

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

With the continuing expansion of the worldwide tourism industry, tourists nowadays are seeking a variety of travel experiences more than the traditional sun sand, and sea holiday. Changes in demographic, social, and cultural characteristics of the tourism market have led to an increasing number of new niche markets available in destination countries (World Bank, 2000). Among all forms of special interest tourism, cultural tourism is predicted to be one of the five key tourism market segments in the near future (World Tourism Organization, 1999a) with an annual growth rate at 10 to 15 percent (World Bank, 2000). Although culture, heritage and the arts have long been contributing to the appeal of destinations, they have only recently been discovered as a major marketing tool to attract travelers seeking a personally rewarding and enriching tourist experience (Zeppel and Hall, 1991). This type of special interest travel aims at the process of learning and experiencing the past and present of the host community through consumption of the manifestation of cultural heritage including physical objects (sites, buildings, artifacts, costumes, art) and social customs (religion, songs, dances, ceremonies).

For the past decade, cultural resources and tourism have become inextricably linked throughout the world especially in developing countries. The decision to pursue cultural tourism is often on the government agenda of many tourism destinations especially those with colorful traditions and enriched cultural and heritage resources.

Thailand has diversity in tourism resources; especially in geography, climates, biology and flora & fauna. These enable an increasing number of both Thai and international tourists to be able to choose to travel to many provinces of Thailand. Moreover, Thailand is also reputed in cultural tourism. In ranking cultural and traditional tourism in Asia Pacific countries, Thailand ranks number one in the region

(Kaosa-ard and Team, 1997). However, to promote tourism products to attract tourists, many factors have to be considered such as understanding tourist preferences, quality of tourism products, standard services, suitable prices and effective advertisements. An effective marketing is needed in order to obtain guidelines in a tourist area management. Marketing management has to be carried out in line with a sustainable tourism management in order to generate a good income for the country and to help with the conservation for the contributions to a sustainable utilization of tourism resources.

Tourism Authority of Thailand has long been the core organization that raises the promotion of tourism in the country. Tourism Authority of Thailand (1997a: 7) claimed that the government has set up aims of tourism that the growth rate of tourist is to be at least 7 percent per year, foreign currency income at least 15 percent per year. And they tried to encourage Thai people to increase domestic tourism at least 3 percent per year.

Tourism Authority of Thailand (1997a: 36) in compliance with the government prospect set up a 6-year plan since 1998-2003. It came with campaign of “Rak Thai Teaw Thai”. The goal is to develop Thailand tourism in such a way that conserves cultural, social and natural heritage and enable sustainability of environment.

The government realized the importance of tourism to the country, thus promotes tourism in Thailand by adding tourism in some of the National Economic and Social Development Plans. And according to tourism policy of the Royal Thai government, under the responsibility of The Ministry of Tourism and Sports, there is an attempt to develop tourism industry to be “Tourism Capital of Asia” based on sustainable tourism promotions, and improve the tourism quality of Thailand to meet an international standard. Because they realize that tourism is a very large scale business of trade and service that has been uninterruptedly developed and involves almost all production sectors at all level: local, provincial and national, so that it is regarded as a tool to develop an economy, society, quality of life and to conserve cultural, social and environmental heritage. In order to get more income from tourists, the seminar on “Tourism capital of Asia Goal” was held on 21 March 2003 which leads to be the quality of Tourism resource for more qualified tourists by emphasizing on the quality of tourism products to increase the value-added with higher personal

income. The seminar has suggested one of the problems that stop the growth and development of tourism is a lack of marketing management.

Despite good potential in unique cultural tourism resources, particularly tourist attractions, activities, local cultural festivals and local way of life, cultural tourism in Southern part of Thailand is not so well known like in The Northern and Central part of Thailand. So Thailand is not fully represented by short tours of Bangkok and Chiangmai.

This research studies methodology, guidelines in marketing strategies to bring about a sustainable cultural tourism by responding to tourist preference factors. Nakhon Si Thammarat is selected for a case study for an implementation of a guidelines study.

Nakhon Si Thammarat is a potential province for cultural tourism but it lacks of a concrete marketing plan for cultural tourism. According to A study for national action plan for the tourism industry in the 9th National Economic and Social Development Plans (2002-2006), the analysis for identifying a suitable province tourism development. It is found that Nakhon Si Thammarat is the potential province that needs more aggressive marketing strategies. Hence, it is suitable for a case study for this research.

1.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

- 1.2.1 To determine the factors influencing tourists both Thai and foreign to make a destination decision to select cultural tourism in southern provinces;
- 1.2.2 To examine the potential of supply factors for developing sustainable cultural tourism in Nakhon Si Thammarat;
- 1.2.3 To guideline a marketing strategy for cultural tourism development in Nakhon Si Thammarat.

1.3 Hypothesis

1.3.1 Important level of marketing mix factors that influence tourist both Thai and foreign to make decisions to select cultural tourism in southern provinces have relationship with personal factors

1.3.2 Thai and Foreign tourists have different important level of marketing mix factors to make decisions to select cultural tourism in southern provinces.

1.3.3 Nakhon Si Thammarat has high potentiality in being a cultural tourist attraction

1.4 Research Benefits

The information obtained from this research can be utilized as a guideline in developing marketing strategies to achieve sustainable cultural tourism in Nakhon Si Thammarat and other related regions.

1.5 Research Scope

1.5.1 Scope of area, this study limits area to examine demand factors in southern provinces and select Nakhon Si Thammarat province for a case study.

