

INVESTIGATING THAI TOURIST'S TRAVELING BEHAVIOR FOR HOT SPRING MANAGEMENT TO PROMOTE HEALTH TOURISM IN CHIANG RAI

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Abstract

There are two objectives in this study ,1) to investigate the travelling behaviors of Thai tourists who are visited hot spring attraction in Chiang Rai ,2) To provide a guideline for hot spring management to promote health tourism in Chiang Rai. This research employed purposive sampling and the sample in this study 400 Thai tourists who visited hot springs in Chiang Rai. The research tools were used questionnaire to collect the data. The statistics of data analysis were descriptive statistics, T-Test and ANOVA. The survey of Thai tourists' behavior visiting hot springs provide valuable information for the hot spring management to develop a policy. The practical guidelines for hot spring management to promote health tourism consists of 4M management :1) Guideline of man management, 2) Guideline of money management ,3) Guideline of material management and 4) Guideline of management. The discussions and conclusions were also provided.

Keywords: Hot spring management, Thai tourists' behavior, Health tourism

Introduction

Recently, the health tourism has been increasingly developing in Thailand. Since economic status and other problems in daily life are key reasons affecting high stress level. For this reason, people seek some kinds of

relaxation to escape from the pressure. Health tourism is a good choice for people who avoid stressful life by paying more attention to health improvement (Jutatip, et al.,2021). Thailand as a quality tourism destination combined with data from Global Wellness Tourism found that, in 2020. Thailand is ranked the 13th in the world with an income



more than 400 billion baht (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2019). In addition, Thailand has the benefit of strength on the service operations. For example, people are friendly and gentle with patients, this creates a good impression for tourists (Orapin et al., 2015). Thailand has many hot springs for health tourism, the most famous ones being in Northern Thailand. Chiang Rai is the most attractive place to promote health tourism, particularly for those Thai tourists who have special interests in improving their health, body, and mind. The number of tourists visiting Chiang Rai was 2.7 million and the revenue earned 30,000 million baht in 2019 (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2019). There are more than 10 hot springs in Chiang Rai. Travel and hospitality businesses in hot spring are attracted to the tourists, such as spa business, food and beverage business, accommodation business, souvenir shop, tour companies and other business. This business also helps create jobs and income for the nearby community. Thus, it is important for driving the province's overall economy with health tourism (Ngamnid et al., 2021). The record number of Thai travelers coming to Chiang Rai has brought about some contemporary mixed emotion for locals to offer the best service that would leave a lasting impression and attract many visitors

According to Weerasak (2012), hot spring were a valuable resource for tourism. If it is not developed or lacking good management, it will eventually decline and destroy. From the studies in the past found that services and activities based on hot springs, were about nature exploring, recreation, traditional massage and food and beverage services. There has been investment made in the

travelling and communication infrastructure by the government in order to satisfy the need of the large number of tourists. Educational program and training have been updated to ensure that the travelers feel welcome and secured. Moreover, Thai tourists can gain extra benefit in purchasing a standard item of services and products in hot springs. With regards to the services and product arranged to support hot spring tourism all things need to be ensured that the events taking place meet the well-being and health of the locals as well as the travelers (Korawan et al., 2021). Understanding Thai tourists' behavior would be useful in designing tourist products and services to better attract and serve their needs. The benefit and importance of management of the hot springs should meet the satisfaction of tourists. Therefore, this research has studied Thai tourists' behavior in hot spring tourism sector and provide the practical guidelines for hot spring management to promote health tourism in Chiang Rai.

Research objectives and questions

The objective of this research is to investigate the travelling behaviors of Thai tourists who are visited hot spring tourism sector in Chiang Rai. In addition, this study also provides a guideline for hot spring management in Thailand. To achieve the objectives of this research, the following research question was developed to address this research study:

1. What are the demographic factors that affect the main objective of visiting hot spring?



2. What are the traveling behaviors of Thai tourist in hot spring tourism?
3. What are the practical guidelines for hot spring management to promote health tourism?

Literature review

Tourists behavior

According to Solomon (1996) mentioned that consumer behavior as referring to any process that involves the use of individual or group, and the use and management of goods and services and the ideas or experience to meet their own needs. Furthermore, Hudson (2008) explained that the factors influencing tourists' behavior 7 dimension as follows.

