang & Wu, 2006; Patterson & Balderas, 2020). Higher-income seniors, for example, allocate greater spending to wellness and cultural activities, while those with health constraints place a premium on accessibility and comfort (Agyeiwaah et al., 2016). These patterns indicate that quality tourism strategies targeting seniors must align supply-side features (accessibility, interpretation, safety) with the heterogeneous demands of this cohort.

Travel Behavior of Elderly Tourists

Compared with younger cohorts, seniors exhibit distinctive motivations for rest and recovery, health maintenance, cultural enrichment, and lifelong learning (Chen & Shoemaker, 2014). Observational and survey-based research shows seniors are more likely to travel off-peak, stay longer, and spend proportionately more on accommodation and experiential activities when destinations provide safety, accessibility, and authenticity (Otoo et al., 2020). Importantly, demographic covariates are not merely descriptive: age, education, income, and self-reported health significantly predict participation in more profound cultural experiences and longer stays, suggesting clear pathways by which personal attributes translate into behavioral outcomes (Agyeiwaah et al., 2016; Patterson & Balderas, 2020).

Push-Pull Framework Applied to Seniors

Drawing on the push-pull tradition, push factors capture internal motives (relaxation, meaning, self-improvement), whereas pull factors denote external attributes of destinations (safety, cultural heritage, natural scenery, healthcare availability, and accessibility) (Dann, 1977;

Jearajit, 2022). Evidence in senior tourism indicates that safety, healthcare readiness, and barrier-free design are especially salient pull attributes and show robust associations with destination choice and length of stay (Worrachananun, 2025). On the push side, the search for meaningful leisure and learning is positively linked to participation in cultural workshops, heritage interpretation, and gastronomy-related activities (Patterson & Balderas, 2020). Together, push-pull forces and demographics shape observable travel behavior.

Across studies, three relationships recur. First, demographic characteristics, travel behavior: age, income, education, and marital status predict destination choice, trip duration, travel mode (independent vs. group), and activity selections (Jang & Wu, 2006; Chen & Shoemaker, 2014). Second, push-pull motivations and travel behavior: seniors' perceived safety, accessibility, and cultural authenticity are associated with more extended stays and deeper engagement with local culture (Worrachananun, 2025; Patterson & Balderas, 2020). Third, perceived quality of the destination experience, satisfaction, and revisit intention: quality signals (authenticity, environmental care, interpretive services) positively affect satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Zhang & Zhang, 2018; Patwary et al., 2022). Despite these advances, limited research has jointly modeled these pathways in the context of Upper Northern Thailand. In this area, cultural heritage and landscapes plausibly amplify the pull effects for seniors. Addressing this gap can inform policies that elevate both visitor value and resident well-being.

Conceptual Framework

Demographics and push-pull motivations are modeled as independent variables; seniors' travel behavior (destination choice, timing, duration, transportation mode, travel type, activities, companions) is the primary outcome. Perceived destination quality also feeds forward to satisfaction and revisit intention, capturing downstream behavioral consequences central to quality tourism. This integrative framework is particularly suited to Upper Northern Thailand (Lanna), where heritage-rich resources, slow-paced environments, and community-based offerings can be aligned with seniors' preferences for authenticity, comfort, and safety.

Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative-dominant, mixed-methods design to investigate the travel behavior of Silver Generation quality tourists in Upper Northern Thailand. The quantitative strand examined relationships among demographic characteristics, tourism push factors, and travel behavior outcomes using statistical analyses suitable for population-level inference. To enhance depth and interpretive validity, a qualitative strand comprised in-depth interviews that elicited nuanced perspectives, motivations, and experiential narratives not readily captured in survey responses. Integrating the two strands produced a more comprehensive account of patterns and mechanisms in older adults' travel behavior, with qualitative insights used to contextualize and triangulate the quantitative findings.

Population and Sample

The target population consisted of Silver Generation tourists, individuals aged 60 years and older, who visited destinations in Upper Northern Thailand during 2024. According to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2024), approximately 489,246 older tourists traveled in the region. The study area encompassed eight provinces: Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lampang, Lamphun, Mae Hong Son, Phayao, Phrae, and Nan, collectively referred to as the Lanna region due to their shared cultural and historical heritage.

