



Research Report

**การศึกษาแนวทางปฏิบัติที่ดีของผู้ประกอบการธุรกิจจัดนำเที่ยวเชิงนิเวศเพื่อ
พัฒนามาตรฐานการจัดนำเที่ยวเชิงนิเวศในกลุ่มประเทศอาเซียน
กรณีศึกษาประเทศไทย มาเลเซีย และอินโดนีเซีย**

**Good Practices of Ecotourism Tour Operators for Developing
the Standard of Eco Tours among ASEAN Countries
Case Studies of Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia**

By

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ด้วยความต้องการในการพัฒนามาตรฐานการท่องเที่ยวเพื่อรองรับการรวมตัวของประชาคมเศรษฐกิจอาเซียน (AEC) โดยมาตรฐานด้านหนึ่งที่มีความสำคัญ คือ การท่องเที่ยวเชิงนิเวศ โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งเรื่องมาตรฐานการท่องเที่ยวเชิงนิเวศสำหรับผู้ประกอบการภาคธุรกิจ ที่ผ่านมา มาตรฐานการท่องเที่ยวในกลุ่มประเทศอาเซียน (ASEAN Tourism Standards) ได้ดำเนินการไปแล้วหลายด้าน อย่างไรก็ตาม ประเด็นเรื่องมาตรฐานการท่องเที่ยวเชิงนิเวศสำหรับภาคธุรกิจยังไม่มีกล่าวถึงมากนัก ดังนั้น การวิจัยในครั้งนี้จึงมีจุดมุ่งหมายเพื่อศึกษาแนวทางปฏิบัติที่ดีของผู้ประกอบการธุรกิจจันทนาการเชิงนิเวศเพื่อนำผลการวิจัยไปประยุกต์ใช้หรือต่อยอดในการพัฒนามาตรฐานการจันทนาการเชิงนิเวศสำหรับภาคธุรกิจ ดังนั้นงานวิจัยในครั้งนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาและเปรียบเทียบแนวทางปฏิบัติที่ดีของผู้ประกอบการธุรกิจจันทนาการเชิงนิเวศในประเทศไทย มาเลเซีย และอินโดนีเซีย โดยผลของการวิจัย ผู้ที่เกี่ยวข้องสามารถนำไปเป็นข้อมูลประกอบการพัฒนามาตรฐานการท่องเที่ยวเชิงนิเวศของธุรกิจจันทนาการในกลุ่มประเทศอาเซียนได้

ในส่วนของการระเบียบวิธีวิจัย งานวิจัยในครั้งนี้มุ่งศึกษาธุรกิจจันทนาการที่อ้างหรือนำเสนอขายรายการท่องเที่ยวเชิงนิเวศ โดยเลือกตัวอย่างแบบเจาะจงตามแนวทางของงานวิจัยในอดีตที่เคยศึกษาผู้ประกอบการที่มีคุณลักษณะเข้าข่ายการจันทนาการเชิงนิเวศ โดยเลือกตัวอย่างจากประเทศละ 2 บริษัท รวมทั้งหมด 6 บริษัท โดยเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลจากสถานที่ท่องเที่ยวเชิงนิเวศที่เคยระบุไว้ในงานวิจัยในอดีต ได้แก่ ภูเก็ต (ประเทศไทย) ปีนัง (ประเทศมาเลเซีย) และบาห์ลี (ประเทศอินโดนีเซีย) งานวิจัยในครั้งนี้ได้นำต้นแบบเชิงทฤษฎีในการจันทนาการเชิงนิเวศ (Ecotourism Model for Tour Operators) ของ อัสวิน แสงพิกุล (2553) มาใช้เป็นกรอบแนวคิดในการวิจัย ซึ่งต้นแบบเชิงทฤษฎีนี้ประกอบด้วย 6 หลักเกณฑ์ ได้แก่ 1) การจันทนาการในพื้นที่ธรรมชาติ 2) การให้ความรู้แก่ผู้ที่เกี่ยวข้องในเรื่องสภาพแวดล้อมธรรมชาติ 3) การอนุรักษ์ทรัพยากรธรรมชาติในแหล่งท่องเที่ยว 4) การคำนึงถึงผลกระทบต่อสิ่งแวดล้อมในแหล่งท่องเที่ยว 5) การพัฒนาชุมชนท้องถิ่นในแหล่งท่องเที่ยว และ 6) นโยบายธุรกิจ การเก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลดำเนินการโดยใช้วิธีการสังเกตการจันทนาการเชิงนิเวศและการสัมภาษณ์ผู้ประกอบการ ซึ่งทั้ง 2 วิธีนี้ดำเนินการโดยการประเมินคะแนนจากการสังเกตและการสัมภาษณ์ภายใต้ขอบเขตของ 6 หลักเกณฑ์ข้างต้น

