



**An Assessment of the Needs, Motivation, and Satisfaction of the Middle East
Tourists in Phuket**

Natnarin Sorot

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Business Administration in Hospitality and Tourism Management
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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้ มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาผลิตภัณฑ์และบริการที่มีอยู่ในปัจจุบัน ของ
โรงแรม ร้านอาหารและบริษัททัวร์ ที่มีกลุ่มเป้าหมายที่เป็นกลุ่มนักท่องเที่ยวตะวันตกกลางใน
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ธรรมชาติ วัฒนธรรม หรือสถานที่ท่องเที่ยวแบบดั้งเดิมและสถานที่แบบพิเศษ อื่น ๆ) ที่มีอิทธิพล
ต่อความพึงพอใจ ในประสบการณ์ของการมาท่องเที่ยวและเยี่ยมชมในจังหวัดภูเก็ต ใน
ขณะเดียวกัน การศึกษานี้ยังมุ่งเน้น ที่จะตรวจสอบความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างความพึงพอใจของ
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เป้าหมายสุดท้ายของการศึกษานี้คือ การให้ข้อเสนอแนะ เพื่อที่จะแก้ไข ปรับปรุง และพัฒนา
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กลุ่มนักท่องเที่ยวตะวันตกกลาง โดยส่วนใหญ่เป็นชาวมุสลิมและพวกเขาอาจต้องการที่จะ
ยังคงอยู่ในวัฒนธรรมที่คุ้นเคยในขณะที่เดินทางท่องเที่ยว จึงเป็นสิ่งสำคัญสำหรับผู้ให้บริการธุรกิจ
ในจังหวัดภูเก็ตในการทำความเข้าใจ เกี่ยวกับความคาดหวัง ความจำเป็น ปัจจัย ที่จะสามารถ
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บริการอยู่ในปัจจุบัน แบบใดเป็นที่นิยมและมีอิทธิพลต่อระดับความพึงพอใจของนักท่องเที่ยว ตะวันออกกลาง ข้อมูลอื่น ๆ ที่เกี่ยวข้อง หรือมีประสบการณ์จากการให้บริการลูกค้ากลุ่มดังกล่าว และวิเคราะห์ผลสะท้อนจากการสัมภาษณ์ของผู้เข้าร่วม นั้น ๆ

ผลการศึกษาพบว่ากลางวันออกนักท่องเที่ยวส่วนใหญ่มักจะเดินทางไปในกลุ่มเล็ก ๆ หรือแบบคู่รัก หากเดินทางพร้อมครอบครัว มักจะประกอบด้วยสามรุ่น โดยเฉลี่ยแล้ว พวกเขาเลือกห้องพักแบบที่มีมาตรฐานสูง ของการให้บริการที่พักและร้านอาหาร ห้องสวีท ห้องพักสำหรับครอบครัว ที่พักสไตล์วิลล่า ที่เอื้อให้เกิดความเป็นส่วนตัวมากขึ้นและสามารถมีพื้นที่ในการใช้สวดมนต์ประจำวันได้ จะได้รับความนิยมอย่างสูงจากนักท่องเที่ยวชาวตะวันออกกลาง การประดับตกแต่งด้วย รูปภาพหรือ สัญลักษณ์ ของศาสนาอื่น ๆ ไม่เป็นที่ยอมรับจากนักท่องเที่ยวตะวันออกกลาง ผู้ดำเนินกิจการร้านอาหารส่วนใหญ่ ชี้ให้เห็นว่าป้ายโฆษณา สัญลักษณ์ ฮาลาลและเมนูที่มีคำอธิบาย เป็นภาษาอาหรับ รวมถึงบุคลากร ในร้านที่สามารถสื่อสารภาษาอาหรับได้ มีความสำคัญมากในการสร้างความพึงพอใจให้กับนักท่องเที่ยวชาวตะวันออกกลาง หลายหน่วยงาน ในธุรกิจการท่องเที่ยวได้ตั้งข้อสังเกตว่า ในช่วงปลายเดือนมิถุนายนหรือต้นเดือนกรกฎาคมก่อนเดือนถือศีลอด เป็นช่วงเวลาที่นักท่องเที่ยวจากตะวันออก นิยมเดินทางมาท่องเที่ยวในจังหวัดภูเก็ตมากที่สุด สำหรับในเรื่องของการสื่อสารและอุปสรรคทางภาษา ไม่ได้เป็นปัญหาที่สำคัญมาก

จากผลการศึกษาได้บทสรุปว่า ผู้ให้บริการในอุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยวในจังหวัดภูเก็ต มีความตระหนักดีถึงการเตรียมการพิเศษที่มีจำเป็นสำหรับนักท่องเที่ยวตะวันออกกลาง อย่างไรก็ตาม ยังคงมีบางส่วน ที่ต้องดำเนินการแก้ไขและปรับปรุงมาตรฐาน เช่นการใช้กฎระเบียบในการควบคุมราคาและบังคับใช้เพื่อลดปัญหาการฉ้อโกงนักท่องเที่ยว; การปรับปรุงระบบขนส่งสาธารณะเพื่อลดจำนวนอุบัติเหตุที่เกิดขึ้นกับนักท่องเที่ยว; จัดตั้งหน่วยช่วยเหลือนักท่องเที่ยวบริเวณใกล้ชายหาดที่สำคัญ; การปรับปรุงการให้ข้อมูลในหลากหลายภาษา; การจัดตั้งบริการ สายด่วนให้ความช่วยเหลือรับเรื่องร้องเรียนจากนักท่องเที่ยว; การปรับปรุง ป้ายบอกทาง แผนที่ ข้อมูลการท่องเที่ยว ในรูปแบบภาษาต่างๆ รวมถึงภาษา อาหรับ; และการขยายขนาดของสนามบินนานาชาติภูเก็ต

รัฐบาลควรมีบทบาทในการดำเนินการแก้ไข และพัฒนาเขตการท่องเที่ยวต่าง ๆ โดยคำแนะนำเหล่านี้มีความสอดคล้องกับปัญหาที่นักท่องเที่ยวและผู้ประกอบการกำลังเผชิญอยู่ หากเร่งดำเนินการแก้ไขจะสามารถทำให้จังหวัดภูเก็ตเป็นสถานที่ท่องเที่ยวได้รับความนิยมไม่เฉพาะเพียงแต่นักท่องเที่ยวชาวตะวันออกกลางเท่านั้น หากแต่เป็นนักท่องเที่ยวจากทั่วทุกมุมโลก

คำสำคัญ: นักท่องเที่ยวตะวันออกกลาง, พฤติกรรม, ความพึงพอใจ, ความตั้งใจในการมาเยือน, ฮาลาล

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Abstract

This study aims to study the existing products and services on offer by hotels, restaurants and tour agencies that target Middle East tourists in Phuket, and investigate factors (price, accommodation service, natural attractions, cultural and traditional attractions, and special preferences) influencing Middle East tourists' satisfaction with the experience of visiting Phuket and examine the relationship between Middle East tourists' satisfaction and their revision intention to Phuket. Finally it will provide suggestions for improving the performance of the tourism industry in Phuket with regard to Middle East tourists because they are one of the fast growing market segments visiting Thailand and were considered as highest-spending world travellers.

Most Middle East tourists mostly are Muslim, and they may prefer to remain within familiar cultures when travelling (Cohen and Neal, 2012). It is important for business services providers in Phuket to develop a better understanding of Middle East tourists' expectations and needs and the factors that can lead to their overall satisfaction, thereby stimulating revisiting and recommendation behaviour.

This research used a mixed methods strategy, which combines a qualitative method was employed in the form of semi-structured interviews and quantitative research paradigms to answer research questions. The quantitative sample for this study were 389 tourists from the Middle East countries excluding Israel and the qualitative included 30 people from tourism service providers, including hotel managers, restaurant managers, and travel agency staff members.

The results showed that most Middle East tourists tend to travel in small group or couples, or as a family often consisting of three generations. On average, they chose higher than

average standard of services both for meals and accommodation. The family rooms, suites Villa-style lodging which encourages more privacy and have prayer area were highly popular. Decoration of other religions is not appreciated. Restaurant representatives indicated that Halal sign and Halal foods and menu in Arabic were very important. Many of travel agencies noted that the popular period for visitors from the Middle East tourists are in late June or early July. The language barrier was not a significant problem.

Service providers appeared to be well-aware of the special arrangements needed for Middle East tourists. However there are still some improvements that could be made. They pointed a number of improvement such as standardizing services and implementing price rules; improving public transportation; creating help desks for tourist support on major beaches and improving multilingual information; price control and enforcements to reduce the incidents of cheating of tourists; and expanding the size of Phuket Airport.

Government could have more active role in improving tourist zoning. These suggestions are consistent with the issues that identified by the respondents, and would help improve Phuket's popularity which are not just for Middle East tourists but all tourists from around the world.

Keywords: Middle East Tourists, Behaviour, Satisfaction, Revisit Intention, Halal, Phuket

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LIST OF PAPERS

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Tourism in Phuket and Middle East Tourists

Phuket is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Thailand. Phuket is a southern coastal province. According to the Tourist Authority of Thailand (TAT), it is known as the *Pearl of the South*. Phuket, which includes one large island and approximately 32 small ones, is the second-smallest province in Thailand (TAT, 2010). Most of its tourism interest is in its natural environment, which includes coastal and tropical areas as well as forested areas (TAT, 2010). Although it is one of the most popular coastal tourism areas in Thailand, with a focus on sun and diving holidays, it also has a unique Sino-Portuguese architectural heritage and a reputation for hospitality that draws both domestic and international visitors (TAT, 2010). This combination of natural beauty and architectural grace, as well as the culture of the area, is highly attractive to many visitors.

Phuket has been promoted as a tourist destination for many decades. The result of this promotion makes Phuket attractive to travelers around the world, who come to visit Phuket and enjoy the pleasant weather and the sea, sun, and sand-dominated environment. Phuket is considered as Thailand's largest, most popular and most visited island. It has become the wealthiest province since the late 1980s (Phuket Industry Report, 2007). Its economy is predominantly fueled by the tourism industry which has become largest source of income for the province. Millions of tourists in each year come to Phuket and the surrounding Andaman Sea islands annually, bringing in billions of baht of revenue to the region. According to the Phuket Hotelwork (2013), the Phuket economy has been growing in a last decade. In the year 2007-2008, an estimated 4 million tourists (both Thais and foreigners) visited Phuket. Even though Phuket has been affected by political issues for the past few years, like the rest of Thailand, the province still hosted 2,853,366 tourists in 2009 and 2,721,269 tourists in 2010 (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2010). Products and services offered to foreign tourists who travel to Phuket include hotels, spas, golf clubs, nightclubs, as well as shopping malls and boutiques. The Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2010) also projected that Phuket tourism will continue to grow, driven by both Thai and foreign tourists. This growth is because Phuket has a lot of activities to do, and

consequently encourages the tourist to spend more. Comparing Phuket with another island such as Phi Phi and KohSamui, Phuket has much higher visitor traffic. Most tour groups visit the southwestern beach towns of Patong, Karon, and Kata because of their developed and tourist-friendly nature. This area is the ideal place for tourists who are looking for lively, action-filled vacation (Lonely Planet, 2002).

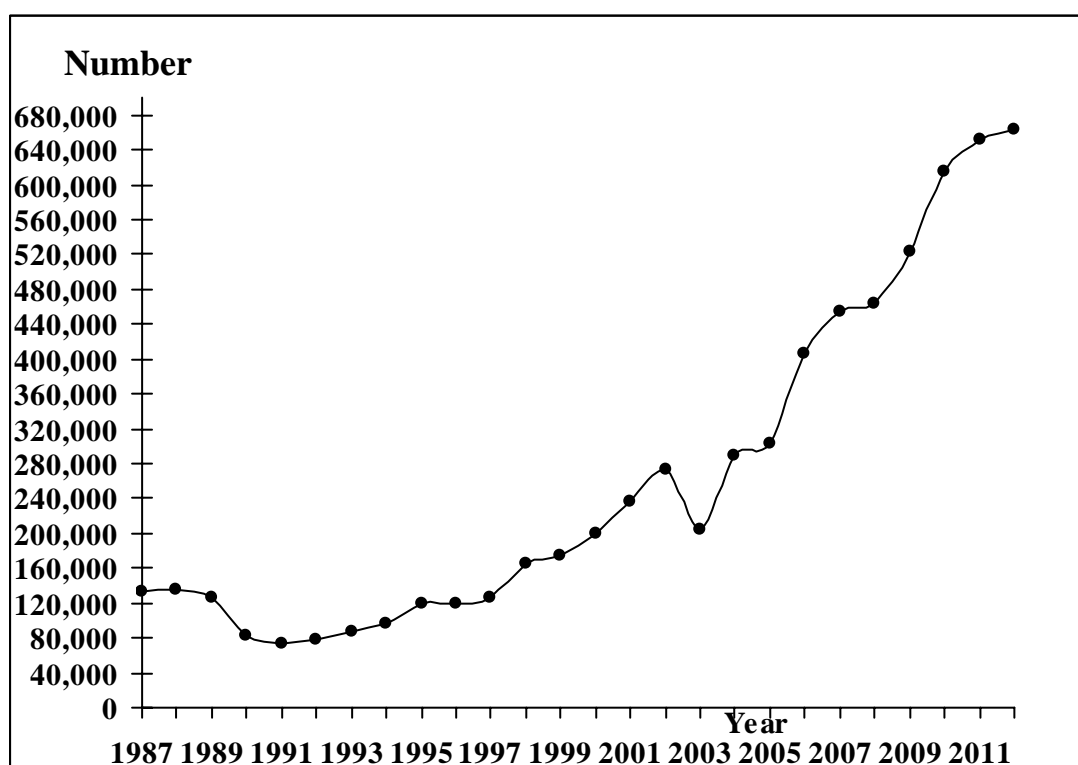
As it shown in many reports from Tourism Authority of Thailand, undoubtedly Phuket is one of the favorite destinations in Thailand among foreigners from every region of the world. Middle East travelers are one of the fast growing market segments visiting Phuket for the last five years, according to the most recent statistics released by Tourism Authority of Thailand (2009). Further, statistics also show visitors from this region have a long average stay and very high average spending compared to other international visitors. Business Guides (2008) projects a 4.4% growth in Middle East travel and tourism in Thailand annually between 2006 and 2015. This will increase opportunities for Phuket as a preferred tourist destination.