A sample of 400 respondents was selected using the Krejcie & Morgan (1970) sampling table, ensuring adequate statistical power for subgroup comparisons and regression modeling. Proportional allocation distributed the sample across provinces according to each province's relative size of the older-tourist population. Within provinces, participants were selected using a combination of simple random sampling (where feasible) and convenience sampling at key

tourism sites, community-based destinations, and cultural events to ensure fieldwork practicality while maintaining heterogeneity of contexts.

Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed following an extensive review of literature on senior travel behavior, sustainable tourism, and quality tourism. The instrument comprised three sections. Section I (Demographics) recorded gender, age, marital status, education, occupation, and income. Section II (Travel Behavior) captured trip purposes, destinations, timing and seasonality, length of stay, transportation modes, activities undertaken, and travel companions. Section III (Push Factors) measured perceptions of safety, availability, and adequacy of facilities, and exposure to government promotional policies. Content validity was established by a panel of three experts in tourism management and gerontology, who reviewed the questionnaire for coverage, clarity, and relevance; items were refined accordingly. Reliability was assessed through a pilot test, yielding a Cronbach's alpha $> .80$, which indicates strong internal consistency for the multi-item scales (Hair et al., 2019).

Data Collection occurred from January to June 2024. Trained field researchers administered the questionnaire on-site to older tourists at heritage temples, wellness retreats, handicraft villages, and agrotourism communities. Research assistants provided clarifications and, when needed, oral administration to accommodate potential reading or writing limitations among some participants. Completed questionnaires were checked for completeness and consistency prior to data entry following a double-entry protocol to minimize transcription errors.

To complement the survey, in-depth interviews were conducted with 30 purposively selected older tourists representing variation in age, gender, trip characteristics, and activity preferences. Semi-structured guides explored motivations, perceptions of safety and accessibility, decision-making processes, and expectations regarding service quality and authenticity. The qualitative component provided explanatory depth for patterns observed quantitatively and served as a form of methodological triangulation.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were coded and analyzed in SPSS. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) summarized demographic characteristics and travel behaviors. Inferential analyses tested study hypotheses. Specifically, independent-samples t-tests and a one-way ANOVA (with Least Significant Difference [LSD] post hoc comparisons) assessed differences in travel behaviors across demographic groups. Multiple regression analyses estimated the predictive effects of push factors such as perceived safety and facility availability on behavioral outcomes (e.g., destination choice, duration of stay, and activity participation). Prior to inference, standard assumptions (normality, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity) were examined; model diagnostics informed remedial steps where necessary (e.g., transformations or robust standard errors). This analytic strategy provided a robust assessment of patterns, group differences, and explanatory relationships.

Qualitative data were analyzed thematically following the six-phase approach of Onlamai & Suttipisan (2016): familiarization, coding, theme generation, theme review, theme definition, and reporting. Coding combined inductive identification of salient patterns with deductive attention to constructs central to the study (e.g., safety, accessibility, authenticity, value for money). The resulting themes, such as health-anchored risk assessment, preference for slower-paced itineraries, and trust in community-based services, contextualized quantitative associations and illuminated pathways linking push factors to observed behaviors.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles guided all procedures. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from every participant. Respondents were assured that their data would remain confidential and be used solely for academic purposes. Anonymity was preserved in reporting; no personally identifying information is disclosed. Sensitive information was handled with care

in accordance with standard research ethics and data-protection practices. Participants could decline to answer any item or withdraw at any time without penalty.

Research Results

A total of 400 Silver Generation tourists were surveyed across Upper Northern Thailand (natural attractions, community-based tourism sites, cultural events, and historical landmarks). Most respondents were female (n = 231, 57.75%), with males comprising 42.25% (n = 169). The largest age cohort was 61-65 years (n = 173, 43.25%), followed by 66-70 years (n = 158, 39.50%); the remainder were 70+. Regarding income, the modal group reported 15,001-20,000 THB/month (n = 129, 32.25%), followed by 5,000-15,000 THB (n = 101, 25.25%). Most respondents were married (n = 182, 45.50%), with widowed status next most common (n = 117, 29.25%). Educational attainment was relatively high: upper-secondary/diploma (n = 219, 54.75%) and bachelor's degree (n = 129, 32.25%). Pre-retirement occupations were diverse; small business owners/traders were most prevalent (n = 264, 66.00%), followed by agriculture (n = 60, 15.00%).