1.5.2 Scope of demography, this case study limits at two groups which are:

1.5.2.1 Tourists group both Thai and foreign who are over 15 years old and interested in cultural tourism in the southern province

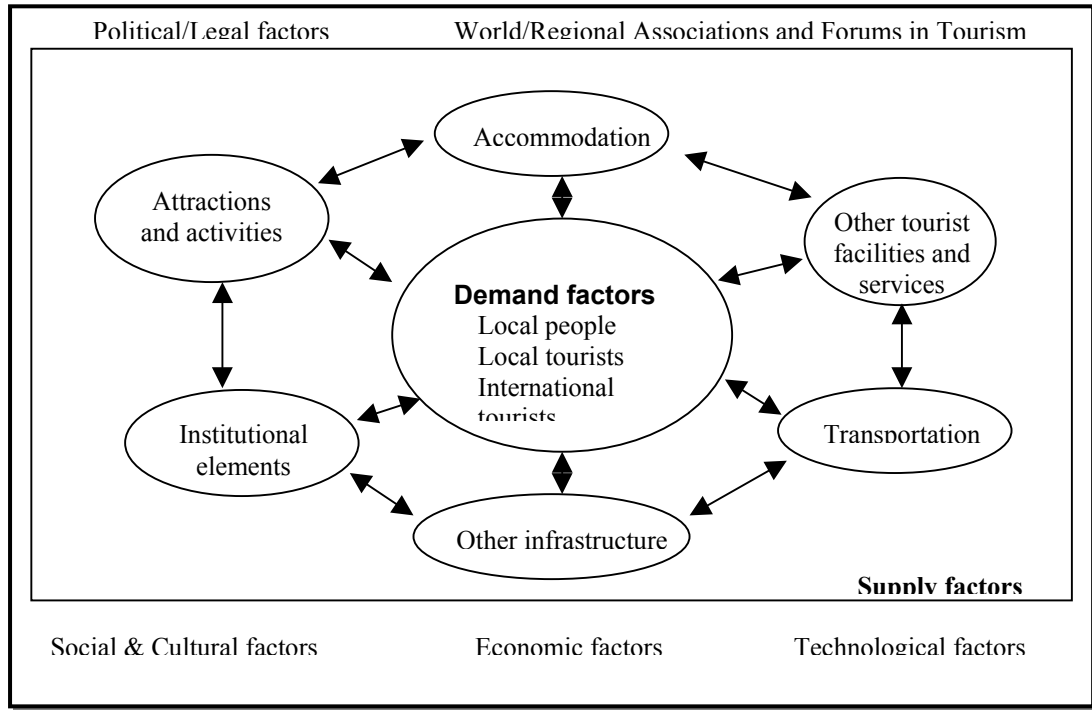
1.5.2.2 Related officer group:

- Provincial tourism committee of Nakhon Si Thammarat, which include the representatives from 15 public sectors, 2 private sectors, and 4 educational institutes.

- Tourism experts

1.5.3 Scope of theme, this study comprises 3 factors in tourism system

Figure 1.1 Tourism System and its environment



Source: Chaisawat, M. (2004)

1.5.3.1 Demand factors

This study emphasizes the demand factors of local (domestic) tourists and international tourists.

- Tourists' behavior
- Tourists' interest in cultural tourism
- Access to information of cultural tourism
- Factors that influence tourists' decisions on selecting cultural tourism in southern provinces

This part is based on primary data collected from questionnaires.

1.5.3.2 Supply factors

According to A study for national action plan for the tourism industry In the 9th National Economic and Social Development Plans (2002-2006), it has the analysis for identifying a suitable province for tourism development. This study analyzes 3 variables: supply, demand, and potential of provincial tourism. Hence, the

research will emphatically analyze the potential of cultural tourist attractions and activities, and review with the following supply factors in Nakhon Si Thammarat;

- Accommodation
- Other tourist facilities and services
- Transportation
- Other infrastructures
- Institutional element

This part is based on primary data are collected from questionnaires and interviews. And the secondary data is collected from concerned literatures.

1.5.3.3 Tourism policy and planning factors

Overview of cultural tourism in Nakhon Si Thammarat and South of Thailand for analyzing and selecting the appropriate strategies for the government and private sector

1.5.4 Scope of case study period, this case study was limited period during December 2003 to August 2004.

1.6 Definitions

1.6.1 Cultural tourism

Cultural tourism can define as a form of tourism that highlight the cultural, heritage or artistic aspects of a destination or experiences and activities for the tourist to admire and learn about local culture and traditions. The local community participates in the management of this form of tourism, which is based on the principles of conserving local culture and the environment.

Cultural tourist attractions and activities

- Religious sites (ex. temple, churches, shrines)
- Historic sites and buildings (ex. ancient monuments, historic gardens, historic landscapes, historic villages and townscapes)
- Local village and life style
- Museum
- Sites associated with historic events and famous people
- Local sports

- Festivals and special events (ex. folklore, performing arts, traditional festivals and special interest)
- Traditional arts and crafts
- Traditional performances
- Traditional food and drinks

1.6.2 Sustainable tourism

Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems.

1.6.3 Tourist

A tourist is any visitor staying more than 24 hours in a country/region/area and making an over night stay for any reasons except paid work (Coltman M., 1989).

However, for this research same-day visitors or excursionists who make day visits to other destinations away from the places where they are staying overnight be tourists.