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THE PERCEPTIONS OF THAILAND'S  
ENVIRONMENT BY  
INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research was to determine the tourists' perceptions of the physical and social environment of Thailand. In April and May 1993, 232 questionnaires were completed by a random sample of tourists after they passed customs at Bangkok International Airport. The findings of this research are:

1. Respondents had strongly negative perceptions of problems in Bangkok, particularly traffic congestion, air quality, and prostitution but tourists found that Bangkok provided excitement and good shopping.
2. Respondents regarded water pollution, lack of fresh water and lack of rubbish disposal as problems in beach resorts.
3. Respondents found deforestation and river pollution evident in Northern Thailand. Moreover, they found that their trip to Northern Thailand was not the adventure, they had hoped for.
4. Respondents found the Thai people friendly and hospitable and they felt they had experienced Thai culture during their visit. Respondents perceived that AIDS did not influence their decision to revisit Thailand.
5. Respondents perceived that environmental degradation was worst in Bangkok and that it was a growing problem in beach resorts as well as Northern Thailand.
6. Despite the respondents' awareness of social and environmental problems in Thailand, most of the respondents intended to revisit Thailand.

# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Tourism industry in Thailand

Thailand is a country that is rich in tourism resources; it is endowed with an abundance of natural beauty, historical sites, cultural and man-made attractions. Thailand occupies a land area similar to that of France (510,000 sq .Km) and has tourist attractions ranging from palaces, ruined cities, archaeological wonders, tribal villages, pristine beach resorts, rain forests and mountains. One of the most popular attractions is Bangkok which is also known as the Venice of the East due to the canals of the Chao Phrya River. Bangkok has many attractions which include temples, palaces and floating markets. It also has cultural activities such as music, dancing, shopping for handicrafts, jewellery and restaurants with diverse cuisine and Bangkok's infamous nightlife. The other major attraction of the country is the southern coast which offers beach resort areas such as Phuket province and Samui Island. Thailand's abundance of natural resources and rich culture is vital for tourism. For this reason, the government views tourism as one of the avenues to improve its productive power to make the transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy.

In order to assist the development of tourism, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) was formed in 1970's to promote tourism and thus generate revenue for the Thai economy. In 1971, an agreement was made between the Thai government and the World Bank in which the World Bank agreed to send its specialists to help the development of Thailand's tourist industry. The World Bank's study was completed in 1975. It examined the growth potential of tourism in Thailand and recommended more public sector investment in infrastructure in areas such as airport expansion, maintenance and the development of provincial sites and resorts (Richter: 1989).

Additionally, in 1971, a national Tourist Development plan was commissioned by the Thai government with the aim of providing the government and private enterprise with guidelines for future tourism growth. In 1979, the Tourist Development plan recommended the Tourist Organisation of Thailand (TOT) should have more authority to guide and control the operations of the private sector. The authority is connected with the government and the administrative system and for this reason, it has a strong relationship with both sectors. It is also in a position to educate, influence and speak with authority. In 1980, the Tourist Organisation was renamed the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT). The renaming gave the Authority added responsibility, an increased budget and more powers to manage the tourist trade.

The TAT's main aims are to promote tourism, and to develop a good image of the tourism industry both at home and abroad. This is to be achieved through the marketing of Thailand as an international tourist destination. The TAT acts as a marketing agency for Thailand overseas and for this reason, it has offices in countries such as Singapore, Japan, Malaysia, Germany, and United States. In economic terms the TAT has been successful. The growth of the tourism industry in Thailand has been impressive. For instance, "income from tourism increased from 200 million baht in 1960 to more than 100,000 million baht in 1991"<sup>1</sup> (Kitthaweerat: 1992 ). However, during 1991, there was a decline in tourist arrivals of 4%, and then in 1992 an increase of only 1%.

A new TAT marketing strategy was implemented. Its role was to promote the image of Thailand as a regional shopping hub (Bangkok Post June 17: 1992). Additionally, the marketing campaign includes plans to attract more tourists to Thailand, to promote chartered and scheduled flights to regional airports focusing on provincial areas such as Chiang Mai, Phuket and U-Tapao. This was to reduce problems related to tourist congestion in Bangkok airport. The Tourism Authority's main aim is to promote Thailand as a tourism destination year round to overcome seasonal declines in arrivals during the off-peak season of June to October. As a result, the new promotion was expected to offset declines in the high season.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Australian dollar = 16.59 baht ( September 1993 ).

It ensured higher occupancy rates of hotels in Bangkok in the low season as well as better occupancy rates in the low season in Bangkok and other resort areas.

The TAT is also responsible for planning, surveying and studying tourist destination development. It also focuses on conservation, protection and enhancement of natural resources and encouragement of cultural activities to attract tourists. Its role is also to promote Thailand's diverse attractions and activities such as trekking, temples and historical sites. This promotion centres on the preservation of Thailand's ecology. The TAT works with the national government to implement legislation which controls tourist resort developments. The TAT is also working with local government to develop infrastructure facilities such as water treatment plants in Pattaya and Phuket. New environmental legislation will be introduced in developing resort areas. The emphasis in this legislation is on tourist carrying capacity.

## **1.2 Tourism industry boom period**

Thailand is a popular destinations for tourists from all over the world. Since the Fourth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1977-1981), tourism in Thailand has expanded rapidly. In 1987, the Thai government launched the "Visit Thailand Year" tourism project to celebrate the King's 60th birthday and to commemorate his becoming the longest reigning monarch in Thai history. Foreign tourists during the Visit Thailand Year 1987, brought 50 million baht to the Thai economy.

Factors contributing towards Thailand's popularity include the various tourist attractions already mentioned. In addition, Thailand's location is a significant factor because it is a perfect centre for commercial aviation in the Southeast Asia region. Moreover, this central location provides a good opportunity for growth to continue in the tourism industry (The Nation, June 17: 1992). Thailand's boom in tourism is reflected in the number of tourist arrivals between 1986 - 1992 as shown in table 1.

**Table 1 Number of Tourist arrivals in Thailand during 1986 - 1992**

Year	No. of International tourist arrivals	Change %
1986	2,818,092	+15.58
1987	3,482,958	+23.59
1988	4,230,737	+21.47
1989	4,809,508	+13.68
1990	5,298,860	+10.17
1991	5,086,899	-4.00
1992	5,136,443	+0.97

Source : Tourism Authority of Thailand

The table shows that from 1986-1990, visitor arrivals in Thailand increased at a rate of 16% per year. However, in 1991, tourist arrivals decreased 4% compared with the same period in 1990, and in 1992 tourist arrivals increased again but only by 0.97%.

During the past decade, Thailand's tourism industry growth has been dramatic and tourism is now a significant factor in the growth of the Thai economy as it moves from an agricultural base, namely rice and rubber, to an industrial and service base namely textiles, electronics and tourism. From Table 2, the growth of revenue from tourism is evident. Tourism revenue has continued to increase

at an average of 24% from 3,721 million baht in 1986, to 100,004 million baht in 1991. The surplus of tourism revenue in 1991 was 67,726 million baht. Moreover, the tourism expenditure figures also indicate a strong outbound market from Thailand.

**Table 2 Balance of Tourism Earnings for the period of 1986 - 1991 (in million baht)**

YEAR	<sup>2</sup> Tourism Revenue	<sup>3</sup> Tourism Expenditure	Difference
1986	37,321	7,799	+ 29,522
1987	50,024	9,902	+40,122
1988	78,859	15,209	+63,650
1989	96,386	19,293	+77,093
1990	110,571	21,882	+88,749
1991	100,004	32,273	+67,726

Source: Tourism Authority of Thailand

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<sup>2</sup> Tourism revenue refers to receipts of Thailand in the form of direct or indirect currency payment made by tourists from abroad to cover their expenses.

<sup>3</sup> Tourism expenditures or payments by Thai travellers during their visits abroad.



Thailand's growth together with international demand has resulted in increased foreign exchange revenue compared with the earnings from other major export earners of Thailand during 1988-1991 (see Table 3). The increase of tourism income, has resulted in tourism revenue becoming the major source of foreign exchange earnings. From 1988 to 1990, tourism has been a major export for Thailand. Tourism has brought additional investment and raised Thailand's standard of living in terms of employment in service industries.

**Table 3 Comparison between International Tourism Earnings and five top export earnings of Thailand for the period of 1988 - 1991 (in million baht).**

1988 Export		1989 Export		1990 Export		1991 Export	
Tourism	78,859	Tourism	96,386	Tourism	110,571	Textile	109,524
Textile	58,627	Textile	74,027	Textile	84,572	Tourism	110,004
Rice	34,676	Rice	45,626	Computer	38,591	Computer	46,471
Rubber	27,189	Rubber	26,423	Rice	27,767	Rice	30,516
Tapioca	21,844	Tapioca	23,974	Rubber	23,491	Prawns	26,681

Source : Tourism Authority of Thailand

The Gulf War, the slump in the World economy and the local military coup in February 1991 contributed to a decline in the number of visitor arrivals in 1991. The number of tourist arrivals decreased to 5.1 million, showing a decline of 4% against 1990, the first decline in nine years (Kitthaweerat: 1992).

However in 1992, the Thai tourism industry showed a degree of improvement. The 1992 number of tourist arrivals of 5,136,443 was an increase of .97% on 1991. A further increase in the number of international tourists is expected in 1993 since the government has named the year "Golf Tour Year". In Thailand golf courses are still inexpensive and they are becoming known in Europe (EIU: 1991). Approximately 5.25 million tourists are expected to visit Thailand during 1993. Income from tourist arrivals is also expected to be in the area of 110,000 million baht, an increase of 11.1% from 1992 (Kitthaweerat: 1992).

Furthermore, the TAT's marketing strategy in 1993 includes selling Thailand as a gateway to Indochina for tourists visiting Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia (The nation, June 17: 1992). Cambodia shows great tourism potential with its Angkor Wat ruins while Vietnam seeks international investment in its tourism industry. This strategy also includes promoting the government commitment to the environment. The government implemented new laws pertaining to the environment which entailed environmental conservation and pollution control

especially in Pattaya. The government had approved US \$80 million for the building of water treatment plants for solving garbage and air pollution problems.

### **1.3 Characteristics of the inbound market**

The growth of tourism in Thailand is evident since 1987. The two major market areas of growth are the Asia Pacific and European regions. In 1992, Thailand had approximately 1.3 million European visitors which was 26.2% of all overseas visitors. Additionally, in the first quarter of 1993 Europe's market share of visitors to Thailand had increased to 32.5% (Immigration Division 1993). Visitor arrivals from the Asia Pacific region during 1992 accounted for 2.7 million (54.3%). Refer to table 4 for the number of tourist arrivals from particular regions.

**Table 4 Tourist arrivals by region from 1990 to 1992.**

REGIONS	1990	1991	1992
ASIA & PACIFIC	3,306,414	2,891,392	2,789,976
EUROPE	1,326,752	1,259,334	1,350,301
THE AMERICAS	381,894	340,462	368,592
SOUTH ASIA	267,483	278,816	298,330
MIDDLE EAST	76,924	67,657	67,125
AFRICA	31,943	35,012	37,952

**Table 5 Tourist arrivals in Thailand by major market 1990- 1992**

COUNTRY	1990	1991	1992
Malaysia	751,600	808,443	729,453
Japan	652,300	559,501	569,744
Taiwan	503,200	453,864	407,293
Germany	243,100	257,031	275,506
U.S.A	285,400	248,441	274,397
Australia	252,200	202,627	207,523
Britain	227,900	197,608	236,468

Source : Tourism Authority of Thailand.

## **The European market**

As table 4 shows, the European market is a significant market for tourism in Thailand that could be considered to be environmentally aware. 20% of this market (which is 5.4% of the total market) were German tourists in 1992 (Immigration division: 1992). The German tourist is recognized to be one of the most environmentally conscious in Europe and one who refuses to tolerate pollution at holiday destinations (EIU: 1992). Significantly for the Thai tourist industry, German tourists have canceled their visit to resort areas because of the pollution at those resorts (EIU : 1992).

In general, the reasons why Europeans come to Thailand are to enjoy the sun, sand and the unique culture of Thailand (EIU: 1991). These findings are also supported by the Horwath Beach-Oriented Destination Survey. This survey found that for the European market, the main attractions are, in order of importance: Thai culture, the high quality of the beaches and the cheapness of the entire holiday and shopping (Pata Travel News January: 1993). Tourists purchase mainly silk as well as Thai art & crafts. Tourist expenditure on shopping formed a large part of Thailand's tourism revenue, for example in 1990 shopping consisted of 20% of this revenue (TAT: 1991) .

Another feature of the European market is that a large number of European tourists are repeat visitors to Thailand. For example in 1990 approximately half of the European visitors were repeat visitors (EIU: 1991).

### **The Asia Pacific market**

Malaysia is one of the major markets from the Asia Pacific region. The number of Malaysian tourists to visit Thailand in 1992 was 729,453 or 14.2% of the market. The majority of Malaysian tourists spend the weekend in Hai Yai province in Southern Thailand and the main purpose for their visit is firstly nightlife and secondly shopping (Bangkok Post, November 21: 1989).

The Japanese market is the next major tourist market in the Asia Pacific region and it is the most sizeable in terms of tourist spending. Japanese tourists can be divided into two categories: Single women of approximately 25 years and honeymoon couples. (Bangkok Post July 8: 1993). Japanese arrivals in 1992 increased by 4.5% from 1991. However, the Japanese recession has contributed to a decline in tourist arrivals of 13.8% in the first quarter of 1993 compared with the same period in 1992 and as a result of the recession, Japanese tourists were very conservative in their spending and very selective about destination and price (Bangkok Post, July 8: 1993).

#### **1.4 Growing environmental and social problems in Thailand.**

A major problem for the tourism industry in many countries is the degradation of the environment. In Thailand this has been exacerbated by the lack of preparation for the huge influx of tourists arrivals in recent years. Hotels and bungalows are often built without adequate facilities such as waste water treatment plants. Legislation governing their construction is often lacking or poorly enforced. As a result, inadequately managed development may take a heavy toll on the environment.