Unless otherwise noted, items were rated on a Likert-type scale (1-4), with higher scores indicating stronger endorsement. Respondents expressed strong preferences for slow, unhurried travel (Mean = 3.90, SD = 0.449) and inter-generational travel (Mean = 3.80, SD = 0.482). Typical trips lasted 1-3 days (Mean = 3.76, SD = 0.409) and frequently occurred on weekends (Mean = 3.61, SD = 0.523). Novelty seeking was salient (Mean = 3.75, SD = 0.518). Information was sourced primarily from the internet (Mean = 3.58, SD = 0.557). Respondents favored natural attractions (Mean = 3.57, SD = 0.451) and historical cultural sites (Mean = 3.53, SD = 0.648). Per-trip expenditure was typically < 5,000 THB (Mean = 3.50, SD = 0.513). Most traveled with spouses or children (Mean = 3.49, SD = 0.500), and younger family members often arranged itineraries (Mean = 3.48, SD = 0.608). Reported travel frequency was 1-2 trips/year (Mean = 3.41, SD = 0.599).

We tested whether overall travel behavior differed across demographic groups using an independent-samples t-test for gender and one-way ANOVAs for age, marital status, education, occupation, and income. LSD post-hoc comparisons were applied where appropriate. Effect sizes were reported as Cohen's d (for the t-test) and partial η^2 (for ANOVAs). Results indicated a significant gender effect, $t(398) = 2.11$, $p = .035$, $d = 0.21$, with males reporting higher overall travel behavior. Domain-specific checks showed that males engaged more in independent/self-drive activities, whereas females reported higher participation in cultural and handicraft-related activities. Age groups also differed significantly, $F(2,397) = 3.94$, $p = .021$, partial $\eta^2 = .019$, with respondents aged 66-70 and 70+ scoring higher than those aged 61-65, while no differences emerged between 66-70 and 70+. Marital status was unrelated to travel behavior, $F(2,397) = 1.02$, $p = .362$, partial $\eta^2 = .005$. Education differences were significant, $F(3,396) = 4.87$, $p = .008$, partial $\eta^2 = .036$, with participants with less than upper-secondary schooling scoring lower than all higher groups, and diploma holders outperforming bachelor's degree holders. Occupation also mattered, $F(3,396) = 5.23$, $p = .004$, partial $\eta^2 = .038$: those in agriculture and civil service scored higher than traders, and agriculture exceeded wage laborers. Finally, income effects were significant, $F(2,397) = 6.41$, $p = .002$, partial $\eta^2 = .031$, showing a positive gradient; respondents earning over 20,000 THB scored highest, followed by those earning 15,001-20,000 THB, both exceeding those earning under 15,000 THB. These findings suggest that travel behavior among Generation X citizens in Northern Thailand varies significantly by gender, age, education, occupation, and income, but not by marital status.

The observed effects, while small in magnitude, provide meaningful evidence that socio-demographic characteristics shape patterns of participation in wellness tourism. As shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Demographic Influences on Overall Travel Behavior (Independent t tests and One-way ANOVAs with LSD Post Hoc Tests)

Variable	Group	n	Mean	SD	Test Statistic	p	Effect Size	Post Hoc (Compact Letters)
Gender	Female	231	3.52	0.41	$t(398)$	.035*	$d = 0.21 [0.02, 0.41]$	-
	Male	169	3.60	0.40	$= 2.11$			
Age	61-65	173	3.52	0.40	$F(2, 397)$	.021*	$\eta^2_p = .019$	B
	66-70	158	3.60	0.39	$= 3.94$			A
	70+	69	3.67	0.38				A
Marital Status	Married	182	3.57	0.40	$F(2, 397)$	.362	$\eta^2_p = .005$	ns
	Widowed	117	3.55	0.42	$= 1.02$			
	Single/Divorced/Other	101	3.56	0.41				
Education	< Upper-secondary	68	3.46	0.43	$F(3, 396)$	.008*	$\eta^2_p = .036$	B
	Upper-secondary/Diploma	185	3.62	0.38	$= 4.87$			A
	Bachelor's	112	3.56	0.40				AB
	Graduate+	35	3.66	0.39				A
Occupation	Agriculture	60	3.68	0.36	$F(3, 396)$	.004*	$\eta^2_p = .038$	A
	Small Business/Traders	180	3.52	0.41	$= 5.23$			C
	Wage Laborers	80	3.60	0.39				B
	Civil Service/State Enterprise	80	3.65	0.38				A
Income (THB)	< 15,000	101	3.48	0.42	$F(2, 397)$	.002*	$\eta^2_p = .031$	C
	15,001-20,000	129	3.58	0.38	$= 6.41$			B
	> 20,000	170	3.66	0.36				A

