

# Potential and Problem of Thai Massage Business in China—A Case Study of Guangzhou Antoinette Cosmetic CO., LTD

Ye Dan<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Thai Studies, Faculty of Art, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

\* Ye Dan, E-mail: [yedan.danni@qq.com](mailto:yedan.danni@qq.com)

Received: October 30, 2017 Accepted: November 18, 2017 Online Published: November 24, 2017

doi:10.22158/rem.v2n5p215

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/rem.v2n5p215>

## **Abstract**

*This thesis aims to answer the research questions: what's the potential and problems of Thai Massage Business in China, base on a case study of Guangzhou Antoinette Cosmetic Co., Ltd, a company that runs Thai massage business in mainland China more than 10 years.*

*The Thesis starts with reviewing Thai Massage business in current Thailand. That is, Thai massage is one of the main attractions of Thai tourism industry, which is the result of many effects, such as policy support from government, skill training support from massage school and training center, individual investment and so on.*

*According to the case study, the problems of Thai Massage business in China are mainly lays on therapist. Language barrier, no higher salary, barrier of visa application, difficulty of skill training and so on, all these make the Thai Massage Business runs hardly in China.*

*While in the same time, Chinese have raised their interesting on Thailand and Thai Massage, the tourism boom become an incredible phenomenon that shocking the world. And a new terms—"Ma Sha Ji" (马杀鸡), means "massage" was be created tells the popularity of Thai massage amount Chinese.*

*The popularity of Thai Massage round the world have proved its benefit and attraction, though there are still barriers and difficulty, with the development of Thai Massage in modern time, more adjustment will be done. And there are limitation of thesis, further relate studies is worth of doing and yet remain undone, such as the would Chinese Tuina become a tourism attraction as Thai Massage, why could or why not?*

## **Keywords**

*Thai Massage, Thai Massage Business, China*

## **1. Introduction**

### *1.1 Background of the Study*

As the symbol of Thai Traditional Medicine, Thai Massage have been a important subject that

government have been promoting, with the long time development, from preserving the ancient wisdom until promoting as a popular vocational activity, Thai Massage have been adjust itself to meet the need of society. And finally become a world wide famous subjects.

Since 2013, Thailand have become the new favor destination to Chinese tourists, and amount all tourist attractions, Thai Massage is the most popular one, which is a activity available for whole family and it's the best relaxation after shopping and visiting.

The popularity of Thai Massage amount Chinese tourists make the massage provider try to seek the potential profit in China. Since Thai Massage have well known around the world, the overseas operation is common. There are Thai Massage operation in American, Japan, Norway and so on, almost around the world with its world wide fame. However, there is raw study that conduct on the subject of Thai Massage Operation in China, and this thesis tempt to review it with a case study of Guangzhou Antoinette Cosmetic Co., Ltd and the answer the questions that what is the potential and problems of Thai Massage Business in China.

### *1.2 Object of the Study*

- 1) To analyze the element of Thai massage business operation in Thailand;
- 2) To analyze the potential of Thai massage business operation in China;
- 3) To analyze the problems of Thai massage business operation in China.

### *1.3 The Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of the study is to answer the questions as follow:

- 1) Is there potential of Thai Massage Business in China?
- 2) What is the problems of Thai Massage Business operation in China?

### *1.4 Hypothesis*

- 1) Since 2013, the Chinese tourists bring new tourism boom to Thailand. Thai massage become a popular activity amount Chinese tourists as well. The Chinese massage operators perceive the potential of Thai massage business in China.
- 2) Review from the case study of Guangzhou Antoinette Cosmetic Co., Ltd, There are problems of Thai massage business in China, such as the difficulty of Thai massage therapist employment, the difference of operation mode and so on.

### *1.5 Significance of the Study*

Most of the studies of Thai Massage are mainly focus on the massage history, cultural value, benefit of massage effect, massage skills and so on. There is very few studies that conduct on the "business scope" and there is difference situation of overseas Thai Massage business operations amount each country and so far there is not yet a study that conducted an objective review on its potential and problems of Thai massage business in China.

### *1.6 Definition of Terms*

"**Thai Massage**" in this study refers to the combination of Royal Thai Massage and Folk Massage that wildly practiced in Thailand.

“**Thai Massage Business**” in this study refers to the operation of Spa, Resort, massage shop, massage giving by the street side.

“**China**” in this study refers in particular to the Chinese Mainland, excluding Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Previous Studies of Thai Massage

The study of Thai massage have never been stop, the preservation of Thai massage is started from the ancient description on tablet, more and more studies of Thai massage is done. Such as the history of Thai massage, the skill, the benefit, its principle and so on. And not only the Thai is studying this ancient wisdom, more and more foreign scholar and public is interesting in this subject too. Therefore, so for the brief classification of Thai massage studies is as follow:

There are three types Thai massage books, classified by main contents:

- 1) The cultural introduction of Thai massage;
- 2) Text book of Traditional Thai massage skill;
- 3) Thai massage treatment (from the aspect of medicine science).

The cultural introduction books are the most common one, the main content are as follow:

- 1) The influence from Buddhism (Prana, four element, Tard Chao Ruan and so on);
- 2) Thai massage history (From Jivaka Kumara Phaccha to Chakri Dynasty, Wat Pho);
- 3) Thai massage treatment (Thai traditional massage, herbal compress, sauna and so on);
- 4) Other kinds of Thai treatment (Yu fai, Yam Khang, Tok Sen and so on).

For those who would like to learn and know Thai massage skill for details, would prefer to the text book of massage skill as well as the DVD. The term “Traditional Thai massage” is usually prefer to “Royal Style Thai Massage”, which is service to the King, his royal family and his aristocracy. Nowadays, there is a stander and stationary step of massage giving. And the feature of this message style is to be gentle and respectful of the message receiver. Folk massage is other styles that well known as “Thai massage”, which is applying within the general public. This massage style is well known while not usually appear on the text book for teaching, cause one of the feature of Folk massage is its creativeness of treatment, which is say, the massage giver could free enough to make his own steps of the treatment. While not matter is Royal Thai massage or Folk Thai massage, they all follow the basic principle of “Sen Sib” and Prana.

For those books are aim to introduce and study the medical function and effect to the body, may not the interesting reading to public, while it’s indeed the important part of Thai massage books, which promoting and display the fundamental function of Thai massage.

