

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industries and is a major source of income for many countries. Like other developing countries, Thailand is keen to promote a tourism industry, especially for international tourists, or in other words, foreign tourists, who bring foreign currency, investment and economic growth. The tourism industry, both international and domestic, increasingly generates large amounts of income for the country. In 2006, Thailand's income from international tourist reached 482,319 million baht.

Year	International						
	Tourist		Average	Average Expenditure		Revenue	
	Trip	Change	Length of Stay	/person/day	Change	Million	Change
	(Million)	(%)	(Days)	(Baht)	(%)	(Baht)	(%)
1997	7.22	+ 0.41	8.33	3,671.87	- 0.92	220,754	+ 0.63
1998	7.76	+ 7.53	8.40	3,712.93	+ 1.12	242,177	+ 9.70
1999	8.58	+ 10.50	7.96	3,704.54	- 0.23	253,018	+ 4.48
2000	9.51	+ 10.82	7.77	3,861.19	+ 4.23	285,272	+ 12.75
2001	10.06	+ 5.82	7.93	3,748.00	- 2.93	299,047	+ 4.83
2002	10.80	+ 7.33	7.98	3,753.74	+ 0.15	323,484	+ 8.17
2003	10.00	- 7.36	8.19	3,774.50	+ 0.55	309,269	- 4.39
2004	11.65	+ 16.46	8.13	4,057.85	+ 7.51	384,360	+ 24.28
2005	11.52	- 1.51	8.20	3,890.13	- 4.13	367,380	- 4.42
2006	13.82	+ 20.01	8.62	4,048.22	+ 4.06	482,319	+ 31.29

Note. From Tourism Statistic, 2007. Retrieved December 3, 2007, from http://www2.tat.or.th/stat/web/static_index.php

Recently, the World Tourism Organization published the trend of Tourism Destinations in 2005, showing that Thailand was one of the top-leading destinations in the South-East Asia region, only outperformed by Malaysia and Hong Kong.

World's Top Tourism Destinations (absolute numbers)

Rank	Series	International Tourist Arrivals (million)		Change (%)		Market share 2004*	Population 2004 (million)	Arrivals per 100 of population
		2003	2004*	2003/2002	2004*/2003			
World		693	764	-1.9	10.2	100	6,377	11
1 France	TF	75.0	75.1	-2.6	0.1	9.8	60	124
2 Spain	TF	50.9	52.4	-2.8	3.1	6.9	40	138
3 United States	TF	41.2	46.1	-5.4	11.8	6.0	293	17
4 China	TF	33.0	41.8	-10.4	26.7	5.5	1,299	4
5 Italy	TF	39.6	37.1	-0.5	-6.4	4.9	58	64
6 United Kingdom	VF	24.7	27.8	2.2	12.3	3.6	60	50
7 Mexico	TF	18.7	20.6	-5.1	10.5	2.7	105	21
8 Turkey	TF	13.3	16.8	4.3	26.2	2.2	69	26
9 Germany	TCE	18.4	20.1	2.4	9.5	2.6	82	29
10 Russian Federation	TF	20.4	19.9	-3.9	-2.7	2.6	144	244
11 Austria	TCE	19.1	19.4	2.5	1.5	2.5	8	14
12 Canada	TF	17.5	19.2	-12.6	9.2	2.5	33	57
13 Malaysia	TF	10.6	15.7	-20.4	48.5	2.1	24	67
14 Ukraine	TF	12.5	15.6	19.0	24.9	2.0	48	33
15 Poland	TF	13.7	14.3	-1.9	4.2	1.9	39	39
16 Hong Kong (China)	TF	9.7	13.7	-9.5	41.1	1.8	7	214
17 Greece	TF	14.0	13.3	-1.5	-5.0	1.7	11	125
18 Hungary	TF	..	12.2			1.6	10	122
19 Thailand	TF	10.1	11.7	-7.3	16.4	1.5	65	18
20 Portugal	TF	11.7	11.6	0.5	-0.8	1.5	11	110
21 Netherlands	TCE	9.2	9.6	-4.3	5.1	1.3	16	61
22 Saudi Arabia	TF	7.3	8.6	-2.4	17.0	1.1	26	2007
23 Macao (China)	TF	6.3	8.3	-3.9	31.9	1.1	0	33
24 Croatia	TCE	7.4	7.9	6.7	6.8	1.0	4	176
25 Egypt	TF	5.7	7.8	17.1	35.7	1.0	76	10