Notes. p < .05 marked with *. Compact-letter displays (A, B, C) indicate significant differences at $\alpha = .05$ (LSD post hoc). Assumptions for normality and homogeneity were tenable. Robustness checks (Welch ANOVA, Games-Howell) are recommended if assumptions are violated.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study deepens the understanding of how the Silver Generation—older adults aged 60 and above—engages with “quality tourism” in Thailand’s Upper Northern (Lanna) region. Importantly for a regional journal, these patterns illuminate broader Asian dynamics. Three contributions stand out. First, older travelers in this sample consistently preferred slow, immersive, and culturally anchored experiences. Second, travel behavior was systematically differentiated by gender, age, education, occupation, and income, underscoring that the Silver Generation is heterogeneous rather than monolithic. Third, perceived safety and facility quality appear to be decisive levers of satisfaction and loyalty, proving stronger than generic promotions and suggesting the need for concrete destination investments with regional relevance.

Our findings converge with Asian and global evidence that seniors prioritize authenticity, comfort, and safety over volume-oriented, time-compressed itineraries (Onlamai & Suttipisan, 2016; Patuelli & Nijkamp, 2016). The Lanna preference structure emphasizes community-based workshops, heritage interpretation, and wellness, mirroring senior-market successes elsewhere in Asia: Japan’s blend of hot-spring wellness and living traditions; Korea’s temple-stay and barrier-free city trails; and Taiwan’s county-level accessible heritage routes. Across these cases, destinations that pair cultural depth with universal design and reliable services tend to outperform those offering culture alone. The implication is not merely to “add ramps,” but to choreograph the end-to-end experience—including wayfinding, transport reliability, medical readiness, and trained frontline staff—so that seniors’ risk calculus tilts toward participation rather than avoidance (Onlamai & Suttipisan, 2016; United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2023).

Demographically, the present study reveals precise segmentation within the Silver market. Men were more likely to engage in independent or self-drive travel, whereas women reported higher participation in handicraft and cultural activities. Older cohorts (70+) emphasized wellness and accessibility more than younger seniors (60-69), who combined multiple provinces and accepted greater logistical complexity. Education correlated with higher demand for interpretive content, guided heritage walks, learning-oriented workshops, and deeper cultural explanation (Otoo et al., 2020). This is consistent with research arguing that knowledge-oriented seniors derive value from meaning-making, not just sightseeing. Income stratification also mattered: higher-income seniors stayed longer and spent more, echoing the core proposition of “quality tourism” that value added can exceed headcount (Passafaro, 2019). Taken together, these patterns argue for micro-segmentation strategies within Asia’s aging markets, rather than one-size-fits-all “senior tourism” products.

The policy signal is equally clear. Regression evidence from this study indicates that perceived safety and the availability/quality of facilities are the strongest predictors of satisfaction and revisit intention, outpacing promotional inputs. This aligns with regional lessons: where destinations in Japan, Singapore, and parts of Taiwan have invested in barrier-free design standards, last-mile connectivity, and medical readiness, senior market share has grown without eroding destination authenticity. For Thailand’s Lanna region, the actionable priority is to sequence investments that seniors directly feel: step-free access at high-traffic sites; shaded rest nodes at short intervals; reliable, clearly signed transport; availability of basic medical services; and trained guides who can modulate pace and depth for intergenerational groups. Government marketing that promotes secondary provinces is valuable (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2017). However, its impact will be amplified only when tangible upgrades align with messaging throughout the visitor journey (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2023).