Most of the studies try to answer the question: “What is Thai Massage” from the culture aspect or medical aspect, while raw studies conduct on the aspect of society and commerce. If take a look from the society and commerce aspect, the adjustment of Thai Massage in modern time is remarkable:

- 1) Massage giver no longer a doctor but a therapist, the learning is available for almost everyone.
- 2) Massage receiving is not longer a curing activity, but also a relaxation activity, and even become a tourism attraction.
- 3) The Massage giving location is not longer hospital, it's hotel and Spa shop, even by the street side.

Therefore there are other kinds of book that not title on “Thai Massage”, but readers would find that Thai massage is one of the main subject in the book—tourism guide books and hotel advertisement. That is, beside the cultural and medical value, Thai Massage in modern time have deeply involved in commerce and tourism industry, which is not only “Thai Massage”, but “Thai Massage Business” will more accurate.

All in all, there are lot of studies of Thai Massage have been done, while rarely conduct on “Thai Massage Business”. This thesis tempts to point out firstly: Thai Massage nowadays have deeply involved in business and tourism. Secondly, take Guangzhou Antoinette Cosmetic Co., Ltd as a case study to review how could the success of Thai Massage Business be copied in China, and to answer the question: What is the potential and What is the problem.

### **3. Methodology**

#### *3.1 The Research Methodology*

The research methodology of this study is based on secondary resources, documentary research, qualitative in-depth interview and observation. The documentary research includes articles and information from advertisement and magazine. Secondary mainly from Journal and publication. The interviewees are the Thai Massage operators in Thailand and China, Thai massage therapist, massage receivers (customers) and Thai massage students.

The interview including asking some prepared questions and personal experience and suggestion sharing.

### **4. Research Finding**

As what have been mention in the literature, the previous study of Thai Massage are mainly on the Thai Massage culture and skill sections, there is raw studies that conduce on the business sections. In this chapter, the operation of Thai Massage in Thailand and China will be reviewed. Such as the operation mode, the feature of operation and so on.

#### *4.1 Thai Massage Business in Thailand*

Thai Massage Business in this thesis refer to massage giving in the resort, hotel, walking shop. As what have been reviewed in previous chapter, the massage function, providing, schooling in Thailand have been changed that not limited to Thai Traditional Massage. Therefore, it tempts to review Thai Massage Business in the this chapter for better understanding of the current situation of Thai Massage in Thailand.

#### 4.1.1 From Thai Traditional Massage to Thai Massage Business

Thai Traditional Massage is the core subject of Thai Massage Business, that is to say, every massage providing would have Thai Traditional Massage, otherwise it's not Thai Massage business operation. There are three points that make Thai Massage Business available in Thailand:

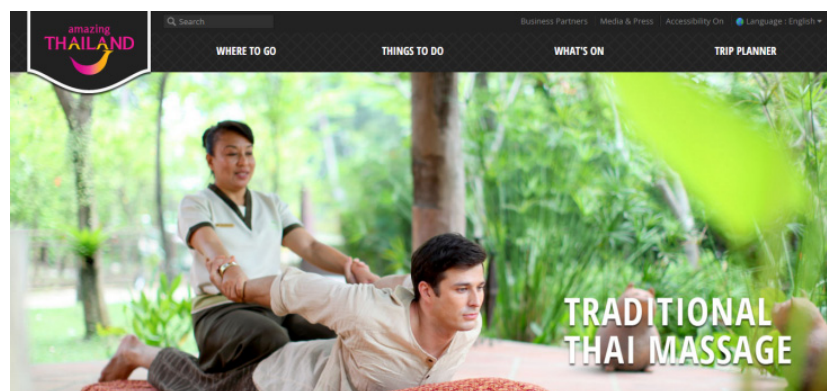
- 1) Massage function is for relaxing: more potential massage receivers;
- 2) Massage operation is available for private operation;
- 3) Massage training is available for public.

Above changing, is the outcome of TMRP, that more and more people could involve in this subjects, while with the development and popularity of Thai tourism since 60s until now, The fame of Thai Massage is spread world wide.

#### 4.1.2 Thai Massage as Tourist Attraction

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) was the first organization in Thailand to be specifically responsible for the promotion of tourism which established on the 18th March 1960.

The duty of TAT is as what it introduces itself: *“TAT supplies information and Tat on tourist areas to the public, publicizes Thailand with the intention of encouraging both Thai and international tourists to travel in and around Thailand, conducts studies to set development plans for tourist destinations, and co-operates with and supports the production and development of personnel in the field of tourism”* (Note 1).



**Figure 1. Front Page of TAT Web Advertise (Note 2)**

Nowadays, build a official webside maybe the most common way of broadcasting and in the same time be the authority of information source. As TAT is shouldering the propaganda of tourism, the official web is windows of information.

Traditional Thai Massage have been the subject of tourism attraction in Thailand, mainly because its cultural and practical function. Actually, Thai government have been promoting Thailand as a tourism hub in Asia, where is not only attractive for delicious food, amazing landscape, but also for relaxing and leisure.

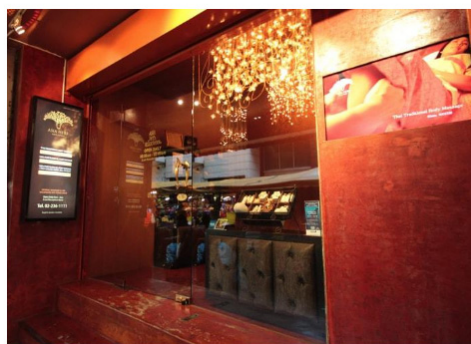
**Table 1. Governmental Promotion since 2004**

| Period              | Content   | Regulatory   |
|---------------------|---|--|
|                     |   | Authorities  |
| <b>2004 to 2010</b> | Five-year Strategic Plan: Establish Thailand as “Center of Ministry of Public Health Excellent Health of Asia” (Note 3) |  |
| <b>2010 to 2014</b> | Establish Thailand as “World-Class Health Provider” Ministry of Public Health (Note 4)                                  |  |
| <b>2012 to 2016</b> | Thailand’s National Tourism Development Plan (Note 5)   | Relevant Departments   |
| <b>2012 to 2016</b> | Policy of Developing Thailand into a Medical Hub in the Ministry of Public Health and Region (Note 6)                   | Thailand Board of Investment   |
| <b>Since 2013</b>   | Developing Thailand as a World-Class Medical Convention Center (Note 7)   | Ministry of Public Health Thailand<br>Convention and Exhibition Bureau |

All in all, with the longtime development, the image of Thai massage is now link tightly with Thai tourism, become a famous tourist attraction. Therefore, tourism plays an important role in the development of Thai massage in current time, or in other words, most of people would know Thai massage though their visiting in Thailand. And ever list “Thai Massage” as must to do activities in Thailand.