Tourism development without adequate planning and environment controls can have disastrous effects and in Thailand these problems are especially evident in Pattaya. Twenty-seven years ago Pattaya was a small fishing village. During the Vietnam war it was selected as a Rest and Recreation area for United States Military personnel and it quickly established itself as a popular tourist resort for entertainment and natural scenery. Pattaya is currently suffering the problems of many destinations such as air, water and noise pollution and the degradation of its natural resources. Uncontrolled building has destroyed its shoreline and water treatment facilities have not been installed. This is illustrated in the film of raw sewerage in the bay (Economist July 6: 1991). The contamination is approximately 100 times above the acceptable levels (Bangkok Post July 14 :1989). As a result, many tourists have been infected with skin diseases from

swimming in the sea. There is also a lack of fresh water during the peak tourist season. Prostitution in Pattaya has contributed to its negative image internationally. This is indicated by the decline of tourist arrivals in the resort as stated in table 6.

**Table 6 Visitor Arrivals in Pattaya from 1990 - 1991**

Arrivals	1990	1991	Change 91/90
Thai visitors	1,018,379	872,215	-13.27
Foreign visitors	1,429,069	1,251,987	-14.35
Total	2,447,448	2,124,202	-12.39

Source: Tourism Authority of Thailand

To overcome these problems, government corporations and the TAT have implemented a plan to restore tourism in Pattaya. Pattaya's physical condition is the main priority of the plan. The plan will deal with environmental issues, such as the installation of water and waste treatment facilities as well as the implementation of disposal management programs. A campaign involving marketing Pattaya as a popular and safe destination will be introduced.



Air pollution in Bangkok is above recognised danger limits and environmentalists say its slowly killing street vendors, traffic policemen and public transport drivers. Many tourists visiting Bangkok complain of skin rashes, bad sinuses and perpetual tiredness (Bangkok Post, November 13: 1990). Air pollution is directly attributed to the rapid increase in the number of vehicles, particularly motorcycles in the last few years. The existing roads in Bangkok are unable to cope with the increased number of vehicles. According to the Bangkok Post September 13: 1993, 480 new cars are registered each day which would cover a distance of 1.5 kilometers if they were parked in single file.

Obviously traffic congestion in Bangkok is a significant problem. "In those days, tourists travelling on a package tour could finish touring a few places in a day, however this is no longer possible" (Bangkok Post, September 2: 1993). For many tourists today even a short distance in Bangkok can take many hours. As a result, many tourists spend time in traffic rather than enjoying their holiday and sightseeing.

Deforestation has been severe especially in Northern parts of Thailand. In 1988, the natural forest area in Northern Thailand covered 50,252,00 rai<sup>4</sup> or 47% of total land, while in 1961 the natural forest occupied 69% of the total land area (Tongsom et al: 1992). This shows the forest has decreased rapidly during the

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<sup>4</sup> 1 hectare - 6.25 rai.

past 27 years. Deforestation is a result of illegal logging for economic purposes, subsistence farming and destruction of forest by hill tribes (Tongsom et al: 1992).

### **Social problems**

The government introduced the Entertainment Act 1966 which allowed the private sector to operate activities such as bars, night clubs and massage parlors to serve United States military service personnel. In 1967, an agreement was made between the United States and Thai government allowing US soldiers from Vietnam to come to Thailand for recreational leave, this involved prostitution. Since the Vietnam War, prostitution has served local and international tourists. Recently, Bangkok was referred to as an erotic theme park (The Age November 8: 1993). The increase in prostitution has resulted from the rapid and uneven development of Thailand, poverty and the economic neglect of the Northeast and Northern provinces (Ong: 1985). In Northern Thailand, girls who complete their compulsory education level of Pathom Suksa 6<sup>5</sup> would rather become prostitutes than pursue low paying respectable occupations. "The practice of becoming a sex worker has long become a local social value because young girls do not like to work hard and have been taught that prostitution can help them make big money and save their family from hardship of poverty" (Bangkok Post, July 16: 1993).

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<sup>5</sup> Pathom Suksa 6 = grade 6 primary school.

The growth of international tourism has also created an environment in which prostitution has flourished. Recently, AIDS has highlighted Thailand's association with prostitution. AIDS is spreading quickly among the prostitutes in Northern Thailand. A public health survey revealed that 70% of sex workers are HIV positive (Bangkok Post July 16: 1993). Moreover, it is estimated that between 200,000 and 400,000 Thais are infected with the AIDS virus (The Age, November 8: 1993). "On average one in seven Thai girls having sex with foreigners would be HIV positive." (The Age, April 19: 1993). The high rate of HIV positive among Thais could be caused by frequent visits to brothels and their promiscuous sexual behaviour.

The negative image of the country has affected potential tourists. Malaysian tourists are influenced by the AIDS epidemic and this has been demonstrated in Southern Thailand where a decline of arrivals in 1992 has occurred (Bangkok Post, November 21: 1989). Japanese tourists are also conscious of AIDS, as well as other problems in Thailand and this is reflected in declining arrivals (Bangkok Post, July 8: 1993).

## 1.5 The study problem

The decline in tourist arrivals in 1991 had a negative impact on the tourism industry in terms of lost revenue for Thailand. While this decline may be the result of many different factors outlined below, this study aims to investigate the fourth factor (the importance of environmental perception). The factors which may have contributed to the decline in the number of tourist arrivals in 1991 are as follows:

1. The Worldwide recession has made people unable to travel abroad due to financial constraints.
2. The tourism industry is sensitive to unstable political circumstances. Thailand's recent history has been characterised by the people's struggle for democracy that on several occasions has led to bloodshed. This may have resulted in a drop in tourist arrivals in Thailand in 1991.
3. Tourists have become more demanding about standards in holiday destinations and may have gone elsewhere if these standards were not met in Thailand. Thus, Thailand could further lose its market share to competitor nations such as Indonesia and Malaysia which can offer unspoiled environments for tourists. For example, the "Visit Malaysia Year" in 1990 impacted on Thailand's tourism industry. There was a decline in the number of Malaysian arrivals in Thailand while the number of Singapore and Philippine arrivals grew slightly. At the same

time, during 1990, the number of Asian and European arrivals in Malaysia grew significantly by 100% and 70% respectively (Rurakdee: 1991). Thus strong competition from other holiday destinations could have resulted in a smaller number of tourists visiting Thailand.

4. Environmental degradation, such as pollution, and the country's association with prostitution may have created a negative image of Thailand abroad. These two factors may have prevented potential tourist from visiting or revisiting Thailand.

The tourism industry is vitally important to the Thai economy. Therefore it is necessary to explore further the relationship between tourists' perceptions of Thailand's environment and their intentions to revisit the country.

To the author's knowledge, little or no specific research on tourists' perception of Thailand's environment has been undertaken in Thailand, not even by the TAT. This study therefore hopes to contribute some information about how tourists perceive Thailand's environment. Rather than attempting to study tourists' perception of Thailand in general, the study concentrates on popular tourist destinations in Thailand.

The author hopes that this study will be the first step in this area and will be followed by further study into the relationship between environmental degradation and the intention of tourists to revisit Thailand. Moreover, the author hopes the study will shed some light on how tourists perceived Thailand as a destination and why the tourism industry sectors should be aware of environmental problems.

### **1.6 The purpose of the study**

Tourism worldwide is based upon the attractions offered to visitors by a culture and society different from their own and the natural, unspoiled beauty of a foreign place. Tourists today are "increasingly being deterred from visiting destinations because of the environmental impact in these areas" (PATA Travel News, July: 1993). This statement is particularly relevant for tourists visiting Thailand in the 90's because of the growing social problems caused by prostitution and AIDS and the increasing environmental problems in Bangkok and the beach resorts and Northern Thailand.

The purpose of the study is to gain information about the perceptions of tourists who take a vacation in Thailand and to ascertain negative perceptions of Thailand's environment which would prevent them from revisiting the country.

# Chapter 2

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

Searching the literature with regard to tourist perceptions of the environment, the researcher found only a small number of studies. Most studies deal with residents' attitudes toward tourism such as Pizam (1978) and Belisele (1980). A number of general studies about tourism in Thailand, such as those by Muqbil (1993) and Supapueng (1991), as well as some studies which are concerned with the impact of tourism on the environment, such as Parnwell (1993) and Cohen (1978), were investigated

The literature review was conducted to gain an understanding of:

- the concept of tourists perceptions of environment and variables that could influence tourists decisions in their next visit to the country.
- general features which are considered important in choosing vacation destinations.
- other tourism trends with regard to reasons for choosing a destination, such as a green clean environment and the image of a country.

The majority of references were gathered from the following sources: AUS ROM - a collection of Australian Social Sciences databases, the TAT library, Bangkok Bank library and Victoria University of Technology library. The literature search was undertaken covering books and articles from 1966-1993 to analyse the relationship between tourism and the Thai economy, the Thai environment and the Thai government as well as examining the relationship between tourism and prostitution and tourism and pollution. Tourism research journals such as Annals of Tourism and Journal of Tourism Research provided some in depth studies on tourist perception. Publications of organisations such as TAT statistical reports provided statistical trends and valuable references for the study. Moreover, the literature search included PATA Travel News, Tourist review and tourism related articles in newspapers and magazines in Thailand. No studies relevant to tourist perceptions of Thailand's environment were found.

The topics covered in this review are those issues such as the relationship between environmental perception and tourism, tourists' satisfaction and image, tourism and the environment and the impact of tourism on the environment of Thailand. These topics are relevant to this study as they explore tourists's expectations of a destination and how the perception of visitors change after experiencing the destination. The review also explores how satisfaction with appropriate types of holiday experiences is important for tourists's perception of the environment. For instance, if tourist's feel disappointed with a destination, they may decide not to revisit that destination.



## **2.2 Definitions**

Terms are used in this study are listed below:

**Environment:** all aspects of surroundings which can be divided into two categories: natural and cultural. The natural environment pertains to forest, air and water while the cultural environment refers to historical sites, local culture, technology and entertainment (Tourism Authority of Thailand: 1993).

**Environmental Perception:** "A holistic approach of the quality of environment to perception which considers how an individual translates and interprets information from the environment" (Fridgen: 1991).

**Tourist:** Any person visiting Thailand for any reason other than to exercise remunerated activity within the country (TAT Statistical report: 1991).

**Respondents:** Foreign tourists participating in the survey.

**TAT:** The Tourism Authority of Thailand.

## **2.3 Theories of the relationship between tourism and the environment**

A number of tourism researchers have investigated tourist perceptions of the environment. The emphasis in these studies has been on the reasons why people chose particular destinations over others rather than the impact of physical and social environment on tourists' decisions to revisit a destination. Fridgen's (1980) theories on social interaction and authenticity . His theories were found to be appropriate to this study and they are therefore discussed below. Theories relating to travel motivation and recollection were also investigated.

Many theories are relevant to the tourists' perception of the physical, social and cultural environment. "The physical and social elements surrounding people constitute the environment. Situations, contexts, sites, and facilities that support leisure behaviour are called leisure environments" (Fridgen 1980: 361).

Fridgen (1980) has stated the journey to the destination site takes the tourist through a number of environments which are only briefly perceived. Fridgen's study perhaps offers some insight into tourists' perceptions of the environment. Tourists who are constrained or impeded by proximity or a lack of privacy could develop negative perceptions of the

environment of the destination. For example, the over-crowding in Bangkok may be negatively perceived by tourists because they may have been delayed and frustrated by traffic congestion.

Fridgen has also investigated the concept of "authenticity in tourism" and he states that "satisfaction is related to perception of authentic tourist attractions" (Fridgen 1984: 30). He contends satisfaction with an attraction is lessened if tourists perceive it as fake or staged. An authentic experience is only achieved when tourists undergo "environment-behaviour" where what occurs in the setting and what is expected is brought together.

The concept of authenticity is important as far as tourist perceptions of the environment is concerned. If tourists feel disappointed or dissatisfied with inappropriate surroundings and attractions, then they may decide not to revisit that destination.

However, while some tourists demand authenticity as part of their holiday experience, others do not. These less adventurous tourists do not want to be confronted by surroundings and experiences which are too foreign to them. For example these visitors may require tour guides in remote areas or a higher standard of service accommodation than is available locally. In this context, Northern Thailand trekking tours for

example would only be popular with those tourists who want authentic Thai experiences while the less adventurous tourists "require guidance, protection and basic services to realise their desires" (Cohen 1989: 36).

Tourism researchers have further studied recollection with regard to environmental perception. Fridgen has stated that "during the recollection phase of travel a person consolidates the impressions and perceptions into memories, emotions and evaluations" (Fridgen 1984: 32). A person's expectations of the trip merge with the actual event. As a result, a person's perception and attitudes may have changed.

It would seem the recollection theory can be important in terms of environmental perception. If a tourist has certain expectations of a destination, it will influence the visitor's overall satisfaction of the destination. If those expectations are not met, the tourist is more likely to have negative perceptions of the destination and its environment.

Environmental perception is also important for tourism research. It involves the science of aesthetics or environmental aesthetics which tourism researchers employ to determine what prospective tourist might like. For instance, researchers have found that "people are sensitive to water elements and vegetation and diversity" (Ulrich 1979). This shows that people show a consistent bias towards preferring nature. Ulrich's (1979) and Kaplan's (1977) studies again highlight visitors preferences for particular environments, namely the more natural and scenic. The tourists liking for visually aesthetic environments supports the view that natural landscapes in resort destinations should be protected to attract visitors. There appears to be a correlation between visually attractive environments and the number of tourists visiting the destination.

Hudman (1980) has argued that travel motivation is subject to a push-pull tendency. Hudman states that factors which motivate a tourist to visit are push factors and this motivation process or push is exacerbated by the pull which the attractive destination area exerts on the tourist. Such factors according to Hudman (1980) operate together and are reflected in current travel patterns.

Hudman's research shows the importance of new and attractive destinations for the tourists. This theory is relevant in terms of tourists negative perceptions of the environment. If, as Hudman contends, travel motivation is subject to a push-pull tendency, then the theory would suggest that environmental degradation or pollution problems would affect the tourist's decision not to revisit those destinations because negative environmental factors would leave a negative impression on visitors.

According to Plog (1974), different types of tourists are attracted to different tourist destinations and these can be classified into allocentric and psychocentric. Allocentric refers to a person interested in diverse activities. These tourists are characterised by a liking for adventure, have self confidence, show a willingness to experiment and are usually highly active and more likely to visit untouched areas or new destinations. Psychocentric refers to an individual who may be self centred. Such people tend to be more interested in tour groups, are not highly active and prefer familiar destinations. Plog's theories may also be significant in terms of visitors' perceptions of the environment. Whether tourists are adventure seekers or in tour groups, they would have certain expectations of their holiday.

