

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### **Rationale for the Study**

Since the reign of King Rama V, train services have operated in Thailand for a long time. Airport Rail Link (ARL) was launched by State Railways of Thailand to connect between Suvarnabhumi airport and the city of Bangkok in June 2010. Airport Rail Link is the first high-speed train in Thailand. The rail link project between central Bangkok and Suvarnabhumi airport has turned out to be a fiasco with passengers paying up to 150 baht for what they say is a shoddy service (Bangkok Post, 2011). There are so many problems that are caused with the service operation. This can affect the tourists' satisfaction level. In addition, there are 185, 545, 206, 174, 290, 038, 288, 314 European tourists visiting Thailand via Suvarnabhumi Airport on May, June, July and August 2011, respectively (Ministry of Tourism and Sport, 2011). According to the quarter statistic of tourist visit Thailand in quarter 2, which was 2,857,756 tourists visiting Thailand via Suvarnabhumi Airport. It can be summarized that the number of European tourist visit Thailand is one of important part of tourists visiting Thailand.

### **Statement of Problem**

As the Bangkok Post mentioned, the Airport Rail Link has been unsuccessful in operating its services, because passengers keep complaining to the officials. Some examples of complaints in the newspaper include "Kantapa Piriyaongsa, An office employee, complained the trains do not arrive on time, resulting in passengers missing flights at Suvarnabhumi." (BangkokPost, 2011) The Airport Rail Link Company is being criticized. This can affect the company's income, if this news spreads to other tourists through word of mouth. There is no research or study regarding tourists' satisfaction on Airport Rail Link in Thailand. It is better to find the tourist satisfaction and dissatisfaction that can be applied to the strategic planning for Airport Rail link project. Airport Rail Link has been facing the problem relating to the service that is not reliable and customer complains about rail service. According to tripadvisor.com

that passengers complains about the service after travel with Airport Rail Link. For Example, tourist complains in tripadvisor.com that Airport Rail Link did not provide a good service for traveler with an over luggage. If tourists who come with a big luggage. It is better to take another choice to reach the city. If there are tourists visit this website find the suggestion of this person. Tourists might take another service rather than using Airport Rail Link (Tripadvisor.com, 2011).