#### 4.1.3 Thai Massage Operation in Thailand

According to the operation mode and facilities, the Thai Massage could be classified to 2 kinds. There are Walk-in Shop and Resort.



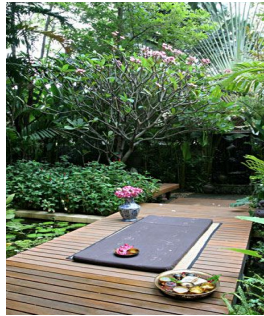
**Figure 2. Walk-in Shop, Asia Herb Association, Patpong. SalaDaeng Pat-PongShop (Note 8)**

Walk-in Shop is the most common operation mode in Thailand, almost everywhere around the city. And this make Thai Massage become one of the convenient daily activity for locals and a “can not miss” relaxation for tourists.



**Figure 3. Thai Massage by the Street (Note 9)**

Beside the Walk-in Shop, the massage that by the street side is one of the interesting phenomenon in Thailand as well. Though it just offers foot massage and shoulder massage, it's the most needed relaxation for tourists who have been traveling for long time. However, it's one of the promotion of Walk-in Shop, therefore not classify as new operation mode.



**Figure 4. Thai Massage in Resort (Note 10)**

#### 4.1.4 Thai Massage and Thai Spa

Beside Thai Massage, there is one terms that popular and common as well, that is Thai Spa. The term “Spa” is derived from the name of the town of Spa, Belgium, whose name is known back from Roman times, when the location was called *Aquae Spadanae*. With the longtime development, “Spa” refers to various health treatments now. Therefore “Thai Spa” refers to various health treatments that with Thai feature, such as Traditional Thai Massage, Thai herbal treatment, Thai decoration and so on.

#### 4.2 Thai Massage Business in China

According to the record, the first Thai Massage service is offered in Asia Hotel (Beijing) in Beijing 1993, which had been rise a hot discussion about it in the society in that time. However, there is no more continue recording after that. So far, 20 years has passed, the society had change a lot, what is the current situation of Thai Massage business will be reviewed in this chapter.

#### 4.2.1 The First Thai Massage Club in China

There is a report published on the semimonthly journal *Human Resource Development of China*, 1993. Titled: Thai Sisters in China—The Visiting to First Thai Massage Club in Beijing (泰姐到中国—北京首家泰式按摩院见闻), written by Jun Lee.

It said in the report that there were 33 Thai women come to Beijing, giving Thai Massage in the Asia Hotel (Beijing). And it emphasizes the legalization and mystery of Thai Massage in his report. According to the reporter, the operation of the Thai Massage Club was a hot topic in that time. Later on, there was one more article published on the *Business World (Xinhua News Agency)* in 1994, which share more detail of the club. It's said in article that, after bathing, the customer would be asked to wear loose cloth and then start massaging, the massage last two hours. However, what's more valuable is the point of view of Thai Massage in that time.

It's says in article, there are two kinds of Thai Massage in Thailand, one is Traditional Thai Massage, for curing, which is origin from the temple, and it's server for the King's family. The other one is Sex Massage that is well known for most of the people.

As what have been reviewed in chapter 2, above knowledge of Thai massage is a kind of misunderstanding, while it actually reflect what Chinese know about Thai massage, it may last for long time until around 2013, that Chinese tourists booming to Thailand then start to know the actual situation of Thai Massage. While it shows that the image of "Sex Massage" somehow spread in mainland China as well.

The article also point out, the 33 Thai therapist are all married women, all from Bangkok with good quality of massage skill, and well dress when they perform massage. It's also mention that the cost for 2 hours massage is 2000 RMB in that time, not including other charge for drinking and snack. Though is high expense, there are lot of customer visit the club, most of them are foreigners and oversea Chinese from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan.

#### 4.2.2 Chinese Tourism Boom in Thailand

As a country that famous for tourism, Thailand have received tourists around the world, while during 2013 to 2015, people in Thailand found the city were fill with Chinese tourist everywhere, and the data prove the factor.



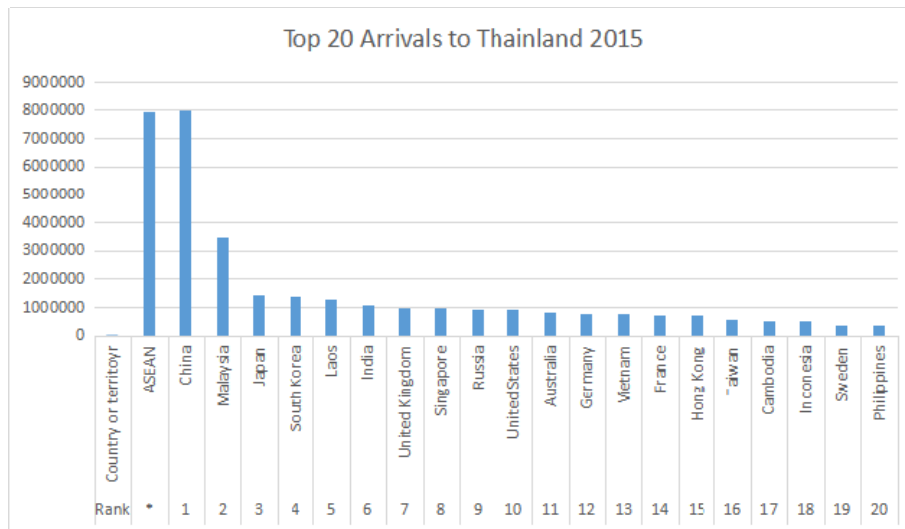


Figure 5. Top 20 Arrivals to Thailand 2015, Made by Ye Dan

The top one is the 7,934,791 arrivals from mainland China (People’s Republic of China), which is striking by compare with the number of ASEAN (Note 11) (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) 7,886,136 which is the summation of nine ASEAN members, and there are 8 of them are on the list of Top 20, though Malaysia take the top 2, it’s leave far behind China. And Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan are those from Asia. The western countries are followed by UK, Russia, US, Germany, France and Sweden. All in all, the major tourist source to Thailand are from Asia, and number of Chinese tourists almost equal to the total number of ASEAN.

