

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background/Rationale

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing sectors in the world. It is a major driver of growth for developing countries – the tourism market share has actually increased markedly over the past two decades (7% of world GDP and 11% of total employment) (WTO, 2006). In early 2003, tourism around the globe experienced detrimental impact from two major incidents; namely, the American–Iraqi conflict and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic in Asia. The East Asian market experienced a decrease of 5.59 percent, equivalent to 6,166,460 arrivals (TAT, 2006). In addition, year 2004 Tsunami had attached India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. The affect hit tourism industry pretty severely in those countries.

For Thailand, to stimulate tourism industry after SARS and Tsunami, The Tourism Authority of Thailand plans to maintain and focus on positioning Thailand as the “Tourism Capital of Asia” in its marketing for 2006 by highlighting quality products, sustainability, and competitiveness (TAT, 2005). To success this plan, a seminar on “Tourism Capital of Asia Goals” was held on 21 March 2003. The main focus was on attracting tourists with high incomes. This seminar suggested that one of the problems was “lack of tourism development and marketing management” (Srisuwan, 2005: 2-3).

In Southern part of Thailand, most of tourism products are based on the abundant natural resources. TAT had developed strategic plans followed the TAT tourism zone. There are five zones of southern part. For TAT zone one, included Songkhla and Satun provinces, TAT has planed to develop Satun to be a new sea tourism destination. Because of its has distinguished beaches but not well known to visitors. In addition, For Songkhla province, TAT has planed to develop Songkhla to be a “Tourism City Center.”

“Songkhla province” has area features a variety of tourist locations of long-standing historical significance. It borders Malaysia and offers a convenient transportation route favored by a great number of tourists, especially those from Malaysia and Singapore. For numbers of visitors to Songkhla in year 2004, there are 1,289,100 of Thai visitors and 2,034,614 of foreign visitors. Tourism revenue in Songkhla averaged 14

million baht each day. Recently, because of the number of guest nights has decreased from 5-7 days to 2-3 days. TAT zone one (response at Songkhla and Satun province) and Indonesia - Malaysia - Thailand Growth Triangle: IMT - GT had a seminar at Songkhla that was held on 16 September 2005 to develop a tourism marketing plan for South East Thailand. They had decided together to appoint a marketing and promotion task force in collaboration with IMT-GT. The results of the seminar increase in promoting tourism activities. This included a new logo and tourism theme, IMT-GT tour packages, travel guides, sales promotion events, familiarization trips (FAM Trips), and marketing strategy research (OTD, 2005).

This research investigated potential of tourism market at present and the potential support the prospect of marketing development in hospitality and tourism at Songkhla province and offers guidelines for proper sustainable marketing strategy development plans for Songkhla province.

1.2 Objectives of the study

- 1) To study the present situation of supply factors of the tourism market present in Songkhla province.
- 2) To study the potential and prospect of supply factors whether they have enough potential to support tourism marketing plans from government in the near future.
- 3) To study the future tourism effect on Songkhla after developing tourism-marketing plans.
- 4) To provide recommendations to support proper Songkhla tourism marketing development plans in the future.