- 1) Motivation is driven from within the people to act or behavior to satisfy their need to understand the motivation of tourists will give operators a competitive advantage
- 2) Age and gender market segmentation used in the present age is the major tour companies
- 3) Lifestyle analysis will consider the lifestyle of the individual allocation of time, money and energy but we need to think about lifestyle along with demographic and psychological factors such as activities, interests and opinions
- 4) Life cycle refers to the duration of the life cycle and age of the family member
- 5) Cultural refers to norms, beliefs and rituals that were unique to each individual to determine their needs and behavior
- 6) Social class refers to the place where a person lives in society such as income, wealth, education, occupation, family status, value of housing and location
- 7) Reference group means a group that directly or indirectly influences the attitudes or behaviors of individuals such

as families, education institutes and others.

Health tourism

Health tourism is a tourist trip to visit beautiful places in natural and cultural attractions as well as to learning the way of life and leisure by divided the time of travel to promote health and therapy activities. There are two types of health tourism

1. Health Promotion Tourism is the promotion of travel to visit tourist attractions in beautiful natural attractions and cultural education, lifestyle and recreation, by splitting from the tourism part in health-promoting activities, accommodation and hotel for quality standard such as massage, steam with herbs, bathing, water therapy, healthy food and beverage, meditation, yoga, beauty service and recreation.

2. Health healing tourism is traveling to visit beautiful sights in the tourist nature and culture and learning lifestyle and recreation, and part of time to travel to get treatment service and health and medical, health care in hospital or nursing home quality standard such as treatment of various dental and health care of teeth.

In this research, we will focus on health promotion tourism for hot spring tourism sector because Thai Tourists recently want to take care of their health and lifestyle by arranging their time to hot spring baths, travel to relax and detoxifying both body and mind after work.

According to Varinnar and Kanokkarn (2019) also mentioned that the main objective of visiting health tourism destinations is also affected by the tourists' demographics profile, such as



gender, age, and income. Wanna (2003) and Weerasak (2012) further pointed out that hot spring is famous for health tourism for domestic tourists in Thailand. The factors that tourists concern before traveling to health tourism are 1) The place should have a beautiful natural environment, clean and no pollution 2) safety and security is required for tourists (Boonler, 2006). 3) staff needs to have knowledge and experience in physical and mental health, and they are willing to help tourists all the time. Hot springs will be success depends on the availability of a highly qualified and trained staffs (Lee and King, 2008). 4) they should have many recreation activities for developing of physical and mental health and 5) tourists get benefit from learning local culture and getting knowledge to develop a better quality of life.

Hot spring management

Hot spring, also called thermal spring, is spring with water at temperatures greatly higher than the air temperature of the surrounding area. Most hot springs discharge groundwater that is heated by shallow invasions of magma in volcanic areas. Some thermal springs, however, are not linked to volcanic activity. In such cases, the water is heated by convective circulation: groundwater straining downward reaches depths of a kilometers or more where the temperature of rocks is high because of the normal temperature gradient of the earth's crust about 30°C (54°F) per kilometer in the first 10 km (six miles) (The Royal Institute, 2001). There is good memorial to enjoy experiences in winter time in the mountains of northern part of Thailand than a dip in a natural hot spring.

Thailand's hot springs are found in some of the country's most spectacular landscapes and provide visitors with the perfect balance of relaxation and beautiful natural attraction (Nipon, 2016).

There are 96 hot springs developed for tourism in Thailand. In Northern of Thailand, there are 12 hot springs in Chiang Mai, 10 hot springs in Chiang Rai, 8 hot springs in Mae Hong Son, 2 hot springs in Lampang, 2 hot springs in Phrae, 2 hot springs in Nan. (Tatsuo, 2017). Furthermore, Hot springs can be divided into four management types. (Chuamuangphan, 2016; Tatsuo, 2017; Department of Mineral Resources, 2021) as follows: 1). A hot spring owned and managed by the government; these hot springs are located in the national park. The distinctive highlight of the hot springs located in the national park is that they are natural and abundant natural resources. It is in harmony with the surrounding forest conditions and seems to be a one-stop attraction for people of all ages. There are many national park activities for family visitors, young visitors, female visitors, elderly visitors, such as hiking, Thai massage or spa, restaurant, souvenir shop, accommodation and camping as well as organizing several leisure activities. These types of hot springs are worthwhile, charming and value for visiting although accessibility is sometimes difficult and relatively remote to other linked attractions and local business (Arissara and Gulapish, 2015). 2) A hot spring that is privately owned and managed by the private sector: the notable feature of private hot springs is the privacy and calmness due to the low number of tourists compared to other hot springs. They are pleasant with hot springs with a special and comprehensive