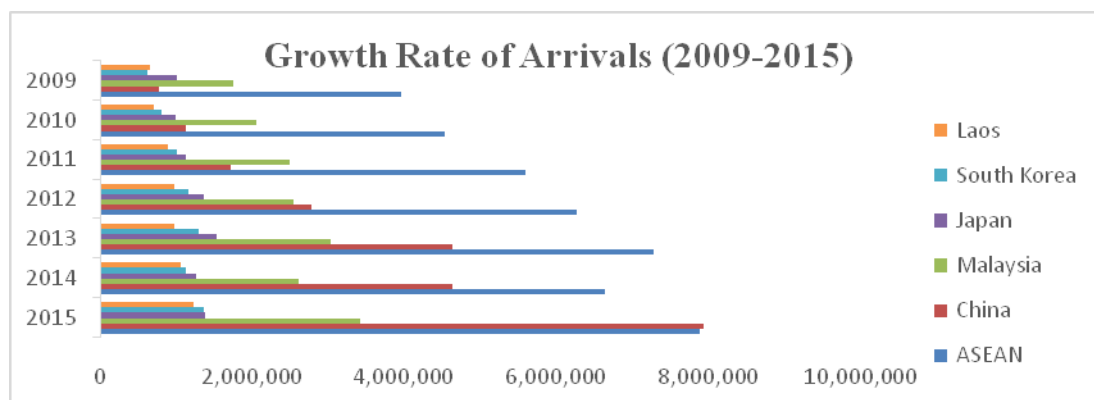


Figure 6. The Growth Rate of Arrivals (2009-2015), Made by Ye Dan

And beside the total number of tourists, what notable is the rapid increase rate of Chinese tourists. Above chart is the comparison of tourist numbers of the Top 5 Arrivals from 2009 to 2015. They are chosen as the data base. It’s because they are the Top 5 arrivals sources on the list of the Top 20. Learn from the above chart, the tourists of each country are increasing yearly, which indicate the positive development of tourism industry in Thailand. And mount all of them. ASEAN and Malaysia are

successfully remain a stable increase with big base number every year. While as the chart shows, China rushes to the first again, both because of the bigger base and the rate.

From 2011 to 2015, tourists from mainland China had grown rapidly. The boom of tourists in 2012 is credited to the Chinese movie “Lost in Thailand”, produce by Xu Zheng which releases on 12th December, 2012. It’s a comedy film about three Chinese men’re traveling in Thailand. The film is unexpectedly grossed more than US\$200 million at the Chinese box-office, becoming the highest grossing movie of all time in China when it was made public. Most of the scenes of Thailand are shot in Chiang Mai, one of the cities locates in northern Thailand. What audiences receive from the film is a city with Buddhism culture and exotic atmosphere which inspires them of peace and simple life style. Continue growth indicate the positive response of Chinese tourists. The interest of Thailand is now not triggered by second hand landscapes from the movie or TV only, but shared with family, friends or net users who had traveled to Thailand. Especially sharing information or article that with the label of “Real Personal Travel Experience in Thailand” is popular on the Internet. However, no matter how real the experience it was, it couldn’t be better than take the trip by oneself.

Chinese tourists are the potential customers for Thai massage business in China. Thai massage is various in forms and locations, that almost every Chinese tourist could have a Thai massage experience, which make them a potential customer for Thai massage business in China. The interesting of Thai massage is increase, while the requirement of service is increase as well. The customer would compare the massage they received in Thailand and China. In other word, more and more Chinese would like to try Thai massage in China, while the massage service must be good now.

#### 4.2.3 Thai Massage in Mandarin “MA SHA JI”

The language barrier and the popularity of Thai Massage mount the Chinese tourist create a new term for Thai Massage in mandarin: Ma Sha Ji (马杀鸡). It’s not the Chinese translation of “Thai Massage”, it’s a homo-phonic words of “Massage” in English, not in Thai, write in Chinese character as “马杀鸡”, literally means “house kills rooster”.

As a country that famous for tourism, Thai people get use to see somewhere in Thailand that foreigners are over numbers of the locals and generally be able to greeting or have simple dialog in English. And English, as the most widely use language round the world, most tourists would speak in English when they need to communicate with the local Thai people.

When the Chinese tourists booming to Thailand, English still plays an important role in the communication, because both Chinese and Thai language are not yet popular in foreign countries. Therefore it’s understandable that the term is homo-phonic in English, not in Thai. And personally speaking, the pronunciation of “Thai Massage” in Thai is difficult to pronounce. Beside the language barrier, the literally meaning of the “Ma Sha Ji” is fun and easy for remember. However, it’s the popularity of Thai Massage amount Chinese tourists that make “Ma Sha Ji” a well known term that equal to “Thai Massage” in Chinese.

#### 4.2.4 Rapid Development of Middle Class in China

According to McKinsey & Company “*The explosive growth of China’s emerging middle class has brought sweeping economic change and social transformation—and it’s not over yet. By 2022, our research suggests, more than 75 percent of China’s urban consumers will earn 60,000 to 229,000 renminbi (\$9,000 to \$34,000) a year. The evolution of the middle class means that sophisticated and seasoned shoppers—those able and willing to pay a premium for quality and to consider discretionary goods and not just basic necessities—will soon emerge as the dominant force*”.

In other words, the middle class in China, is not only group rapidly, but also willing to pay for higher and better consumption. The potential of stronger purchasing power is important. Cause unlike the various operating forms in Thailand, the Thai massage operation in China is costly, which make it requires better payment than local massage operation. About this situation will reveal in the following chapter.

All in all, more and more Chinese are interesting in Thai massage and more and more Chinese is able to purchase good quality service.

#### 4.2.5 A Case Studies of Guangzhou Antoinette Cosmetic Co., Ltd

The following chapter will start by introducing Guangzhou Antoinette Cosmetic Co., Ltd, a company that running various affairs of Thai massage business, and try to discuss what is Thai massage business.



**Figure 7. Logo of Thai Massage Products of Guangzhou Antoinette Cosmetic Co., Ltd**

Guangzhou Antoinette Cosmetic Co., Ltd is a cosmetic company that registered in Guangzhou City, Guangdong Province, 2003, the trademark of Thai massage business is Duan De Thai (杜德泰). Though the company does not run a Thai massage shop under the name of its own logo, while as a one stop supplier of Thai massage business, the company is able to contact and access to various customers and sections of Thai massage business. And more than 10 years business experiences, the success and failure of GZ Antoinette and the feedback and information from its customer will provide meaningful data for this study.

The main sections are as follow in the chart:



**Figure 8. The Business Sections of Guangzhou Antoinette Cosmetic Co., Ltd**

The implication of three section is the massage products require certain skill, while the Chinese therapy is fail to do the massage as good as the Thai therapy.