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ผู้ประกอบการทั้ง 6 บริษัท จันทนาการเชิงนิเวศในลักษณะที่คล้ายคลึงกันและแตกต่างกันในบางด้าน โดยการจันทนาการเชิงนิเวศในลักษณะที่คล้ายคลึงกัน ได้แก่ การจันทนาการในพื้นที่ธรรมชาติ การอนุรักษ์ทรัพยากรธรรมชาติ การคำนึงถึงผลกระทบต่อ และนโยบายธุรกิจ ส่วนด้านที่แตกต่างกันได้แก่ การให้ความรู้แก่ผู้ที่เกี่ยวข้องในเรื่องสภาพแวดล้อมธรรมชาติ และการพัฒนาชุมชนในท้องถิ่น

งานวิจัยนี้ได้เสนอแนะแนวทางปฏิบัติที่ดีสำหรับการจัดนำเที่ยวเชิงนิเวศ โดยยึดหลักแนวคิดจากต้นแบบเชิงทฤษฎี และข้อค้นพบจากงานวิจัยที่สำรวจจาก 6 บริษัทในประเทศไทย มาเลเซีย และอินโดนีเซีย โดยแนวทางปฏิบัติที่ดีจากข้อเสนอแนะของงานวิจัยในครั้งนี้ ผู้ที่เกี่ยวข้องสามารถนำไปประยุกต์ใช้หรือต่อยอดเพื่อพัฒนาให้เป็นมาตรฐานการจัดนำเที่ยวเชิงนิเวศของผู้ประกอบการในกลุ่มประเทศอาเซียนได้

คำสำคัญ: การท่องเที่ยวเชิงนิเวศ แนวทางปฏิบัติที่ดี อาเซียน ประชาคมเศรษฐกิจอาเซียน (AEC)
ผู้ประกอบการนำเที่ยว

Abstract

Due to the need of developing the ASEAN Tourism Standards for the incoming ASEAN Economic Community integration (AEC), one of these standards is the ecotourism standard, particularly for the business sector. Recently, the ASEAN Tourism Standards have been developed in several sectors. However, little effort was undertaken in the ecotourism business sector. This study, therefore, has the main goal to develop the ecotourism good practices for tour operators in ASEAN countries. To achieve the goal, the study has the objectives to examine and compare the ecotourism practices of tour operators in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. The research finding (ecotourism good practices) will be able to assist in the development of ecotourism standard for the tour operators in ASEAN countries.

With regards to the research methodology, this study investigated the samples from tour operators who claim or offer eco-tours through the marketing channels. They were purposively chosen according to previous research's suggestion on their ecotourism business characteristics. Two tour operators were selected from each country, with a total of 6 companies investigated. With previous research's referral, Phuket (Thailand), Penang (Malaysia), and Bali (Indonesia) were the area of investigation in this study. By employing the 6 E's Ecotourism Model for Tour Operators (EMTO) from Sangpikul (2010) consisting of 6 criteria (i.e. nature, education, conservation, impact, community, and corporate), this study used observation and interview methods to get the required data. These methods were done through a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches on the 6 criteria.

Based on the finding, the six tour operators delivered both similar and different ecotourism practices. Most of them delivered the similar ecotourism tour practices on nature, conservation, impact, and corporate elements whereas the difference practices were found on education and community elements. The study proposes the ecotourism good practices based on the ecotourism model and the results of the six tour operators' practices from three countries (Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia). The proposed ecotourism good practices may further assist in the development of ecotourism standard for ASEAN tour operators.

Key words: ecotourism, good practices, ASEAN, AEC, tour operators

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This chapter aims to provide the overview of research project including research background, objectives, hypotheses, research contributions, research scope, and definitions of key terms used in this study.