Note. From World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2007. Retrieved December 3, 2007, from http://unwto.org/facts/eng/pdf/indicators/ITA_top25.pdf

However, the tourism industry in South-East Asia region has been very intense. Our neighboring countries have seen the opportunity to boost their economy through tourism industry as well. Many concerned agencies in Thailand have put much effort into attracting foreign tourists to visit Thailand. The Tourism Authority of Thailand, for instance, is enthusiastic to launch many campaigns to promote visits to Thailand among foreigners.

Knowing the tourists impressions before and after visiting Thailand will let us know how foreign tourists see or feel about Thailand. Moreover, it will reveal if Thailand and all the agencies concerned have been making the right moves towards promoting visiting among foreign tourists. This will enable us to improve ourselves or put more emphasis on specific areas of promoting tourism in Thailand.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Foreign tourists' impressions are a major concern of the tourism industry in Thailand. Being able to understand impressions of foreign tourists toward visiting Thailand will help us to understand the actual situation that Thailand has to confront. It will also facilitate Thailand to cope with our competitors, and to maintain the market share and position in the world market. This study was conducted to examine foreign tourists' impressions before and during coming to Thailand. This study aims to answer the following questions:

Main question

- What are the foreign tourists' impressions toward visiting Thailand?

Sub-questions

1. Before coming to Thailand, what are the foreign tourists' impressions of Thailand?
2. After having experienced visiting Thailand, what are the foreign tourists' impressions of Thailand?
3. What are the foreign tourists' opinions about their experience of Thailand?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The Objectives of this survey are as follows:

Main objective:

- To explore the impressions of foreign tourists toward visiting Thailand.

Sub-Objectives:

1. To find out the range of foreign tourists' impressions toward visiting Thailand 1) before coming to Thailand, 2) after having experienced a visit to Thailand.
2. To find out the foreign tourists' opinions of the experiences they gained from visiting Thailand.

1.4 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Definitions of terms of this study are the following:

Impression:	The mean scores of foreign tourists' feelings toward visiting Thailand. The feelings can be measured by using the 5-point Likert scale which is as follows: 5 = Strongly agree 4 = Agree 3 = Undecided 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree
Opinion:	A person's ideas and thoughts toward something
Foreign tourists:	International tourists who are not Thai residents.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

One hundred foreign tourists were included as the subjects for this study. The study of foreign tourists' impressions toward visiting Thailand focuses on only foreign tourists who were travelling in the Bangkok area. The questionnaires, which were distributed to each participant, cover the motivation before coming to Thailand, impressions during the stay in Thailand, and opinions on experiencing Thailand.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted to explore the impressions of foreign tourists toward visiting Thailand. The study aims to measure the feeling of foreign tourists toward visiting Thailand and find out the motivation among foreign tourists to visit Thailand. The result of the study shows if the strategies used in the Thai tourism industry are on the right track with the right target group. It also helps suggest which part of the tourism industry is needed to be improved or requires immediate action. With budget constraints, we need to be more specific on how or which part of the work must be focused on to compensate for the budget limitations. In conclusion the benefits of this study are as follows:

1.6.1 To find out the feeling of foreign tourists toward visiting Thailand, before coming to, and during the stay, in Thailand.

1.6.2 The findings will be useful for the Tourism Authority of Thailand, and all agencies concerned, as information to improve tourism in Thailand.

1.6.3 This study will benefit the Thai economy and Thai people as a whole when foreign tourists come back to visit Thailand again.

1.6.4 The survey can be used as a guideline for those who plan to establish themselves in tourism business.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study of foreign tourists' impressions toward visiting Thailand is divided into five chapters. Chapter one includes the background of the study, statement of the problems, objectives of the study, the definition of terms, scope of the study, the significance of the study, and organization of the study respectively. Chapter two is designed to review related literature. Chapter three consists of the methodology: subjects, materials, procedures, and data analysis. Chapter four presents the findings of the study. Finally, Chapter five will provide conclusions, discussions and recommendations for further research.