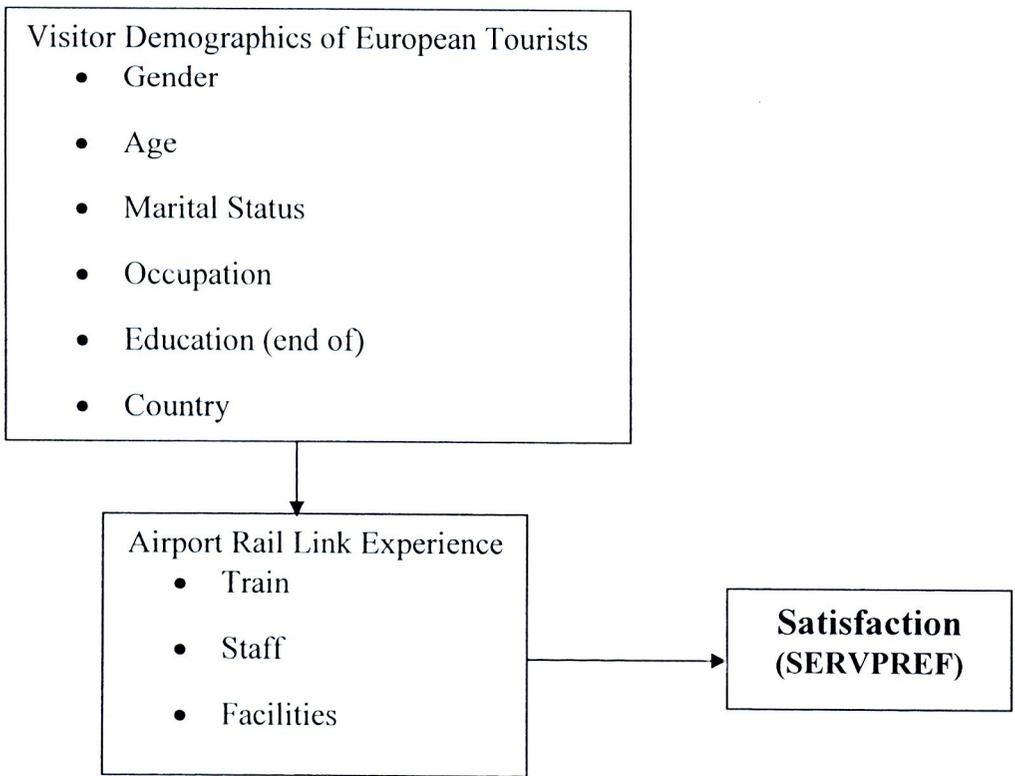
**Objectives of the Study**

The research aims to investigate whether European tourists are satisfied or dissatisfied with Airport Rail Link service in order to find future solutions.

The research objective is

To study the European tourists' satisfaction and dissatisfaction toward the Airport Rail Link, Bangkok

**Conceptual framework**



**Figure 1 Conceptual framework of study European Tourist satisfaction towards Airport Rail Link in Thailand**

## **Scope of the Study**

The research study will mainly focus on European tourists' satisfaction towards Airport Rail Link in Thailand. The research was conducted with 400 European Tourists regarding satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The set of 400 Questionnaires were distributed at Suvarnabhumi Station and Phayathai Station.

## **Definition of Study**

**European Tourists** The European Tourist is the tourists who come from European country visiting Thailand via Suvarnabhumi Airport, which use the Airport Rail Link service either Express Line or City Line.

**Service** The service that is provided by Airport Rail Link includes facilities, staffs, trains and station platforms used by European Tourists.

**Expectation** The beliefs, needs, and wants that European Tourists think that the Airport Rail Link should provide for them.

**Satisfaction** The perception of services of individual person to service provided by Airport Rail Link. If the customer is happy with the service provided, It is registered as "Satisfied." In case that the perception of service received is not good and they are not happy with the service provided. We register "Dissatisfied"

**Airport Rail Link (ARL)** The train service connecting Suvarnabhumi airport to Bangkok City. It is operated by SRTET Company. Including 8 stations, Phaya thai (PTH), Ratchaprarop (RPR), Makkasan (MAS or BCAT), Ramkamhaeng (RKH), Hua-mak (HUM), Bantapchang (BTC), Lat-krabang (LKB) and Suvarnabhumi (SVB)

## **Human ethics considerations**

The researcher has to consider the ethics when preparing the questionnaires for tourists. All the questionnaires must get university approval before collecting the data. The name of sample population or unrelated information must not be asked in the questionnaires. The tourists have the right to not answer the questions. Data collected will be kept confidential.

**Practical significance**

Airport Rail Link can use the results of this research to find new solutions for their business in order to improve customer satisfaction. Airport Rail Link will know the accurate expectation of tourists which can be adapted to provide the accurate service to tourists. In addition, the government can use this research to set up the statutory corporation to help airport rail link.

**Background Information**

Airport Rail Link is the first train to connect Suvarnabhumi airport to the Bangkok city. The cabinet of Thailand has approved to allow the State Railway of Thailand construct the Airport Rail link project on the meeting September 23, 2003. The distance of Airport rail link around 25 kilometers from airport to the central city. The Airport Rail Link project has been operated by SRTET Company, which stand for State Railways of Thailand Electrified Train. The Airport Rail Link is divided into 2 services. The first one called "City Link" which will stop in 8 stations including Phaya thai, Ratchaprarop, Makkasan, Ramkamhaeng, Hua-mak, Bantapchang, Lat-krabang and Suvarnabhumi. The price begins from 15 baht up to 45 baht. It takes 28 minutes to reach the airport. The other service named "Express Line" will take only 15 minute from Makkasan Station direct to the Suvarnabhumi Airport.