1.1 Research Background

During the past decade, ecotourism has received significant attention in all levels including government, educational institutions, and business sectors. This is because ecotourism has been widely recognized as the fundamental to the sustainable tourism development and contributed to the natural resources conservation and the community development. Its aim is to minimize the negative impacts on the nature and socio-cultural environment, educate visitors about nature, provides economic and social benefits to local communities, and support the protection and conservation of natural and cultural assets. Based on the current situation analysis, there are two research problems identified to be associated with this research, all of which lead to the foundation of the research background. **The first issue** concerns with the ecotourism tours in Thailand and ASEAN countries. The growing awareness of ecotourism has resulted in the expansion of ecotourism related activities and businesses in Thailand and worldwide. However, there are several studies indicating that there are some problems regarding ecotourism in Thailand (Srisuwan, 2004; Sangpikul, 2008; 2011) and ASEAN countries (Kontogeorgopoulos; 2005; Hakim & Nakagoshi, 2010). Many tour operators are attempting to take the advantages of ecotourism by using the word ‘ecotourism’ as a marketing tool or advertisement to sell their products (green washing) rather than offering the real ecotourism experience. In particular, many companies, who label their business as ‘eco-tours’ ‘green-tours’ or ‘eco-pirates’ (fake ecotourism), attempt to capture this growing segment by offering only sightseeing tours in the natural areas without any ecotourism implementations. Some studies (Srisuwan, 2004; Sangpikul, 2011) found that the companies who claim they are ecotourism operators have not implemented any ecotourism principles in their operations (mis-conduct of ecotourism) such as natural learning, low impact activity, tour impact’s consideration, or contributing any local benefits. Moreover, several tour operators reduce the quality of services due to price cutting (poor quality), and finally resulting in tourist dissatisfaction and poor image of the industry. In other cases, many tour companies do not care the environment in which they operate (mis-use of natural resources), and also generate the negative impacts on the environment. All of these seem to be the current

issues occurring in the Thailand's ecotourism sector. Therefore, related stakeholders should push and promote the ecotourism good practices and standard for tour operators in Thailand and ASEAN countries.

The second issue involves with the establishment of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 with the goal to promote regional economic integration. One of the AEC's strategic plans is to determine ASEAN Tourism Standards that are essential for helping ASEAN to be a quality destination. Currently, there are six ASEAN Tourism Standards that are being implemented, namely, 1) green hotels 2) food and beverage services 3) public restrooms 4) home stay 5) tourism heritage and 6) ecotourism (Import-Export Bank of Thailand, 2012). In relation to ecotourism standard, most parties have focused it on the ecotourism sites (natural attractions) rather than other components such as the business sector (tour operators). In fact, the component that has caused major impacts to the ecotourism sites come from the business sector (tour operators). This is because whenever the tour operators operating in natural setting, the potential for harm exists (Patterson, 2002; the International Ecotourism Society, 2009). Moreover, those without responsible practices may cause significant impacts to the environment as frequently appeared on the media. Therefore, this highlights the need for the ecotourism standard among the tour operators. According to ASEAN Tourism Standards, ecotourism is one of the important sectors to be considered for having the ecotourism standard among the member countries due to the fragile characteristics of the destinations. It is essential for them to manage ecotourism in a sustainable way. Ecotourism business standard is expected to assist in the quality development of ecotourism practitioners, particularly for the business sectors and their related activities. Generally, standard is developed from related criteria and indication to measure tourism operators' practices against the specific requirements. The good practices may assist in the development of standard through the established criteria and indication. Therefore, the current study (with the goal to develop the ecotourism good practices) is expected to assist in the development of ecotourism standard, particularly in area of ecotourism standards for tour operators. Especially, research-based knowledge regarding ecotourism business standards is very limited due to the complexity of ecotourism concept and its implementation in the business setting. Thus, related parties should promote more research on this issue so that concerned stakeholders may take the benefit of the research-based result towards the development of ecotourism sector.