service and good one stop service, which is often located near the main hot springs or tourist routes. 3). Community-owned and managed hot springs; the distinctive quality is the local value, with a diversity of cultures, local lifestyles, as well as traditions or traditions in each local community that tourists will experience. The surrounding environment is local, natural, and also has accommodation or homestay to provide tourists. A small number of tourists travel to the hot springs in the community. (Liaorungruang, 2012). This community-owned and managed hot springs can be divided into 2 types which is community-owned and managed hot springs (Ngamnid et al.,2021). with 100% community management, and a hot spring that receives a budget from the sub-district administrative organization along with a community management (Pichayakul, 2020) 4). Co-managed hot springs between two parties; in Chiang Mai, such as San Kamphaeng hot springs, Mae On district (it is co-managed between government and community). This type of management tries to increase the management ability to be more flexible and can generate good profits. The businesses in hot spring attraction areas must consider the various feature of each hot spring to make the best financial outcome.

The management of Hot Spring can also use 4M theory (Man, Money, Material and Management) which is from theory of economics with production management theory by Man refers to the operator of organization, Money means the cost of an organization, Materials

mean equipment various appliance throughout the building and premises. In terms of tourism, materials can be products and service. Management means the business management such as process of marketing, production process and service process (Drucker ,2012)

Research methodology and data collection

This research is quantitative research that used questionnaires. The population and sample group are the Thai tourists in Chiang Rai that visited and used service in hot springs. The sample group was chosen by purposive sampling. The sample size was calculated using W.G Cochran's unknown population formula (1977) and a reliability value at 95% with the margin of error at 5%. The sample group consisted of 385 Thai tourists, but the actual data collection had obtained all 400 complete questionnaires. The questionnaire contained of the following questions:

1. Statistical profiles of tourists
 - Gender, Age, Monthly income
2. Statistical tourist Behavior
 - Main objective of visiting
 - Form of travel
 - Source of information
 - Travel Preferences
 - Persons traveling with
 - The number of times to visit this hot spring a year
 - Average spends on services in hot spring
 - Activity prefers in hot spring

Research findings

Thai tourists behavior

The results based on collecting questionnaires are as followed:

Table 1 Gender

Gender	Total	Percentage
1. Male	155	38.75
2. Female	245	61.25
Total	400	100.00

The analysis of the gender of Thai tourists who came to hot spring sites showed that 61.25% was female and 38.75% was male.

Table 2 Age

Age	Total	Percentage
1. Below than 20	11	2.75
2. 21-30 years old	92	23
3. 31-40 years old	107	26.75
4. 41-50 years old	104	26
5. 51-60 years old	53	13.25
6. More than 60 years old	33	8.25
Total	400	100.00

The analysis of the age group of Thai tourists who came to hot spring sites showed that the age of respondents in 31-40 years was the highest at 26.75% followed by the age of respondents 41-50 years for 26%, 21-30 years for 23%, 51-60 years for 13.25%, more than 60 years for 8.25% and below than 20 years for 2.75% respectively.

Table 3 Monthly Income

Monthly Income	Total	Percentage
1. Below than 5,000 THB	63	15.75
2. 5,001-10,000 THB	68	17
3. 10,001 – 15,000 THB	77	19.25
4. 15,001-20,000 THB	54	13.5
5. 20,001- 25,000 THB	34	8.5
6. 25,001-30,000 THB	34	8.5
7. More than 30,000 THB	70	17.5
Total	400	100.00

The analysis of the monthly income of Thai tourists who came to hot spring sites showed that the income of respondents between 10,001-15,000 THB was the highest at 19.25% followed by the income of respondents more than 30,000



THB for 17.5 %, income between 5,001-10,000 THB for 17%, below than 5,000 THB for 15.75 %, 15,001 -20,000 THB

for 13.5%, 20,001-25,000 THB and 25,001 – 30,000 THB for 8.5% respectively.