Table 1.2 shows the number of tourists in Phuket by originating regions from 2005 to 2012. This table indicates the large number of Middle East who traveled to Phuket in each year. Table 1.3 illustrates international tourist arrivals at accommodation establishments in Phuket by nationality from 2009 to 2013 which increased 30% from 2010 to 2011. The updated information from Office of Commercial Affair Phuket about the number of tourist in Phuket was in 2012. It reported there was about 9.5 million international tourists visited Phuket (total inbound and outbound passengers) in 2012 (C9hotelwork, 2013). Additionally, the numbers of tourists have increased 13% from 2011.

Middle East tourism is one of the potential markets that business owners should focus on. Figure 1.1 and Table 1.1 illustrate a number of Middle East tourists arrives to Thailand from 1987-2014. It indicates the high growth of approximately 408% (2012 compared with 1987). This is particularly true since Phuket has become a very favorite destination among Middle East travelers during the last five years. The Department of Tourism and Sports (2010) and Tourism Authority of Thailand's report indicates that Middle East tourist arrivals (Table 1.2) grew by 67.2% in the first quarter of 2006, and continuing to grow during the coming period. Tourists from Saudi Arabia alone have increased by 62.31% in 2010 compared to the previous year. It has

also shown that Middle East tourists have high average expenditures and length of stay compared to others. Thailand is becoming an increasingly popular destination among Middle East tourists.

Figure 1.1 Middle East Tourist Arrivals to Thailand (1987- 2012)



Source: Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2013

Table 1.1 International Tourist Arrivals to Thailand by Nationality

Nationality	2011	2012	2013	2014
	Number	Number	Number	Number
Middle East	601,146	605,477	630,243	593,000
Egypt	16,703	19,918	28,175	27,358
Israel	125,093	129,551	134,874	137,948
Kuwait	55,788	64,611	71,173	57,468
Saudi Arabia	12,521	17,084	21,452	12,860
U.A.E.	108,608	113,547	123,926	117,828
Others	282,433	260,766	250,643	239,538

Source: Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Thailand 2015 (<http://www.tourism.go.th>)

Table 1.2 International Tourism in Phuket

Foreigners (Region of Residence)	2006	2007	2008	2009
The Americas	151,769	125,707	82,142	100,240
Europe	1,343,147	1,409,278	942,002	1,007,583
Oceania	322,206	391,152	338,530	412,091
Asia	960,572	823,486	1,349,116	990,352
<u>Middle East</u>	<u>79,780</u>	<u>96,749</u>	<u>66,433</u>	<u>73,601</u>
Africa	25,305	45,341	94,070	97,441
Total	2,882,779	2,891,713	2,872,293	2,681,308

Source: Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2009

Table 1.3 Middle East Tourist Arrivals at Accommodation Establishments in Phuket

Nationality	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Saudi Arabia	6,235	13,685	17,952	n/a	n/a
U.A.E.	10,343	19,352	25,005	n/a	n/a
Oman	4,531	5,320	7,851	n/a	n/a
Bahrain	3,251	6,452	8,652	n/a	n/a
Other Middle East	29,611	69,549	88,928	n/a	n/a
Total	53,971	114,358	148,388	142,230	148,953

Source: Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Thailand, 2014

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Middle East tourist arrivals at accommodation establishments in Phuket are continuously increasing every year. According to Ministry of Tourism and Sports (2012), the number of Middle East tourists arrive at accommodation establishments Phuket has been increased significantly from 53,971 in 2009 to 148,688 in 2011 (increased 193%). The focus on the Middle East market in this research is due to the report from Business and Tourism Guide to Thailand (2006), which shows that Middle East tourists are some of the highest-spending world travelers, with expenses USD500 or more on average than European travelers. This makes Middle East outbound travel a highly lucrative international tourism segment. Business Guide Series (2008)

also claims that the Middle East tourist market is a significant focus for the tourism industry around the world, especially in Southeast Asian countries. These countries are working hard to promote their tourism products, in order to attract the Middle East tourist to spend the most value in their countries. Middle East tourists have the longest average length of stay compare to tourists from other regions. Most Middle East tourists travel in a small group of two to four people, which along with their highest average spending makes Middle East tourists the highest yielding visitors on average. Thailand's neighboring countries also see this potential, and aim to improve their abilities to attract tourism demand, especially from the Middle East. This creates even more serious competition in the tourism industry among regions that have a similar concept of Sea Sun Sand Tourism, such as Bali, Indonesia and Malaysia.

According to the previous research, there are a number of factors that marketer and government need to consider in order to attract and satisfy tourists (Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2009). These factors may include price, service, amenities, and place-specific attractions such as natural resources and environment or unique culture and traditional experiences (Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2009). Moreover, according to Farahani (2009) who investigated factors that influence Muslim tourists, found that accommodating the needs of this group by providing halal meals and religious information (directions to Mecca, information about mosques, or prayer times), increases tourist satisfaction and intention to revisit. Thus, to attract Middle East visitors Phuket needs to offer both general and specific services that meet their needs.

The growing opportunity in this tourism market has stimulated intense competition in international tourism among Southeast Asian countries. As mentioned earlier, most Middle East tourists are Muslim, and they may prefer to remain within familiar cultures when traveling. As such, it is important for business owners in Phuket as well as the government to develop a better understanding about Middle East tourists' expectations and needs and what factors can lead to their overall satisfaction, thereby stimulating revisiting and recommendation behaviors. The findings in this study will provide the stakeholders with conceptual foundation to build upon for improving better tourism products and services to attract this group of tourists. Further, the segmentation approach will allow for more effective strategy to be devised as different strategies can be customized toward different Middle tourist segments.

1.3 Research Objectives

This research aims to investigate factors influencing Middle East tourists' satisfaction for visiting Phuket, as well as examine how this satisfaction leads to their revisit intentions. As such, the objectives of this study could be summarized as follows:

1. To study the existing offer of products and services targeting Middle East tourists in Phuket's tourism industry.
2. To investigate factors (including price, accommodation service, natural attractions, cultural and traditional attractions, and special preferences of Middle East tourists) influencing Middle East tourists' satisfaction with the experience of visiting Phuket.
3. To examine the relationship between Middle East tourists' satisfaction and their revisit intention to Phuket.
4. To provide suggestions for improving the performance of the tourism industry in Phuket in regard to Middle East tourists.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The importance of tourism to the Thai economy cannot be overstated. Because of this, the main importance of the current research is that it will provide practical information and knowledge for Phuket business owners that they can use during their business planning, services identification, and marketing practices. By describing what services and supports are required for Middle East tourists to enjoy their time in Phuket and return (as well as recommend the region to others), this research will provide business owners and others with information they can use to adjust their own services to meet the needs of this rapidly growing segment. This will be particularly useful in identifying segment-specific needs, such as religious or dietary supports, those hotel managers or other service providers may not be aware of, but which could easily be provided.

This study will also provide more information on non-European travelers and tourists for the academic literature. This is currently an under-represented area of study in the literature, with most academic studies focusing on visitors from and to Europe and North America. By focusing outside this area, this research will provide more insight into tourism as a global phenomenon, rather than just a Western phenomenon.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study was conducted from July 2011 to April 2013. Questionnaires were tested and revised in March 2013. Data collection was carried out during April 2013. Then data analysis and report composition was completed.

In term of geographical scope, questionnaires were distributed in Phuket International Airport (departure terminal). Interviews were conducted with stakeholders in major beaches (Patong, Kata, Karon, and Kamala).

This research focuses on the Middle East region, which includes 21 countries, although it excluded Israel since there are cultural and religious differences that could skew the findings because of different tourist segment needs. This research examines the expectations, behavior, needs, motivations, satisfactions, and traveling patterns of tourists from in the Middle East region who travel to Phuket, as well as assess the existing tourism products and services on offered for Middle East tourists in Phuket.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This research aims to investigate tourist motivations and satisfaction in Phuket. The related theories and researches that will be applied are as follows:

2.1 Concept and Theories

2.1.1 Consumer Behavior

2.1.2 Definition of Motivation

2.1.3 Definition of Satisfaction

2.1.4 Definition of tourist revisits intention

2.2 Factors Influencing Tourists' Satisfaction

2.2.1 Price

2.2.2 Accommodation

2.2.3 Natural attractions

2.2.4 Culture and tradition

2.3 Related study on Arab and Middle East Tourism

2.3.1 General Information about the Middle East

2.3.2 Traveling Preferences of Middle Eastern Tourists

2.4 Relationship between Tourist's Satisfaction and Revisit Intention

2.5 Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Concept and Theories

2.1.1 Consumer Behavior

One definition of consumer behavior is interaction of cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors involved in the exchange process (Peter & Olson, 1990). This definition focuses on a dynamic understanding of consumer behavior, emphasizing the idea that individuals, groups, and societies change constantly and that these changes result in a change in the consumer dynamics (Peter & Olson, 1990). Another important point about this definition is that it involves interaction between several levels of consumer involvement, including thinking (cognition), feeling (affect or emotion), environmental factors, and ultimately the behaviors of the consumer

(Peter & Olson, 1990). This implies that simple definition at any one of these levels is insufficient to understand the consumer response. Perner (2008) offered a slightly different definition of consumer behavior. This definition indicated that it was the study of the consumer (individual, group, or organization) and how they selected, purchased, used, and then disposed of products and services based on their individual needs. Perner (2008) also extends the definition to include the understanding of how consumer processes affect society and on the individual.

One area where consumer behavior can be illustrated is in the choice of time to travel. According to Middle East Web (2010), the Middle East contains large desert areas, which are characterized by very high temperatures. Summer in the Middle East can be adequately summarized as hot and dry, sometimes reaching up to 50°C in the Gulf countries. Dubai's summer season climate (June to September) is exceptionally hot and humid, with 80% to 90% humidity and temperatures up to 48°C. Because of this, many companies allow their employees to take a long vacation in this period. Some companies who work in the outdoors or desert, such as oil and petrochemical companies, even have formal summer breaks during July and August when the company does not operate because the weather is too hot. This is also the summer vacation period. www.globalintelligence.com has also affirmed that almost two-third of the leisure or vacation travel takes place in the hottest summer season and school holiday from June to August. July is the busiest month with 22% outbound travel followed by June (17%) and finally August with 13%. For the rest of the year, travel is more for business purposes.

Thus, understanding consumer needs shows that this would be a good time to market packages to Phuket in the Middle East and also for Hotels to offer a special package for Middle East families to travel to Phuket.

2.1.2 Definition of Motivation

Swarbrooke and Horner(1999) have defined motivation as the factors which make a tourist want to purchase particular products or services. However, they do not define these motivations further. Goodall(1998) identified sources of motivation, such as: (i) physical or physiological e.g. search for relaxation, health, sport, or challenge; (ii) cultural, i.e. the wish to learn about foreign places; (iii) social, e.g. the visits made to friends and relatives; and (iv) fantasy (or personal), i.e. escape from present reality. Understanding why people travel and what they are seeking is a complicated question related to human nature and culture. Thus, a definition

of motivation is useful for understanding why it might be found. Emotional and cognitive motives are most commonly found in psychological and sociological definitions of motivation (Ajzen&Fishbein, 1997). In contrast, MacCannel (1976) defined motivation as an internal and external set of feelings, drives, instincts, knowledge, and beliefs. This suggests that anthropologically, tourists are seeking out an authentic experience and an escape from their routines.

Traveler Motivation

Needs are defined as internal forces that drive motivated behaviour (Pizam & Mansfield, 1992). This means it is necessary to understand what needs, people actually have. Maslow's theory explained five categories of need (figure 2.1). Physical or Physiological needs includes the basic essential needs such as accommodation, food, and clothes. Safety and Security needs such as the need for protection from physical threats and harm, which will become apparent after physiological needs, are met. Social needs of belonging and association with others, such as companionship, love, and relationships happen after the individual's Safety and Security needs have been fulfilled. Similarly, Esteem needs, such as accomplishment, achievement, competence, maturity, independence, self respect, and finally self-actualization needs like learning and spirituality become apparent after the individual has fulfilled their lower needs.

Figure 2.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Source: Maslow, 1954

Research into the motivating factors in tourism found two distinct groups of motivators (Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999). The first group of motivators is the general motivating factors for a holiday (such as boredom or fatigue, overwork, school holidays, and desire for travel). The second group of motivators is particular factors; that is, they encourage the individual to take a specific holiday, in a specific location, at a specific time (Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999). For example, this could involve a particular festival occurring, a desirable seasonal difference, or other factors that encourage the choice of a particular holiday. Most tourists are not affected by only a single factor, but are more likely to be affected by several general and specific factors that account for their decision (Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999). Phuket is likely to allow for both types of motivating factors. For example, as a well-known Thai tourist destination, Phuket may provide its own motivation to take a holiday in general. However, it also has a number of festivals (like the Vegetarian Festival or the Phuket King's Cup Regatta), which could provide much more specific, time-based and intentional factors in the decision to visit Phuket.

2.1.3 Definition of Satisfaction

The Oxford English dictionary defines *satisfaction* as the feeling of pleasure felt by a person who has received something or has achieved something. Many studies have offered different definitions of satisfaction, which are summarized in table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Definitions of Satisfaction

Author (Year)	Definition
Hunt (1977)	An assessment of the experienced emotions.
Kotler (1994)	The level of feeling that results from comparing the products' performance and person's expectations.
Oliver (1997)	The tourist's fulfilment response.
Mick (1998)	The person's emotional response (positive or negative) that results from comparison of the product's perceived performance and the expected performance. Emotional responses can range from dissatisfaction (performance was short of expectations) to satisfaction (performance met expectations) to delight (performance exceeded expectations).