With the above research problems, if there is an extended research from previous study titled "Good practices for Ecotourism Operator for the Sustainable Tourism Development of Thailand" by Sangpikul (2010), this may help generate the research-based knowledge regarding the ecotourism standard for tour operators in ASEAN context. Previous research conducted by Sangpikul has examined the practices of Thai tour operators who label (or claim) their business or

products as “ecotourism” or “eco-tour”. The study has developed 6 ecotourism criteria with 27 indicators (called 6 E’s Ecotourism Model for Tour Operators or EMTO) to investigate the ecotourism practices of those tour operators. The 6 ecotourism criteria consist of 1) nature element 2) education element 3) conservation element 4) impact element 5) community element and 6) corporate element. The result of the study found that the practices of the tour operators with the environmental awards were more congruent with ecotourism concept than those without the environmental awards. The ecotourism practices of the first group can be further developed as the ecotourism good practices. Consequently, this study has proposed the ecotourism good practices based on the combination of the business practices and the literature for the Thai ecotourism sector. Nevertheless, the scope of this study is limited to Thai context. Given the need for the development of ASEAN Tourism Standards in ecotourism sector, the research on such issue may be more helpful to further extend and investigate in ASEAN contexts.

Therefore, the current study will expand Sangpikul’s research by examining the ecotourism good practices of tour operators in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. These are the countries that are frequently discussed by academics as the popular ecotourism destinations in South East Asia region (Marker, Blanco, Lokanathan, & Verma, 2008). It is hoped that the current research will yield a helpful result (good practices) to assist in the development of ecotourism standard for the tour operators in ASEAN countries, as well as for further other quality control mechanisms such as possibly the accreditation or certification program in the long-run. These quality control mechanisms will not only promote the sustainable and responsible tourism business but they also will support the branding and marketing for ASEAN’s ecotourism sector.

1.2 Research Objectives

This study has the main purpose to develop the ecotourism good practices for tour operators in ASEAN countries through the following research objectives:

1. To examine ecotourism practices of tour operators in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia by employing the criteria and indicators from the Ecotourism Model for Tour Operators (EMTO) as a research framework
2. To compare and analyze the ecotourism practices of tour operators in those countries

1.3 Research Contributions

There are several contributions from this study. **Firstly**, since the literature on ecotourism business or tour operators in ASEAN context is limited, this study will help fulfill the gap of the knowledge in providing more fact and information on the business side, particularly the ecotourism practices in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. The results of the study would help us

learn and understand how the tour operators in those countries deliver their ecotourism trips. **Secondly**, this research is a comparative study. It would help disclose the commonalities and differences of ecotourism practices among the tour operators in the three countries. **Thirdly**, the results of the study would help reveal how the ecotourism practices are implemented in those three countries. **Fourthly**, the result of study may be helpful to the development of ecotourism standard by employing the proposed criteria together with their good practices in the development of ecotourism standard for tour operators. Related organizations may adapt the recommended good practices to be partial or essential elements of ASEAN ecotourism standard. In addition, they may also review other sources to help develop the ecotourism standard. **Finally**, the ecotourism standard and good practices may assist in the development of other quality control mechanisms such as benchmarking and possibly the accreditation or certification program in the long-run. These quality control mechanisms would not only promote the sustainable and responsible tourism business but they would also support the branding and marketing for the region's ecotourism sector.

1.4 Research Scopes

There are 3 parts of research scopes needed to be mentioned as follows:

1) **Content:** This study is an extended research project with the aim to examine the ecotourism practices of tour operators in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia by employing the criteria and indicators from the Ecotourism Model for Tour Operators (EMTO) developed by Sangpikul (2010). The EMTO consists of 6 criteria and 27 indicators, namely, 1) nature elements 2) education element 3) conservation element 4) impact element 5) community element and 6) corporate element. These criteria directly represent the *core concept* of ecotourism based on the literature. Other minor practices that are indirect will not be examined (i.e. first aid, tour safety, transport use or something about tour operators' operations or management) as they are not the purpose of this study.

2) **Subjects investigated:** The subject investigated were the tour operators who claim or offer eco-tours through the marketing channels. They were purposively chosen according to previous research's suggestion on their ecotourism business characteristics (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2003; Sangpikul, 2010). Two tour operators were selected from each country, with a total of 6 companies investigated.