4.2.5.1 The Analysis of Massage Products and Skill

| Products and Skill 🍷 |                              |                                      |  |                               |  |
|----------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|--|
|                      | Aroma Massage Oil            | Herbal Ball                          | Sauna Herb                             | Traditional Thai Massage      |  |
| Products for Use     | 20 ml per customer, per hour | five customer per packing / per hour | Three customer per packing / per hours | NO                            |  |
| Skill for Apply      | need but easy                | need and be skillful                 | Not need skill                         | Need and be very skillful     |  |
| Appliance            | small dish                   | Steam Pot                            | Steam Tent                             | No                            |  |
| Sense of Thai        | Some                         | Yes, symbol of Thai treatment        | Yes, symbol of Thai treatment          | Yes, symbol of Thai Treatment |  |

**Figure 9. The Analysis of Products and Skill**

As what shows above Figure, the aroma oil is the best choice for selling, which is quick to use out and not require hard skill, however, is does not have the sense of Thai treatment. Use some Thai decoration will help though. Herbal Ball and Sauna Herb are representing the Thai medicine and not require difficult skill, which makes them popular products as well. It is no doubt that Traditional Thai massage is core of Thai massage, while for the product supplier as Guangzhou Antoinette, it is almost not profit from this objects, while for the massage operators, if the spa claim to be a Thai spa or Thai massage shop in China, then Traditional Thai massage is the “Must Have” item.

It’s now understandable that why Thai massage shop adds aroma shop in the service menu. Though in fact the method of aroma massage is Swedish style, with the Thai decorations, aroma oil become “Thai” and the local herb and fruit make the oil itself become Thai products as well. And it’s also because the price and quality of aroma oil is various that is available for all levels of operating.



**Figure 10. Massage Packing: Hot Compress and Aroma Oil Massage**



**Figure 11. Thai Sauna Setting**



**Figure 12. Ingredient of Herbal Ball Making**

The reason that Hot Compress and Thai Herb Sauna become the command service are as follow:

- 1) Hot Compress and Thai Herb Sauna play an important role in the Thai medicine treatment, the history is as long as the massage skill.
- 2) The application of herb is the wisdom of traditional medicine as well as the local knowledge of plant and fruit.
- 3) The require of skill is not that difficult for learning.
- 4) The concept of steam is world wild accepted.
- 5) Sauna herb packing and herbal ball are the products that could be use out and purchase continually.

In Thailand, Traditional Thai massage is a standard object, but in China it's not. The main reason is the requirement of hair foreign employee is difficult to make and the salary is much higher than the

Chinese therapy. The detail of this issue will be discussed in other chapters of this writing.

So the fact is, though Thai massage is famous around China, there is not many operators are able to have this massage service.

From the perspective of Thai massage business, the cost and profit are the main point that what kind of treatment should be offered, the main focus is therefore not for healing and curing patient. For most of people, these tree massage service may be too command to see that no one what to ask “Why?”. However, when the Thai massage business is to be “copied” to a foreign country, it will know what we have been take it for granted. The massage service menu is a result of the balance of cost and profit.

#### 4.2.5.2 The New Concept of Thai Massage



**Figure 13. Thai Aroma Oil Massage**



**Figure 14. Thai Hot Compress**

Beside the service menu, there are several feature of Thai massage in the current time, which not only the commercialization, but also create a new concept of Thai massage:

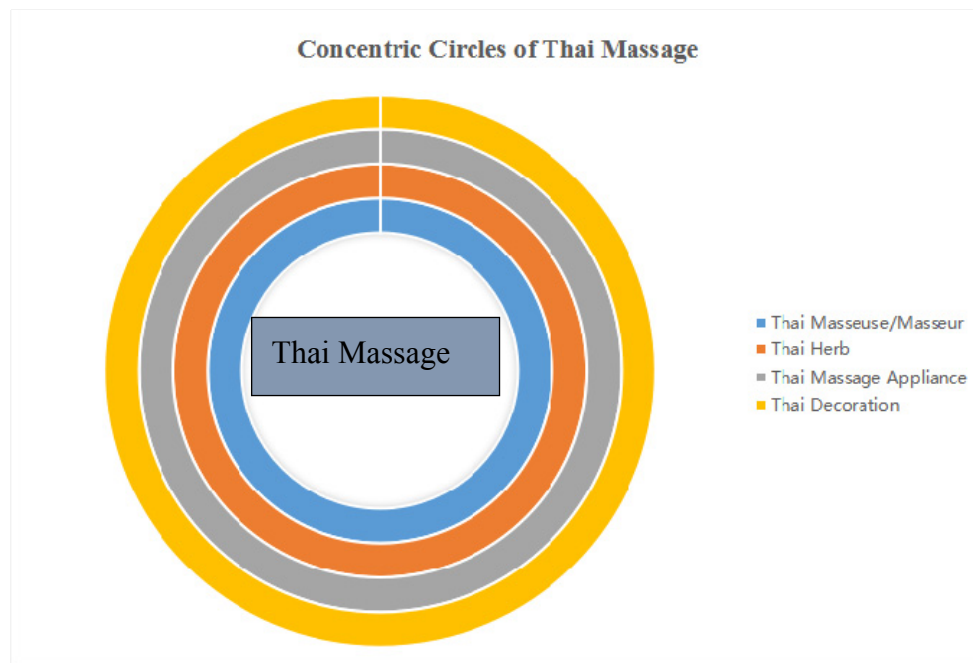
- 1) Place: From home and treatment room to shop, spa, resort.
- 2) Purpose: for relaxing more than for certain healing.
- 3) Combination of other massage concepts, such as oil massage, body scrub and so on.

More and more people would say: “I need to take a Thai massage for relaxing myself” or some may say: “Let’s go to the resort for relaxing, there is nice Thai massage”. The Term “Relaxing” is become the main purpose of Thai massage taking and one of the holiday activity.

What’s more, female customer that receiving massage is a command image for propaganda now. Firstly,

the female become massage receiver, not the giver, which reduce the association of sex massage. Secondly, it emphasizes that the massage is for beauty and health care. It's again to promote the concept that Thai massage is for healing and curing, it's a new relaxing life style.

With this concept, it's easy to understand that Thai massage is now a part of tourism attraction and resort project. And in fact this is the new image of Thai massage. Though the sex massage still exist, but it's not a main stream understanding of Thai massage now.



**Figure 15. Concentric Circles of Thai Massage**

Once the “Relaxing Life Style” become the main stream concept of Thai massage, then “How this concept is made?” is a worth asking question.