Table 2.1 Continue

Author (Year)	Definition
Fournier & Mick (1999)	The outcome of post-purchase evaluation of the process and outcome of the tourism service experience.
Baker & Crompton (2000)	The emotional state experienced by the tourist after the completion of the trip.
Lovelock, Patterson & Walker (2001)	An emotional state or feeling related to the extent to which the tourist's needs, desires, and expectations were met or exceeded during the trip.
Zeithaml & Bitner (2003)	The consumer's judgment that the product, service, or feature of the product or service fulfilled consumer desires.
Sheth & Mittal (2004)	The positive emotion resulting from a successful transaction.

Source Thaothampitak, 2008

There have been a number of studies that examined tourism satisfaction. Yuksel (2001) states that there are three debated areas of satisfaction, including a definition of customer satisfaction, the measurement of customer satisfaction, and a relationship between satisfaction and service quality. These three issues have been studied using a number of approaches, like importance-performance, disconfirmation, performance-only, and expectation-performance methods (Yuksel, 2001).

One of the frameworks highly related to the topic studied is the Expectancy Disconfirmation Model, developed by Oliver (1980). This model proposed that satisfaction results from the discrepancy between expectations and perceived performance. It suggests that consumer satisfaction with products or services occurs when there is a positive discrepancy between preceding expectations and actual experience received. In this case, consumer is satisfied with the products or services and is willing to purchase them again. On the other hand, negative disconfirmation will arise when actual performance is below expectations, which results in consumer dissatisfaction with products or services and will lead to discontinuity of purchase as the consumer looks for better alternatives.

This is very important to the study of the tourism industry in Phuket, in which we need to examine the level of satisfaction of Middle East tourists to be able to know the level of our

products and services and whether it is meeting their expectations. Further than that we will be able create a proper strategy to fix the gap between their needs and our products/services on offered.

2.1.4 Definition of Tourist Revisit Intention

The final aspect of the framework is tourist revisit intentions. This may be the simplest definition to attain, since it simply refers to the intention of the tourist to come to the holiday location again in a future holiday (Jang & Feng, 2007). Revisit intentions are not static because both locations and visitors change over time; for example, a location that was suitable for a holiday as a university student may not be suitable for a family holiday a few years later. However, many tourists do revisit the same locations over time, and some become highly loyal in their visiting habits, visiting once a year or even more frequently (Jang & Feng, 2007). Jang and Feng (2007)'s study indicated that revisit intentions balanced novelty seeking (which supported the choice of a new destination) and satisfaction with the existing location. Tourist revisit intentions are important because return visitors may stay longer, spend more, and provide more economic returns to a given area than those who only visit once (Kozak & Baloglu, 2010). For example, repeat visitors to Phuket may decide to visit for two weeks rather than one, or may even find themselves buying a timeshare or condo rather than renting hotel rooms.

2.2 Factors Influencing Tourists' Satisfaction

There are a number of factors influencing tourist's satisfaction. In this section a number of factors are discussed. These factors are; price, accommodation, natural/ man-made attractions, and culture and traditions.

2.2.1 Price

One of the most fundamental aspects of tourism satisfaction is that the price of the location must match the budget set by the visitor (Alegre & Garau, 2011). The price can refer to the basic aspects of the holiday, such as accommodation and food. However, there are also other aspects of price that are important in a region, such as the relative price of goods in tourist shops and boutiques (Murphy, Moscardo, Benckendorff, & Pearce, 2011). This can be a difficult aspect of the price to manage, since it is not so much the absolute price that makes a difference in

consumer price fairness perceptions as price *differentials* (Kozak & Baloglu, 2010). That is, the main issue is not the absolute price of goods, accommodation, or food, but the difference between how many the consumers expected to pay (probably based on home market perceptions) and how much they actually did pay. In this way, tourism satisfaction with prices from different regions may vary depending on their expectations. It is also important that consumers perceive value for money; it is not enough that something is considered cheap, but it must also be considered to be worth the price to be satisfactory (Murphy et al, 2011).

2.2.2 Accommodation

Another important aspect of tourism satisfaction is that the availability, choice, and quality levels of accommodations meet their expectations (Alegre & Garau, 2011). This can mean different things for different people and regions, since accommodation choices are to some extent regional and particular (Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2009). However, the quality of accommodation is a major factor in how tourists experience the holiday and their overall level of satisfaction with it (Alegre & Garau, 2011). Alegre and Garau's (2011) study of sun and sand holidays found that this was the most important basic factor in tourist satisfaction. However, once again the tourist's expectations will inform their level of satisfaction. For example, tourists staying in a budget accommodation will expect cleanliness and hospitality, but not a high level of luxury or amenities (Meng, Tepanon, & Uysal, 2008). This is also likely to be the acceptable accommodation level at a nature resort, as described by Menget al. (2008). However, a visitor to a five-star luxury resort will have far higher expectations, such as in-room amenities and special services (Kozak & Baloglu, 2010). What is most important is that the accommodation provides the level of service the tourist expects, rather than providing an absolute level of service.

2.2.3 Natural/ Man-made Attractions

The quality and availability of natural attractions, like landscapes, beaches, forests, and natural beauty, are routinely identified as very important factors in tourism satisfaction (Alegre & Garau, 2011; Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2009). Alegre and Garau (2011) noted that the quality of beaches and other natural environmental factors was particularly important for sun and sand destinations (like Phuket), and that these needed to be balanced against the extent to which the environment was built up or urbanized in order to understand the total impact on satisfaction. Obviously, natural attractions are more important for some types of locations than others, but

studies of similar locations have shown that for areas that have an image of having a high level of natural beauty must meet this image if tourist satisfaction is to result (Chi & Qu, 2008). Furthermore, natural attractions are highly important in overall satisfaction; Chi and Qu (2008) found that satisfaction with natural attractions accounted for 9.4% of variance in overall tourism satisfaction in their study of a United States tourism location. This shows that natural attractions, including how well they are maintained and how well their marketing image fits the reality, have a serious impact on tourist satisfaction.

2.2.4 Culture and Traditions

The local culture and traditions of the destination are also an influence on the tourist's satisfaction. One study of Southern Italian regions showed that several cultural and traditional factors, like the attitudes of local residents, the artistic and cultural aspects of the regions, local food, and cultural events, were all associated with tourism satisfaction (Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2009). These criteria may be localized; for example, while the quality of local wine was important for visitors to Southern Italy (Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2009), it is unlikely to be as important for visitors to Phuket. Shopping is another area where culture and local traditions are important (Murphy et al, 2011). For example, consumers may have different desires for shopping – they may want to buy locally crafted goods or global luxury goods, or some combination of both. Meeting these expectations is important for ensuring satisfaction with the local culture. Formal cultural heritage sites and experiences may be the most direct way many tourists experience local culture and traditions (Chen & Chen, 2010). Chen and Chen (2010) found that both cognitive and emotional factors influenced the satisfaction of tourists with a cultural heritage experience in Taiwan, including uniqueness and authenticity as well as others.

2.3 Related Studies of Arab and Middle East Tourism

2.3.1 General Information of the Middle East

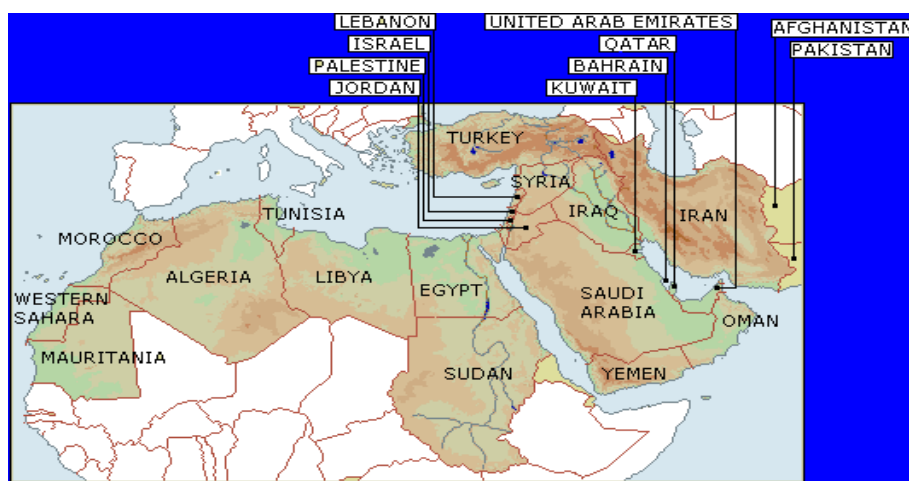
The Middle East is one of the world's major economic regions, including 25 countries and around 350 million people (Anderson, Seibert, & Wagner, 2006). Most of the Middle East shares Standard Arabic as a trade language, although local languages and dialects also abound (Anderson, et al., 2006). Geographically, it is located in Mediterranean, North Africa, and Western Asia as well as the Indian Ocean region. The majority of the population of most Middle

East countries is Islamic, although the region is also the cradle of the Jewish and Christian faiths (Anderson, et al., 2006).

The complexity and variety of the Middle East region makes it difficult to generalize for visitors across the region, except for a few shared characteristics. The Middle East is a politically diverse and volatile region, and has undergone substantial change through the 20th and 21st centuries. Particular challenges in Middle East politics include the rights of women and the formation of democracies, as well as conflict with various other states including Israel and the United States (Anderson, et al., 2006). The Middle East has a diverse regional economy, including agriculture, oil and petrochemicals, minerals, manufacturing, and service industries in various countries (Anderson et al., 2006). While some states such as Dubai are highly wealthy, others are counted as developing states (Anderson et al., 2006).

This research will focus on 21 countries identified by the Mid East Web (2010) as belonging in the region, including: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. The study will exclude Israel, which is often included in political definitions of the Middle East but which has religious differences that could influence traveller needs. This research will study the expectations, satisfactions, behaviour and travelling patterns of tourists from the Middle East region, who travel to Phuket, as well as assess the existing tourism products and services on offered for Muslim tourists.

Figure 2.2 The Middle East Countries



Source: MidEast Web, 2010

There has been previous research in Middle East tourism to Thailand. Ibrahim et al., (2009) noted that Arabic tourists are mainly interested in sightseeing and visiting interesting places, as well as shopping, theme parks, and beaches. Stays of three to ten nights may be common depending on the tourism destination. Cobos (2008) found that most Middle East tourists travelling to Thailand were single males aged 21-30 years. The most common source of visitors was the United Arab Emirates (UAE), followed by Kuwait and Egypt. Most of these visitors travelled in groups of two to four friends, staying in standard hotels. These travellers also have a short planning horizon, planning only two to four weeks before their visit.

Other general research in Middle East tourism shows that Saudi Arabia is a major outbound tourism market in the region, with Saudi tourists spending around USD6.7 billion annually on international tourism (Hasan, 2008). However, other markets are not far behind. UAE travels account for around USD5 billion in international travel, averaging USD1,700 per trip (Hasan, 2008). This is approximately USD500 higher than the comparable European traveler visiting the same destination. This has resulted in a global shift in tourism marketing and target markets, with many Asian countries enthusiastically marketing into the Middle East in order to attract higher-spending travelers. Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia have had particular success at attracting Middle East travelers in recent years, although other markets have also expanded (Hasan, 2008).

The Business and Tourism Guide to Thailand (2006) has declared that Middle East tourists are one of the highest spending travelers in the world; they are spending as much as US\$500 more than European travelers' average spending. This has made the Middle East countries one of the most lucrative outbound tourist markets in today's fast growing international tourism industry. Business Guide Series (2008) also claims that the Arab tourist market is a significant focus for the global tourism industry, especially for Southeast Asian countries. They are working hard to promote their tourism products to attract the Arab tourist to spend the most value in their countries.

This creates even more serious competition in the tourism industry among Thailand's neighboring countries such as Bali, Indonesia and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. David (2010) observes that some dismiss Phuket as too commercial and touristy, but the island is so beautiful and there is so much to do that it can make a perfect vacation for many families. Phuket is one of

Thailand's most attractive tourist destinations, which is the reason why Phuket should have its own study to be able to know the real needs and expectation of Arab tourists. What is the fundamental factor in the decision to choose the travel destination in order to create satisfaction and to attract them to revisit so we can prepare to develop our tourism products and creating or modifying the proper strategy. They also could be the good persuasion to recommend others people around them to visit Phuket. Aftermost the Arab market will bring the enormous revenue into the tourism industry in Phuket.

2.3.2 Travelling preferences of Middle East tourists

There are three characteristic preferences of Middle East tourists that may be identified from the literature, including Arabic language services, halal food, and religious supports (including prayer areas and materials) (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010). While Zamani-Farahani and Henderson (2010) note that these are common services offered to tourists in Islamic countries, they also note that in non-Islamic countries with a high proportion of Islamic visitors they are becoming increasingly common. However, there have not been direct studies for most of them.

Food is particularly noticeable in the context of medical care. Medical tourism is one of the main draws for Middle East tourists, particularly in Thailand (Connell, 2006). Medical tourism preferences of tourists from the Middle East include cultural comfort aspects (such as availability of halal food and interpretation for spoken languages and written Arabic). A study of tourism in Bangladesh found that these characteristics are one of the reasons why Middle East medical tourists, as well as those visiting for cultural heritage or natural beauty, choose to visit Bangladesh rather than comparable locations around Asia (Das & Chakraborty, 2012). There could be a variety of reasons for the preference for Bangladesh, as a majority-Islamic country, rather than similar areas that offer the same services, however. For example, a study in Malaysia found that hygiene practices or lack of understanding of halal food handling rules often meant that hotels and restaurants that promised halal dining could not deliver these services (Zailani, Omar, & Kopong, 2011). Furthermore, areas like Dubai (as well as Malaysia and Bangladesh) have active medical tourism industries, directly competing with Thailand (Connell, 2006). Thus, while offering halal food is important, it also must be done to a certain standard in order for the

intended population to see its benefits. It is also true that these aspects must be in conjunction with high standards of other services, such as high-quality medical care, in order to draw tourists.