Table 4 Main objective of visiting

Main objective of visiting	Total	Percentage
1. To relax	247	62
2. To improve health/mind/body	70	17.5
3. To admire the beautiful nature and landscape	25	6.25
4. It is an opportunity to be with your family	43	10.75
5. Educational trip	3	0.75
6. To visit relatives and friends	12	3
Total	400	100.00

The analysis of percentage of main objective of traveling, most of the respondents intended to travel to the hot spring for relax, accounted for 62%, followed by improving health with

17.5%, for an opportunity to be with family 10.75%, for admiring the beautiful nature and landscape 6.25% and visiting relatives and friends 3%, respectively.

Table 5 Form of travel

Form of travel	Total	Percentage
1. Private Car	308	77
2. Motorbike	71	17.75
3. Bus	1	0.25
4. Rental Van	20	5
Total	400	100.00

The results of the data analysis, the percentage of travel form was found the private car was 77 %. Followed by

motorbike was 17.75%, rental van was 5% and bus was 0.25% respectively.

Table 6 Source of information

Source of information	Total	Percentage
1. Friends and Relatives	340	85
2. Advertising (Television, Radio)	3	0.75
3. Travel Magazine	6	1.5
4. Travel Agency	2	0.5
5. Brochure	0	0
6. Internet	36	9
7. Signboard	13	3.25
Total	400	100.00



The analysis of percentage of source of information about hot springs found that 85% know from their friends and relatives. Followed by 9 % for internet,

3.5 % for signboard, 1.5% for travel magazine, 0.75% for advertising, and 0.5% for travel agency respectively.

Table 7 Travel Preferences

Travel preferences	Total	Percentage
1. Non-festival days	91	22.75
2. Saturday – Sunday	239	59.75
3. Public Holiday /Long Weekend	70	17.5
Total	400	100.00

Based on their travel preferences, 59.75% of tourists chose to take a trip on Saturday and Sunday. 22.75% chose to

travel on the non-festival days and 17.5% travel on public holiday or long weekends.

Table 8 Persons traveling with

Persons traveling with	Total	Percentage
1. Come alone	57	14.25
2. Come with friends	95	23.75
3. Come with family	242	60.5
4. Come with travel agency	4	1
5. Come with company	2	0.5
Total	400	100.00

The analysis of percentage of persons traveling with found that 60.5% came with family. Followed by 23.75 % came

with friends, 14.25 % came alone, 1% came with travel agency and 0.5% came with company.

Table 9 The number of times to visit this hot spring a year

Time of visiting	Total	Percentage
1. Come first time	67	16.75
2. 2-3 times	93	23.25
3. 4-5 times	37	9.25
4. More than 5 times	203	50.75
Total	400	100.00

The analysis of percentage of visitors who visited to the hot springs in a year found that respondents traveled more

than 5 times a year 50.75%. Followed by 2-3 times a year 23.25%, came first time 16.75 % and 4-5 times a year 9.25%.

Table 10 Average spends on services in hot spring

Spending money	Total	Percentage
1. 1-500 Baht	318	79.5
2. 501-1000 Baht	65	16.25
3. More than 1000 Baht	6	1.5
Total	400	100.00

The analysis of percentage of the cost of spending on service in hot springs found that 79.5 % spend 1- 500 baht, followed

by 16.25% for 501 – 1,000 baht and 1.5% for more than 1,000 baht respectively.

Table 11 Activity prefers in hot spring (Respondents could choose more than 1)

Activities	Total	Percentage
1. Hot spring bathing	369	92.25
2. Massage	129	32.25
3. Steam with herbs	66	16.50
4. Yoga	8	2.00
5. Meditation	19	4.75
6. Nature visit/taking walks	48	12.00
7. Shopping souvenir beauty product	37	9.25
8. To eat healthy food & beverage	112	28.00
9.Exercise	44	11.00

The analysis of the percentage of activity tourists wanted to do in hot springs, most of the respondents intended to do bathing which accounted for 92.25% , followed by massage with 32.25% , for eating healthy food 28% ,for steam with herbs 16.5 % , for nature visit 12%, for exercise 11% , for shopping souvenir beauty product 9.25 % and yoga 2% , respectively.