Out of my own observation, I make a concentric circle to explain this question. Thai massage skill is the core of this concentric circle, and then it's Thai masseuse/masseur, Thai herb, Thai massage appliance and Thai Decoration.

As what have been mention, firstly Traditional Thai massage is the main symbol of Thai massage, while it requires very skillful technique. Secondly, other massage service require certain technique as well, so the skill is the kernel of concentric circle.

The next circle is the therapy, because they are the person that hold the skill, and because of their good skill, customer will visit the shop again, otherwise, the shop can not run well. And it's also because from the case study of Guangzhou Antoinette, the unstable of employment is the main problem that bother the massage operators. About the employment problem will be discussed in other chapter with detail. But not only the massage skill, the figure of Thai therapy is representative, which including the greeting posture, the dressing and the language.



The third circle is the Thai herb, the representative products are herbal ball, sauna set and aroma oil that made of coconut, lemon grass or other local herb and pants.

The fourth is the Thai massage appliance, such as sauna tent, small dishes for aroma oil and so on. These are part of the Thai treatment, not only service the purse of healing, but also represent traditional Thai Culture.

The last circle is the Thai decoration, this section itself is a independent business, the products could be used in various occasions, such self-use at home, in hotel, restaurants and so on. The most popular market of Thai decoration products is Chatuchak Market, there are several shipping companies located, in order to make the most convenient door to door delivery.



**Figure 16. Female Servant in Greeting Posture**



**Figure 17. Thai Style Tray and Small Dishes for Aroma Oil**

My argument is, if s massage operation could full fill these five concentric circles, the business is more possible to be successful. It's five fundamental element for running the Thai massage business. II In the following chapter will be a case study of Guangzhou Antoinette Cosmetic Co., Ltd. The question: What is the potential and problem of Thai massage business in China? will be answered.

#### 4.2.5.3 Products and Delivery

Thai decoration is the most useful factor that create a sense of Thai culture. Therefore, in the very beginning of Guangzhou Antoinette Cosmetic Co., Ltd, the Thai decoration is the best sell item and the most profit one. All the products will come by shipping, it usually take one month, it happen often that products are broken or wait too long time.

Since the R9 rote is open in 2009, the delivery is made by car, which is quick and safe. It helps a lot to



get the products more quickly, while in the same time, more and more products are easier to come, the competitors are more, and especial the factory in Yunnan city start to make similar design of Thai decoration, it's cheaper than import from Thailand, so now, the Thai decoration is more command on the China market and the price is more fair.

Thai massage applicants, such as sauna set, small dishes for aroma oil, Thai therapy dressing and do on are in need of Thai massage business as well, especially the Thai therapy dressing. It's easy to create a image of Thai massage therapy, and not a costly item to make.



**Figure 18. Thai Massage Therapy Dressing in China**



**Figure 19. Female Dressing for Chinese Massage Therapy**

There are many massage operators are interesting in the Thai herbal products, especially the Thai herbal ball. The GZ Antoinette company have tried to set up teaching for the shops, while not every shop is able to run this object well. It's true that for those are able to hold this objects, they are Chinese therapy as well, not have to be Thai. But still, some shops don't get food feedback from the customer, so they have to change and stop the hot compress massage service and some just keep the Thai herb sauna, because that not require certain skill.

#### 4.2.5.4 Regulation of Hire Foreign Employee in China

And this lead to the second problem about the Thai therapy. Let's suppose all the Thai therapy are skillful enough, but the point is how to find them and hire them? So for there is not yet see and job agent that assistance in the job seeking of Thai massage therapy to mainland China. So far the job seeking is though private contact.

Take GZ Antoinette as an example, the Thai therapy is introduced by the Thai products supplier who have been cooperating for long time. It's because the working visa requires time and spent for apply, and it's usually not easy to get, so need to seek a suitable therapy who are skillful and trustful enough.

The therapy will usually visit China with tourist visa, and take a sort time working experience in the shop that both she and the employer would know is this a good choice for both of them or not. If both of them are satisfied, the Thai therapy will back to Thailand for apply all the document and certificate.

The requirements are as follows:

- 1) Certificate of No Criminal;
- 2) Health Record issued by doctor;
- 3) Certificate of bachelor degree;
- 4) Recommendation Letter from former employer;
- 5) Resume;
- 6) Certificate of Thai massage;
- 7) Certificate of Aroma massage;
- 8) Statement of Employment of Chinese employer;
- 9) Wage and living condition in China;
- 10) Photo and passport copy.

According to Guangzhou Municipal Human Resources and Social Security Bureau, to hire a foreign employer must meet the below requirements:

*“Article 6 the posts which employing units decide to fill with foreigners shall be those in special need and which can not be taken up by domestic candidates for the time being. Moreover, no relevant state regulations shall be violated in the while”.*

*No units shall employ foreigners to engage in cultural performances with a business character, except for those conforming with stipulations in Clause 3 of Article 9 of these Regulations.*

So far, Thai massage is not recognized as an occupation that requires foreign assistance and company that make the application usually should be big and well running, but most of the massage business is small and medium operation, they are fail to make the employment. Therefore, it leads to another problem of Thai massage therapy employment—illegal employment and staying.

## 4.2.5.5 The Illegal Employment and Staying

| <b>China Visa Type</b> |                       |   |   |
|------------------------|-----------------------|---|---|
| <b>Type</b>            | <b>Day of Staying</b> | <b>Entry</b>  | <b>Remark</b>   |
| Tourist Visa           | 30-60 days            | single/double/multiple Entry                                  |   |
| Business Visa          | 30-60 days            | single/double/multiple Entry                                  |   |
| Non-Commerce           | 30-90 days            | single/double Entry   |   |
| Work Visa              |                       | single Entry (multiple available after get residence permit ) |   |
| Stusy Visa X1          | More than 6 months    | multiple Entry  |   |
| Stusy Visa X2          | Less than 6 months    | single Entry  |   |
| China S1 Visa          | 180 days              | single Entry (multiple available after get residence permit ) | Live with immediate family  |
| China S2 Visa          | 30-90 days            | single Entry (multiple available after get residence permit ) | Live with family member who are foreigners working or studying in China |
| China Q1 Visa          | 180 days              |   | Family members of Chinese citizen                                       |
| China Q2 Visa          | 120 days              |   | Spouse of Chinese citizen   |
| Crew Visa              |                       |   |   |
| Group Visa             |                       |   |   |
| Transit Visa           |                       |   | Same as tourist visa  |

Figure 20. China Visa Type (Note 12) Made by Ye Dan

Beside tourist visa, any other kinds of visa requires invitation or improvement of relationship, so tourist visa holding become the most common way to visit China.