This section has focused on the reasons why tourists choose particular destinations over others. The reviews are relevant to the author's study as the relationship between tourist perceptions and destination choice is explored. Furthermore, research has suggested that tourists are attracted to natural environments or aesthetically pleasing destinations. Some visitors exhibit a bias for authentic travel experiences and may be able to identify if parts of their holiday experience are fake or staged. Theories regarding recollection and environmental perception are also important in explaining tourists' negative perceptions of particular destinations.

## **2.4 The impact of tourism on the environment**

Many researchers have looked into the relationship between the environment and tourism. This section of the review focuses on the impact of tourism on the environment. Additionally, tourists' preferences of destinations and attractions are outlined. The broad definitions of environment and its implications for tourism are also explored.

Some studies have highlighted tourism and its impact on the environment, both natural and human. O'Grady (1990) covers the broader issues of environment. He defines the environment as not only land, air, water, vegetation and wildlife but also encompassing people, their creations and the social, economic, cultural and political conditions that affect their lives.

The TAT (1993) has studied the impact of tourism on the natural and cultural environment of Thailand. The negative impact on the natural environment include the deterioration of tourist destinations, due to an increase in garbage and waste strewn around tourist sites and the damage to ecosystems which has resulted in discoloured beaches and the destruction of flora and fauna. Another negative impact is the impairment of the natural beauty of popular tourist destinations such as Phuket, Chiang



Mai and Pattaya by the erection of many ugly unsuitable high rise western buildings and structures which visually impair the beauty of the natural environment.

Tourism has had a negative impact on the social and cultural environment. According to Supapueng (1991) tourism has had a considerable negative impact on the poorer local people of Thai society who cannot cope with the development. An example of the displacement of local people is Phuket where people were forced to move from their beaches to make way for seashore resorts. This has also occurred in areas such as Chiang Mai where farmers were forced to sell their land to investors who then built holiday resorts. Tourism in resort areas has resulted in high cost of living for local residents as prices of goods and services have risen.

Another negative impact is commercial sex which has evolved out of the poor economic conditions in Thai society. The expansion of tourism has also been a boom for the sex trade. However, the sexual service industry has brought its own problems namely drugs, disease and crime. The sex industry will be discussed in the next section.

Hudman (1980) contends that the growth of tourism in undeveloped areas has progressed without proper planning procedures and policies and this has led to problems with the number of tourists which in turn has had an impact on the environment. Hudman states that the tourists have a tendency to search for new experiences in an untouched area after already established tourist destinations have become over commercialised. Four alternative options are proposed: a laissez faire system, designated tourist development centres, control of the number of visas and the control of regional flow of tourists. Hudman states that a combination of these strategies may be useful for policy makers and further asserts the establishment of tourist development centres so that other areas are protected from adverse tourist impact. Hudman states in undeveloped areas, cultural identity is protected while income is generated in the target areas.

Cohen (1978) focused on the positive and negative impact of tourism on the environment. His study finds the development of tourism poses risks to the environment. Such risks are accentuated in those "special environments" where rapid tourism growth often takes place. Cohen asserted that the environmental impact of tourism may be more pronounced in developing countries than developed ones where government and industry may be more inclined to focus on increased foreign exchange earnings at the expense of the natural environments.

Authors such as Pizam (1978), Young (1973) and Jafari (1973) write about the effect of tourism on resident populations and their physical, economic and social environments. The physical environment is detrimentally affected by over population, traffic congestion and pollution; the economic environment by increased land pricing; the social environment by prostitution and the loss of cultural identity. The increased employment resulting from tourism may force local people to become more competitive which could diminish the appeal of the destination.

In summary, the literature suggests that tourism may have a substantial negative impact on the environment. These negative impacts were found to be more pronounced in developing countries, where planning has been lacking. However, future planning procedures and management should reduce tourism's negative impacts. This substantial negative impact on the environment as outlined in the review is important for the author's study because the relationship between degradation of the natural and social environment may affect the tourism industry. In addition, the negative impact on the environment in Thailand could also influence tourists' perceptions of a destination and these perceptions are central to the study.

## **2.5 The negative impact of environmental and social problems on the Thai tourism industry.**

This section focuses on the environmental and social problems currently faced by Thailand which may adversely affect tourism. Social issues and important environmental problems which may be instrumental in creating a tourist's negative perceptions of Thailand are discussed.

Researchers and the TAT recognise the negative impact of environmental problems on the tourist industry. Muqbil (1992) has highlighted environmental issues in Thailand. He stated "if tourism wishes to retain long term prospects for growth, it must take into account the demand by its customers for an unspoilt environment as part of its business strategy" (Bangkok Post April 13: 1992). The TAT's Deputy Governor, Mr Sere Wangprachitr, he stated that tourism development must also include environmental conservation and balance in order to achieve a sustainable environment which can contribute toward tourism in the long term (Bangkok Post August 11: 1990).

One of the most pressing social problems facing Thailand is the fact that the country has long been associated with sex tourism which has a considerable negative impact on tourism. In general Thailand's reputation for prostitution is reflected in the number of male tourists exceeding females, because the sexual service industry has become

one of the main attractions for male tourists. Many travel agencies advertise the availability of sex tours in magazines and newspapers. Moreover, Supapueng (1991) states that the Thai government has defended its policy.

After the Vietnam war, prostitution catered for the growing tourism industry in Thailand. According to O'Grady (1992), regions such as Patpong's red light district in the centre of Bangkok quickly began to gain a reputation as sex centres for foreign tourists with numerous massage parlours and bars. He states the presence of half a million prostitutes virtually cemented Thailand as the brothel of Asia and the term sex tourism was born. One of the major negative impacts of prostitution has been the exploitation of children by foreigners.

Sex tourism has helped the Thai government to some degree. Many rural areas have benefited from the income for sons and daughters. However this has brought many social problems and raised many moral issues. In particular, AIDS is now at a crisis point.

While sex tourism has brought many visitors to Thailand, prostitution in Thailand has had a negative impact on Thailand's image overseas. Many tourists associate Thailand with sex tourism and prostitution rather than with rich Buddhist culture and natural beauty. Thailand's association with prostitution is reinforced by Thai women who are engaged in prostitution overseas. Particularly in Europe where, they nominally work as dancers or "go go" girls evading the strict visa regulations (Sareewat: 1990). This strongly negative association of Thailand with the unsavoury of lucrative sex tourism affects the appeal of Thailand for general tourists.

The Thai government recognises the enormity of the resulting social problems surrounding prostitution and the exploitation of women and children. It introduced a prostitution bill which punishes people who have sex with children in an attempt to reduce child prostitution. The bill carries a "maximum penalty of 10 years jail for those caught having sex with children under 15 years old" (Bangkok Post July 17: 1993). Pimps and brothel owners who supply children for sex could be imprisoned for more than 20 years.

Another major social problem which has repercussions for the tourism industry is AIDS. Vijitjunya (1993) states that the tourist arrivals in the past year have declined with widespread news of AIDS. Mr Mechai who was once the chairman of the TAT linked sex tourism with AIDS and commenced a public awareness campaign. Mechai stated "AIDS is not a risk in tourism if we act now. But if we don't, it will destroy tourism" (PATA Travel News, September 1992: 8).

While prostitution and AIDS are enormous social problems which are instrumental in Thailand's negative international image, environmental problems have a direct detrimental impact on tourism. A major problem for Thailand's tourism industry is traffic congestion in cities such as Bangkok, Pattaya and Chiang Mai. According to Dr Chaianan, tourists in Bangkok are "getting sick of spending up to 20% of their time touring stuck in the traffic which is making half day city tours almost impossible" (Bangkok Post December 17: 1992).

Another problem is poor garbage disposal at major island resorts. Unregulated littering is turning Pee Pee Island, one of Thailand's most beautiful islands in the Andaman Sea in Southern Thailand, into a dumping ground. Here, the local tour operators have resorted to throwing their rubbish into the sea because of a lack of disposal facilities. As a result, at least "90% of the tourists state they will not revisit the island because of

garbage floating in the sea" (The Nation, January 23, 1991: 10).

Inskeep (1987) has focused on environmental issues and the negative effects of tourism on the environment. According to Inskeep tourists will change their "travel plans if the environmental qualities are not met" (Inskeep 1987: 119). Therefore, it is important that planners look at the negative implications of environmental degradation for tourism. Inskeep (1987) states that a greater harmony between tourism and the environment may help to engender an environmental awareness in the public and private sectors.

Research has emphasised the necessity to control the environmental impact of tourist development. Many of Thailand's tourist attractions are centred around seashore resorts and mountainous regions and the growth of "tourism may exert pressure on the environment in such sensitive areas" (Wong Poh-Poh, 1990). An environmentally sustainable policy in Thailand may reduce environmental degradation especially in areas where tourism development takes place. Also Parnwell (1993) states that sustainable development should be part of tourism planning and conservation.



The tourism promoted by the TAT which is so important for the Thai economy is now being blamed for "deforestation, sea water degradation, coral reef and other marine life destruction" (The Nation, January 23, 1991: 10). The TAT governor, Mr. Dharmnoon Prachuabmoh, has called many of these problems "tourist pollution" and has emphasised that tourism has both beneficial and destructive impacts. He also stressed the importance of the public awareness campaign which should result in the increased involvement of local people in environmental protection.

An example of such local involvement is given in the case study of Ms. Ink K who lives in Phuket. She made a documentary which was broadcast on BBC 2 in Britain during October 1991 called 'Thailand for Sale' which focuses on the impact of tourism in Phuket. She opposed the construction of a mammoth project by a Swiss-based company to turn the unspoilt front beach in the Northern part of Phuket into a multi-million-dollar resort (Contours: 1992). The developer proposed to move the fishing village, school and temple which would have resulted in local people have little chance to enjoy themselves on the beach and would have severely limited their access to their own local attractions.

The environmental problems caused by tourism development are exacerbated by the poor management, lack of planning and environmental controls in the tourism industry. The sheer numbers of tourists place enormous pressure on resources with 37 million Thais travelling inside the country as well as 5 million foreign tourists visiting Thailand. Dr Savit, the Chairman of the TAT argues that international tourists are not the cause for the industry's environmental problems but that Thai tourists are responsible. He argues that Thailand's environmental problems could be reduced if its resources were better managed and he proposed that tourism zones and an appropriate infrastructure be implemented. The tourism zones would not be like the ones in the past which opened national parks to the public without restrictions, proper management, facilities and enforcement of appropriate regulations. Under the tourism zones proposal, international tourists will be allowed in certain areas where culture, people and natural settings can be experienced.

In summary, it is important to recognise the extent of prostitution, AIDS and environmental degradation in order to understand tourists' perceptions of the environment. These issues are particularly relevant to the author's study, as such issues could influence tourists' decisions to revisit Thailand. This section of the review has focused on the discussion in newspapers and journals of environmental problems and the social and political difficulties facing the tourism industry in Thailand. These sources show that traffic congestion, pollution and overdevelopment have negative implications for the tourist industry. They also illustrate how prostitution and AIDS have contributed greatly to the negative image of Thailand overseas. Moreover, the sources also emphasise that the Thai government has begun to co-operate with the public and private sectors to cultivate a positive image of Thailand for international tourists.

## **2.6 The relationship between environmental perception and tourism**

This section of the literature review focuses on books and articles which discuss possible ways of perceiving the environment. It also discusses theories of environmental perception which are developed in these writings and the relationship between environmental perception and tourism. It is important to review these studies as tourists' perceptions of the environment and the impact of these perceptions on their decision to revisit a destination form the main focus of the author's study.

As previous stated, environmental perception refers to sensual perception of the physical, social and cultural environment. In relation to tourism, environmental perception involves the tourist's impressions of the physical and cultural attractions of a particular destination. Since tourist resorts are often large surroundings, Fridgen (1991) emphasises that the environment of an entire resort could not be perceived accurately by one tourist and in these circumstances, the tourist's memory plays an important role.

A number of researchers have investigated the link between the environment and perception. Fridgen (1980) investigates the individual's psychological responses to the environment and crowding, and attitudes in relation to the environment. Fridgen suggests that people first respond psychologically to the environment and then orient themselves to it and finally interpret information from it. Thus, he suggests an individual's perception, while based on a physical response to the environment, is mainly an intellectual response. This emphasis on the psychological response of tourists to the environment may certainly be relevant for tourism marketing, advertising and promotion of possible destinations. Advertisers may be able to focus human responses by emphasising the positive attributes and characteristics of a tourist destination in all forms of advertising.

Fridgen has also suggested that various types of environments satisfy the varying needs of visitors. This is based upon the particular idiosyncratic perceptions of and attitudes towards specific environments that each individual has. The tourism industry applies Fridgen's results in their marketing strategies by being attentive to the needs of particular tourists in their selection of appropriate destinations. If the tourism industry can be attentive to needs of tourists in their selection of appropriate destinations, it will be more successful in terms of tourist satisfaction.

Stokols (1976) studies people's reactions to crowded environments. He states that people experience crowding when they perceive a lack of control over the environment both in physical and social terms. Crowding is certainly a problem in Thailand with its population of 55 million.

Hofels (1991) asserts that tourists are more environmentally aware now and this has strengthened their interests in quality destinations and untouched environments. He states that successful tourism depends on the environment because ignoring the environment will result in the declining number of tourists and he further asserts that "modern tourists are very perceptive to environmental problems during their vacations" (Hofels 1991: 13). Importantly, he has asserted that tourism industry must have a "substantial interest in responsible management with regard to all aspects of the environment" (Hofels 1991: 14).

According to Hofels (1991), the main aim of the tourism industry is to provide a structured approach where adverse affects to the environment can be minimised. This approach results in environmentally sustainable tourism which involves the protection and management of the environment protection of the environment and also supports the continued development of the tourism industry. Such environmentally sustainable tourism is important for Thailand and its economy.

Hofels views are certainly relevant to tourists' negative perceptions of the environment and their decisions not to revisit Thailand. The tourism industry needs to be more environmentally aware and recognise their market if the industry is to continue in the future. Moreover, tourists are more conscious and aware of better quality destinations with untouched surroundings. If the tourists have positive perceptions of the environment, they are more inclined to revisit those destinations in the future.