In this research, T -test and ANOVA were also employed to investigate if there any significant differences in the tourist's gender, age, and monthly income for the main objective of visiting hot springs. The results were explained as from table 12 to 14 as follows:

Table 12 The main objective of visiting by gender for Thai Tourists (T-Test)

Variables	Male			Female			T	df	Sig.
	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	Mean	Std. Dev.			
Main objective of visiting	155	1.81	1.249	245	1.80	1.292	0.049	398	0.798

* $p < .05$

Regarding results of the study from a table of differences between males and females, or genders, no significant

difference was found for gender at level 0.05

Table 13 The main objective of visiting by age for Thai Tourists (ANOVA)

Variables		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Main objective of visiting	Between Groups	27.244	5	5.449	3.426	0.005
	Within Groups	626.693	394	1.591		
	Total	653.937	399			

* $p < .05$

Regarding results of the study from a table of differences between age and the main objective of visiting in hot springs,

there is a significant difference was found for age at level 0.05.

Table 14 The main objective of visiting by monthly income for Thai Tourists (ANOVA)

Variables		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
Main objective of visiting	Between Groups	128.594	5	25.719	6.466	0.000
	Within Groups	1567.156	394	3.978		
	Total	1695.750	399			

* $p < .05$

The results of ANOVA test, shown in Table 14, indicated that there is a significant difference was found for monthly income at level 0.05.

The guideline for hot spring management to promote health tourism

Hot spring tourism focuses on health promotion because Thai Tourists recently want to take care of their health and lifestyle by arrange the time to exercise, travel to relax and detoxifying both body and mind after work (Weerasak,2012).

The results of the demographic information from the total number of respondents were 400 found that most Thai tourists were female and age between 31-40 years in this research.

The results of tourists' behavior showed that the purpose of visiting is to relaxation 62%, followed by improvement body and mind 17.5% and taking opportunity to be with family 10.75%. Most of visitors prefer to travel by their own car 77%, and they knew the source information of hot spring tourism by their friends and relatives 85%, followed by internet 9%.

Thai tourists chose to take a trip on Saturday and Sunday 59.75%. Most of tourists came with their family 60% and 14.25% came alone. Most of them visited hot springs more than 5 times a year and spent around 500 baht for service in hot spring sites. Furthermore, they prefer to bathing for 92.25%, massage for 32.25%, and for eating healthy food for 28%. Moreover, there is no significant



difference in gender for the main objective of visiting hot spring. Meanwhile, there are significant differences in age and monthly income for the main objective of visiting hot springs.

For the practical guidelines for hot spring management to promote health tourism should have a guideline by using the 4M theory (man management, money management, material management and management) which is a theory of economics with production management theory (Drucker,2012). The four guidelines of hot spring management are as follows:

1) Guideline for man management

The management of hot spring needs to plan a manpower during weekends because Thai tourists prefer to visit hot spring during this time. Hot spring needs to plan a manpower and job responsibility of each position. They might have to increase the number of temporary staffs to hire during weekends. Management team also needs to develop skills of staff by training of safety and security (Wanna ,2003) and (Weerasak ,2012). For example, they should provide first aid training to take care of tourists' safety while accessing the Hot springs service. Moreover, staffs need to have knowledge to recommend service in hot springs. For instance, they can give information about hot spring bathing, massage and where to eat healthy food and drink in hot spring sites.

2) Guideline for money management

The service fees should be appropriate for tourists include bathing, massage, food and drink, souvenir. Management team should adjust the service rate appropriate for goods and products in hot springs. Food and beverage, souvenir,

other activities price should be reasonable for tourists. Hot springs should promote local healthy food and drink to make the tourist satisfied or cooperate with local restaurant that can provide local health food. Additionally, tourists would be impressed by the wide availability and variety of local cuisine. The utilization of authentic health food would add value to the hot springs' tourism experience (Varinnar and Kanokkarn,2019).

3) Guideline for material management

The hot spring management should provide the most efficient use of tourist materials. They should plan for maintenance budget to install equipment for safety and security. The results of the research revealed that tourists prefer to have hot spring bathing and steam with herbs. Thus, management team provides emergency lighting in the private rooms, ring signal and warning sign. for rules and regulation in hot spring. In addition, hot spring should provide a first aid kit, sign for rule and regulation to make tourists who come to use service understand and follow the rule strictly. Safety and security are very important and required for tourists in hot spring tourism (Weerasak,2012).