As previously mentioned, Standard Arabic serves as a common trade language throughout the Middle East. This opens the opportunity to improve appeal by offering Arabic-language service in tourism service locations. One author argues that government supports for learning Arabic in the Malaysian tourism service industry have the potential for strong returns, although it is not a priority of the Malaysian tourism industry at this time (Azman, Azman, & Kamaruzaman, 2009). This offers an opportunity to move in front of competing countries. It is known that effective translation for medical care is one of the main reasons why tourists from the Middle East and other locations choose Thailand as a source for medical tourism (Connell, 2006). Thus, the potential for using language as a means of competing should be considered.

A final aspect of particular requirements of Middle East tourists is accommodation for daily prayer, including dedicated space, directions to Mecca, and other supports (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004). Many places have proved to be resistant to providing this type of religious support to Islamic visitors due to the perception that Islam is inherently terroristic, according to the authors. However, religious observance is in fact part of the everyday life and practice of Muslims and continues while engaged in tourism activities and travel (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner, 2004). Because of this, providing direct support for religious observance could be a valuable approach to tourist satisfaction.

The services demanded by Middle East tourists in Thailand have been shifting over time. For example, one report indicates that a Middle East tourist zone in Bangkok has shifted dramatically since the 1980s (Cohen & Neal, 2012). The authors report that while this area was originally set up as a means to facilitate behaviors that were religiously proscribed (such as the sex trade, drugs, and alcohol), over time the illicit demand has shrunk. Today, most of the services offered to Middle East tourists in the area is focused on family and medical tourism demand, with the proscribed role almost disappearing (Cohen & Neal, 2012). This is consistent with a change in tourism demands generally, away from illicit activities and toward support for medical tourism. Thus, it is important to consider that the needs of Middle East tourists, as with other tourists, do change over time and cannot be considered to remain constant.

2.4 Relationship between tourist satisfaction and revisit intention

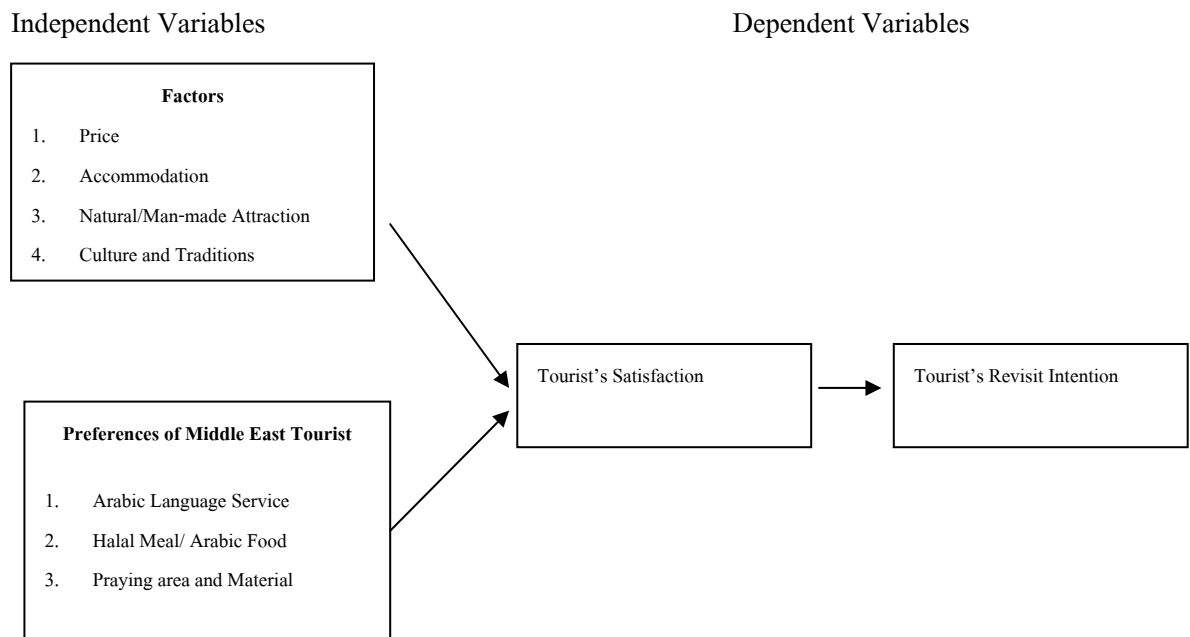
There has been a lot of empirical research on the relationship between tourist satisfaction and revisit intentions. All of these studies found that tourist satisfaction was one of the main determining factors in revisit intentions. For example, one study used a combination of a literature review and multiple years of surveys in tourists to Hong Kong to identify reasons for revisit intentions (Um & Chon, 2006). They found that while perceived attractiveness was the largest factor, satisfaction with the previous visit was also important for revisit intentions (Um & Chon, 2006). A second study examined tourism loyalty (or repeated revisits) to Eureka Springs, a United States natural attraction (Chi & Qu, 2008). This study found that visitor satisfaction was one of the main factors in the formation of a revisit intention, and in the eventual formation of location loyalty (Chi & Qu, 2008). A study of golf travelers showed that the relationship between satisfaction with the visit (including aspects like price or value and quality of services) and the revisit intention was strong among specialty tourists (Hutchinson, Lai, & Wang, 2009). This effect can also be seen at the level of the individual hospitality business. For example, a study of customer satisfaction in a series of restaurants found that satisfaction with the business on the initial visit was one of the factors in forming an intention to return to the location (Kim, Ng, & Kim, 2009). This indicates that even at the hotel or restaurant level the experience could influence willingness to return.

2.5 Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

The final area for discussion is the conceptual framework and hypotheses, as shown in Figure 2.4. The independent variables include general factors and Middle East preferences. General factors include price, accommodation, natural attractions, and Thai culture and traditions (Alegre & Garau, 2011; Chen & Chen, 2010; Chi & Qu, 2008; Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2009; Kozak & Baloglu, 2010; Meng, Tepanon, & Uysal, 2008; Murphy, Moscardo, Benckendorff, & Pearce, 2011). Middle East traveler preferences include Arabic language services, Halal or Arabic food, and religious services like prayer rooms and materials (Al-Hamameh & Steiner, 2004; Azman, Azman, & Kamaruzaman, 2009; Das & Chakraborty, 2012; Zailani, Omar, & Kopong, 2011; Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010). The intermediate outcome variable is tourist satisfaction. Finally, tourist satisfaction leads to tourism revisit intentions (Chi & Qu, 2008;

Hutchinson, Lai, & Wang, 2009; Kim, Ng, & Kim, 2009; Um & Chon, 2006). Hypotheses are posed for each of the identified relationships.

Figure 4 Conceptual Framework



Based on the conceptual framework presented above, eight hypotheses are developed as follow;

H1: Price or cost of living at Phuket is a significant influence on tourist satisfaction.

H2: Accommodation at Phuket is a significant influence on tourist satisfaction.

H3: Natural/ Man-made attractions at Phuket are a significant influence on tourist satisfaction.

H4: Thai Culture and tradition is a significant influence on tourist satisfaction.

H5: Arabic language service is a significant influence on tourist satisfaction.

H6: Halal Meal or Arabic Food is a significant influence on tourist satisfaction.

H7: Praying area and material is a significant influence on tourist satisfaction.

H8: Tourist satisfaction is a significant influence on the tourist's revisit intention.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology used in this study. First, a description of the population, sampling, and sample size is provided. Second, research instruments and data collection processes are discussed. Finally, data analysis tools and process was explained.

3.1 Research Strategy

This research was used a mixed methods strategy, which combines methods from qualitative and quantitative research paradigms to answer research questions or objectives that are divergent in their scope or area of interest (Creswell, 2009). The mixed methods strategy is ideal for answering questions that are more complex than can be handled with one strategy or where a mixture of breadth and depth of inquiry is desired (Creswell, 2009). That makes it ideal for this research, where the research objectives cannot truly be answered using all one or the other method. It also makes it possible to gain a fuller answer to some of the research questions.

In this research, the objectives are explored using different methods. Research Objective 1 was explored using a qualitative strategy, while for Research Objectives 2 and 3 a quantitative inquiry was employed. Triangulation, or using both qualitative and quantitative findings (Creswell, 2009), were used for Research Objective 4. This provides the best balance of inquiry methods, since the first research objective (studying existing tourism services targeted at Middle East visitors) is at a different scope and scale than the second and third (which seek to discover needs and satisfaction of the visitors themselves).

3.2 Population, Sample Size, and Sampling

3.2.1 Population and Sample Size

According to the MidEastWeb (2010) the Middle East region is comprised of 21 countries, including Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. This study excluded Israel, due to religious differences that affect the result

on behavior and needs. The target population in this study is tourists from these 20 countries who stay in medium range hotels and 4 – 5 star accommodation establishments in selected tourism sites at Phuket. They were accessed in the tourist beaches of Patong, Kata, Karon and other beaches as well as Phuket international airport (only at the departure terminal). The choice of medium range hotels and 4 – 5 star tourist accommodations in the mentioned area was based on the information from Phuket Tourism Associations that the majority of Middle East tourists stay in superior quality accommodations (Business Guide, 2008). Therefore, the population was concentrated in those sites, allowing better data collection.

3.2.2 Sampling Method

There are two sampling methods employed in this study, as there are two research strategies used (quantitative and qualitative strategies).

For the quantitative strategy, according to table 3.1, the annual population of Middle East tourists in Phuket is 96,479 (2007). The appropriate sample size at the 95% confidence level for this population would be 383 based on the sample size calculations by Yamane in Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (1997). However, for convenience purposes and to allow for incomplete surveys, the sample size for the quantitative study is 400. Previous studies by Bin Che Mat (2004) and Ibrahim (2009) found no significant differences in the characteristics of tourists from different Middle East countries, such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and U.A.E. Therefore there is no need for quota sampling.

Table 3.1 Sample Size with Different Confidence Levels

Population	Margin of error			
	5%	3%	2%	1%
5,000	357	879	1622	3288
10,000	370	964	1936	4899
<u>100,000</u>	<u>383</u>	<u>1056</u>	<u>2345</u>	<u>8762</u>
1,000,000	384	1066	2395	9513

Source: Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (1997)

The population of the qualitative study was travel industry service providers. The qualitative sampling strategy was purposive sampling, where participants were selected based on their characteristics, which meet the desired sample, or based on what they know (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2010). This is a standard method of sampling for qualitative studies, which use much smaller sample sizes and are not intended as random samples.

The sample size was determined by saturation, or the point at which participants begin to repeat known information, as well as practical resources like time and availability of participants (Hennink et al., 2010). Qualitative sample for this study included thirty people. These people were tourism service providers, including hotel managers, restaurant managers, and travel agency staff members. Ten members of each of these groups were selected for participation. These participants agreed to the interview process and provided sufficient information to complete the analysis.

3.3 Data Collection

The data used in this study was primary and secondary data. Detail of each type of data presents in the following sections.

3.3.1. Primary Data

The primary data for this study was gathered using questionnaire surveys and interview. All quantitative data (questionnaires) was collected in a period of 1 month in April 2013, which is ideal for collection as it is a tourism high season. 400 questionnaires were distributed at Phuket International Airport (departure terminal) as well as other tourism hot spots in Phuket. Questionnaires were organized into a dataset and only usable questionnaires were processed for further analysis.

Thirty interviews were conducted in the same period as the questionnaires. In that period Phuket is full of Middle East tourists, and it allows fresh information to be provided by the participants, who deal with the group of tourists regularly.

3.3.2. Secondary Data

Secondary data was also collected from the following sources

Tourism Authority of Thailand, and Ministry of Tourism and Sports

International Tourism organizations

Textbooks

Academic Journals

Association of Thai Travel Agents

Websites

3.4 Research Instruments

3.4.1 Questionnaires

The quantitative study data was collected using a questionnaire that was adapted from previous related literature and questionnaires. The questionnaire consists of five sections as follows:

Section I: Demographic Profile

Section II: Tourist's behavior toward Phuket

Section III: Factors Influencing Tourist's Visit Intention,

Section IV: Special Needs for Middle East Tourist

Section V: Tourist's Satisfaction Level

Section VI: Tourist Revisit Intention

Section I is designed to extract socio-demographic information, including gender, age, nationality, religion, income and people traveling with. Section II is comprised of questions about tourist's behavior toward Phuket. These questions include whether this is the first visit, reason for visiting Phuket, source of information about Phuket and hotel location. Section III emphasizes factors influencing tourist's visit intention. The questions in this section are adapted from Rattanakitrungrueang (2007). It is grouped into four categories based on the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 2: price, accommodation, natural attractions and culture and tradition. Section IV consists of questions relating to the special preferences of Middle East tourists, including Arabic language service, Halal meals, and praying area and materials. Section V focuses on the tourist's satisfaction level with their trip to Phuket. It intends to determine respondents' overall satisfaction with their vacation in Phuket and the items used in this section were adapted from Ali and Howaidee (2012). Lastly, Section VI aims to identify the level of tourist revisit intention which adapted from Rattanakitrungrueang (2007).

