

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The global situation nowadays frequently changes. Consequently, results from change and several unpredictable incidents have inevitably affected the tourism industry and tourists' traveling behavior. Moreover, competition in the tourism industry is highly intensive because each country prioritizes their tourism industry creating a large amount of income. Most countries try to develop infrastructure, lift up standards of tourism products and services, and create strong points of individual identity to be selling points in order to attract international tourists to travel more in their country.

As an organization responsible for tourist promotion, TAT has the duty for marketing promotion to invite tourists from other countries to visit Thailand as well as promote Thai people to travel more domestically. As a result, it is necessary to have an operations room distributing information correctly and promptly. Also, modern technology is necessary for executives to support decision making in setting appropriate operational plans, and to monitor corporate performance or agencies within the organization and find correct ways to solve problems by using risk management measures for TAT to perform efficiently with highest productivity and also the least risk.

In former times, TAT has established a Tourist Rescue Center affiliated with the Office of the Governor to help tourists taken advantage of and find measures to prevent and solve problems in order to decrease accidents, and control and coordinate safety in several TAT events. This is done by setting officials to perform along with staff from the Tourist Police Division at the 1155 center (working during crisis) on Ratchadamnoen Road. After TAT was restructured in 2003, TAT transferred tasks in terms of destination development and the Tourist Rescue Center to the Ministry of Tourism and Sports. TAT now merely focuses on tourist marketing promotion. However, during the past 4-5 years, TAT's tourist marketing promotion has not been smooth because of several crises happening domestically and internationally. They weaken tourists' confidence as well as affect tourist numbers and income is not

reaching the goal. Several tourist statistics within the organization have lacked information integration. Therefore, executives cannot utilize a database to set a tourist plan very efficiently.

Thus, on 29 March 2007, TAT established the Tourism Intelligence Unit and Crisis Management Center on the 17th floor of the TAT headquarter building aiming as an operation center using IT system integrating information in order to set a strategic plan, make decisions by TAT executives, and monitor the tourist data in both normal situations and crisis such as tourist statistics information, tourism income, occupancy rate, travel reservations or cancellation of both Thai and foreign tourists, information on monitoring and evaluation, movement information from both domestic and international press, situation report information from TAT domestic and overseas offices, as well as information from related agencies of both public and private sectors. These may affect travel of both Thai and foreign tourists and are required in order to monitor situations promptly and to analyze and support decision making by executives and present press in a systematic way.

In order to do this, Tourism Operation Center's administration initially needs cooperation from several agencies within the organization. Therefore, TAT has appointed directing committees and a working group of the Tourism Operation Center composed of personnel from several departments as the working group to set working roles and clarify the Tourism Operation Center data in order to be able to approach the objectives of the Tourism Operation Center efficiently and productively. During the past, the working group of the Tourism Operation Center has held teleconferences and proceeded urgently in case of crises affecting the tourism industry. Moreover, TAT has also started the Tourism Operation Center to be ready and support crises which might affect tourists and the tourism industry during important Thai tourism festivals like New Year Festival, Loi Krathong Festival, and Songkran Festival, etc.

For database settlement within the operations room, working group set by IT Office hiring a consultant to create a prototype of the Tourism Operation Center in order to analyze and assess tourism situations systematically and promptly. At present, the consultant has already laid out, as well as carrying out the phase of putting in data to examine and link every existing data in the TAT system. Moreover, there was a test to present processed data through the system as a pilot project in May 2008.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.2.1 How do domestic and oversea TAT office directors perceive information from the TAT Operation Center?

1.2.2 What level of satisfaction do directors of TAT offices have regarding the TAT Operation Center?

1.2.3 How do TAT office directors feel about the overall performance of the TAT Operation Center?

1.3 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 Main Objective

To study awareness of domestic and oversea TAT office directors towards communications of the Tourism Intelligence Unit and Crisis Management Center.

1.3.2 Sub-Objectives

1. To investigate satisfaction of TAT office directors towards the TAT Operation Center.

2. To identify opinions directors of TAT offices have towards the TAT Operation Center.

1.4 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS/ VARIABLES AND DEFINITIONS

Definitions of the terms of this study are the following:

Communication is the process of people sharing thoughts, ideas, and feelings with each other in a commonly understandable way.

Effective communication occurs only if the receiver understands the exact information or idea that the sender intended to transmit.

Crisis is an unpredictable incident in the course of either the natural or man-made disaster that can affect the credibility and image of Thailand which will result in the disruption of normalcy and business continuity of the tourism industry.

Crisis communication is generally considered a sub-specialty of the public relations profession that is designed to protect and defend an individual, company, or organization facing a public challenge to its reputation.

Encoding is the process of putting a message into the form in which it is to be

communicated.

Decoding is the process the receiver goes through in trying to interpret the exact meaning of a message including looking for clues as to its true meaning.

Awareness refers to what you are conscious of now and over time.

Communication (process) awareness is the learnable skill of intentionally noticing at least seven of over 50 factors in and between you and a communication partner.

Satisfaction is the contentment one feels when one has fulfilled a desire, need, or expectation.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study will only focus on crisis communication of the Tourism Intelligence Unit and Crisis Management Center. The study results from opinions and awareness of domestic and oversea TAT office directors towards crisis communication of the Tourism Intelligence Unit and Crisis Management Center by using questionnaires. Sample groups were domestic and oversea TAT office director from 17-28 February 2008.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

1. In order to know strategies, methods, problems, barriers and guidelines to solve problems of crisis communication.
2. This study will be beneficial and will promote guidelines of crisis communication for both state and private agencies.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study of crisis communication of the Tourism Intelligence Unit and Crisis Management Center in this paper is divided into five chapters: introduction, composed of background, statement of the problem, objective of the study, definitions of terms/ variables and definitions, scope of the study, significance of the study, and organization of the study; review of literature, composed of crisis communication theory, crisis communication model, crisis communication objectives, key messages for crisis communication, objectives of the TAT Operation Center, and expected

benefits of the TAT Operation Center; methodology, composed of distribution of subjects, materials, procedures, and data analysis; results presenting demographic information of respondents, awareness of the TAT Operation Center information through media, information receiver's satisfaction towards the TAT Operation Center's information distribution, information receiver's opinions towards the TAT Operation Center's information distribution, and attitudes on process awareness of the TAT Operation Center as well as conclusions, discussion, and recommendations composing a summary of the study, summary of the findings, discussion, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.