This section of the review has focused on the environmental perception of tourists. The researchers discuss how an individual responds physically and psychologically to the environment in a highly personal way. The tourism industry uses this information in marketing particular destinations. This section also addressed the concept of environmentally sustainable tourism which involves meeting the requirements of tourists by providing satisfying holiday experiences while protecting sensitive natural environments and providing economic growth for local communities.



## 2.7 Tourist satisfaction and Images

Many researchers have inquired into the question of image in the tourism industry. These theories of image and its implications for tourism are outlined in the review. The tourists' experiences and expectations in relation to the concept of image will also be discussed in this section. Tourist expectations and image are important as it relates to perception a visitor has prior to visiting a destination.

The term image can be defined in several ways. Firstly, there is a visual aspect of the term which, for the tourism literature "implies a search for the long term memory store for scenes and symbols, panoramas and people" (Pearce 1988: 163). This mental image may be exaggerated and distorted and it is contrasted to the physical reality that the tourist may find. Fakeye and Crompton (1991) found that destination images were conceptualised as evolving through three stages: organic, induced and complex. The "organic image" that exists comes before promotional information from tourist destinations. The "induced image" occurs when the desire to travel image starts, and complex images are the final stage of the process and incorporate experiences at the destination" (Fakeye and Crompton 1991: 15). This study revealed that experience with a destination alters image because direct contact makes a more complex and differential

image of a destination area more likely when people spend more time at a destination and with residents.

This study also discovered that first-time visitors and repeat visitors differed in their image of social opportunities and attractions. The repeaters scored much higher on these attributes which shows that those visitors who made more than one trip had a greater awareness of social opportunities and attractions. Moreover, the study showed that visitors' length of stay was related to their image on at least two of the factors. It was found that first-timers and repeaters who stayed longer rated the social opportunities and attractions factor and the infrastructure, food and friendly people factor higher than short-stay visitors.

Many investigators state that images are central in destination choice for tourists and marketing. Crompton (1979) asserts that images as "perceived by individuals in the tourism market may have as much to do with areas's tourism development success as the more tangible creation and tourist resources" (Crompton 1979: 18). Furthermore, Fakeye and Crompton stated "images are important because they transpose representation of an area into the potential tourist's mind and give him or her a pre-taste of the destination" (Fakeye & Crompton 1991: 10).

With regard to tourism certain images might be important such as images of climate, landscape and culture. Researchers such as Hunt (1975) state that images are both positive and negative and that the view of a region might be unfavourable or favourable. There is discrepancy among researchers whether "the choice of a tourist trip is person oriented or destination determined" (Goodey 1971: 135). However, Mathieson and Wall (1982) suggest the larger the difference between positive image and reality, that is between expectations and experience, the more likely it is that a tourist will be dissatisfied. However, the author's study deals with tourists who have actually visited Thailand and their opinions of the country are based on experience rather than image or perception.

It would appear any predefined images a tourist may possess relate to perception. Clawson and Knetsch (1966) have provided a link between environment and tourism behaviour. The authors state the anticipation of the trip, that is, planning and thinking about their trip, and arriving at their destination is relevant to the individuals' perception. The aspect of anticipation is central as it relates to a persons' perception before arrival and during the visit at a destination.

It would seem an individuals' preconceived image of a destination is important for the study of tourism. For instance, Crompton (1979) states there is need to differentiate between images that make a site attractive and images which are related to factors important in decisions to travel to a site. As Crompton suggests, the images a visitor has of a specific destination after experiencing the reality, are not the same as first conceived. This is because visitors are becoming increasingly concerned about the environment destinations which are seen as over developed and polluted and are losing their good image. It would appear images are important for tourists as they set up expectations. The destination that does not meet those expectations will disappoint tourists because tourist satisfaction is "based on the destination meeting or surpassing expectations" (Fridgen 1991: 167). As mentioned above, if tourists have negative perceptions of the resort, it could affect their decision not to revisit that destination and may be reflected in the decline in the number of visitors and affect the destination's reputation as a popular tourist resort. Therefore, it is essential that expectations of prospective tourists are met.

Successful tourism depends on the positive images projected to prospective tourists. However, on occasions negative images appeal to certain tourists. According to Zafar (1991: 36) "the unsafe, unsavoury, or unusual images of a destination are seen as attractive". This is certainly the case in areas of Thailand that have a seamy reputation. For instance, there may be a correlation between an increase in prostitution and an increase in tourism. In some circumstances, the negative images of Thailand may attract particular tourists to such destinations.

This section of the review has focused on images and environmental perception and their relationship with tourism. It is important to review image as it is particularly relevant to the author's study as images of destinations are likely to influence tourists' decisions to revisiting certain destinations.

## **2.8 The research question**

The literature review has shown that tourists' positive and negative perceptions is dependent on various factors. One factor is the quality of the natural, cultural and social environment. Another factor according to Hofels (1991) is whether the visitor is a first time or repeat visitor. A final factor is the tourist expectation of the environment.

Also tourists today are environmentally aware and more interested in quality destinations and untouched environments (Hofels 1991). Thailand is suffering from a negative international image due to its environmental problems as well as its association with prostitution and AIDS. According to Inskip (1987) tourists will alter their travel plans if environmental qualities are not met. Therefore, the environmental and social problems are major concerns to the Thai tourism industry. It is assumed that all these general facts will contribute to tourists' perception of Thailand's environment. From these assumptions, the following research issue can be delineated:

**Tourists who have negative perceptions of the physical, social and cultural environment, will decide not to revisit Thailand.**

# Chapter 3

## METHODOLOGY

The objective of the study is to determine tourists' perception of the environment of Thailand and the factors affecting their decision to revisit Thailand. The perceptions of tourists of a destination are influenced by factors, such as the quality of the environment and tourist satisfaction with their experience at the destination and their image before arrival at the destination. While results can be obtained by various methods such as case studies, surveys and experiments, the literature review, revealed that the majority of perception studies had used survey techniques to compile data from a sample population. The author has chosen the survey method via questionnaire to conduct the research because it was best suited to assess socio-cultural impacts and perception of individuals.

This study employs the descriptive design technique to identify the attributes of a population of a particular area. This technique is also used to determine the frequency of positive and negative responses of a given statement and respondents' attitudes and perceptions of the environment of Thailand.

### **3.1 THE SAMPLE**

The sample population refers to tourists who have vacationed and foreigners who reside in Thailand during April and May 1993. Originally the author wanted to conduct the survey in a number of Thailand International Airports such as Chiang Mai and Phuket International Airport. However there were delay with official procedure, limited time and financial constraints. Consequently, the author only conducted the survey at Bangkok International Airport. Bangkok International Airport was chosen because it is the main international gateway to Thailand and most tourists use it to take connecting flights to other destinations in Thailand.

250 questionnaires were distributed by the author to tourists. A total of 232 were collected, yielding a response rate of 92.8%. A total of 18 responses accounting for 7.2% of the sample were incomplete. These responses were incomplete because the respondents were called to board their flights.



### 3.2 THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was developed after an intensive literature search of subject matter in a number of libraries. The questionnaire design was formulated towards the fulfilment of the objective of the study, is to gain information about the perceptions of tourists. To develop a questionnaire, the author examined the questionnaires used in the studies of Pizam et al (1978) and Hofels (1991) which dealt with tourist satisfaction and tourist perception of environment respectively. The author, being Thai, was strongly aware of current environmental issues in Thailand and therefore focussed the questions on these issues. The questionnaire was then pilot-tested on a sample of 7 respondents in Melbourne to finalise the survey instrument.

To establish content validity it was necessary to check the data on computer. The results of the questionnaire were input into the SPSS (statistical program for the social sciences) and the results were analysed to check validity. It was also important to ascertain the correct type of questions for the survey as invalid responses could be given to questions if they were too difficult to comprehend.

Some correlations were found in regards to the negative and positive perceptions of the environment. This is shown by the significance of frequency results which displayed the test respondents' preference towards natural environment and dislike for negative attributes such as pollution and traffic congestion.

The results of the pilot-test showed that some modifications of the questionnaire were necessary because the questionnaire did not cover some areas of environment in Thailand. It also showed that a change in layout was needed in order to make the questionnaire easier to understand. Thus the content was divided into sections such as demographic information and travel characteristics so that the respondents covered one topic at a time. By adding specific questions about the tourists' reaction to the Thai environment such as traffic congestion, air quality and good shopping centres in Bangkok, the survey was improved and clearly ascertained the attitudes and perceptions of the tourists for the purpose of the study. Additionally, it was found necessary to have more diverse questions relating to the cultural attribute of Thai society. Also, by adding open ended questions, the survey provided the respondents with the opportunity to express their opinion about issues which concerned them most (see Appendix A).

The final questionnaire combined closed and open ended questions and consisted of 39 questions divided into three sections (see Appendix A).

The first section consisted of 10 questions, asking tourists for demographic information such as sex, age, occupation and country of residence and tourists' travel characteristic such as purpose of visit, frequency of visit, tourist attractions visited in Thailand and their major activities while in Thailand.

The second section consisted of open ended questions to allow the respondents to give their general impressions of particular destinations and their environments.

The third section consisted of 29 questions designed to measure tourists' perception of the environment in three main regions of Thailand namely Bangkok, beach resorts, Northern Thailand and also ascertain impressions of Thailand's cultural and natural environment as a tourist destination. The questions in this section asked tourists about their perceptions of Thailand and whether they intended to revisit Thailand.

The scale ranged between the following attitudes: Strongly agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly disagree. The response to each question was rated on the five point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, with zero meaning no response to that question.

### **3.3 PROCEDURE**

The survey gathered information from foreign tourists at the Departure Lounge of Bangkok International Airport. The researcher distributed questionnaires for tourists to complete while waiting for the departure of their flights. Various departure times were chosen to obtain a greater representative sample of respondents. The questionnaire consists of two pages and a covering letter (see Appendix A). The tourists were given brief verbal instructions before they commenced the questionnaire.

The surveys were completed over two months. Various factors influenced the length of the time of surveying:

1. The author had no assistance with the distribution of questionnaires.
2. Many tourists refused to complete the survey and others had spent only a short time in Thailand. Therefore they felt that they could not respond accurately to the questions.

3. The Airport Authority had given permission for the author to conduct the survey for only two months and in this time the author succeeded in obtaining 232 fully completed responses.

The questionnaires provided the basic data. The process of coding and translating the data into alpha-numerical form to represent the information began once the questionnaires were completed. The conversion and analysis of the data was done with the aid of the computer software programs Dbase III+ and SPSS. The initial method of analysing the information was by descriptive statistics, a technique which provides a good idea of respondents' perceptions and opinions by showing percentages and means. The SPSS statistical computer program was utilised to perform these tasks. All data were entered and statistically processed in Thailand with the assistance of lecturers from Ramkhemheng University, Bangkok.

### **3.4 Limitations of the survey**

1. The questionnaire was only in English and this limited the survey to respondents who could understand English.

2. A few respondents did not answer all the given questions in each section. This is a problem with this method of surveying respondents.

3. It was difficult to ask people directly about whether they had come to Thailand for the express purpose of using prostitutes. Therefore the only appropriate question was the rather euphemistic question which asked about nightlife, "What was your major activity while visiting Thailand?" While this question avoided asking respondents explicit, personal questions, it was the only question possible in this sort of survey. The answer to this question therefore only provided relatively general information.

# Chapter 4

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Analysis of the data

The data was processed with the help of SPSS PC+ program. Frequency distribution was used to investigate the number of cases in each category. Frequency is defined as the number of times or percentage something occurs (Bryman: 1990). In table 7-11 shows frequency distribution of respondents. For the analysis of the data a mean score test was employed. Means responses were used to find out the overall average of respondents' perception of Thailand's environment. In tables 12-15 the mean and standard deviation of the statement for each region in Thailand are shown. T-test was used to compare the mean of two groups to see whether the differences between the groups. Table 16 show T-test result of business and leisure respondents.

Table 7 Socio-economic characteristics of respondents (N=232).

SEX	NO. ( % )
Male	177 ( 76.3 )
Female	55 ( 23.7 )
MARITAL STATUS	
Single	115 ( 49.6 )
Married	113 ( 48.7 )
Other	4 ( 1.7 )
AGE	
Under 18	2 ( 0.9 )
19 - 24	30 ( 12.9 )
25 - 39	109 ( 47 )
40 - 54	63 ( 27.2 )
55 +	28 ( 12 )
OCCUPATION	
Student	21 ( 9 )
Professional	189 ( 81.5 )
Retired	12 ( 5.2 )
Other	10 ( 4.3 )
REGION OF RESIDENCE	
Europe	114 ( 49.1 )
Asia & Pacific	69 ( 29.7 )
The Americas	26 ( 11.2 )
South Africa & Middle East	16 ( 6.9 )
South Asia	7 ( 3.1 )



**Gender:**

As Table 7 shows, 76.3 % of respondents were male and 23.7% were female. Therefore, the sample reflects a regional trend in the predominance of male travellers. According to Mak and White (1992), for most destinations in the Asia & Pacific region, the number of male travellers exceeds the number of female travellers.

**Age group:**

The results reveal that 0.9% of respondents were aged under 18, 12.9% between 19-24, 47% between 25-39 years, 27.2% between 40-54 years and 12.1 % over 55. Thus by far the largest group is that aged between 25 and 39 years.

**Marital Status**

49.6% were single, 48.7% were married and 1.7 % were from the "other category" (the other category refers to widows and the divorced).

**Occupation**

The results show that 81.5% of respondents were professional (those currently employed), 9% were students, 5.2 % were retired and 4.3% were unemployed. The overwhelming majority of respondents were thus currently employed people.

## **Region of residence**

The results show that 49.1% of respondents came from Europe, followed by 29.7% from Asia & Pacific region (including Australia and New Zealand) and 11.2% from America. 6.9% of respondents came from South Africa and the Middle East and 3.1% from South Asia. In comparison with the figures of the statistical report of the TAT (1991), these results only differed marginally. In the TAT report, the Asia & Pacific region accounted for most of the arrivals to Thailand in 1991 and the second largest market was Europe. The TAT conducts most of its surveys in many different tourist resorts and at international airports in Thailand. Thailand has five international airports in Phuket (Southern Thailand), Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai (Northern Thailand), U-tapao (Eastern Thailand) and Bangkok, (Ainsworth 1993: 21).

