

Impact of Psychic Distance and Country Image on International Healthcare Services

— A Case Study of Thai Caregivers and Japanese Elderly —

チュラーロンコン・ビジネス・スクール

タマサート・ビジネス・スクール

Assarut Nuttapol Srisuphaolarn Patnaree

要約

本研究では、精神的距離と国のイメージの概念を適用して、医療サービスの国際化を説明しました。日本の高齢者介護施設で働くタイの介護者の輸出は事例として用いられた。回答者は408人の高齢の日本人サービス受給者と370人のタイの介護者でした。従属変数は日本高齢者のタイ人介護者からのサービスを受ける意欲と、タイ人介護者が日本介護施設で働く意欲であった。精神的距離と国のイメージの影響はサービス受給者とサービスプロバイダーの両方の視点から調査されました。結果は、精神的距離と国家イメージの両方が提供者とサービス受給者の意欲に様々な影響を与えていることを示唆しています。サービスマネージャーは、成功した国際的な医療サービスを達成するために、精神的距離のギャップを埋めるために、サービス提供者とサービス受給者の間の良好な理解を促進し、両国からの良好な国イメージを確立することを推奨した。

キーワード

Country Image, Healthcare Service, International Service, Japanese Elderly, Psychic Distance

I. Introduction

The trade volume of international services has increased rapidly over the past three decades. International trade in services has played a more important role in the global economy to the extent that the World Trade Organization (WTO) has reconsidered the characteristics of international services. According to the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), international services can be categorized into four modes depending on the territorial presence of the supplier and the consumer at the time of the transaction. These categories include cross border trade, commercial presence, and presence of natural persons (WTO, 2017). The categorization helps clearly identify the nature of international services at the core of research in this area.

This study focuses on Japan's aged society and the connected emergence of international service activities. The growing number of Japanese elderly has caused the government to launch policies to manage the lack of healthcare personnel promoted by long stays in foreign countries, which represents the consumption abroad mode of international service (Fukahori et al., 2001; Miyazaki, 2008; Ono, 2008) or the acceptance of Filipino and Indonesian nurses and caregivers to work in elderly nursing homes, which is categorized as the presence of natural persons (Ohno, 2012; Tsubota et al., 2015).

After the Japanese government launched the policy to accept nurses and caregivers from foreign countries, several studies tried to investigate the success of the policy. However,

most studies focused on the evaluation of the policy or the performance of the foreign caregivers (Kawaguchi et al., 2012; Setyowati et al., 2010; Yagi et al., 2014). Conversely, no studies have attempted to answer questions about the quality of the interactions between the elderly and the caregivers, including the foreigners' willingness to work in a foreign country and the elderly's willingness to receive services provided by foreigners.

This study applied the psychic distance (Boylu et al., 2009; Emami and Ranjbarian, 2015) and country image (Agrawal and Kamakura, 1999; Balabanis et al., 2002; d' Astous and Boujbel, 2007) concepts to explain service providers' willingness to work and service recipients' willingness to accept services in an international healthcare service setting. These two concepts are important factors in international business and international marketing research and have been widely applied in various research settings. However, few studies have adopted these concepts in an international service setting.

II. Methodology

The respondents in this study consisted of Thai caregivers and Japanese elderly. Four hundred and eight Japanese elderly individuals aged 55-80 years who were living in Thailand and Japan represented those who had experience and had no experience with Thailand, respectively. Additionally, three hundred and seventy Thai caregivers were Thai practical nurses, care helpers, and nursing and elderly care program students.

The questionnaire consisted of four main parts. In the first part, the respondents rated their perceived psychic distance toward their counterparts. The 25-item scale used in the questionnaire was based on Dow and Karunaratna's (2006) and Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions. Then, the respondents rated the perceived personality of the Thai (Japanese) people using a 19-item measurement. The respondents answered whether they were willing to work in a Japanese elderly nursing home (Thai respondents) or receive service from Thai caregivers (Japanese elderly). The last part of the questionnaire requested the respondents' personal data (e.g., age and occupation).

Some items were adjusted to match the context of health care services after a preliminary qualitative survey of a focus group and in-depth interviews with potential samples. After pretesting the questionnaire, a three-point Likert scale (1 = disagree, 2 = not sure, and 3 = agree) was adopted to make it simpler for the elderly to understand and to give the answers that really reflected their thoughts.

III. Results

The data was analyzed with SPSS statistical software. The 25 items of the psychic distance measurement and 19 items of the country image measurement were analyzed using principle component analysis with the varimax rotation method. The results suggested six factors of the psychic distance measurement (cultural distance, education distance, distance in manner and appearance, distance in food, religion, and

language, economic distance, and distance in social pressure) and four factors were extracted from the analysis (competency, agreeableness, emotional stability, and empathy).