Reliability Test

When constructing a new questionnaire it is important to test internal reliability of its scales, or how much each scale is reflecting a single construct or idea (Hilton, 2004). In this case, internal reliability was tested using a pilot test of 40 questionnaires. Cronbach's alpha, a coefficient where a higher value indicates a higher level of internal reliability (Hilton, 2004), was used for this test, and was calculated in SPSS. According to Hilton (2004) Cronbach's alpha is routinely used for this task because it is simple and intuitive to understand and can be used to adjust scales. The results showed a Cronbach's alpha of which confirmed the reliability of the questionnaire 0.802

Table 3.2 Reliability result

Variables	Cronbach's alpha result
<i>Price</i> (Food, accommodation, transportation, goods)	.859
<i>Accommodation</i> (Location, Service quality, Facilities)	.903
<i>Natural/ Man-made Attraction</i> (Attractive places, Natural resources such as beaches and mountain of Phuket, Man-made attractions such as Phuket FantaSea, Siam Niramitr, Cabaret etc.)	.802
<i>Culture and Traditions</i> (Taste and style of local food, Cultural events, and Traditional way of living)	.825
<i>Arabic language Service</i> (Arabic Speaker in Restaurant/ Hotel/Tour Agent)	.821
<i>Halal meal/ Arabic</i> (Arabic Menu in Restaurant/ Hotel, Provide Halal Meal in Hotel)	.819
<i>Praying area and Material</i> (Praying times Schedule, Direction, Mat, Area)	.982
Tourist's Revisit Intention	.832

3.4.2 Interviews

Qualitative data was collected using semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are interviews that have an interview guide, but where participant and researcher can explore other areas of interest where needed (Hennink et al., 2010). This makes them ideal for qualitative research where there is much more flexibility and less standardization than in quantitative research (Hennink et al., 2010). It is also ideal for interviewing experts, as this research does, since it offers them the chance to provide input the researcher may not have had before (Hennink et al., 2010). The interview questions were adapted from three characteristic preferences of Middle East tourists including Arabic language services, halal food, and religious supports (Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010). Interviews are timed to take ten to fifteen minutes. The interviews were conducted in Thai in order to avoid barriers to communication posed by linguistic fluency. The interviews were then being translated into English for analysis. There are some issues with this translation, including potentially inaccurate translation (Hennink, et al., 2010). However, by providing transcripts (in the Appendix) these issues may be limited.

3.5 Data Analysis

The Quantitative data was analyzed with the SPSS program. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages and regression analysis were used for analyzing data for this study. Descriptive statistics was employed for analyzing demographic data as well as identifying factors that influence tourist satisfaction and satisfaction levels when traveling to Phuket. Regression analysis was used to test research hypotheses, which investigate the relationship between factors influencing tourist satisfaction and satisfaction level (H1 to H7) as well as the relationship between tourist's satisfaction and their revisit intention (H8).

Qualitative study with In-depth interview was analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis is a qualitative technique that focuses on the intention and meaning of communications (its content) rather than the specific words that are used to identify the main factors (Hennink et al., 2010). Content analysis identifies broad themes or conversely specific, narrow answers to research questions as structured by the research process. By examining the specific input and content of the interviews, the research will identify what types of services are available for, and

popular with, Middle East travelers in Phuket. Other information that arises from the interview may also be included if enough participants mention or reflect on it.

Chapter 4

Findings

4.1 Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire results are divided into two sections, including descriptive results (Section 4.1.1) and hypothesis tests (section 4.1.2). The descriptive results include a summary of the descriptive statistics for each individual variable. The hypothesis testing summarizes the outcomes of regression testing for the seven factors in visitor satisfaction (including four location-specific factors and three Middle East tourist preferences), as well as the relationship between visitor satisfaction and revisit intention.

4.1.1 Descriptive Results

Descriptive statistics include demographic profiles (Section 4.1.1.1), tourist behaviors (Section 4.1.1.2), factors influencing visit intentions (Section 4.1.2.3), special needs of Middle East tourists (Section 4.1.2.4), tourist satisfaction levels (Section 4.1.2.5), and revisit intentions (Section 4.1.2.6).

4.1.1.1 Demographic Profiles

Demographic information collected from the questionnaire includes gender, age, nationality, religion, and household income. Table 4.1 shows that most of the sample (76%) is male. The sample is also relatively young, with 56% being aged 20 to 30 years (Table 4.2). There were a number of nationalities represented, as shown in Table 4.3. Of these, the largest four groups - Kuwait (23.7%), Egypt (14.7%), U.A.E. (12.1%), and Qatar (9%) – accounted for 59.5% of the sample. The dominant religion was Islam (91.5%) as shown in Table 4.4. Annual household income was relatively low to moderate, with 32% of participants indicating under USD50,000 in annual income and 29% indicating USD50,001 to USD75,000 (Table 4.5). Overall, the sample can be characterized as young, male, and Islamic, originating from Kuwait, Egypt, U.A.E., or Qatar, and being relatively low-income or middle-class.

Table 4.1 Gender

	Frequency (n=389)	Percent
Male	294	76%
Female	95	24%

Table 4.2 Age

Age Group	Frequency (n=389)	Percent
Less than 20 years	32	8%
20 – 30 years	218	56%
31 – 40 years	111	29%
41 – 50 years	16	4%
51 – 60 years	12	3%

Table 4.3 Nationality

Nationality	Frequency (n = 389)	Percent
Kuwait	92	23.7
Egypt	57	14.7
U.A.E	47	12.1
Jordanian	35	9.0
Qatar	32	8.2
Lebanese	24	6.2
Oman	18	4.6
Syrian	13	3.3
Moroccan	12	3.1
Saudi	11	2.8
Iraq	10	2.6
Yemen	10	2.6
Algeria	9	2.3

Table 4.3 Nationality

Nationality	Frequency (n = 389)	Percent
Bahrain	8	2.1
Sudan	4	1.0
Tunisian	4	1.0
Iran	3	.8

Table 4.4 Religion

Religion	Frequency (n=389)	Percent
Islam	356	91.5
Christianity	9	2.3
Other	16	4.1
Druze religion	8	2.1

Table 4.5 Annual household income

Annual household income	Frequency (n=389)	Percent
Under 50,000 USD	125	35%
50,001 – 75,000 USD	112	29%
75,001 – 100,000 USD	73	19%
125,001 – 150,000 USD	32	8%
100,001 – 125,000 USD	26	7%
More than 150,000 USD	21	5%

4.1.1.2 Tourist's Behavior toward Phuket

There were six items related to the characteristics of tourist behavior toward Phuket. Table 4.6 shows that 67% or about two-thirds of the sample are on their first trip to Phuket, and about one-third (33%) are return visitors. Table 4.7 shows that the overwhelming reason for visiting Phuket is for vacation or leisure (92%). As Table 4.8 shows, most of the sample is traveling with friends (44%) or their spouse (30%). It is notable that only 11% of the sample is traveling alone, suggesting that this is relatively uncommon.

Table 4.6 Tourist first visit to Phuket

Tourist first visit to Phuket	Frequency (n=389)	Percent
Yes	261	67%
No	128	33%

Table 4.7 The reason for visiting Phuket

The reason for visiting Phuket	Frequency (n=389)	Percent
Vacation/Leisure	358	92%
Other	14	4%
Business Purpose	7	2%
Medical Reason	5	1%
Other - Honeymoon	5	1%

Table 4.8 Accompanying people

Accompanying People	Frequency (n=389)	Percent
Friends	172	44%
Spouse	114	30%
Family	59	15%
Alone	43	11%

Table 4.9 summarizes the sources tourists accessed for information about Phuket. This shows that friends and family were the most important source of information (52.4%), followed by websites such as Trip Advisor or Google (20.1%). In contrast, travel agents and advertising were relatively unpopular sources of information.

Table 4.9 Source that tourist access for information about Phuket

Source of information	Frequency (n = 389)	Percent
Friend/ Family	204	52.4%
Website - Trip advisor (2), Google (3)	78	20.1%
Tour Agent Counter (In Resident Country)	68	17.5%
Magazine/TV/Advertising	30	7.7%
Other	9	2.3%

The remainder of questions about tourist behavior was about the hotel selection. Table 4.10 shows that the most common location for hotels is Patong (68%), followed by Kata/Karon (13%). Table 4.11 shows hotels tourists stay at. This shows that there is no single hotel or group of hotels that are dominant in the sample. The four most popular hotels (the Millennium, Hilton, Le Meridien, and Amari Coral) account for only 22.4% of the sample.

Table 4.10 Tourist hotel location

Hotel Location	Frequency (n = 389)	Percent
Patong	263	68%
Kata/Karon	51	13%
Other	51	13%
Phuket Town	15	4%
Kamala/Surin	9	2%

Table 4.11 Hotel where tourists stay

Hotel	Frequency (n=389)	Percent
Millennium	32	8.2
Hilton	21	5.4
Le Meridien	17	4.4
Amari Coral	17	4.4
Movenpick	14	3.6
Tony Resort	12	3.1

Table 4.11 Continue

Hotel	Frequency (n=389)	Percent
C R B	12	3.1
Leelavadee	12	3.1
La flora	12	3.1
Royal Paradise	11	2.8
Holiday Inn	10	2.6
Radisson BluPanwa	10	2.6
P.S. Hotel	9	2.3
Amata	9	2.3
Platinum Hotel	9	2.3
Horizon	9	2.3
Sea Pearl	9	2.3
Sala Resort Maikhao	8	2.1
JW Marriot MaiKhao	7	1.8
The kee	6	1.5
Aspery	6	1.5
Layan Villa	6	1.5
Villa ZolitudeChalong	6	1.5
Bangkok Residences	6	1.5
Novotel Hotel	6	1.5
Sala Maikhao	6	1.5
Westin Siray Bay	6	1.5
Westin Siray Resort	6	1.5
Patong Swiss Hotel	6	1.5
Graceland hotel	6	1.5
Two villa Bangtao beach	6	1.5
Korsiri Villa	5	1.3
White Sand	4	1.0
Baan Paradise	4	1.0
Devana	4	1.0
See Sea	4	1.0

Table 4.11 Continue

Hotel	Frequency (n=389)	Percent
NAP	2	.5
Cape Sienna	2	.5
88 Hotel	2	.5
89 Hotel	2	.5
Club Bamboo	2	.5
Marriot Naiyang Beach	2	.5

4.1.1.3 Factors Influencing Tourist's Visit Intention

The third set of questions focused on factors that influenced consumer visit intentions (Table 4.12). The means were interpreted using the following strategy. First, five levels of interpretation were constructed using the formula $\frac{\text{Highest score} - \text{Lowest score}}{5}$, leading to level widths of 0.8. These were then assigned interpretations as follows:

- 1.00 to 1.79 – Not important at all
- 1.80 to 2.59 – Not very important
- 2.60 to 3.39 – Neutral (neither important nor unimportant)
- 3.40 to 4.19 – Important
- 4.20 to 5.00 – Very important

As the table shows, most of the issues were ranked as important or very important. Very important factors included the price of goods, location and service quality of accommodations and attractive places.

Table 4.12 Factors Influencing Tourist's Visit Intention

Questions	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean value interpretation
Price of service in Phuket (Hotel and restaurant)			
● Price of goods	4.48	4.48165	Very Important
● Price of accommodation	4.12	.92129	Important
● Price of food	3.98	.93731	Important

Table 4.12 Continue

Questions	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean value interpretation
● Price of transportation	3.94	.95166	Important
Accommodation service			
● Location	4.39	.88539	Very Important
● Service quality	4.25	1.05617	Very Important
● Facilities	4.17	1.12391	Important
Attractive places (Natural resources such as beaches and mountain) of Phuket	4.48	.95386	Very Important
Man-made attractions (e.g. Phuket FantaSea, Siam Niramitr, Cabaret etc.)	3.95	.99725	Important
Unique culture and traditional of Phuket			
● Traditional way of living	3.65	1.12659	Important
● Cultural events	3.64	1.08125	Important
● Taste and style of local food	3.50	1.21762	Important

4.1.1.4 Special Needs for Middle East Tourists

The fourth set of questions focused on the special needs of Middle East tourists (Table 4.13). This set of questions focused on three areas, including language, food availability, and arrangements for religious observance (as indicated by the literature review). Results were interpreted in the same way as above. All of the issues related to religious observance (including prayer time schedule, praying direction, prayer mats, and praying areas) were very important. Halal food and/or Arabic food in restaurants and hotels were also very important. Arabic speakers in restaurants and hotels, Arabic tour guides, and Arabic menus were important.

Table 4.13 Special Needs for Middle East Tourist

Questions	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean value interpretation
Provide Halal Meal or Arabic Food (Restaurant/ Hotel)	4.44	2.37467	Very Important
Arabic Speaker (Restaurant/ Hotel)	3.68	1.30110	Important
Arabic Menu (Restaurant/ Hotel)	3.54	1.38347	Important
Arabic Tour Guide	3.42	1.38741	Important
Special arrangement for Muslim tourists, including			
Praying Area	4.40	1.12084	Very Important
Praying Direction	4.39	1.11244	Very Important
Praying Mat	4.37	1.13173	Very Important
Praying times Schedule	4.37	1.12885	Very Important

4.1.1.5 Tourist's Satisfaction Level

The fifth set of questions focused on tourist satisfaction level in Phuket. This was a single general question, as well as the opportunity to provide information about satisfactions and dissatisfactions with Phuket. The overall response (Table 4.14) indicates that tourists are satisfied with services for Middle East tourists in Phuket.

Table 4.14 Tourist's Satisfaction Level

Questions	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean value interpretation
Overall, what did you feel about the existing services provided for Middle tourist in Phuket?	4.05	.79459	Satisfied

There were a number of comments about Phuket and why it was satisfactory. These included scenery (beautiful landscapes and beaches), friendly people, activities and services, reasonable prices, good hospitals, and good nightlife, as well as availability of a lot of Halal food. There were fewer comments about dissatisfactions, though those that did exist (expensive taxis

and other prices, dishonest shops and tour agents, and problems communicating in English) are serious and could potentially significantly impact the customer experience.

4.1.1.6 Tourist Revisit Intention

The final set of descriptive results is focused on tourist revisit intentions. These three items (Table 4.15) were scaled using the same method as explained in Section 4.1.1.3, with revisit intentions interpreted as Totally Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Highly Agree (at the same level boundaries). As Table 4.15 shows, in general responses indicate a high level of revisit intention for Phuket, with the sample indicating they strongly agreed that they would revisit Phuket and that they would recommend Phuket to friends and family. Thus, there is a relatively strong revisit intention.