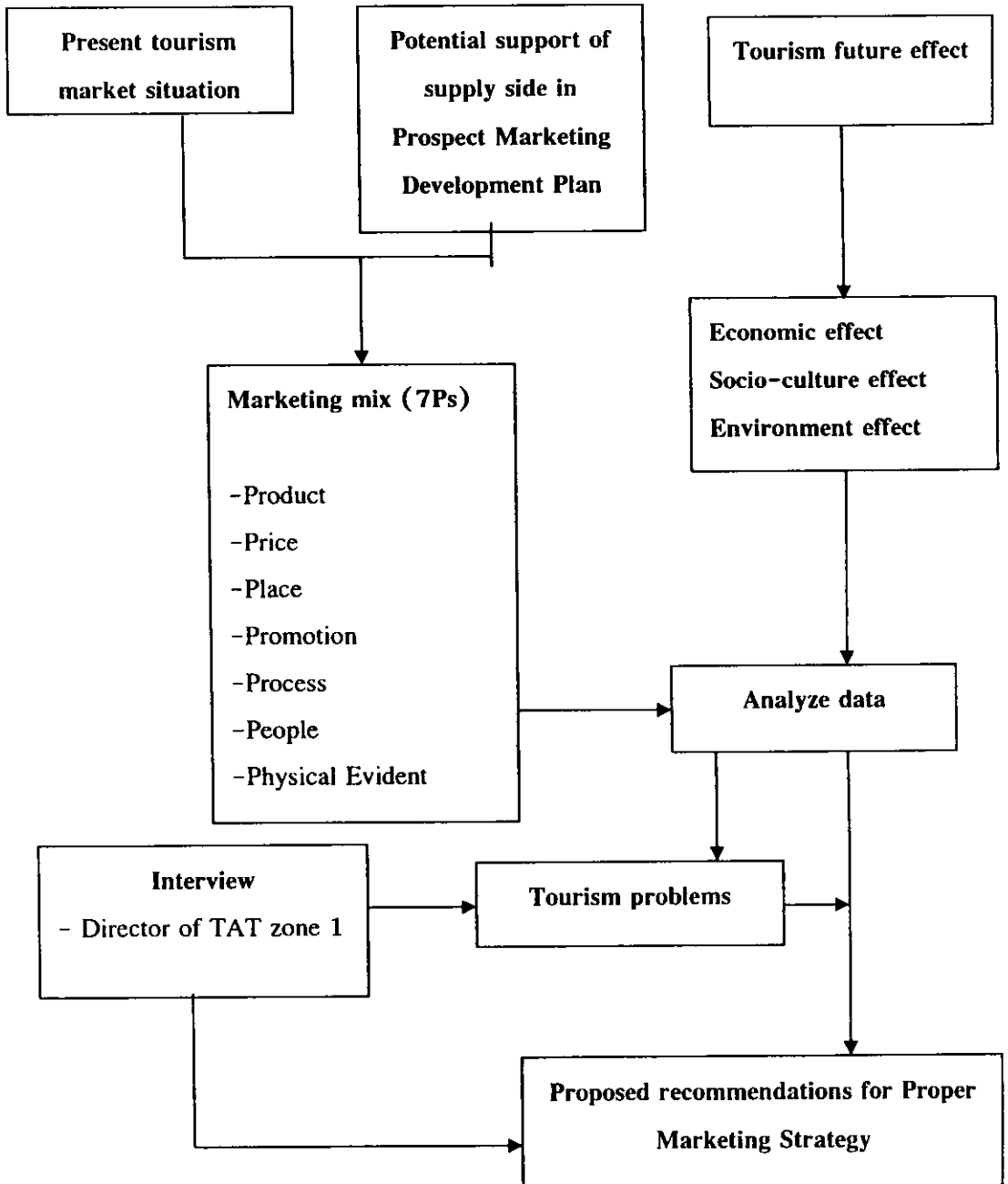
1.3 Significance of the study

The information obtained from this research can be utilized as a guideline in developing tourism marketing strategic plans and improving tourism market of Songkhla province in the future.

1.4 Limitations of the study

This research focused on study the potential and prospect of hospitality and tourism market in supply factors at Songkhla province. Therefore, the results did not show the opinion of demand factors. In addition, the dual characteristic of Songkhla and Hatyai district was a limitation of this study. Hatyai is one district of Songkhla province but had better known because of its tourism accessibility, tourism accommodations, and attractive tourism entertainments are located in Hatyai. Therefore, Hatyai is a business trade city of Southern Thailand while, Muang district and other districts of Songkhla province lie most of tourism natural product shops, which are unique and distinguish. Therefore, most of the results of this study were from the respondents in Hatyai district because most of supply factors are located around there. This case study limited period during December 2005 to April 2006.

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework



1.5 Definition of Key terms

Tourism Supply Factors

Direct tourism supply factors in tourism industry serve visitors. For this study had divided the tourism supply factors into two parts. First, “supporters” which include educational institute, tourism police, administration parts, and financial institutes. Second, “providers” which include accommodation businesses, restaurants, pubs and entertainment places, travel agents and tour operators, and transportation businesses.

Visitor

Any person traveling to a Songkhla other than that of his/her usual environment for less than 12 months and the main purpose of trip is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the Songkhla visited and visited at less 24 hours.

Prospect

The possibility of future success or, chance of success or advancement, trend of development. To predict future situation by study the present situation and business trend to plan the future development.

Potential

The capacity for growth, development, or coming into being, to support the development for increase number of visitors with standard of service quality and tourism infrastructure.