The six psychic distance factors and four country image factors were the independent factors in the binary regression analysis. The dependent variable for the case of Thai caregivers was the willingness to work in a Japanese elderly home (willing vs. unwilling or not sure). Conversely, in the case of the Japanese elderly, the dependent variable was the willingness to receive services from a Thai caregiver (willing vs. unwilling or not sure).

According to the results, both psychic distance and country image affect the decision-making of service providers and service recipients in the international service setting. However, the factors that affect each player are different. In the context of the healthcare services discussed in this study, in which the interactions between service providers and service recipients were key, the results showed that both the Thai caregivers and Japanese elderly shared the same concerns regarding the factors related to their lifestyles (i.e., distance in food, religion and language) and the quality of interactions between people (i.e., agreeableness and empathy).

This study explored some factors that solely concerned Thai caregivers. These factors were the education distance and the perceived emotional stability of the Japanese people. These factors were the key factors for Thai caregivers in deciding to work in Japanese elderly homes. Thus, the perceived distance in education played an important role in decision-making regarding

whether to work in the new environment, whereas the emotional stability of the Japanese elderly represented how comfortable and relaxed the caregivers felt when dealing with them.

The unique determinant for the Japanese elderly is the competency of the Thai caregivers. This determinant can be explained as the key factor to evaluate the service quality provided by the service provider. High competence of the service provider may imply that it will provide good service.

This study offers insights from both the service providers and the service recipients in international healthcare service. To succeed in international service, the service managers should promote good communication between the service providers and the service recipients to fill any psychic distance gaps and establish a good country image from both perspectives.

References

- Agrawal, J. and Kamakura, W. A. (1999), "Country of origin: A competitive advantage?", *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 16(4), pp. 255-267.
- Balabanis, G., Mueller, R., and Melewar, T. C. (2002), "The human values' lenses of country of origin images", *International Marketing Review*, 19(6), pp.582-610.
- Boylu, Y., Tasci, A.D., and Gartner, W.C. (2009), "Worker and consumer face-off on cultural distance and satisfaction", *Tourism Review*. 64(4), pp.37-52.
- d' Astous, A. and Boujbel, L. (2007), "Positioning countries on personality dimensions: Scale development and implications for country marketing", *Journal of Business Research*, 60(3), pp.231-239.
- Dow, D. and Karunaratna, A. (2006), "Developing a multidimensional instrument to measure psychic

Impact of Psychic Distance and Country Image on International Healthcare Services
—A Case Study of Thai Caregivers and Japanese Elderly—

- distance stimuli”, *Journal of International Business Studies*, 37(5), pp.578–602.
- Emami, A. and Ranjbarian, B. (2015), “Empirical investigation of tourists’ perceived psychic distance of Iran as a tourism destination”, *Iranian Journal of Management Studies*, 8(3), pp. 351-372.
- Fukahori, H., Baba, Y., Hioki, F., Monkong, S., Intarasombat, P., and Malathum, P. (2011), “Healthcare services for Japanese elderly long-staying in Thailand from the perspective of the patient and healthcare providers: a survey study,” *Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics*, 53(2), pp.168-173.
- Hofstede, G. (2001), *Culture’s Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations across Nations*, 2ed. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, Calif.
- Kawaguchi, Y., Hirano, O. Y., Ogawa, R., and Ohno, S. (2012), “Exploring learning problems of Filipino nurse candidates working in Japan: Based on the results of a practice national board examination of Japan given in English”, *Southeast Asian Study*, 49(4), pp.643-651.
- Miyazaki, K. (2008), “An aging society and migration to Asia and Oceania,” *Transnational Migration in East Asia*. Vol.77), pp.139-149.
- Ohno, S. (2012), “Southeast Asian nurses and caregiving workers transcending the national boundaries: an overview of Indonesian and Filipino workers in Japan and abroad,” *Southeast Asian Studies*, 49(4), pp.541–569.
- Ono, M. (2008), “Long-stay tourism and international retirement migration: Japanese retirees in Malaysia,” *Senri Ethnological Reports*, 77, pp.151-162.
- Setyowati, S., Susanti, H., Yetti, K., Ohara-Hirano, Y., and Kawaguchi, Y. (2010), “The experiences of Indonesian nurses in Japan who face the job and cultural stress in their work: A qualitative study”, *Kyushu University Institutional Repository*, 5, pp.175-181.
- Tsubota, K., Ogawa, R., Ohno, S., and Ohara-Hirano, Y. (2015), “A study on the cost and willingness to recruit EPA foreign nurses and care workers in Japan: from the angle of hospitals and care facilities,” *Health Science Research*, 27, pp.45-53.
- WTO (2017), Definition of services trade and modes of supply. available at: https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/serv_e/cbt_course_e/c1s3p1_e.htm (accessed 9 August 2017).
- Yagi, N., Mackey, T. K., Liang, B. A., and Gerlt, L. (2014), “Policy Review: Japan–Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA)—Analysis of a failed nurse migration policy”, *International journal of nursing studies*, 51(2), pp.243-250.