## **Travel characteristics of respondents in Thailand**

This section consists of an analysis of the survey results which reveal the purpose of tourist visits, the major activities of tourists, the choice of tourist attractions visited, the mode of transport chosen and respondents' reactions to holidaying in Thailand. As discussed in chapter 2, a visitor's image of a destination prior to visiting it is likely to influence his or her perception of its environment during a visit. Prospective visitors develop these expectations of the environment and of Thailand as a destination in general. These prior expectations may have arisen from advertising literature, such as tourist brochures, television commercials and from talking to other tourists who had previously visited Thailand. Table 8 shows the respondents' travel characteristics while visiting Thailand.

**Table 8 Travel characteristics of respondents ( N=232 ).**

<b>FREQUENCY OF VISIT</b>	<b>No.(%)</b>
first time visit	73 (31.5)
repeat visit	159 (68.5)
<b>PURPOSE OF VISIT</b>	
Leisure	118 (50.9)
Business	84 (36.2)
V.F.R.	12 (5.2)
Others	18 (7.7)
<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	
Sight Seeing	104 (44.8)
Shopping	27 (11.6)
Nightlife	18 (7.8)
Others	79 (35.8)
Trekking	4 (1.7)
<b>ATTRACTIONS (multiple responses)</b>	
Bangkok	227 (97.8)
Chiang Mai	80 (34.5)
Pattaya	50 (21.6)
Samui Island	48 (20.7)
Phuket	44 (19)
Other	60 (25.9)
<b>MODE OF TRANSPORT</b>	
Taxi	92 ( 39.7 )
Bus & Coach	77 ( 33.2 )
Tuk Tuk	25 ( 10.8 )
Other	38 ( 16.3 )

### **Frequency of visit**

Table 8 shows that 31.5% of respondents were first time visitors and 68.5% were repeat visitors. These findings differ from the study of Mak and White (1992) where more than half of tourists travelling to Asia Pacific were first time visitors. These results have important implications for this study because this survey is examining the relationship between negative perceptions of Thailand's environment and tourist's intentions to return to Thailand. Therefore, these results show that these problems has not yet deterred many tourists and nearly 70% of respondents were satisfied enough with a previous visit to Thailand to return for another holiday.

### **Purpose of visit**

Leisure was the dominant reason for the respondents' vacation. More than half of respondents 50.9% visited for leisure, while 36.2% of respondents visited for business reasons. 5.2% of respondents stated that visiting friends and relatives was the purpose of their visit, while 3.4% said education was the purpose and the other category rated 4.3%.

## **Activities of respondents while in Thailand**

The most popular activity for respondents while visiting Thailand was sightseeing at 44.8%. Activities, categorise under "other" including conducting business and religious activities, were the major activities for 34.1% of respondents. 11.6% of respondents mentioned shopping as their main activities. 1.7% of respondents mentioned trekking as their main activities. However, only 7.8% claimed that nightlife and entertainment were their major activities while visiting Thailand. This relatively low figure could be the result of a combination of factors. As already mentioned in chapter 3, one of the problems with this question is that the definition of "nightlife" is deliberately vague. It may cover activities such as dining out, going to nightclubs or involvement with prostitution and, because of this association with prostitution, some tourists may not have answered honestly which reflects the unpopularity of the nightlife category.

## **Attractions in Thailand**

The result showed that 97.8% of respondents visited Bangkok. 34.5% of respondents visited Chiang Mai, 19% of respondents visited Phuket, while 21.6% visited Pattaya and 20.7% visited Samui Island. The other category rated at 25.9%. The results show that nearly all the respondents visited Bangkok. This is partly due to the fact that Bangkok is the major entry and exit point for international airlines flying into Thailand. In addition, Bangkok is a major financial centre in Thailand, so,

most of the business visitors would conduct their business there.

### **Mode of transport**

While in Thailand, forms of public transport, such as taxis, buses and coaches were the most popular modes of transport for respondents during their stay. 39.7% of respondents used taxis and 33.2% used buses and coaches. 10.8% of respondents used Tuk Tuks<sup>1</sup> and 16.4% used other mode of transport, including hire car.

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<sup>1</sup> Tuk Tuk refers to a three wheeled motor bike used for public transport which is licensed to carry three or more passengers.

**Table 9 Factors causing disappointment with Thailand. (Multiple responses)**

Factors	Tourists who will not revisit Thailand (%)	Tourists who will revisit Thailand (%)	TOTAL (%)
Pollution	13 ( 50 )	148 ( 73.6 )	161 ( 70.9 )
Uninteresting Scenery	2 ( 7.6 )	1 ( 0.5 )	3 ( 1.3 )
Local People	4 ( 15.4 )	8 ( 4 )	12 ( 5.3 )
Others	8 ( 30.8 )	75 ( 36.8 )	83 ( 36.1 )
<b>Total</b>	<b>26 ( 11.2 )</b>	<b>206 ( 88.8 )</b>	<b>232 ( 100 )</b>

Table 9 shows the number of respondents disappointed by Thailand for various reasons. 70.9% of respondents were disappointed by pollution. This possibly reflects the fact that the majority of tourists visited Bangkok which is badly polluted. 36.1% of respondents ticked "other" mentioning disappointed with such factors as traffic congestion, inadequate infrastructure or the language barrier (poor English). Virtually no respondents were disappointed by the scenery and local people as only 1.3% and 5.3% respectively mentioned these as disappointing facets of Thailand.



These results reveal that pollution is potentially a major problem for Thailand's tourism industry. Since tourism is based on natural attractions and the environment, if Thailand's environment continues to be polluted, then tourists will be deterred from visiting Thailand. The polluting of a tourist destination will also affect its image for prospective tourists. A negative image of resorts such as Pattaya, Pee Pee Island may result in a declining number of tourists. However the figures also show that respondents will revisit Thailand despite being disappointed by pollution.

**Table 10 Respondents' positive impression of Thailand (Multiple responses).**

Factors	Tourists who will not revisit Thailand (%)	Tourists who will revisit Thailand (%)	TOTAL (%)
Historical sites	7 ( 27 )	51 ( 24.8 )	58 ( 25.2 )
Nightlife	1 ( 3.8 )	27 ( 13.2 )	28 ( 12.2 )
Natural attractions	15 ( 57.7 )	70 ( 33.9 )	85 ( 37 )
Art & culture	6 ( 23.1 )	45 ( 21.9 )	51 ( 22.2 )
Friendly people	7 ( 27 )	142 ( 69 )	149 ( 64.8 )
Other	3 ( 11.5 )	5 ( 2.4 )	8 ( 3.5 )
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26 ( 11.8 )</b>	<b>206 ( 88.2 )</b>	<b>232 ( 100 )</b>

The friendliness of the Thai people is a major advantage for tourism in Thailand. The survey results show that 64.8% of respondents are impressed by the friendliness of Thai people. Natural attractions also bring tourists to Thailand. 37% of respondents are impressed by natural attractions followed by historical sites 25.2%, art & culture 22.2%, nightlife 12.2% and the "other" category 3.5%. The results reveal those respondents (57.7%) who decided not to revisit still appreciated the natural attractions of Thailand. Perhaps this indicates those tourists were disappointed by other factors unrelated to the natural environment.

**Table 11 Visitor participation in package tours to Thailand.**

Frequency / Age	YES ( % )	NO ( % )	TOTAL ( % )
First visit	18 ( 24.7 )	55 ( 75.3 )	73 ( 32 )
Repeat visit	19 ( 12.3 )	134 ( 87.7 )	155 ( 68 )
Under 18	1 ( 50 )	1 ( 50 )	2 ( 0.9 )
19-24	4 ( 13.4 )	26 ( 86.6 )	30 ( 12.9 )
25- 39	13 ( 12 )	96 ( 88 )	109 ( 47 )
40- 54	10 ( 16.7 )	50 ( 83.3 )	63 ( 27.2 )
55+	9 ( 32.2 )	19 ( 67.8 )	28 ( 12.1 )
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>37 (16.3)</b>	<b>191( 83.7 )</b>	<b>228<sup>2</sup> ( 100)</b>

The survey results show that only 16.3% of respondents came to Thailand as package tourists, while 83.7% of respondents travelled without the assistance of packaged tours. This is related to the fact that most respondents were repeat visitors, and they did not need to travel with the assistance of an organised package tour. The under 18 age group sample

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<sup>2</sup> Missing case 4

in this survey was too small a sample to make an accurate assessment of travel preferences. For further study, an increased sample size would need to be obtained. 12% of tourists between the ages of 25-39 prefer to travel with a package tour, while 13.4% of respondents between the age of 19-24 prefer to travel with a package tour.

It is clear that respondents in the young age groups like to travel independently. Perhaps younger tourists tend to be more adventurous and like to travel to other Thai destinations beyond Bangkok. The 19-24 and 25-39 age groups have almost the same percentage taking package tours. The figures in table 12 indicate that older respondents are more likely to take package tours. 32.2% of respondents aged over 55 used package tours. This result supports Quiraga's (1990) finding that elderly tourists are more likely to purchase package tours.

24.7% of respondents who visited Thailand for the first time took package tours while 12.3% of repeat visitors took package tours. This indicates that tourists on their first vacation to Thailand who are unfamiliar with the country are more likely to select package tours because everything including guides, meals and accommodation is arranged for them.

## **4.2 Respondents' perceptions of Thailand's environment**

The purpose of this section is to investigate tourists' views on the environment of Thailand. The questions in this section asked tourists to rate according to which regions of Thailand they had visited, their perceptions of various aspects of Bangkok, beach resorts, Northern Thailand and their general impressions of Thailand. This section also ascertained tourists' opinions of standard of facilities and services provided. Means show the average of respondents' perceptions of Thailand's environment.

The questions in this section were rated on a 5 point scale. The 5 point scale allows for the measurement for appropriate statistical analysis. The respondents gave their opinions about their travel experiences in many regions of Thailand. The mean figures in table 11 to 14 are defined as follows: the lower the value, the more negative the perception of tourists.

5 indicates a very positive perception

4 indicates a positive perception

3 indicates a neutral perception

2 indicates a negative perception

1 indicates a very negative perception

The mean score shows the entire sample who visited particular attractions in Thailand. 227 respondents answered the section on Bangkok's environment, 138 respondents answered the section on beach resorts, 78 respondents answered the section on Northern Thailand and 232 respondents answered the section on Thailand's cultural environment. The number of responses in each section varied according to the particular travel experiences of respondents in Thailand.

**Table 12 Respondents' perceptions of Bangkok's environment (N=227) in ascending order.**

Bangkok Variables	Mean	S.D.
The air quality in Bangkok is a serious problem.	1.48	0.78
Traffic congestion in Bangkok is very annoying.	1.46	0.8
Bangkok has a notoriety for prostitution.	1.92	0.85
Bangkok is over populated.	2.2	0.9
The streets of Bangkok are dirty.	2.32	0.96
Bangkok has a lack of parks and gardens.	2.51	0.95
The social life in Bangkok is lively and exciting for tourists.	3.94	0.77
Bangkok has good shopping centres.	4.17	0.74

As table 12 shows, the means with regard to the environment are generally low which signifies the respondents' negative perception of the environment in Bangkok (environment being characterised by air quality, traffic congestion, prostitution, lack of parks, dirty streets and over population). This indicated that respondents felt very strongly that Bangkok's natural environment is polluted. These findings are similar to the survey conducted by Thailand's Development Research Institute in 1992. This survey found traffic condition was the most negative factor, followed by

pollution (Muqbil b: 1993).

The respondents in this study tended to give a relatively high positive perception of social lifestyle and shopping in Bangkok. Respondents obviously enjoyed the variety of the goods available and the inexpensive prices of shopping in Bangkok. Respondents also perceived that social life in Bangkok is lively and exciting. The results show tourists have more negative perceptions of Bangkok than positive impressions.



**Table 13 Respondents' perception of beach resorts in Thailand (N=138) in ascending order.**

Beach Resort Variables	Mean	S.D.
There is an insufficient number of rubbish bins in beach areas.	2.19	0.93
Pollution is evident in beach areas.	2.29	1.11
There are too many high rise buildings along the beach.	2.63	1.07
There is a lack of fresh water in beach resorts.	2.76	0.88
There is little commercial entertainment along the beach.	2.79	0.84
Availability of tourists information is poor.	3.07	0.95
The beach I visited were good for swimming.	3.45	1.16

Table 13 shows the tourists' perception of beach resorts in Thailand. The overall mean score of natural environment and facilities for respondents showed a relatively less than average to high value which indicated respondents are not satisfied with the quality of the environment and the facilities in resorts. Factors such as an insufficient number of rubbish bins, lack of fresh water, too many high rise buildings and excessive entertainment have produced relatively negative responses by respondents. Pollution also received low means by respondents in this study.

In general, respondents were equally divided in their opinions about the availability of information in beaches resorts and suitability of beaches for swimming.

**Table 14 Respondents' perception of Northern Thailand's environment (N=78) in ascending order.**

Northern Thailand Variables	Mean	S.D.
There is too much deforestation in Northern Thailand.	1.91	0.93
It is rare to see Thai people wearing local dress.	2.75	0.97
Rivers in Northern Thailand are unpolluted.	2.92	0.93
Natural attractions of Northern Thailand are relatively unspoilt.	3.22	0.86
Tour guides provide ample knowledge of Thai culture.	3.55	0.82
Northern Thai architecture is unique.	3.78	0.77
A trip in Northern Thailand is a real adventure.	3.84	1.03

Table 14, shows that the means of each statement range from low to quite high which revealed that respondents did not have strong opinions about Northern Thailand's environment. The respondents did have opinions about the natural and cultural environment in Northern Thailand such as Northern Thai architecture, the unspoilt condition of natural attractions, the adventures offered by a trip to Northern Thailand and whether tour guides provided adequate information.

Deforestation, river pollution and local dress <sup>3</sup> tended to have relatively negative responses which showed that the respondents were dissatisfied with these factors. Possibly, the relatively average to low means of perception of the environment in Northern Thailand indicated that tourists appear to be searching for interesting attractions besides seashore resorts and city touring. Perhaps, the tourists are looking for more challenging experiences. Many tourists are turning their attention to Thailand's national parks and the vast flora and fauna (Travel Week November 4: 1992). The results also indicated the most serious environmental degradation problem in Northern Thailand was deforestation.