Table 4.15 Tourist Revisit Intention

Questions	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean value interpretation
I will recommend Phuket to my friends & Relatives	4.33	.76750	Strongly Agree
I would like to visit Phuket again in the future.	4.30	.84006	Strongly Agree
When I think about great holiday, I will think about Phuket.	4.09	.89075	Agree

4.1.2 Hypotheses Result

Hypotheses were tested in three groups using multiple or single regression, including factors (H1 to H4), preferences (H5 to H7), and satisfaction and revisit intention (H8). Of the hypotheses, H2 (Accommodation and satisfaction), H5 (Arabic language services and satisfaction), H6 (Halal/Arabic food and satisfaction), and H8 (Satisfaction and revisit intention) could be confirmed. H1 (Prices and satisfaction), H3 (Attractions and satisfaction), H4 (Thai culture and satisfaction), and H7 (Prayer facilities and satisfaction) were not confirmed. However, in general the effects of these factors were weak, suggesting that these models did not capture the majority of factors in either satisfaction or revisit intentions.

4.1.2.1 Factors of Tourism in Phuket and Visitor Satisfaction

The first four hypotheses addressed the relationship between factors of tourism in Phuket and visitor satisfaction. These place-specific factors are characteristics of Phuket itself. These hypotheses included: price or cost of living (H1), accommodation (H2), natural and man-made attractions (H3), and Thai culture and tradition (H4). These factors were tested together using multiple regressions. The model summary (Table 4.16) shows that there is a slight effect from these four factors (adjusted $R^2 = 0.030$). The ANOVA test (Table 4.17) shows that the results of the test are significant ($F = 4.045$, $p = 0.003$). Table 4.10 summarizes the coefficients of the tests. This shows that only Accommodation ($p = 0.004$) is a significant factor in customer satisfaction with Phuket. The resulting regression equations that are found for this relationship are:

$$\text{Unstandardized: } Y = 0.160X_1 + 3.279$$

$$\text{Standardized: } Z = 0.182X_1$$

Based on this analysis, price (or cost of living), natural and man-made attractions, and Thai culture and tradition are not found to be significant in customer satisfaction with Phuket, but accommodation is. Thus, H1, H3, and H4 are not confirmed, while H2 is confirmed.

Table 4.16 Model Summary - Factors

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.201 ^a	.040	.030	.78240

a. Predictors: (Constant), Culture and Traditions, Price, Natural/ Man-made Attraction, Accommodation

Table 4.17 ANOVA^b - Factors

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9.904	4	2.476	4.045	.003 ^a
	Residual	235.068	384	.612		
	Total	244.972	388			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Culture and Traditions, Price, Natural/ Man-made Attraction, Accommodation

b. Dependent Variable: Tourist Satisfaction

Table 4.18 Coefficients^a - Factors

	Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
		Coefficients		Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.279	.253		12.971	.000
	Price	.028	.032	.046	.856	.393
	Accommodation	.160	.055	.182	2.886	.004
	Natural/ Man-made Attraction	.010	.058	.010	.172	.864
	CultureandTraditions	-.018	.044	-.022	-.416	.678

a. Dependent Variable: Tourist satisfaction

4.1.2.2 Preferences of Middle East Tourists

Hypotheses H5 to H7 were also tested using multiple regression testing. These hypotheses addressed the special preferences of Middle East tourists in Phuket and their impact on visitor satisfaction. These included Arabic language services (H5), halal meals (H6), and prayer area and materials (H7). Table 4.19 (Model Summary) shows that the effect of these factors was relatively modest (adjusted $R^2 = 0.028$). However, as the ANOVA test (Table 4.13) shows, the results were statistically significant ($F = 4.674$, $p = 0.003$). The coefficients for all three tests are included in Table 4.21. This shows that Arabic language service ($p = 0.004$) and

Halal meals and Arabic food ($p = 0.005$) were significant, but praying areas and materials were not significant ($p = 0.130$). These outcomes lead to the following set of regression equations:

$$\text{Unstandardized: } Y = -0.109X_1 + 0.091X_2 + 3.813$$

$$\text{Standardized: } Z = -0.175X_1 + 0.171X_2$$

Based on this set of findings, it can be stated that Arabic language services and halal/Arabic meals are significant in customer satisfaction but that prayer areas and materials are not. Thus, H5 and H6 are confirmed, but H7 is not confirmed.

Table 4.19 Model Summary - Preference

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.187 ^a	.035	.028	.78354

a. Predictors: (Constant), Praying area and Material, Arabic Language Service, Halal Meal Arabic Food

Table 4.20 ANOVA^b - Preference

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.608	3	2.869	4.674	.003 ^a
	Residual	236.363	385	.614		
	Total	244.972	388			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Praying area and Material, Arabic Language Service, Halal Meal Arabic Food

b. Dependent Variable: Tourist satisfaction

Table 4.21 Coefficients^a – Preference

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
		Coefficients		Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.813	.175		21.801	.000
	Arabic Language Service	-.109	.038	-.175	-2.892	.004
	Halal Meal Arabic Food	.091	.032	.171	2.835	.005
	Praying area and Material	.060	.040	.084	1.519	.130

a. Dependent Variable: Tourist Satisfaction

4.1.2.3 Visitor Satisfaction and Revisit Intention

The final hypothesis test (H8) addressed the relationship between visitor satisfaction and revisit intention. This was tested using single regression testing. The Model Summary (Table 4.22) shows that this is the strongest relationship of any seen in the test (adj. $R^2 = 0.237$). The ANOVA test (Table 4.23) confirms that the outcomes were significant ($F = 121.338$, $p = 0.000$). Table 4.24 shows the coefficients of the test. This test results in a set of regression equations as follows:

$$\text{Unstandardized: } Y = 0.461X_1 + 2.376$$

$$\text{Standardized: } Z = 0.489X_1$$

Based on these findings, it is clear that as anticipated, visitor satisfaction has a positive relationship to revisit intention for Middle East tourists in Phuket. Thus, H8 is confirmed.

Table 4.22 Model Summary – Satisfaction and Intention to Revisit

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.489 ^a	.239	.237	.65446

a. Predictors: (Constant), Tourist Satisfaction

Table 4.23 ANOVA – Satisfaction and Intention to Revisit

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	51.971	1	51.971	121.338	.000 ^a
	Residual	165.759	387	.428		
	Total	217.730	388			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Tourist satisfaction

b. Dependent Variable: Tourist' s revisit intention

Table 4.24 Coefficients – Satisfaction and Intention to Revisit

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
		Coefficients		Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.376	.173		13.761	.000
	Satisfaction	.461	.042	.489	11.015	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Tourist's revisit intention

4.1.3 Comments by Middle East Tourists

According to the open-ended question, most of the Middle East respondents left it empty but some have given suggestions. Positive and negative feedback were filled freely in this area. Most appreciations were about beautiful natural beaches, nice accommodation and the kindness of Thai people while suggestions for improvement in some areas were also provided. Many concerns of the Middle East tourists were similar to the suggestions from services providers. They were not related to the specific religious requirements of Middle East tourists but were general expectations from all tourists traveling to Phuket.

Many respondents repeated the same issue about improving public transportation system which is urgently needed. They experienced unfair charges in many occasions from private taxis, as well as from the tour counters where they already purchased the package from them but not far away found another counter offered in lower price. Few respondents mentioned about improving Security facility such as install more CCTV or increase tourist police presence. A group of

respondents who were sitting on the floor of the airport while answering the questionnaire pointed out that it was time to expand the airport. Respondents added that often saw passengers sitting on the floor when the airport is getting many passengers were waiting to board the flights at the same time. This is a problem both for the departure hall as well as in arrival area where there is very limited space. Long lines waiting of passengers at the immigration counters are frequently seen in the international arrival hall.

4.2 Interview Results

In addition to the surveys, interviews were conducted with service providers in the tourism industry in Phuket, including ten hotels, ten restaurants, and ten tourism and travel agencies. There were five themes identified during the discussions, including the tourist industry services and products provided for Middle East tourists, differences between Middle East tourists and others, the characteristics of Phuket in supporting Middle East tourists, the government of Phuket's response to Middle East tourism, and recommendations for improvement.

The representatives provided a lot of information about existing services and products for Middle East customers. Both the hotel and restaurant representatives pointed out the importance of halal food, both on the menu and for hotels available for recommendations. The hotel also indicated that a prayer area and family rooms or suites (such as three-bedroom suites) were highly popular. Restaurant representatives indicated that Arabic signage and menus, staff that are from Arabic-speaking countries such as Syria and U.A.E., and menus featuring typically Arabic foods (such as halal food, Persian food, and shawarma) were important. One of the restaurant representatives pointed out the popularity of shisha in combination with meals (such as after dinner). The travel agencies noted that late June or early July (immediately before the fasting month of Ramadan) was a popular time for visitors from the Middle East. Popular attractions included James Bond Island and Phi Phi Island, as well as local temples and cultural attractions. One agent argued that standard price controls would be helpful to avoid price gouging or excess discounting, both of which were particularly troubling to this group.

The hotel and restaurant informants had the most useful information about differences between Middle East and other guests. The hotel informants noted that: strict standards of privacy and body modesty encouraged facilities like private pools as well as other private facilities;

display of other religions is not appreciated; they often travel in family groups including people of different ages, requiring different services; although they like to bargain, they will spend for facilities like a good view; the hotel restaurant must provide halal food; and many cannot speak English very well. Restaurants report many of the same issues, including that halal food is particularly important; that they travel in large groups; they often do not speak English; and that they are willing to spend on experiences (particularly seafood and other expensive foods). The travel agency respondents also report that Middle East tourists like to bargain, and will often collect prices from various agencies before deciding which to buy from.

The third area of interest is why Phuket is increasingly popular with Middle East tourists. Respondents identified a number of reasons for this. For example, hotel respondents pointed out that aspect of the resort like villa-style lodging (which encourages privacy and large family groups), a high population of Muslims, and an active TAT promotional campaign in the Middle East as being factors in the increasing popularity of Phuket. One of the hoteliers attributed the rise in popularity to online information and personal reviews, which have encouraged more visitors to try it. Patong Beach is also very convenient, since many service providers can speak Arabic and there are facilities for prayer on the beach. The restaurant respondents also pointed out the convenience, especially of halal food and prayer areas. They also pointed out that there are convenient flights from Middle East regions on airlines like Qatar Airways, and that many visitors visit repeatedly. The agency respondent indicated that there were a lot of facilities and services, and that the language barrier was not such a problem, particularly since many groups travel with at least one English speaker.

The fourth theme was how Phuket government authorities were dealing with Middle East visitors. Areas that were highlighted as being well done include active promotional campaigns by Phuket tourist authorities and TAT; the tourist police (who provide multilingual support for tourists); and organization of Patong Beach. There were a number of areas where there was a need to improve, however. Some of these included: standardizing services and implementing price rules; improving public transportation; creating help desks for tourist support on major beaches and improving multilingual information such as maps, signage, and other areas; improving security; and expanding the size of Phuket Airport. Of these, issues of security and public transportation seem most important. In particular, reliance on taxis and tuk-tuks is seen as

especially problematic for tourists. Another problem is that not all of the tourism information is available in Arabic, which puts Middle East tourists at a disadvantage.

The final theme was recommendations on improving the popularity of Phuket and the quality of its offerings for Middle East tourists. There were a number of suggestions for improvements around service offerings, including more availability of halal food and prayer areas in areas like hotels and beaches. There were also marketing suggestions, such as planning festivals around Muslim holidays like Eid, hotline services, tourist exhibitions and special packages, and pricing standards and enforcements to avoid tourists being cheated. There were also a number of facility and infrastructure improvements suggested, such as improving security (such as CCTV cameras and increased tourist police presence), substantially improving public transportation, controlling prices (especially for standard services like taxis), improving traffic issues, and creating tourist zoning. These suggestions are consistent with the issues that are identified by the participants with existing services. They could improve Phuket's popularity with all tourists, not just Middle East visitors

Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand and investigate factors influencing Middle East tourists' satisfaction for visiting Phuket, as well as examine how this satisfaction will lead their revisit intentions. Furthermore the findings of this study will provide the stakeholders with conceptual foundation to adjust their strategy and improve better tourism products and services to attract the Middle East tourists. To accomplish the goal this study has gathered information from both Middle East tourists and stakeholders by using different strategy. Questionnaire was distributed to the tourist while interview was applied with stakeholder.

5.1 Summary of Questionnaire and Interview results

5.1.1 Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire results are divided into two sections, including descriptive results and hypothesis tests. The descriptive results were a summary of the descriptive statistics for each individual variable include demographic profiles tourist behaviors, factors influencing visit intentions, special needs of Middle East tourists, tourist satisfaction levels, and revisit intentions. Demographic information from the questionnaire includes gender, age, nationality, religion, and household income shows that most of the sample was male, relatively young, with aged between 20 to 30 years. There were a number of nationalities represented; the largest four groups were Kuwait, Egypt, U.A.E., and Qatar. The dominant religion was Islam (91.5%). Annual household income was relatively low to moderate, with 32% of participants indicating under USD50,000 in annual income and 29% indicating USD50,001 to USD75,000. There were six items related to the characteristics of tourist behavior toward Phuket. Most of Middle East tourist traveled to Phuket on their first trip, and a lot of them were return visitors. Almost all of Middle East tourists visiting Phuket for vacation or leisure mainly were traveling with friends and their spouse. The main sources of information about Phuket for Middle East tourist are from their friends and family, additional information from websites. The hotel selection shows that the most popular location among Middle East for accommodation/hotels is in Patong, followed by Kata/Karon. The Middle East tourist visit intention was ranked as very important or important. Very important factors

included the price of goods, location and service quality of accommodations and attractive places. In the subject of Special Needs for Middle East Tourists, the questions focused on three areas, including language, food (Halal) availability, and arrangements for religious observance (including prayer time schedule, praying direction, prayer mats, and praying areas) were very important. Halal food and/or Arabic food in restaurants and hotels were also very important. Arabic speakers in restaurants and hotels, Arabic tour guides, and Arabic menus were important.

The overall response indicated that tourists are satisfied with services for Middle East tourists in Phuket that stakeholders provide at the moment. However, there were also few comments about dissatisfactions that did exist such as expensive taxis and goods prices, dishonest shops or tour agents who quoted different price in the same tour program, and problems with communicating in English. These are seriously could be significantly impact on customer experience. Expansion of Phuket international airport was one of the areas. The respondent pointed out that needed to be considered.