3) **Area of investigation:** Phuket (Thailand), Penang (Malaysia), and Bali (Indonesia) were the area of investigation on this study. They were selected based on three reasons. Firstly, previous research had investigated ecotourism tour operators on these three sites (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2003; Hong, & Chan, 2010; Sangpikul, 2010). Secondly, these places are claimed to possess a

range of natural resources that make it possible to engage in ecotourism activities such as rafting, cycling, canoeing, and trekking (Weaver, 2002; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2003). And finally, the three places are island-based areas and share geographical features such as tropical climates, mountainous interior regions, and a number of long beaches (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2003).

1.5 Research Hypothesis

Based on the literature review on ecotourism practices of tour operators, this study predicts that the evaluation scores on the ecotourism practices of tour operators in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia are different from one another.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Several technical terms of ecotourism will be used through this study. In order to better understand them, the definition of key terms especially developed for this study is provided as follows.

Sustainability is the capability to be carried without damaging the long-term wealth and integrity of natural and cultural environments (Curtin & Busby, 1999).

Sustainable tourism is a tourism concept that has been developed from the root of sustainable development by focusing on the three dimensions: economic, social and environment pillars. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines sustainable tourism as the tourism which leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be filled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems (McKercher, 2003).

Ecotourism is a responsible travel to uncontaminated natural areas with the objectives to enjoy and experience natural attractions and associated cultural components of the areas. With the purposes to enhance the sustainability, ecotourism involves related stakeholders to foster natural learning, reduce impacts, promote conservation and develop associated community (Sangpikul, 2010).

Ecotourism tour operator (or *eco-tour operator*) is a tour operator that promotes responsible travel in the natural areas through providing the practices of enhancing natural learning and appreciation, considering environmental impacts, promoting conservation and contributing to local community (Sangpikul, 2010). The tour programs offered by these tour operators are often called '*eco-tours*' reflecting the implementation of ecotourism practices in their operations. To be simple, the term '*eco-tour operator*' and '*eco-tour*' will be mainly used in this study.

Nature tourism is a form of tourism that relies on the natural environment for the basis of natural experience and travel, and may include any form of outdoor activities involving natural elements such as visiting natural parks, a picnic at waterfall, driving to mountain areas, or relaxing at the beaches or islands (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996). Nature tourism usually *does not* require any further experience regarding natural education, conservation of natural environment or learning local culture that form the basis of ecotourism experience (Matysek & Kriwoken, 2003). Therefore, this is the important issue to distinguish ecotourism from nature tourism. It should be noted that there are some similar words that have been used interchangeably with nature tourism, namely, *nature-based tourism* or *natural tourism*. However, in this study, a simple word like 'nature tourism' is preferred.

Nature tour operator is a tour operator who mainly operates in the natural environment, and offers various tour programs in visiting and experiencing natural areas (e.g. sight seeing, outdoor activities) (Matysek & Kriwoken, 2003). Typically, nature tour operators simply offer sightseeing tours and relaxing activities, they usually *do not* promote natural education, conservation awareness or local community development like what eco-tour operators do.

Good practice is a technique, method, process or activity that is believed to be more effective at delivering a particular outcome than any other way. Good practice usually refers to the practice that produces a superior, better or improved performance than an existing one (Baum & Odgers, 2001).

Good practice for ecotourism operator is a set of practices (guidelines for doing something) that eco-tour operators should implement (or make changes) in their operations for a better performance, and that performance would contribute a more environmental and socio-cultural sustainable outcome for local tourism and related stakeholders.

Standard is a way products, facilities, and services are assessed by measuring their level of conformity to prescribed requirements or achievement of specific objectives. (Toth, 2002). In relation to tourism, **tourism standard** is a way tourism products are assessed by measuring their practices or performances to the specific requirements. Tourism standard establishes measurable criteria for tourism development and operation as well as clarify what is required for a tourism business to be considered “environmentally responsible” and “sustainable” (Patterson, 2002).



Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter will review the literature regarding ecotourism definitions, an overview of ecotourism in ASEAN countries, the development of Ecotourism Model for Tour Operators, and ecotourism good practices to provide the background and knowledge regarding the current research project.