If a Thai therapy work in China with tourist visa, even if it no cause problem, the Thai therapy have to go back Thailand before the visa is expire, which means, the employer have to hire a new therapy as good as the formal one and in time to take place the formal one. In fact, some time is hard to do in the real situation, because not everyone could get 6 month tourist visa. If the employer has to hair new Thai therapy, he have to pay for the flights almost every month or every three month, which is a high cost. Therefore, it's not only because the violation of regulation, but also it's not worthwhile doing it.

## 4.2.5.6 The Training of Thai Massage Skill in China

As what have been show, it's very difficult to hire a Thai massage therapy, so the possible resolution is to train the Chinese therapy. And due to the popularity of Thai massage, Thai massage school now is available to almost everyone. And the teaching is under the guiding of government as well.

Take course of TTM School as an example. Thai massage is sorted:

- 1) “General Thai Massage”, 5 days, total 40 hours;
- 2) “Advanced Thai Medical Massage Therapy”, 10 days total 80 hours;
- 3) “Professional Thai Massage for Health 165 hours” and;
- 4) “Professional Thai Massage Therapy 1200 Hours”.

According to the course setting, a new learner at least need to have 5 days, full time learning (8 hours per days). And according to the regulation, the massage teacher should be qualified enough to issue a certificate and the massage school should be qualified enough to open the course.

However, the real situation in China is, Chinese therapy take the course after or before her work and Thai massage teacher is require to service customer if there is. It’s because let the therapy stop working will effect the shop operation, and secondly, the fee for hire a Thai massage teacher is about 10,000 RMB (50,000 baht for stay a month), or some time stay shorter time and pay lesser, but compare with Chinese teacher is expansive cost anyway. So the result of teaching and learning is not that well. In other words, the Thai massage training for small massage business operators is still costly.

Even some have a good training result, the operator may face another problem, which is a qualified therapy will leave for better wage. In other words, the therapy got training and skill improved but not work for him any more. This is a command problem that the Thai massage business operator have to facing as well. In the case of Thailand, the therapy will choose to get a overseas jobs, while when they not skillful or doesn’t get any offer, they will stay in the shop. The fact is, few therapy get skill improved, while the shop itself not, so the employee would like to seek better income.

All in all, the high cost of both time and money cause the massage business operator fail to maintain high quality of massage training, and it cause the shop fail to maintain the business. The emphasis and difficulty of Thai massage skill is underrated. And the regulation of foreign employment and this problem no way out. In other words, in China, those who are able to run Thai massage well would be the operator of big company, which is rich enough to run the training or hire a Thai massage therapy.

#### 4.2.6 Successful Thai Massage Operation Cases

##### 4.2.6.1 Wan Chun Beauty Club



**Figure 21. Wan Chun Spa Room for Aroma Oil Massage (Double Bed)**



**Figure 22. Wan Chun Spa Room for Aroma Oil Massage (Single Bed)**

Wan Chun Beauty Club headquarter located in Nanjing City, have been running over 27 years, established by Ms. Wan Chun. It has more than 10 chain shops around Nanjing city and also have its own beauty training school. Since 2008 until now, the cooperation between Guangzhou Antoinette Cosmetic is about 10 years. Aroma oil, herbal ball and sauna packing are the main products that continue purchasing.

Take Aroma Oil Health Care as example:

- 1) 750RMB (3750 Baht)/120 min for walking customer;
- 2) 308 RMB (1540 Baht)/120 min for club membership;
- 3) Step: Take Bath and have tea; Ready for Aroma Oil massage; Facial clear and facial care.

For easy compare, the price for aroma oil massage in Wan Chun Club (China), it's 750 Baht/hour (membership price). In Asia Herb Association (Thailand) the aroma oil for body it's 600 Baht/hour. The command cost for aroma oil massage around Thailand is 300 Baht/hour and it's almost same price for small beauty shop charge for oil massage in China. That is to say, Thailand and China have similar consuming level of massage service. And because the Wan Chun Club have its own school for training, which could ensure the skill of massage.

#### 4.2.6.2 Ultimate Club



**Figure 23. Ultimate Club, Massage Room (Zhuhai City)**

Ultimate Club is established by Zhuhai Huafu Group in Zhuhai City, in 2007. It offer various service including fitness, swimming, basketball, spa, beauty care and so on. It's for membership only, the cost for membership is 10,000 RMB/year (50,000 baht/year), for some service would be charge again.

The cooperation between Ultimate Club and Guangzhou Antoinette is long time as well, and the club is one of those that are able to apply working visa for Thai therapy, while it's under the title of Aroma Therapy, not Thai massage therapy, because Thai massage therapy is not recognized as a profession, but the aroma therapy is officially recognized. In May, 2016, there are two more Thai therapies was introduce by Guangzhou Antoinette who were start working until now.

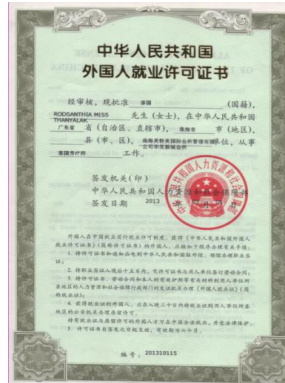


Figure 24. Employment of Foreigners in China, from Ultimate Club

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1 The Potential of Thai Massage Business in China

With more and more Chinese take visit to Thailand, The favor of Thai Massage would continue to grow, and due to the development of economic and society, Chinese nowadays would like to pay for better quality of life experience and pay more attention to relaxation and health care.

Inherited the ancient wisdom to the modern time, Thai Massage is successfully developed itself to be a word wild famous concept: Relaxing Life Style. But could this success be copied? According to the case study of Guangzhou Antoinette Cosmetic Co., Ltd. There are great potential of Thai massage business in China, while the main problem have to face is the lack of qualify Thai massage therapy which is both due to the difficulty of massage skill and the employment of Thai therapy. And this lead to a possible result that the successful Thai massage operating would only be top grade. It may be a bafflement for most of the massage business operators in China, while it's a good situation for those are able to run it big and nice.

### 5.2 The Problems of Thai Massage Business in China

In this thesis, it take large part to review Thai Massage and Thai Massage Business in Thailand, in order to discover the factors of its success. While such success is difficult to copy in China. It mainly lies on the employment of Thai therapist and the training of Chinese therapist.