The final set of descriptive results is focused on tourist revisit intentions. As Table 4.8 shows, in general responses indicate a high level of revisit intention for Phuket, with the sample indicating they strongly agreed that they would revisit Phuket and that they would recommend Phuket to friends and family. Thus, there is a relatively strong revisit intention.

Accommodation is a significant factor in customer satisfaction with Phuket. Based on this analysis, price (or cost of living), natural and man-made attractions, and Thai culture and tradition are not found to be significant in customer satisfaction with Phuket. The researcher was also tested about the special preferences of Middle East tourists in Phuket and their impact on visitor satisfaction. Based on the findings, it can be stated that Arabic language services and halal/Arabic meals are significant in customer satisfaction but that prayer areas and materials were not. Visitor Satisfaction and Revisit Intention was confirms that the outcomes were it is clear that as anticipated, if visitor has a positive satisfaction will lead to highly revisit intention level to travel to Phuket .

5.1.2 Interview Results

The interviews were conducted with service providers/stakeholders in the tourism industry in Phuket, including ten hotels, ten restaurants, and ten tourism and travel agencies. There were five themes identified during the discussions, including the tourist industry services and products provided for Middle East tourists, differences between Middle East tourists and others, the characteristics of Phuket in supporting Middle East tourists, the government of Phuket's response to Middle East tourism, and recommendations for improvement.

The representatives provided a lot of information about existing services and products for Middle East customers. Many respondents pointed out the importance of halal food, both on the menu and for hotels available for recommendations and they also indicated that a prayer area and family rooms or suites (such as three-bedroom suites) were highly popular. Furthermore respondents indicated that Arabic signage and menus, staff that are from Arabic-speaking countries such as Syria and U.A.E., and menus featuring typically Arabic foods (such as halal food, Persian food, and shawarma) were important. The travel agencies informed that late June or early July was a popular time for the Middle East. The Famous attractions were James Bond Island and Phi Phi Island, as well as local temples and cultural attractions.

The hotel mentioned that Middle East has strict standards of privacy, preferred private facilities; display of other religions is not appreciated. They are willing to spend for facilities like a good view; the hotel restaurant must provide halal food but travel agency respondents disagreed and reported that Middle East tourists like to bargain, and will often collect prices from various agencies before deciding to buy any tour package from tour counters. Middle East like to travel in large groups and not all can speak English however will find at least one English speaker among them.

The third area of interest is why Phuket is increasingly popular with Middle East tourists. Respondents identified a number of reasons for this. For example, hotel respondents pointed out that aspect of the resort like villa-style lodging (which encourages privacy and large family groups), and an active TAT promotional campaign in the Middle East and the rise in popularity to online information and personal reviews as being factors in the increasing popularity of Phuket, which have encouraged more visitors to experience it. Patong area is also very convenient; many service providers provide Arabic speaking staff and praying facilities. Especially it has plenty of

halal food restaurants. The convenient of direct flights from Middle East regions like Qatar Airways is also reason of increasingly high number of Middle East tourists.

The fourth theme was how Phuket government authorities were dealing with Middle East visitors. Areas that were highlighted as being well done include active promotional campaigns by Phuket tourist authorities and TAT; the tourist police (who provide multilingual support for tourists); and organization of Patong Beach. However, there were a number of areas where it needed to improve. Such as the standardizing services and implementing price rules, improving public transportation, creating help desks for tourist support on major beaches and improving multilingual information such as maps, signage, and other areas; improving security; and expanding the size of Phuket Airport. Of these, public transportation seems to be the most important. In particular, reliance on taxis and tuk-tuks is seen as especially problematic for tourists. Another problem is that not all of the tourism information is available in Arabic, which puts Middle East tourists at a disadvantage.

The final theme was recommendations on improving the popularity of Phuket and the quality of its offerings for Middle East tourists. There were also marketing suggestions, such as planning festivals around Muslim holidays like Eid, hotline services, tourist exhibitions and special packages, and pricing standards and enforcements to avoid tourists being cheated. There were also a number of facility and infrastructure improvements suggested, such as improving security (such as CCTV cameras and increased tourist police presence), improving traffic issues. These suggestions are consistent with the issues that are identified by the participants with existing services. They could improve Phuket's popularity with all tourists, not just Middle East visitors

5.2 Discussion

This discussion summarizes follow the objectives of the study as follows:

5.2.1 To study the existing offer of products and services targeting Middle East tourist in Phuket's tourism industry.

According to the findings on both questionnaire and interview showed that a great number of the Middle East tourists visited Phuket were satisfy with products and services that they received from service providers. The service providers are also seems to be well aware of the

special arrangement and requirements that should be provided for the Middle East tourists included Halal meals, Arabic speaking staff, and praying facilities. The interview results mentioned that many restaurants in Patong have provided menu in Arabic language to explain detail of recipe and Arabic speaking staff that are able to give recommendation if customer would like to experience Thai or Asian dishes. Majority of Hotel respondents were aware of Middle East tourists' nature, as they like to travel in a big group with different ages of members and tend to need more privacy especially when having a young lady in the group. The option of a villa with private pool was created to fulfill this requirement and Middle East tourists are also appreciated though it might not be in their original reservation but most of them willing to upgrade for their more comfortable stay. Moreover the result showed that hotels where targeted Middle East tourists have a set of basic knowledge on their special arrangement, the managers has briefed their staffs to have an idea about praying time, praying direction (Qibla) for Muslim guests and some hotels even have provided the praying mats if guest requested for it. When assigned room to Middle East guest were also allocated them in the rooms where there is none of statues, pictures represented other religions decorated in the rooms.

The Middle East tourists were satisfied with products and services which offered at the moment when traveling to Phuket though they tend to over-emphasize on the importance such as prayer accommodations. But there are undoubtedly still some improvements that could be made, such as placing praying room near beaches because normally tourist spend most of their time in that area. This is in contrast to the issue of food, which was also important, but which some interview respondents suggested might not be as well executed as it could be (for example; poor quality halal food). The relative importance of various aspects of tourism deserve more examination in future research.

5.2.2 To investigate factors (including price, accommodation service, natural attractions, cultural and traditional attractions, and special preferences of Middle East tourists) influencing Middle East tourists' satisfaction with the experience of visiting Phuket.

The main factor that made middle tourist has chosen Phuket to spend their holidays was because of beautiful natural beaches; the place has full of activities (tour program, sports, shows, etc.), cultural and also affordable price of goods and accommodation with high service

quality as it showed in result under satisfaction level question. The preference of Middle East tourist has similarity to other group of tourist.

The result of Hypotheses tested by using multiple or single regression, could be confirmed and rejected in some factors as follows:

H1: Price or cost of living at Phuket is a significant influence on tourist satisfaction.

This hypothesis was rejected. The result exposed that Middle East has strict standards of privacy and body modesty which encouraged facilities like private pools as well as other private facilities. They often travel in family groups including people of different ages, requiring different services. They are willing to spend more for facilities like a good view and nice experiences such particularly seafood and other expensive foods.

H2: Accommodation at Phuket is a significant influence on tourist satisfaction.

This hypothesis was accepted. The hotel selection is a very important factors, it shows that the most popular location among Middle East for accommodation/hotels is in Patong because quality of accommodations, the location and service, attractive places. The area answers all facilities that Muslim needs. Furthermore, the result also indicated about one-third (33%) of the respondent were return visitors.

H3: Natural/ Man-made attractions at Phuket are a significant influence on tourist satisfaction.

This hypothesis was rejected. Based on this study, natural and man-made attractions, or Thai culture and tradition are not found to be significant in customer satisfaction with Phuket, but accommodation is.

H4: Thai Culture and tradition is a significant influence on tourist satisfaction.

This hypothesis was also rejected. The result confirmed that Thai cultural or tradition is not influence the Middle East tourist's satisfaction.

H5: Arabic language service is a significant influence on tourist satisfaction.

This hypothesis was accepted. Arabic language service was one of the important aspects of the Phuket experience that influenced customer satisfaction. Areas where they understand Standard Arabic (the Arabic trade language) seems to have competitive advantages. In the interviews result indicated that accommodations like Arabic signage and menus and

Arabic-speaking waiters were very important for customer satisfaction for guests from the Middle East. This was not just for comfort reasons, but because Middle East did not always have a high level of English proficiency (if any). Thus, Phuket may be more effective at encouraging Middle East tourism revisit intentions if the city as a whole encouraged the use of written and spoken Arabic.

H6: Halal Meal or Arabic Food is a significant influence on tourist satisfaction.

This hypothesis was accepted. The result indicated Halal meals; Arabic Food was important and affected the tourist's satisfaction level and revisit intention.

H7: Praying area and material is a significant influence on tourist satisfaction.

This hypothesis was rejected. The result supported that prayer accommodation such as Prayer mat, praying schedule, etc. was not important although stakeholders still provided prayer facilities in their services.

5.2.3 To examine the relationship between Middle East tourists' satisfaction and their revision intention to Phuket.

H8: Tourist satisfaction is a significant influence on the tourist's revisit intention.

This hypothesis is accepted and can be seen as the strongest hypothesis test, as well as in the descriptive outcomes and interviews. As mentioned that the finding found that majority of Middle East tourists were satisfied with products and services in Phuket and they also have high revisit intention. Additional on that, they are also willing to recommend Phuket to their family and friends as a vacation destination.

The finding of this study was as expected from the literature in many areas. For example, a full third of the participants in the sample were repeat visitors, indicating a high revisit intention among previous visitors. Some of the interviewees also indicated that some of their guests returned for several years in a row, spending holidays in the area routinely. Since they were willing to tell friends and family about their visit, and since there is a strong influence of information from friends and family, satisfied visitors are likely to have even more of an impact. Thus, there is clear evidence that ensuring visitor satisfaction in Middle East tourists who visit Phuket is likely to be a winning strategy for increasing the number of visitors who visit.

Some of the findings are different than previous literatures. Hasan (2008) mentioned that Saudi Arabia is a major outbound tourism market in the region, with Saudi

tourists spending around USD6.7 billion annually on international tourism. Cobos (2008) found that most Middle East tourists traveling to Thailand were from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), followed by Kuwait and Egypt while this study focused only on Middle East tourists in Phuket and found that the highest numbers of this group are from Kuwait followed by Egypt and UAE. Cobos (2008) also revealed that most of these visitors traveled in groups of two to four friends, staying in standard hotels but this study found that the Middle East tourists in Phuket are preferred a large suite room or private villa which are totally different expectations comparing to previous studies.

5.3 Recommendations

The last objective of this research is to provide suggestions for improving the performance of the tourism industry in Phuket in the sector that aimed on Middle East tourists. Even though, in general, Middle East tourist seem to be satisfied with tourism of Phuket, however, they still have some areas that government, business owner/stakeholders should focus on to improve better service to the Middle East tourists and also for other tourists. The main issue that has been recommended by most of respondents is about transportation, in which tourism area, like all major beaches, should have public transport. In present time, there are only private taxis and Tuk Tuk which sometime are over-price for their services.

As we have already known that the main source of the Phuket province income is tourism business. According to the interview results from business owner/stakeholders, it is not just for the opinion from the Middle East tourists but include also tourists from different other countries around the world that mentioned the same issue about the inconvenience of public transportation in Phuket. Traveling around the city is limited, comparing to other tourism destination that provide public bus or train from the airport which are much more convenience for tourists and they are able to move around the city freely with reasonable price. While the transportation situation in Phuket is still has limited services, the airport bus is actually available but only few destinations (Phuket Town and Patong) and frequency of each bus need to be improved. Moreover, in each major beach such as Patong, Kata, Rawai, Surin, Naiyang, and other should have local buses to hop-in from hotel to beach or supermarket. Now a day, we often see tourists hire Tuk Tuk which sometime charged with a very exaggerated price and the government could

not control the price especially in late nights. The tourists, without choices, hire them or may have another solution by renting a motorcycle for traveling around by themselves. But again the record of tourists getting accident by motorcycle riding is also increasing every year.

Cost control policy from department in charge is another issue that needs to improve. The Middle East tourists have pointed out on the price of goods and package tours provided by tour agencies that sometimes they have to check the price in a different agency to get the best deal for a trip to island. It would be great if the tour operator and department in charge could have start up with price and quality control. The tourist can find the same itinerary in every agency in the same price.

The Airport expansion of Phuket international airport is one of the important topics which should be immediately revealed. The research found that passengers have not enough seats while waiting in the departure terminal and some were end up sitting on the floor. This creates unpleasant image of Phuket since it is recorded as a number one tourist dream destination of tourist city in Thailand.

The language barrier also can be improved such as creating tourism tools/signage in different languages which can be seen easily. This tool/signage should be in most of information documents such as brochure, information leaflet magazines, map etc.; commonly are in English, also widely translated into Chinese and some are in Russian, French, German but can't be found in Arabic version. It would be better if tourism relating departments would consider Arabic in one of their version. It is also some of the respondents suggested about traffic sign that some are in both Thai and English, not all, but still signs are only in Thai.

If the government would have taken all concerns seriously, it certainly will increase satisfaction level of all tourists in Phuket in the future and definitely Phuket will be much more receiving new faces of tourists and the repeat travelers from around the world.

5.4 Limitations and suggestions for further research

The Following recommendations are offered for related research about Middle East tourism or Muslim travelers in the future.

There are a number of areas the findings brought up, particularly in the interviews that are mostly lacking in the literature at all. For example, the accommodation requirements (especially large suites or rooms for families and private facilities like private pools) are not addressed at all in the literature. Neither is the need to provide diverse services to traveling groups that include three to four generations of a family, often with different needs. This is a novel contribution that could be explored in future research. They also offer an opportunity for Phuket, which has already responded through an increased number of villa rooms being built which offer increased privacy and size for large groups. However, it could be even further explored (such as through specialized services for family groups or the differences between male and female respondents and their special preferences.