At the subregional level, our province-specific observations map onto common Asian trade-offs. Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai serve as “gateways,” offering international air access, diverse

accommodations, and a stronger medical ecosystem that seniors recognize as risk-mitigating. Nan and Phrae offer high authenticity and cultural intimacy but must raise the bar on universal design, evening mobility, and transport frequency to compete for older visitors. Mae Hong Son's scenery is exceptional, yet accessibility is hindered by serpentine road geometry; curated, small-coach, slower itineraries with more rest points would broaden feasibility for older cohorts. These patterns are not uniquely Thai; they echo the broader Asian challenge of elevating secondary cities and rural cultural landscapes without sacrificing safety, comfort, or identity. Another cross-Asian theme is inter-generational travel. Many seniors in our sample traveled with spouses, adult children, or grandchildren, a pattern reported in several Asian contexts where family leisure norms are strong (Onlamai & Suttipisan, 2016). Products that allow concurrent engagement—e.g., a morning of grandparent-friendly heritage interpretation and a parallel workshop for younger family members, followed by a light wellness activity—can increase party-wide satisfaction. For operators, this implies designing “layered” experiences with variable intensity and a synchronized rendezvous, rather than a single linear tour.

Strategically, the results affirm Thailand's policy turn toward high-value, low-volume tourism within the Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) model (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2017). Quality for seniors is not an abstract ideal; it is operationalized through infrastructure credibility (barrier-free routes, clear wayfinding), service reliability (on-time, comprehensible, multilingual), and authentic content delivered at a senior-appropriate tempo. In practice, this argues for destination stewardship that integrates: 1) universal design audits of priority sites; 2) workforce upskilling for senior communication and risk management; 3) wellness-adjacent offerings (light stretching, traditional therapies, nutrition-forward dining); and 4) digital transparency (accurate accessibility info, telehealth contact points, and sustainability labels), because older adults increasingly use online reviews and certifications to filter options. The comparative lens also points to a regional cooperation agenda. Upper Northern Thailand and neighboring subregions in Lao PDR, Myanmar, and southern China share Lanna-Tai cultural threads and mountainous geographies. A transboundary “Silver Heritage Corridor” with harmonized accessibility signage, interoperable booking, and joint training on senior-centered service could distribute benefits while maintaining cultural integrity. Similarly, exchanging best practices with East Asian destinations on universal design standards and first-responder capacity could accelerate capability-building. Such cooperation aligns with UNWTO's guidance on accessible and inclusive tourism as a driver of both competitiveness and social equity (United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2023).

Limitations merit caution. The study focuses on one Thai macro-region and relies on cross-sectional data; causal claims should therefore be tempered. Moreover, while we report demographic segmentation, additional psychosocial factors (e.g., perceived age, health confidence, digital literacy) likely moderate behavior and should be integrated into future models. A regional comparative design—e.g., parallel sampling in northern Vietnam, Taiwan, or Japan—would test portability of the Lanna pattern and sharpen guidance for Asia-wide policy. Even so, three robust implications for Asia's aging destinations are evident. First, invest in what seniors feel: barrier-free mobility, medical readiness, and reliable service orchestration. Perceived safety and facility adequacy move the needle more than slogans. Second, design for segments, not “seniors”: create variants for the active 60-69 cohort (multi-province, light adventure) and the 70+ cohort (shorter distances, more rest, richer interpretation), and tailor content depth to education profiles. Third, curate authenticity at a senior pace: crafts, heritage, and community-hosted experiences can command price premiums when delivered with ergonomic care, cultural respect, and time for reflection.

In conclusion, the Upper Northern region can credibly position itself as a benchmark for regenerative, senior-friendly tourism in Asia by aligning product design with the values older

travelers articulate: authenticity, safety, comfort, and cultural depth. Doing so advances Thailand's quality-tourism agenda and contributes to a regional knowledge base on how destinations can thrive in an aging era. For policymakers, destination managers, and community partners, the path forward is not more visitors but better journeys—designed for older bodies and curious minds, and grounded in the living cultures of Lanna and its Asian neighbors.

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