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<sup>3</sup>Local dress is comprised of narrow strips of woven silk or cotton which were joined, folded or tucked to serve as various garments. For women, the basic clothing was a **pha sin** which is two or three strips of cloth sewn into a tube, worn around the waist and tucked in at the navel. Another narrow strip was wrapped around the breasts. Pha sin can be plain, but usually striped in patterns which belonged to a location or ethnic group. Men wore a strip that was tied between their legs and around the waist. Both men and women carried their belongings in cloth shoulder bags.

**Table 15 Respondents' perception of Thailand's cultural environment (N = 232) in ascending order.**

Cultural environment Variables	Mean	S.D.
I have learnt some Thai language.	2.93	1.12
The security for tourists in Thailand is adequate.	3.48	0.84
Thai Greeting is unique.	3.73	0.85
I have experienced Thai culture during my visit.	3.79	0.73
AIDS will influence my decision not to visit Thailand again	3.96	1
Thai people are friendly and hospitable.	4.25	0.77
I will visit Thailand again.	4.42	0.71

In general, respondents felt they had experienced Thai culture during their holiday in Thailand. This result is reflected in the above average and high means of cultural factors. In general most respondents felt that they were happy about their personal safety while in Thailand. This is indicated by the average value. Respondents also stated that AIDS would not influence their decision to revisit Thailand. Relatively high means scores are seen with the statements describing the friendliness of Thai people. The average to high means of respondents' overall perception of Thailand's cultural and natural environment indicate the respondents are satisfied with

their holiday experience, and most of the respondents intended to revisit Thailand.

The findings to an extent show tourists have negative perceptions of the Thai environment. Since 88% of respondents intend to revisit Thailand (see table 10), environmental factors do not appear to greatly influence their decision to revisit Thailand. This could reject the original hypothesis that if tourists have negative perceptions of the physical and cultural environment, it will influence their decision to revisit Thailand. In order to test the results, the difference between tourists who intend to revisit Thailand and those who will not revisit should be investigated with the aid of the T-test method. However, it is not feasible to conduct a T-test distribution as sample size is small as 88% of respondents are willing to revisit while 12% are not (see table 10).

Some further investigations were carried out. The t-test method was used to compare and analyse the sample the means by calculating significance of the difference between the means in the perception of Thailand's environment of two groups (business and leisure tourists). These two groups were compared because they are the major market for Thai tourism. Moreover it is important to investigate the differences between leisure and business tourists regarding their perceptions of the environment. The two-tailed probability was used for the t-test to investigate if there were any differences between the means. The aim was to identify if scores between the two groups were statistically different and if the scores between business and leisure were higher or lower. The t-test analysis was used to compare business and leisure tourists' perceptions of the natural, cultural, social environment and infrastructure in Thailand. Details of the findings are presented in table 16.

Table 16 Tourists' perception of Thailand's environment.

Bangkok Variables	Mean Leisure (N=118)	Mean Business (N=84)	T value
Traffic congestion in Bangkok is very annoying.	1.57	1.32	2.1*
The air quality in Bangkok is a serious problem.	1.59	1.32	1.5
Bangkok has a notoriety for prostitution.	1.99	1.84	1.2
Bangkok is over populated.	2.25	2.14	0.8
The streets of Bangkok are dirty.	2.32	2.28	0.3
Bangkok has a lack of parks and gardens.	2.52	2.52	0.1
The social life in Bangkok is lively and exciting for tourists.	3.9	4.01	-1
Bangkok has good shopping centres.	4.18	4.07	1
<b>Beach resorts Variables</b>			
There is an insufficient number of rubbish bins in beach areas.	2.18	2.23	-0.3
Pollution is evident in beach areas.	2.4	2.21	0.8
There is little commercial entertainment along the beach.	2.73	2.76	-0.2
There is a lack of fresh water in beach resorts.	2.76	2.76	0.1
There are too many high rise buildings along the beach.	2.8	2.39	1.9
Availability of tourists information is poor.	3.11	3.07	0.2
The beaches I visited were good for swimming.	3.54	3.18	1.5

Significant at \* < 0.5



Northern Thailand Variables	Mean	Mean	T value
	Leisure (N=118)	Business (N=84)	
There is too much deforestation in Northern Thailand.	2.09	1.35	3.4**
It is rare to see Thai people wearing local dress.	2.68	3	-1.3
Rivers in Northern Thailand are unpolluted.	3.11	2.65	2*
Natural attractions of Northern Thailand are relatively unspoilt.	3.4	3.1	1.4
Tour guides provide ample knowledge of Thai	3.53	3.45	0.4
Northern Thai architecture is unique.	3.75	3.85	-0.5
A trip in Northern Thailand is a real adventure.	3.97	3.6	1.4
<b>Thailand's cultural Variables</b>			
I have learnt some Thai language.	2.82	3	-1.2
The security for tourists in Thailand is adequate.	3.55	3.37	1.5
Thai Greeting is unique.	3.61	3.84	-1.9
I have experienced Thai culture during my visit.	3.79	3.73	0.6
AIDS will influence my decision not to visit Thailand again	3.94	3.86	0.5
Thai people are friendly and hospitable.	4.12	4.42	-2.8**
I will visit Thailand again.	3.63	3.92	3.2**

Significant at \*  $P < .05$  , Significant at \*\*  $P < .01$  .

Statistically significant differences between the mean score of leisure and business respondents were found in five statements. Overall, the business tourists were more sensitive to environmental degradation of Thailand. Possibly business tourists frequently travel to Thailand and have kept abreast of changing events over a period of time compared with leisure tourists. They perceived more negative environmental factors such as traffic congestion in Bangkok ( $t= 2.1;p<0.5$ ) and deforestation ( $t=3.4;p<0.5$ ). Possibly, because business tourists have a limited time to conduct their business traffic congestion would be more frustrating and expensive to their time. Leisure tourists had found less negative impressions of traffic congestion, perhaps because they were on holiday and their activities were less urgent. Furthermore, business and leisure tourists show some differences in their perception of deforestation in Northern Thailand ( $t=3.41;p<0.1$ ). The business tourists have more negative perceptions of deforestation (mean of 1.35) than leisure tourists (mean of 2.09). This may be because leisure tourists spend less time in Northern Thailand and do not have an opportunity to visit destinations of their choice. Furthermore, business and leisure tourists show significant differences in the perception of river pollution in Northern Thailand ( $t=2.03, p<0.5$ ).

However, the t-test results reveal that scores from the leisure and business tourists were statistically different in positive perceptions. The T-test showed that over time, business tourists visiting Thailand perceived more positive in the friendliness of Thai people ( $t = -2.8, p < .01$ ) more positively and they plan to revisit Thailand ( $t = -3.2, p < .01$ ) more than leisure tourists. Obviously, business tourists communicate a great deal more with Thai people in carrying out their work.

### 4.3 The open ended question

This section was designed to allow the respondents to think freely about Thailand's environment and to describe their overall impression of Thailand and its environment.

46.6% of respondents answered the open question while 53.4% decided not to respond. The responses reveal a number of concerns: traffic congestion, pollution, overdevelopment due to tourism, westernisation of Thailand and inadequate public transport.

Of those who commented on Thailand's environment, 24.1% mentioned traffic congestion. The comments regarding traffic congestion show the respondents believe it was a serious problem especially in Bangkok. Generally, respondents commented on their delays in traffic and the exhaust fumes from motor bikes. A few tourists felt traffic congestion could seriously affect tourism.

27.8% of respondents felt pollution was a serious problem especially in Bangkok. Air pollution was a major concern and many believed poor exhaust systems were the main cause. A few visitors suggested that emission controls should be implemented for most vehicles.

Most respondents felt rubbish disposal was inadequate and thought there should be a public awareness campaign to inform the Thais of the correct procedures of rubbish disposal. Those respondents who visited seashore resorts felt water pollution was a severe problem and that it was detrimental towards the environment and felt destinations would lose their appeal for tourists. Moreover, some felt deforestation would affect tourism in the future.

17.6% of respondents thought Thai people were friendly, helpful and pleasant while only a small number of respondents believed Thais were dishonest. Some respondents believed there was little public awareness regarding littering on streets but a few respondents perceived Thai people were generally clean.

15.7% of respondents commented on tourism development in Thailand. Some respondents believed tourist resorts were overdeveloped with too many shopping centres. Respondents also felt there was too much construction in Bangkok and stated that improved infrastructure and planning would overcome the detrimental effects of uncontrolled tourism development. In addition, respondents also cautioned the overdevelopment of tourism in scenic areas.

10.2% of respondents commented on cultural aspects of Thailand. Many respondents regarded Thai culture as unique, though a few asserted that Thailand is becoming too westernised. Some respondents believed progress should be curtailed as it may result in the decline of the cultural identity for many Thais.

4.6% of respondents commented on Thailand's public transport. Some respondents had a negative perception of public transport drivers and believed Bangkok's public transport system needed upgrading. As already mentioned, visitors stated public transport drivers should speak basic English and they also stated that taxis were too expensive. For a full transcript of respondents' comments, refer to Appendix C.

In summary, in the responses to the open question, great emphasis was placed on the degradation of the environment in Thailand. Although tourists perceived the friendliness of local people they were not impressed by the quality of the environment of tourist destinations. It would seem the major issues for Thailand are the environmental problems in Bangkok, such as traffic congestion and air pollution, and in the water pollution and land degradation elsewhere in the country.

# Chapter 5

## DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of the study was to identify tourists' perceptions of the environment in Thailand. This chapter discusses the results of the survey and the implications of these results.

### 5.1 Environmental problems

#### **Bangkok**

According to the results of the survey, most respondents feel that the environment of Bangkok faces enormous problems. Traffic congestion in Bangkok is a major disadvantage for local tourism as shown in table 12 with the low mean of (1.46) signifying that traffic congestion adversely affects most tourists.

The Thailand Development Research Institute (1992) study found that traffic congestion was the major negative factor for the tourism industry in Thailand (Muqbil: 1993 b). However, the study showed only 57.8% of international tourists saw it as a major negative problem compared to most of the respondents in this study (See table 12).

Therefore, a comparison of the two studies reveals that traffic congestion has become more of a problem for tourists from 1992 to 1993. Traffic congestion appears to be a major concern for tourists in Thailand as experienced in their initial journey from Bangkok Airport to their hotel, a journey which can take many hours due to the traffic. Furthermore, the survey results indicate that action should be taken immediately. If traffic congestion remains unsolved, the tourist industry will suffer irreversible harm.

In the past few years, the relationship between traffic congestion and air pollution in Bangkok has been an issue in both the international and local media. The results of the survey show a low mean of (1.48) which reveals that respondents perceive air quality in Bangkok to be a serious problem (see Table 12). A study conducted by the National Environment Board on air quality in Bangkok showed during the rush hour in the congested areas of Silom road (Business centre), the level of carbon monoxide is far above the safety standards and the levels of lead and suspended matter in the air are also dangerously high (The Nation, September 12: 1989). As a result, air pollution could pose serious threats to the health of tourists and people working outdoors in congested areas such as, traffic policeman and pavement vendors. Due to air pollution and



traffic congestion in Bangkok, some Italian tourists decided not to visit Bangkok and look to other destinations (Bangkok Post, September 16: 1993). It is clear that air pollution and traffic congestion would be factors that reduce the number of tourists visiting Bangkok.

Thus, air pollution and traffic congestion are major problems for tourists in Bangkok and the environmental problems will eventually have devastating effects on the tourist industry. Tourists do not want to confront these problems as they are only interested in attractive destinations which offer pleasant experiences and recreation.

In summary, tourists in this study perceive the natural environment of Bangkok as very polluted and perceive Bangkok as well known for prostitution. However, tourists perceive Bangkok as good for shopping and the social lifestyle exciting. This result indicates Bangkok's natural environment is losing its charm for tourists due to various problems as mentioned before. The result indicates shopping could be promoted as a major attraction for Bangkok and within few years, Bangkok may be able to compete with Hong Kong and Singapore as a shopping paradise.

## **Beach resorts**

In the perception of the attributes beach resorts in Thailand by tourists in this study, the results of the survey reflect that infrastructure in beach resorts is poor. As shown in Table 13, the mean is lower than average (2.29) which reveals respondents agree that pollution is evident in beach resorts. These results reveal that pollution of all kinds is a growing problem in resorts and that water pollution in particular is already of major concern. The literature review supports this, as, in Pattaya for example, water pollution is a severe problem. It would appear tourism has a negative impact especially in beach resorts. This may be a problem since many market competitors offer unpolluted beautiful natural beaches. The TAT could benefit from the experience of other beach resorts which are built under strict environmental guidelines and given limited capacity. The TAT would be able to promote destinations which adhere to rigid environmental regulations as tourists are increasingly environmentally aware.

The lack of fresh water in resort areas especially on Pee Pee Island and Phuket in Southern Thailand is a particular concern, as the results in Table 13 show the low mean (2.76) indicates tourists perceive that there is a lack of fresh water in resorts. This result shows that many tourist lodgings suffer from a shortage of fresh water and poor water supply during the peak

season. Hence, improvement of water supply in resorts should be carefully considered and implemented.

In table 13, results show a below average mean (2.19) which indicates for respondents there are not enough rubbish bins in beach resorts. The results of this study point to the need for planning and for strict environmental guidelines in the construction of facilities in resort areas such as Pattaya, Phuket, Pee Pee Island and Samui Island. Careful consideration must be made of the impact these resorts are having on the environment. As a result the lack of proper facilities can create degradation of the environment such as water pollution.

Most respondents expect the buildings along the beach such as hotels, shops and restaurants to blend with the natural environment. The high rise buildings along the beach ruin the natural beauty of beach resorts. As shown in table 13, the mean (2.63) indicates respondents feel there are too many high rise buildings along the beach. This indicates respondents believed architecture of future buildings in beach resorts should be in harmony with the surrounding natural environment.

In summary, tourists in this study perceive water pollution and the lack of facilities as a problem in many beach resorts in Thailand. This result reveals that resorts need proper facilities to serve tourists and adequate waste treatment systems should be strictly required for business establishments along the beach. The result indicates that tourists prefer buildings along the beach in keeping with the environment.