Since the research has made only in Phuket, it would be better if we can explore also in Bangkok or the entire of Thailand. Phuket is more for a single or bachelor while Bangkok is for family. We only learn the satisfaction of a specific group. And also each country has their individual character if we have a chance to study on more detail of each particular country would be better understanding.

The respondents gave answer base on their religion rules but they practice differently in reality as we still can see many of the Middle East tourists drinking and clubbing just like other tourists even though they do realize that it should not be done since it is against to their religion but still.

Many studies mentioned that services demanded by Middle East tourists in Thailand have been shifting over time. Middle East tourists used to travel to Bangkok used to for sex trade, drugs, and alcohol over time the illicit demand has shrunk. Today, most of the services offered to Middle East tourists in the area are focused on family and medical tourism demand. This is consistent with a change in tourism demands generally, away from illicit activities. As well the result of this study today could be replicated in a few years later. It is important for Phuket tourism industry to consider having repeated studies and keep active on Middle East tourist's trends as well as other tourists in order to create a better understand and realize the actual demand from all tourists around the world.

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استبيان للسياح العرب ببعدة زيارة فوكيت



استبيان

Date

Interviewer(No.)

Place

فيالأمعالإدارةفيالدوليةللماستيرأطروحةمنجزءلاستبيانهذا
هذا الاستبيان جزء من أطروحة للماستير الدولية في إدارة الأعمال في كلية الضيافة والسياحة
في جامعة الأمير سونغكلا، فرع فوكيت ، تايلاند. سيتم استخدام المعلومات التي تم جمعها من هذا
الاستبيان لأسباب أكاديمية فقط و سيتم الحفاظ على سريتها.
شكراً جزيلاً لتعاونكم
نتنرين صرت
باحثة

الجزء الأول: الديمغرافية (إختر الاجابة المناسبة)

- (1) الجنس ذكر أنثى
- (2) العمر ٢٠ أو اقل ٢١ - ٣٠-٤٠ ٤١-٥٠ ٥١-٦٠ أو أكثر
- (إذا امكنالوصف باللغة الإنجليزية) (3) الجنسية:
- (4) الطائفة: مسلم مسيحي آخر حدد:
- (5) المدخول السنوي (دولار أمريكي): اقل من ٥٠٠٠٠ ٥٠٠٠٠-٧٥٠٠٠ ٧٥٠٠٠-١٥٠٠٠٠ ١٥٠٠٠٠-٢٥٠٠٠٠ أكثر من ٢٥٠٠٠٠
- (6) مرافقك في السفر: لا احد زوج (٥) أنتي اصدقايا
- (7) هل زيارتك الأولى الى فوكيت؟
نعملا نعملا
- (8) ما سبب زيارتك الى فوكيت
..... عطلة / الترفيه الفحص طبي
- (9) أي مصدر امكنك الوصول للمعلومات حول فوكيت؟
..... مجلة / تلفزيون إعلانات أخرى موقع إلكتروني: صديق / الأسر ميل سياحي
- (10) أين كان يقع الفندق؟
باتونجكا كارونراواي / نايه
- (كاملا / سورينفوك وناخر:
- (إذا امكنالوصف باللغة الإنجليزية) (11) أين فندق؟

الجزء 3: العوامل المؤثرة على السائح
ما هي العوامل التي تعتقد أنها يمكن أن تؤثر عليك في السفر إلى فوكيت ؟
(5 = مهم جدا = 4 ، هامة = 3 ، محايد = 2 ، غير مهم = 1 ، غير مهم على الإطلاق)

العوامل	5	4	3	2	1
(12) سعر الخدمة في فوكيت (فندق ومطعم)					
• سعر الطعام					
• سعر الإقامة					
• سعر التنقل					
• سعر السلع					
(13) خدمة السكن					
• المكان					
• جودة الخدمة					
• مرافق					
أماكن جذابة (الموارد الطبيعية مثل الشواطئ والجبال (من فوكيت 14) من صنع الإنسان الجذب السياحي) مثل بوكيت فانناسي ، سيام ، كباريه ، الخ. (15).					
عوامل	5	4	3	2	1
ثقافة فريدة من نوعها والتقليدية من فوكيت (16)					
• المداقونوعية الاكل المحلي					
• الاحداثالثقافية					
• الحياةالتقليدية					

جزء 4: خاص بالشرق اوسطيين
العوامل التي تعتقد أنها يمكن أن تؤثر عليك في السفر إلى فوكيت أكثر ؟
(5 = مهم جدا = 4 ، هامة = 3 ، محايد = 2 ، غير مهم = 1 ، غير مهم على الإطلاق)

Factors	5	4	3	2	1
متحدثباللغةالعربية (فندقمطعم)17					
دليلسياحيعربي18					
قائمة طعام بالغة العربية (مطعم /فندق)19					
تقديم وجبة حلال أو مأكولات عربية (مطعم /فندق)20					

<p>(21) ترتيب خاص للسياح المسلمين، بما في ذلك:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • جدول أوقات الصلاة • اتجاه الصلاة • سجادة صلاة • مناطق مخصصة للصلاة <p>(22) عوامل أخرى</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>					
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جزء 5: مستوى رضا السائح
(23) عموماً، ما كان شعورك حول الخدمات الحالية المقدمة للسائح الأوسط في فوكيت؟
راض جداً راض طبيعى
مستاء مستاء جداً
(24) يرجى شرح بالتفصيل؟ لماذا أنت ترضي / مستاء من رحلة فوكيت؟
(إذا أمكن الوصف باللغة الإنجليزية)

الجزء 6: إعادة النظر في النية السياحي
كيف تتفق مع البيان الوارد أدناه؟ (5 = أوافق بشدة، أوافق = 3 = محايد، 2 = غير موافق، 1 = لا أوافق بشدة)

العوامل	5	4	3	2	1
أود زيارة فوكيت مرة أخرى في المستقبل. (25)					
عندما أفكر في عطلة مميزة، سوف أفكر في فوكيت. (26)					
سأوصي فوكيت إلى أصدقائي والأقارب (27)					

****شكر الاجاباتكم****



Date
Interviewer(No.)
Place

Interview questions

1. Can you describe about your business and how it relates to tourism industry?
2. Have you ever served customer from Middle East? If yes, what are those services or products serving?
3. Based on your experience, what are the different between serving Middle East customer and other customer, please give some example?
4. Can you describe the characteristic of Middle East customer such as language use, price preference, and requirement?
5. Based on your business, do you have or prepare anything to attract the people from Middle East? What are them?
6. How do you think about this statement “During the past few years, the customers from Middle East who visit Phuket have been significantly increasing?,” and why?
7. In your opinion, is it convenience for Middle East customer to visit Phuket or not? For example, the availability of Halal food, praying area, Arabic tour guide and other special needs for Middle East residents.
8. In your opinion, what are the areas that Phuket government authorities have done very well for attracting visitor from Middle East?
9. In your opinion, what are the areas that Phuket government authorities need to improve immediately to attracting visitor from Middle East?
10. What are your recommendations for Phuket tourism industry to adopt in order to increase Middle East customer?



Date
Interviewer(No.)
Place

1. ท่านสามารถอธิบายได้ไหมว่าธุรกิจของท่านเกี่ยวข้องกับอุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยวอย่างไร
2. ท่านเคยให้บริการนักท่องเที่ยวชาวตะวันตกนอกกลางหรือไม่ (ถ้าใช่) บริการของท่านคืออะไร
3. จากประสบการณ์ของท่าน ท่านคิดว่าอะไรคือความแตกต่างระหว่างนักท่องเที่ยวชาวตะวันตกและนักท่องเที่ยวชาติอื่น ๆ (กรุณา ยกตัวอย่าง)
4. ท่านสามารถอธิบายลักษณะเฉพาะ ของนักท่องเที่ยวชาวตะวันตกนอกกลางได้หรือไม่ จาก ภาษาที่ใช้ ราคาที่นิยม หรือชื่อเรียกหรือกรณีพิเศษต่าง ๆ
5. จากการดำเนินธุรกิจของท่าน ท่านได้จัดเตรียมการบริการอะไรเป็นพิเศษ เพื่อดึงดูดใจนักท่องเที่ยวชาวตะวันตกนอกกลางหรือไม่ (ถ้ามี) คืออะไร
6. ท่านเห็นด้วยหรือไม่ว่า นักท่องเที่ยวชาวตะวันตกนอกกลางมีจำนวนเพิ่มมากขึ้นใน จ.ภูเก็ต ในระยะ 2-3 ปีที่ผ่านมา โปรดชี้แจงเหตุผล
7. ในความคิดเห็นของท่าน นักท่องเที่ยวชาวตะวันตกนอกกลางได้รับความสะดวกสบายเพียงพอหรือไม่ เวลามาท่องเที่ยวใน จ.ภูเก็ต เช่น อาหารฮาลาล สถานที่สวดมนต์ระหว่างวัน ไกด์ที่สามารถพูดภาษาอาหรับได้ รวมถึงความต้องการด้านอื่น ๆ
8. ในความคิดเห็นของท่าน ภาคส่วนใดในส่วนของราชการของ จ.ภูเก็ต ได้ให้การสนับสนุนการให้บริการเพื่อดึงดูดใจนักท่องเที่ยวชาวตะวันตกนอกกลาง ให้เข้ามาเยี่ยมชม มากที่สุด (ที่ทำมาดีแล้ว)
9. ในความคิดเห็นของท่าน ภาคส่วนใด ที่ส่วนราชการของ จ.ภูเก็ต ได้ควรมีการพัฒนาการให้บริการ โดยเร่งด่วนเพื่อดึงดูดใจนักท่องเที่ยวชาวตะวันตกนอกกลาง ให้เข้ามาเยี่ยมชม เพิ่มมากขึ้น
10. คุณมีข้อเสนอแนะอย่างไรเกี่ยวกับอุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยวใน จ.ภูเก็ต ที่จะสามารถพัฒนาและเพิ่มจำนวนของนักท่องเที่ยวชาวตะวันตกนอกกลาง ให้เข้ามาเยี่ยมชมในจ.ภูเก็ตให้ได้เพิ่มมากยิ่งขึ้น

Questionnaire for the Middle East Tourists who visited Phuket



Date
Interviewer(No.)
Place

QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is a part of thesis of the International Master of Business Administration (MBA) Program at the Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism of Prince of Songkla University, Phuket Campus, Thailand. The information collected with this questionnaire will be used only for academic purpose and kept confidential.

Your kind cooperation in this regard is highly appreciated.

Thank you for your kind cooperation.

Natnarin Sorot

Researcher

Part 1: Demographic Profiles (Please tick in each that corresponds to your answer)

- 1) Gender Male Female
- 2) Age: <20 21 – 30 31 – 40 41 – 50 51 – 60 >61
- 3) Nationality:
- 4) Religion: Islam Christianity Others, please specify
- 5) Annual household income:
- Under 50,000 USD 50,001 – 75,000 USD 75,001 – 100,000 USD
- 100,001 – 125,000 USD 125,001 – 150,000 USD > 150,000 USD
- 6) With whom were you traveling with?
- Alone Spouse Family Friends Others.....

Part 2: Tourist's behavior toward Phuket

- 7) Is it your first visit to Phuket?
- Yes No
- 8) What was the reason to bring you to Phuket?
- Vacation/Leisure Business Medical Check-up others

9) Which source did you access for the information about Phuket?

- Website..... Friend/ Family Tour Agent Counter (In Resident Country)
 Magazine/TV/Advertising Other

10) Where was your hotel located?

- Patong Kata/Karon Rawai/Naiharn
 Kamla/Surin Phuket Town Other, (Specify)

11) Which hotel did you stay?

Part 3: Factors Influencing Tourist's Visit Intention

In which factor that you think it can influence you to travel to Phuket more if they could provide follow as below? (5=Very Important, 4=Important, 3=Neutral, 2=Not Important, 1=Not Important at all)

Factors	5	4	3	2	1
12) Price of service in Phuket (Hotel and restaurant)					
● Price of food					
● Price of accommodation					
● Price of transportation					
● Price of goods					
13) Accommodation service					
● Location					
● Service quality					
● Facilities					
14) Attractive places (Natural resources such as beaches and mountain) of Phuket					
15) Man-made attractions (e.g. Phuket FantaSea, Siam Niramitr, Cabaret etc.)					
Factors	5	4	3	2	1
16) Unique culture and traditional of Phuket					
● Taste and style of local food					
● Cultural events					
● Traditional way of living					

Part 4: Special Needs for Middle East Tourist

In which factor that you think it can influence you to travel to Phuket more if they could provide follow as below? (5=Very Important, 4=Important, 3=Neutral, 2=Not Important, 1=Not Important at all)

Factors	5	4	3	2	1
17) Arabic Speaker (Restaurant/ Hotel)					
18) Arabic Tour Guide					
19) Arabic Menu (Restaurant/ Hotel)					
20) Provide Halal Meal or Arabic Food (Restaurant/ Hotel)					
21) Special arrangement for Muslim tourists, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Praying times Schedule ● Praying Direction ● Praying Mat ● Praying Area 					
22) Other Factors					
.....					

Part 5: Tourist's Satisfaction Level

23) Overall, what did you feel about the existing services provided for Middle tourist in Phuket?

- Very satisfied Satisfied Natural
 Dissatisfied Very dissatisfied

24) Please explain in detail about the answer of question about? Why do you satisfy/ dissatisfy with the trip at Phuket?

(If possible please describe in English)

Part 6: Tourist Revisit Intention

How would you agree with statement presented below? (5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neutral, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree)

Factors	5	4	3	2	1
25) I would like to visit Phuket again in the future.					
26) When I think about great holiday, I will think about Phuket.					
27) I will recommend Phuket to my friends & Relatives					



Thank you for your kind response

VITAE

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List of Proceeding

Natnarin Sorot & Ilian Assenov. "An Assessment of the Products & Services Targeting Middle East Tourists in Phuket,Thailand", International Conference on Tourism and Development: Growth and Diversity, August 29-30, 2014, Chiangmai, Thailand.