4) Guideline for management in hot springs

Based on the research results showed that Thai tourists travel by their own car, and they prefer to take a trip with their family on weekend. Thus, hot spring team need to have adequate parking for tourists especially on weekends. In case the parking area is not enough, staffs should contact local community to find parking area and pay for them. The results of tourist's behavior also showed that the different age of tourist have different



purpose of visiting. The elderly person might want to visit for improving body and mind. Meanwhile, businessperson might want to relax and admire the beautiful nature. Therefore, hot spring need to know and understand what customer wants. In addition, hot springs emphasize on beautiful decoration, planting local flowers and trees. Tourists can sit and relax under trees. According to Wanna (2003) and Varinnar and Kanokkarn (2019), the hot spring tourism sector should have a beautiful natural environment, clean and no pollution for attract the visitors. Tourists and their family should have many recreation activities for developing of physical and mental health.

In terms of marketing, the results found that different monthly income have different effects on the purposing of visiting. Thus, hot springs need to create a variety of travel packages offer Thais' tourist. The high-income customers might enjoy private hot spring baths to improve health and body. Furthermore, most of tourists know the source information of hot spring by their friends and relatives and internet. Hot springs should promote their destination by using various online media such as Facebook, YouTube and Instagram. In addition, the results of research indicated that most of tourists spent around 500 baht per time for services in hot spring. Hot spring should create product package for tourists. For instance, one private room (includes towels, amenity kit) and get one hour for Thai massage pay total 500 baht.

Conclusion and discussion

The objectives of this research were to investigate the travelling behaviors of Thai Tourists who are visited Hot Spring Attraction in Chiang rai. The researchers also provide guidelines for hot spring management to promote health tourism in Thailand. This study adopted 4M theory this study. This research has produced several information insights with potential to enhance the competitiveness of the hot spring sector. Firstly, the different demographic factors in age, and monthly income affect the purposing of visiting the hot spring with a statistical significance level at 0.05. The different gender does not influence the purpose of visiting hot springs, with a statistical significance level at 0.05. Secondly, it has been found that hot spring's staffs are important factors in driving the hot spring management for health tourism. The hot spring management should provide staff training by the trainers or expert from external organizations, so staffs can provide superior service to tourists. The hot springs tourism is a service-oriented industry, and its success depends on the availability of a highly qualified and trained staffs (Lee and King,2008). Thirdly, money management is necessary in hot spring management. The price of hot spring service fees should be appropriate for tourists. Management team must control the suitable price of food and drink, massage, hot spring baths, and souvenir. The government that are responsible for supervising Health tourism destination, natural hot springs should adjust the service fees appropriately for goods and services in hot spring sites (Arissara and Gulapish,2015). Fourthly, the hot spring management should provide the most efficient use of tourist materials.



Management team should improve the safety and security. They must set up emergency lighting in the private rooms, ring signal and warning sign for rules and regulation in hot spring. According to Varinnar and Kanokkarn (2019), the facility in the hot spring is very important to promote health tourism destination because tourists are concerned about their safety. Referring to Boonler (2006) said that tourists decide to choose a health tourism destination with regards to safety and security. Finally, hot spring team need to have adequate parking for tourists especially on weekends and promote their destination by using various online media such as Facebook, YouTube and Instagram.

In conclusion, hot springs were a valuable resource for health tourism. A good management is very important to meet the satisfaction of tourists in hot springs. Understanding Thai tourists' behavior would be useful in designing tourist products and services to better attract and serve their needs.

Managerial implication

As for managerial implications, the finding from this research recommended that the hot spring management team needs to adjust products and services to meet the needs and expectations of Thai Tourists. Importantly, hot springs must provide staffs at all levels with skills and knowledge in service. Staffs are valuable assets to deliver products and services to customers. Thus, hot spring management team should provide staffs with various form of supports to keep Thai tourists 'satisfaction.

Future research

Future research should study the other factors effecting the service and management such as service innovation and sustainable development in hot springs as well as the study of the business in hot springs in the other cluster in Thailand.

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