### **Northern Thailand**

In regards to tourists' perception of Northern Thailand, respondents feel that deforestation is becoming a major problem in Northern Thailand. The results of the survey show that tourists believe the natural environment in Northern Thailand is under threat. In table 14, a low mean (1.91) reveals that respondents believe there is too much deforestation in Northern Thailand. An obvious detrimental effect of the degradation of natural beauty of Northern Thailand is the impact on new tourist markets, particularly the market for ecotourists. Ecotourists do not require luxurious accommodation, food and nightlife and they are willing to accept and appreciate local conditions (Boo: 1990). As a result, ecotourists are most interested in natural attractions and are aware of the potential damage to the environment.

Such tourists try to escape from artificial manufactured attractions to natural environments and indigenous cultures. They would certainly be deterred from visiting natural parks and other attractions in Northern Thailand if deforestation continues unchecked. As well as ecotourists, there are growing numbers of tourists who appreciate less sophisticated, more natural holiday destinations. Frommer (1989) supports this by observing that tourists are searching for more nature based attractions, adventure and culture. Also an article in the Bangkok Post, September 23: 1993 revealed that Australian tourists are interested in adventure holidays in Thailand and are travelling to national parks. Therefore, it is essential that conservation of forest areas and national parks should be undertaken, mainly for environmental reasons but also to preserve natural attractions for local as well as international tourists. If deforestation continues, the bio-diversity of these areas will be destroyed and deforestation will cause significant damage to the Thai economy not only in terms of environmental destruction but in terms of lost revenue from tourism.

Tourists are also aware that river pollution can be an environmental problem in the regions of Northern Thailand. In table 14 the moderate mean (2.92) indicates that respondents are equally divided about the presence of pollution in the rivers. The results reveal that only half of the respondents consider river pollution to be of concern. However, the negative impact of

such pollution will inevitably become a threat to the local tourist industry.

These results suggest two major problems: river pollution and deforestation which have obvious negative implications for the tourism industry. Due to traffic congestion and air pollution in Bangkok, tourists may seek new destinations. This is a good opportunity for Northern Thailand's regions to attract more tourists. Furthermore, these results reveal that trekking activities could be promoted as a major attraction for Northern Thailand's tourism as only 1.7% of respondents trekked in this region. Moreover, mountainous areas in Northern Thailand can offer more adventure experiences such as bush walking, trekking and jungle tours. Also, adventure touring in Northern Thailand could benefit the tourism industry as it offers alternative destinations compared with other areas in Thailand.

In summary, tourists in this study perceive that deforestation is a problem for Northern Thailand. This result indicates that ecotourism may not have a growth opportunity for local tourism as forests are decreasing. This result also indicates that river pollution is another problem that has affected the local tourism industry.

## 5.2 Social problems

There are many social problems in Thailand, however the discussion below concentrated on two major problems affecting Thai tourism. Prostitution has been associated with Thailand's tourism industry for many years. During the Vietnam War, United States military personnel used the country as a rest and recreation centre and after this war ended, the bars and massage parlours became popular for domestic and international tourists. Prostitution is an enormous social problem not only in Bangkok and beach resorts but throughout Thailand.

The survey results show a low mean (1.92) which indicates respondents believe that Thailand is well known for prostitution (see table 12). As a result, it would appear respondents have a negative perception of Thailand. According to Ong (1985) Thailand now has approximately 500,000 prostitutes, 20% of whom are less than 14 years old while Serrill (1993) estimates a figure of 2 million prostitutes in Thailand . Bangkok has become so closely associated with prostitution that the Longman English language and cultural dictionary defined Bangkok as a city of prostitutes (Bangkok Post July 7: 1993).

Although prostitution in Thailand is widespread, it is still illegal. To procure or prostitute oneself is a criminal offence. In addition, families who encourage prostitution can also be seen as procurers and can be charged by authorities. The age of consent in Thailand for a girl is 16 years. Those persons found engaged in prostitution under this age could face 2 to 12 years imprisonment and a fine. However, these laws have not reduced prostitution in Thailand. The terrible poverty particularly in the Northeast and Northern provinces has meant that thousands of women and children have been forced to sell their bodies to tourists and local for economic survival.

This child prostitution in Thailand has become a controversial issue internationally. The traffic of children for prostitution has been directed at Northern of Thailand with girls under 10 years of age, sent to work as prostitutes in Bangkok brothels. One reason for the demand in child prostitution is the view that children are AIDS free.



Adult and child prostitution have created a negative image of Thailand abroad as people perceive Thailand as a sex destination and land of prostitution. The complex issues of Thailand's sex industry, sex tourism and the resulting benefits to parts of the Thai economy must be addressed by the Thai government. The Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai has announced, as one of the major goals to fight prostitution, particularly child prostitution. This policy has resulted in a number of raids against brothels nationwide and has rescuing children from the brothels.

AIDS appears to be another issue for the tourism industry in Thailand, particularly the image it create of the country overseas. The first AIDS cases in Thailand were found in the early 80s those mainly being homosexuals and tourists.

The results of the survey show a high mean (3.96) which indicates that respondents believe that AIDS will not influence their decision to revisit Thailand (see table 15). Thus, AIDS is not a major concern to tourists surveyed. An earlier finding showed that 7.8% of tourists engaged in nightlife activities (see table 8). It is clear that tourist who come to Thailand for leisure purposes who do not engage in prostitution will not be affect by AIDS. While, AIDS is not a major deterrent to tourists the growing AIDS epidemic in addition to Thailand's association with sex tourism must

eventually affect the appeal of Thailand as a holiday destination to mainstream tourists.

The government and the TAT has began to confront the issues of prostitution and AIDS and their impact on tourism. Policy makers recognise the dilemmas posed by the threat of AIDS for the necessity of informing the public about the true nature of AIDS clashes with the demands of the tourism industry. Initially, the Thai authorities opted to protect the industry, by under-stating the extent of the AIDS problem. More recently, however the Thai government and the Tourism Authority have started to deal with the AIDS issue through public awareness campaigns and education in the media. Mr Mechai, the former Chairman of TAT made some controversial statements when he related sex tourism with AIDS. He stated that AIDS is a serious threat to tourism in Thailand (PATA Travel News, September: 1992).

A minor issue raised by the survey result was the issue of personal safety for tourists in Thailand. About half the respondents consider that Thailand provides adequate security for tourists. Therefore, in order to enhance the image of Thailand as a desirable, safe place to visit, the improvement of security systems for tourists is a must.

Friendliness of people and natural attractions seem to be the motivating factors for tourists to visit Thailand. This indicates the need to maintain and protect natural attractions for the future of tourism in Thailand. Also the development of cultural based tourism will attract tourists to Thailand. In table 15, a high mean (4.25) indicates that friendliness of Thai people is the major impression for tourists. It is clear that tourists have the opportunity to meet Thai people who speak, think and live differently and this allows many forms of cultural exchange. This is indicated by the high mean (3.79) which shows that respondents perceive they have experienced Thai culture during their visit (see table 15). This result reveals tourists have some benefit besides relaxation during their vacation. The respondents have had the opportunity to learn another country's culture, history and lifestyle. Possibly, the benefit of cultural experience for tourists is the motivation for tourists to visit Thailand.

In table 15, a high mean (4.52) indicates almost all respondents intend to return to Thailand. This result shows clearly that there was no real negative impact from tourists' perceptions of Thailand's environment. Throughout the survey, respondents consistently reveal their awareness of the social and environmental problems in Thailand and almost all the respondents state that they intend to return. Thus it appears that

environmental problems are not yet preventing tourists from revisiting. The results in table 12, 13 and 14 show there are more negative perceptions of Bangkok's problems by comparison to the beach resorts and Northern Thailand. Respondents have very negative impressions regarding air pollution, traffic congestion, overcrowding and prostitution in Bangkok, while their impression of pollution and environmental degradation in Northern Thailand and beach resorts was less negative.

These negative perception of Bangkok may diminish Bangkok's attraction as a tourist destination. Tourists can already choose to avoid Bangkok and a significant number of them travel directly to the isle of Phuket in the south or to Chiang Mai in the north, both which are served by international flights (The Age, November 20: 1993).

In summary, the weakness of tourism in Thailand can be found in the natural environmental degradation in Bangkok. However, the strength of the tourism industry in Thailand lies in the friendliness of people. Natural resources in some regions offer various attractions that may fulfil tourists expectations. This is the case in Northern Thailand which would suit the adventurous tourist, while the Southern Thailand would appeal to tourists who are searching for sun and sand, while Bangkok suits tourists who love shopping and busy city life. The opportunities for the Thai tourism industry can be found in new segments of tourists such as the elderly and ecotourists. More promotion for these segments should be considered. Moreover, the opportunities for trekking in Northern Thailand could benefit Thai tourism. The threats to Thai tourism can be found in environmental degradation caused by lack of awareness of Thai people and mismanagement of organisations involved in tourism.

Moreover, an overwhelming number of tourists intend to revisit Thailand. Despite their growing concern for Thailand's social and environmental problems, tourists still find Thailand an attractive holiday destination. Therefore, the negative impact of Thailand's problems is not great enough to deter tourists at present.

### 5.3 CONCLUSION

In this study, the majority of respondents were aged between late 20s and mid 30s. There are more males than females and most respondents come from Europe. The respondents were generally repeat visitors and leisure is the major purpose of their visit.

Bangkok was the major destination for respondents. One factor that caused disappointment with respondents was pollution while the friendliness of Thai people was a major impression for the tourists. Most respondents travelled to Thailand without the assistance of a package tours and some perceived that the level of spoken English in the service sectors such as the public transport drivers was low.

Traffic congestion and air pollution in Bangkok were perceived negatively by tourists, and water pollution and waste disposal were serious problems for some respondents in resort areas. Deforestation and pollution in rivers was also a concern for some respondents in Northern Thailand.

An unexpected result was that most tourists in this study intend to revisit Thailand even though they perceived its environmental degradation. The findings showed that environmental problems in Thailand have not affected tourists badly as yet. The results showed that respondents felt that only Bangkok had serious environmental degradation, while other regions and natural resources were found relatively unpolluted for tourists in Thailand.

The results also showed more than half of the tourists in this study were repeat visitors. This indicated that Thailand fulfils tourists' holiday expectations. Tourists still enjoyed themselves although many areas apart from Bangkok. These findings do not support the studies of Inskip (1987), who contends that tourists will change their travel plans if the environmental qualities are not met.

However, the findings of this study create a clear warning for the tourism industry of Thailand. The tourists to an extent were dissatisfied with the natural environment and facilities provided for them. Environmental degradation could affect the tourism industry in the future if the mismanagement involved in the tourism industry continues. In addition, the lack of awareness of Thai people in regards to the natural environment of Thailand could also affect tourism in the future.

The findings of this study show that tourists have some negative perceptions of the Thai environment. However, most of the respondents intend to revisit Thailand. This could refute the original hypothesis that if tourists have negative perceptions of the physical and cultural environment, it will influence their decision to revisit Thailand.



## **5.4 Further study**

This study is only an exploratory study in this area and before one can make definite statements about tourist perceptions of Thailand 's environment, more extensive studies have to be carried out. The following statements highlight some points for further study:

1. This study has revealed that most of respondents intend to revisit Thailand (see table 15). Further study should determine the reasons why most tourists intend to revisit Thailand and why some tourists do not intend to revisit Thailand. The factors that influenced the respondents should also be discussed.

2. This study has also revealed that tourists have much more negative perceptions of the environment and social problems in Bangkok than elsewhere in Thailand. Further study should investigate first whether tourists are avoiding Bangkok altogether and travelling directly to other regions in Thailand and second, whether the tourists who do stay in Bangkok are spending less time there because of environmental problems.

3. This study was based on a sample of 232 respondents. The number of tourist arrivals in Thailand is approximately 5 million a year and many regions are becoming increasingly popular besides Bangkok. For further study, a much larger sample should be surveyed and data should be collected in many locations in Thailand in order to obtain a more representative sample. This would reveal more information about the relationship between environmental problems and their effect on the tourism industry in Thailand.

4. This study did not ask respondents about the length of their stay in various regions of Thailand. Further study should include this question in order to make correlations between the length of stay and the perceptions of the Thai environment.

5. The questionnaire should be revised to cover all aspects of environmental problems in Thailand in order to develop a better understanding of the relationship between environmental problems and its affect on the tourism industry in Thailand.

6. This study revealed more information about tourists' perceptions of environmental problems in Bangkok than in other regions of Thailand. Further study could focus on tourists' perceptions of these regions.

## 5.5 Recommendations

The aim of this section is to make recommendations for the Thai tourism industry based on the findings of the survey. It is hoped that some of the suggestions made will be followed in the future.

1. There is a need to coordinate between the government and private sectors in term of planning and protection of the environment. Government must set up guidelines for the tourism industry to follow. Additionally, tougher environmental laws need to be enforced for persons or organisations who pollute the environment. The government should address the important issue of preservation of the environment in Thailand in order to limit the negative impact of tourism on the environment to maintain the economic benefits of tourism. Conservation need to be a central issue for the tourism industry and for this reason, the co-operation between government and the private sector should be encouraged as it is important to arrive at workable solutions.

2. To overcome the respondents negative image of the traffic situation (see table 12) in Bangkok, certain measures need to be taken. The government could consider the following suggestions: improve the public transport system by providing more buses and a Mass transit system

(trains) should be established. This may help to improve traffic flow in congested areas. Moreover, more inner city restrictions on private vehicles, alternate day driving based on odd-even registration and regulated controls on the number of new cars should also be imposed. The government should reduce the level of lead and carbon monoxide in the air and it should implement plans to resolve the problem of air pollution. Exhaust systems of cars more than ten years old should be checked. In addition, all vehicles should be installed with catalytic converters and fuel conditioners which would reduce the levels of carbon monoxide in the air (Bangkok Post, September 2: 1993). In addition, harsher penalties should be brought in for those emitting high levels of pollution.

3. Respondents believed that deforestation in Northern Thailand is a problem (see table 14). There is a need to launch a reforestation plan in Thailand as the total forest area has decreased from 53% of total land area in 1961 to 28% in 1988 (Tongsom et al: 1992). Forests need to be preserved to protect plants and animals from illegal logging. Moreover, the commercial forestry industry should develop tree plantations for their timber and pulp paper industry. Moreover, paper should be recycled in order to preserve forest areas which would help to preserve natural forests. Therefore a balance between conservation and commercial development should be encouraged. Government should impose strict controls such as

tourist zones in national park areas to protect and preserve the forest and wildlife. This will also help to increase the popularity of Northern Thailand for trekking holidays.