The difficulty of employment of Thai therapist:

- 1) Salary for Thai therapist in China is close to income in Thailand, not high enough to make them leave the home country;
- 2) Language Barrier—very few therapist is able to speak mandarin, while not many Chinese is able to

speak English and Thai;

3) There is few operator is able to meet the requirement of employment regulation of foreign workers.

The difficulty of Chinese therapist training:

1) Language Barrier—very few therapist is able to speak mandarin, while not many Chinese is able to speak English and Thai. Therefore, it will cause misunderstanding of teaching and learning.

2) Chinese therapist usual have limited time for training. They have to practice during work-off time.

3) The outflow of therapist is the command situation that operator have to face, therefore there are operators are not willing to pay for the training.

As Traditional Thai Massage is the core subjects of Thai Massage Business, the lack of qualifies therapist, effect the business running seriously.

Therefore, the massage provider in China have to seek other subjects that represent Thai Massage as well. Thai Herbal Compress, Thai Aroma Massage then become popular and practical subject in China. While such products rely on the distribution business, high cost and delay of delivery is the main problems that operators have to face.

### *5.3 Limitation of Study*

1) There are many studies have been conduct on the subject of Traditional Thai Massage and Thai Massage Business in Thai language, while unfortunately, my ability of Thai language is in primary lever, which limited my information resources.

2) There are raw studies of Thai Massage Business operation in China, mainly because Thai massage is a new attraction to Chinese. And my main resources are base on the operation of Guangzhou Antoinette Cosmetic Co., Ltd, which is not able to reflect the overall situation of Thai Massage Business in China. There is maybe difference amount each local situations.

3) As China have long history of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Massage, while in this thesis, there is no comparison of Chinese Massage and Thai Massage, no matter the massage skill or the business operation. That is because “Chinese Massage” is a complicate subject for me, so far, I am not able to conduct it on this thesis. Therefore, this thesis limited the research on Thai Massage Business in China only.

### *5.4 Suggestion for Further Study*

Firstly, though there is potential of Thai Massage Business in China, while as what review in the thesis, there is problems in practice, and how to solve the problem remain unknown.

Secondly, though Chinese Massage is well know too, it have never become a tourist attraction as Thai Massage. Why? The answer to this question is worth of study.

### **Acknowledgements**

This thesis would never have been completed without the support, guidance and assistance from many individuals and institutions.

Firstly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Assistant Professor Wasana Wongsurawat, Ph.D,

Associate Dean and Director of Thai Studies Center, Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University. I am grateful to finished the thesis under her supervision, who is always kind and patient during past two years. My great appreciation also extended to Assistant Professor Carina Chotirawe, Ph.D who also offered valuable comments and advice for my thesis.

Meanwhile, I also would like to express my sincere gratitude to coordinator of Thai Studies Center, Mr. Surapon Sirimunkongsakun, who is kind and friendly to help during my four years study in Chulalongkorn University.

Finally, I would like to show my deep thanks to my family especially my parents, who have been support me during my study.

## References

- Askanada (Harald Brust) (n.d.). *Thai traditional massage for advanced practitioners*.
- Asokananda (Harald Brust). (n.d.). *The art of traditional Thai massage*.
- Bob, H. (n.d.). *Thai massage & Thai healing arts: Practice, culture and spirituality*.
- Chaithavuthi, & Kanchanoo, M. (n.d.). *Thai massage the Thai way: Healing body and mind Mane wan Chia and Max Chia Nuad Thai "Traditional Thai Massage"*.
- Chami, J. (n.d.). Photo by Luca Invernizzi Tettoni. In *Thailand's luxury spas: Pampering yourself in paradise*.
- Iida, J. (n.d.). *The "revival" of Thai traditional medicine and local practice: Villagers' reaction to the promotion of Thai massage in Northern Thailand*.
- Jiradej, M. (n.d.). *Translation of Lanna medicinal plant recipes for research and development of modern pharmaceuticals and the understanding of the Lanna cultures and histories*.
- Maria, M. (n.d.). *Photography by Sue Atkinson A Marshall health guide Thai massage: A step-by-step guide to traditional healing techniques*.
- NaiKhaya (n.d.). *13.80 Postures of Hermit's Exercises at Wat Pho*.
- National Institute of Thai Traditional Medicine. (n.d.). Department of Medical Service. Ministry of Public Health, Pennapa Subcharoen; editor, Ministry of Public Health. Department of Medical Service. National Institute of Thai Traditional Medicine. *The history and development of Thai traditional medicine*.
- Nontakon, C. (n.d.). *The choice of and the demand for Thai traditional treatment: A case study of soon gner community hospital in Nakhonratchasim a province*.
- Paul, H. (n.d.). *The Thai Village Doctor As a Mediator Between Traditional and Modern Medicine, from Thai-European Seminar on Social Change in Contemporary Thailand*.
- Salguero, C. P., & David, R. (n.d.). *Encyclopedia of Thai Massage: A Complete Guide to Traditional Thai Massage Therapy and Acupressure*.
- Sombat. T. (n.d.). *Traditional Thai massage*.
- Susan, G. S. (n.d.). *Massage therapy: Principles and practice*.



Tourism Authority of Thailand. (n.d.). *Guidebook Wat Pho*.

### Notes

Note 1. <http://www.tourismthailand.org/About-Thailand/About-TAT>

Note 2. Official web of TAT: <http://www.tourismthailand.org/home>

Note 3. Health Policy in Thailand 2006, By Bureau of Policy and Strategy Ministry of Public Health 2006Page 58.

Note 4. News from government web [http://thailand.prd.go.th/view\\_news.php?id=6174&a=4](http://thailand.prd.go.th/view_news.php?id=6174&a=4)

Note 5. News from government web [http://thailand.prd.go.th/view\\_news.php?id=5525&a=2](http://thailand.prd.go.th/view_news.php?id=5525&a=2)

Note 6. News from government web [http://thailand.prd.go.th/view\\_news.php?id=6782&a=2](http://thailand.prd.go.th/view_news.php?id=6782&a=2)

Note 7. News from government web [http://thailand.prd.go.th/view\\_news.php?id=6836&a=2](http://thailand.prd.go.th/view_news.php?id=6836&a=2)

Note 8. <http://asiaherbassociation.com/en/shop-thailand/pat-pong/>

Note 9. <http://www.theworldswaiting.com/2012/12/5-things-to-do-on-khao-san-road.html>

Note 10. Photo: Thai Massage in Resort <http://www.divanaspa.com/>

Note 11. ASEAN was formed on August 8th, 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Since then, membership has expanded to include Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar (Burma), and Vietnam.

Note 12. <https://www.visarite.com/visaType.htm>