4. The Tourism Authority of Thailand appears to be a marketing organisation with little management and regulation of tourist attractions. As the results of this study show that some problems exist. There is a need for TAT to show more responsibility for the management and control of the environment in relation to tourism. Furthermore, a TAT strategy should place more emphasis on the preservation of environment and alternative tourism rather than potential growth of new destinations. Thailand faces strong competition in Southeast Asia. A marketing plan should encourage more alternative attractions or generate outbound tourists to other destinations. Moreover, a research budget could be allocated towards environmental research, regarding tourists attitudes, perception and their satisfaction of Thailand as a tourist destination. The future role of TAT may be directed toward the control of tourism development focusing on carrying capacity, conservation and monitoring the quality of natural attractions.

5. Some of respondents comment that Thai people lack of awareness of protect environment (see Appendix C.). The public and private sector should assist the government in overcoming the problems of environment

degradation and the effect on tourism. Local communities should not wait for the government to solve environmental problems and the private sector should be responsible for their own locality. Moreover, a public awareness campaign should be encouraged so individuals can learn to protect the environment. The local people should also be informed and assist with the development of projects since it is important that they have a good knowledge of their environment and the potential threat to any development.

6. Based on results of the study, the elderly prefer to travel with a packaged holiday (see table 11). This reveals a new segment of Thailand's tourism and offers an opportunity for the tourism industry in the future. According to Quiroga (1990), the elderly choose package tours because of safety factors and the opportunity to meet people of their own age. A major marketing strategy could be directed towards the elderly population in order to create substantial benefits for Thailand's tourism industry.

In summary, the author's hope that the findings and recommendations as mentioned above will alert TAT and the Thai people to be more aware of the growing environmental problems in Thailand and encourage them to act to protect the natural resources of Thailand.

## VISITOR SURVEY

Dear Sir/ Madam

Thank you for your taking the time to assist with the survey. The information you provide will be valuable to my research and the tourism industry in planning and improving environment in the future. The questions require a simple tick in the appropriate box or a short written answer. It would be appreciated if you would carefully read the instructions for each question before answering it. Please be assured that all information is being gathered strictly for academic purposes and is being processed statistically and your confidentiality will be respected at all times.

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Daraphan Sakornsathien

# Questionnaire

Please tick, circle or write your answer as appropriate.

1. How many times have you been to Thailand before?

- Never                       Once  
 Twice                         More than three times

2. What was the **major** purpose of this trip? (Tick only one)

- Leisure                       Visit Friends & Relative  
 Business                     Education  
 Other(specify)\_\_\_\_\_

3. What was the **major** activity while visiting Thailand?(Tick only one)

- Trekking     Shopping  
 Touring & Sight Seeing     Nightlife & Entertainment  
 Other(specify)\_\_\_\_\_

4. Which tourist attractions did you visit during you stay?

- Bangkok                     Pattaya  
 Phuket                       Chiang Mai  
 Koi Samui                  Other\_\_\_\_\_

5. What was your major mode of transport during your stay?

- Taxi                          Bus & Coach  
 Tuk Tuk                     Other(specify)\_\_\_\_\_

6. What disappointed you most in Thailand?

- Pollution                     Uninteresting scenery  
 Local People               Other(specify)\_\_\_\_\_

7. What impressed you most in Thailand?

- Historical Sites             Nightlife  
 Natural attractions        Art & Culture  
 Friendly People            Other-----

8. Did you buy a package tour to Thailand?

- Yes                          No

9. Please record your personal details

Sex     Male                     Female

Marital Status     Single                     Married

Other\_\_\_\_\_

Age     Under 18                 19-24

25-39                     40-54

55 and over

Occupation     Student                 Professional

Retired                  Other\_\_\_\_\_

Where do you live?

Country\_\_\_\_\_

10. Do you have any comments about any aspects of

the environment in Thailand that you would like to mention?

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If you have visited Bangkok please circle the scale that best describes your opinion of the following statements.

(If not ,please go to question 20)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
11. The air quality in Bangkok is a serious problem.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Traffic congestion in Bangkok is very annoying.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Bangkok has a lack of parks and gardens.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Bangkok is over populated.	1	2	3	4	5
15. The social life in Bangkok is lively and exciting for tourists.	5	4	3	2	1
16. The streets of Bangkok are dirty.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Bangkok has good shopping centres.	5	4	3	2	1
18. Bangkok has a notoriety for prostitution.	1	2	3	4	5

If you have visited beach areas, please circle the scale that best describes your opinion of the following statements.

(If not , please go to question 27)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
19. Pollution is evident in beach areas.	1	2	3	4	5
20. There are too many high rise buildings along the beach.	1	2	3	4	5
21. There is an insufficient number of rubbish bins in beach areas.	1	2	3	4	5
22. There is little commercial entertainment along the beach.	5	4	3	2	1
23. Availability of tourists information is poor.	1	2	3	4	5
24. There is a lack of fresh water in beach resorts.	1	2	3	4	5
25. The beaches I visited were good for swimming.	5	4	3	2	1

If you have visited Northern Thailand please circle the scale that best describes your opinion.

(If not , please go to question 34 )

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
26. Northern Thai architecture is unique.	5	4	3	2	1
27. There is too much deforestation in Northern Thailand.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Tour guides provide ample knowledge of Thai culture.	5	4	3	2	1
29. Natural attractions of Northern Thailand are relatively unspoilt.	5	4	3	2	1
30. Rivers in Northern Thailand are unpolluted.	5	4	3	2	1
31. It is rare to see Thai people wearing local dress.	1	2	3	4	5
32. A trip in Northern Thailand is a real adventure.	5	4	3	2	1

**What are your general feelings about your trip to Thailand**

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
33. AIDS will influence my decision not to visit Thailand again.	1	2	3	4	5
34. The security for tourists in Thailand is adequate.	5	4	3	2	1
35. I have experienced Thai culture during my visit.	5	4	3	2	1
36. I have learnt some Thai language.	5	4	3	2	1
37. " Thai Greeting" is unique.	5	4	3	2	1
38. Thai people are friendly and hospitable.	5	4	3	2	1
39. I will visit Thailand again.	5	4	3	2	1

## The Open Ended Question

Respondents' comments about Thailand's environment by country. These comments are direct quotes taken from the answers of the respondents.

### GERMANY

- \* People do not care about the environment for example the problems of rubbish or water, too many tourists and too many people.
- \* Nobody cares about the natural environment, throwing rubbish out of the window eg plastic bottles, everything burns together.
- \* Away from the used and abused idea.
- \* The pollution is getting worse. There are too many high rise buildings, none with Thai style.
- \* Control infrastructure in remote areas in Thailand, Restriction against businessmen, destroy everything for money.
- \* Usually foreigners are believed to be the cause of the environmental problems. I have been in many places where only Thai tourists go. This has been the most polluted place I've seen.

## ENGLAND

- \* Plastic bottles could be collected and recycle, you can usually see them on the floor everywhere.
- \* I have only been in Bangkok, but I have seen efficient garbage disposal. The streets are clean. There are many 2-stroke bikes, vehicles in the city. These engines are highly polluting. There is too much construction here, but it seems to keep clean and under control. The road in from the airport is being upgraded to cope with excessive traffic. I have been unable to find a park where I can relax without having to buy a drink.
- \* Better water bottle disposal facilities needed. Fewer private cars.
- \* Noise and rubbish too much.
- \* Dirty streets and bad pavement.
- \* Traffic is terrible.
- \* Pollution in Bangkok is very bad. Outside Bangkok was OK.
- \* Mainly pollution and traffic problems in Bangkok
- \* Be careful of pollution.
- \* Taxi drivers in Pattaya do much damage to the tourists perception of Thai people.
- \* I hope it does not change too much for tourists, but improves for people who live here.
- \* I feel that without quick government intervention, the islands will be terribly spoilt due to pollution, and new building development. Bangkok needs to

introduce lead free petrol.

- \* Traffic is the worst problem, it took me four and half hours to reach the airport.
- \* The streets could be cleaner in Bangkok and pollution is a problem.
- \* We have enjoyed everything about your country.
- \* Buildings should be strictly controlled eg motel at beach resorts.
- \* People are very friendly and happy to talk to us.
- \* It is important that the scenic parts of the country are not overdeveloped for tourism.
- \* Buildings on the Islands should remain at a height below the trees so not to destroy the natural beauty.
- \* Traffic is very bad.
- \* Do something about the appalling traffic situation.
- \* Several young men would tell us that places were closed when they were not. They tried to get us to hire them for transport or guides.

## **AUSTRALIA**

- \* Reduce exhaust fumes from motor bikes.
- \* Pollution from exhaust fumes.
- \* Traffic is terrible.

- \* Reduce pollution particularly on the Islands before they lose their appeal.
- \* Bangkok needs cleaner streets.
- \* Try and keep your own culture. Don't let become too western.
- \* Deforestation, social economic problems, rivers are polluted.
- \* Too many dogs on Samui Island, all of them were diseased and having to beg for food. Introduction fo facilities, control programs for the animals.
- \* Beautiful country- but in the process of being destroyed by the tourism industry. Thai people are beautiful-They should not degrade themselves by trying to become westerners. The pollution in Bangkok was awful
- \* The urban environment looks interesting. The architecture looks interesting but the pollution is a social problem.
- \* Could be cleaner in Bangkok.
- \* Natural environment is very beautiful.

### **SWITZERLAND**

- \* I like Thailand.
- \* Take care of your culture and customs.
- \* Bangkok needs a good public transport system urgently.

### **FRANCE**

- \* Hard to meet friendly people.
- \* Traffic in Bangkok is very bad.

\* English signs for tourists required. No English signs on buses, more taxi meters, traffic jams make the tourists lose time.

\* Traffic is bad.

## **AMERICA**

\* The people are very beautiful, gentle and friendly.

\* Terrible traffic pollution what I have ever seen.

\* Traffic congestion in Bangkok must be resolved soon. In Chaing Mai the construction of cheap and noisy shopping centres should be not allowed.

\* Pollution is extremely bad, Tuk Tuk car needs emission control.

\* The people are very courteous and helpful. As with everyone in the world, there is much to learn from their country.

\* Too much traffic and pollution.

\* Must guard that the quality of life is preserved. Economic development can kill the environment of controls not in place.

\* Thailand's beautiful as far as taking care of it's environment. Thailand will have problems in the future due to auto exhaust polluting the air, water if plans are not made to encourage car pooling and clear air policies.

\* Thai culture is unique and beautiful. Progress should not be prohibited at the expense of the people or their culture. A truly beautiful country.

## **CANADA**

\* Thailand should now start to think about its regional problems eg transport, pollution, social services, its people, these are all related.

\* Natural environment has been destroyed. I expected a beautiful tropical country but found the worst pollution I have ever seen. Where are the trees?, all I saw were rubber tree plantations.

\* In general, Thailand is rich in natural and scenic beauty. I think, however you don;t fully make use of it. It seems regrettable to me.

### **SINGAPORE**

\* Control your traffic, Taxi drivers should be able to speak English.

\* A feeling that everything is disorganised.

\* Too much traffic.

\* Please solve the traffic problems as business would be affected very much for businessman visiting Bangkok. Efficiency is very low, extra expense need be available.

\* Unequal pricing between tourists and locals, Police should be able to speak English.

\* Phuket is being ruined by uncontrolled tourism.

\* Traffic in Bangkok is very bad. It took 2.5 hours from the airport to the city. Longer than the flight from Singapore.

### **MALAYSIA**



- \* To resolve traffic congestion.
- \* Pollution caused by cars.
- \* Deforestation
- \* Its over populated.

### **HONG KONG**

- \* Traffic is very bad.
- \* Too much traffic.
- \* Tourism development in Krabi is ruining local reefs and spoiling natural beauty.
- \* Bangkok is too dirty.

### **OTHER COUNTRIES**

- \* Better services to airport for people with luggage.
- \* Improve the traffic situation.
- \* Traffic jams in Bangkok, well maintained cultural temples sites
- \* Vietnam - Bangkok is becoming an impossible place in terms of easy and quick travel.
- \* Water in canals seems to be very polluted. Enjoyed east coastline of Phuket.

- \* Thai people are not well informed about the environment. They throw rubbish out of the window into the streets and in parks. A good campaign could raise awareness of the environment is vital for our future.
- \* Traffic congestion need urgent solution.
- \* Thais are the worst offenders for littering.
- \* A very beautiful country because of the culture and history.
- \* Too many cars in Bangkok, cause damage to the environment.
- \* I would love to come back to Thailand many times.
- \* I have no comments about the environment of Thailand. Its really everything fine in Asia.
- \* We have been too short here, to give a good opinion about the whole of Thailand, but Bangkok looks very clean.
- \* Traffic congestion.
- \* Pollution.
- \* Very good country in Asia.
- \* No comment, environment is reasonable.
- \* Bangkok's traffic and pollution must be improved.
- \* Thailand is a good country, built its in the process of development. It needs more rapid progress to make this country in the same as developing countries.
- \* Its over populated.
- \* Too many cars in Bangkok, this is bad for business.

- \* Drivers and shop assistants don't speak English.
- \* No prostitution in Thailand.
- \* Food and language.
- \* Public transport on the whole is not very good. Thai people are very clean by themselves. More effort should be done to collect plastic bags and bottles.
- \* Capital investment mainly in heavy infrastructure roads, deforestation.
- \* An incredible amount of rubbish - more than I thought. Although Bangkok itself is very tidy. There does not seem to be too much public awareness regarding the correct disposal of rubbish.
- \* High level of pollution especially in Bangkok, but noticeable elsewhere.
- \* Some of the best spots have been too exploited for tourists eg trekking in Chiang Mai, some Islands Samui Island, Pee Pee Island.
- \* Do something about the traffic in Bangkok. More information about AIDS, its important to inform the local people, keep on smiling.
- \* Bangkok looks pretty clean for a big city.
- \* I enjoyed jogging every morning in Lampinee Park. The people in Thailand are the sweetest, nicest people in the world.
- \* Traffic problem could be solved with better infrastructure, Corruption should be eliminated, it would reduce industrial pollution.
- \* You have a very big potential to be one of the most attractive countries

of all over the world as long as you will solve the problem of pollution.

\* It was very hot but very nice and friendly people.

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