Outline of chapter 2

Section	Main contents
Section 2.1	Ecotourism definition and its concept
Section 2.2	An overview of ecotourism in ASEAN countries 2.2.1 Overview of ecotourism in Thailand 2.2.2 Overview of ecotourism in Malaysia 2.2.3 Overview of ecotourism in Indonesia
Section 2.3	The development of Ecotourism Model for Tour Operators (EMTO) 2.3.1 Identifying the key elements of ecotourism 2.3.2 Analyzing ecotourism principles and key elements of ecotourism 2.3.3 Analyzing ecotourism's code of conduct and key elements of ecotourism 2.3.4 Formulating ecotourism construct for tour operators 2.3.5 Developing the ecotourism model for tour operators
Section 2.4	Ecotourism good practices 2.4.1 What is good practice? 2.4.2 Relationship between good practices and industry standard 2.4.3 Relationship between good practices and quality controls

2.1 Ecotourism Definitions and its Concept

The term ‘ecotourism’ emerged in the late 1980s as a direct result of the world’s acknowledgment and reaction to global sustainable development (Diamantis, 1999). The nature-based element of holiday activities together with the increased awareness to minimize the impacts of tourism in the natural environment has contributed to the demand of ecotourism (Diamantis, 1999). Almost two decades, ecotourism today has been a growing segment and becoming the world’s significant tourism market. Recognizing the growth and contributions of ecotourism, there are a number of ecotourism definitions defined in numerous ways in related literature due to different stakeholders’ points of view (e.g. tourism scholars, environmentalists, government agencies, business sector). In other words, we may argue that there is no a broadly accepted definition of ecotourism as well as its scope and criteria (Lingberg, Enriquez, & Sproule, 1996; Diamantis, 1999; Sangpikul, 2008). Consequently, this challenges us when discussing about ecotourism concept (what exactly does it mean or what makes up ecotourism). In order to understand a complicated term of what ecotourism is and its characteristics, it is first necessary to review various definitions of ecotourism from both academic and non-academic sides. Reviewing this would help us get the better idea of what ecotourism is including its scope and components.

Table 2.1 Description of selected ecotourism definitions

Sources	Ecotourism definitions and descriptions
Ceballos-Lascurain (1987 cited in Diamantis, 1999)	Ecotourism is traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations found in the areas.
Butler (1989, p. 9-17)	Ecotourism is a type of tourism that is inherently sensitive to communication, awareness and environment enhancement. These characteristics of ecotourism make it less likely to create social and environmental problems commonly associated with conventional tourism. Ecotourism attempts to give travelers a greater awareness of environment systems and contribute positively to the destination’s economic, social and ecological conditions.
Kutay (1989, p. 30)	Ecotourism is a model of development in which natural areas are planned as part of the tourism base and biological resources are clearly linked to social economic sectors.
Boo (1991, p. 4)	Ecotourism is a nature tourism that contributes to conservation, through generating funds for protected areas, creating employment opportunities for local communities, and offering environmental education.
Williams (1992, p.15)	Ecotourism is traveling in relatively primitive and rural circumstances, rustic accommodation, muddy trails, basic amenities, the pay-off being a stronger appreciation and closer contact with wildlife, local culture and resource conservation issues.
Brouse (1992, p.29)	Ecotourism is responsible travel in which the visitors is aware and takes into account the effect of his or her action on both the host culture and the environment.
Figgis (1993 cited in Diamantis, 1999)	Ecotourism is travel to remote or natural areas which aims to enhance understanding and appreciation of natural environment and cultural heritage, avoiding damage or deterioration of the environment and the experience for others.

Wight (1993, p. 5)	Ecotourism is an enlightening nature travel experience that contributes to conservation of the ecosystem, while respecting the integrity of host communities.
Andersen (1994, p. 23)	Ecotourism is a tourism experience infused with the spirit of conservation and cultural change that results in a net positive effect for the environment and local economy. It aims to minimize the human intrusion on the ecosystem, to educate travelers and to enhance the spiritual experience in nature that fosters respect and stewardship.
Buckley (1994, p. 664)	Ecotourism refers to an integration of nature based products and markets, sustainable management to minimize impacts, financial support for conservation, and environment attitudes and education of individual people.
Coll, Kelso, Faulkner, Tideswell, and Atwell (1995 cited in Kontogeorgopoulos, 1999)	Ecotourism involves travel to relatively undisturbed areas with a view to studying, admiring and enjoying the landscape, its natural environment and the culture/lifestyle of the resident population in a manner which is sensitive to the long-term sustainability of these features.
Goodwin (1996, p. 288)	Ecotourism is low impact nature tourism which contributes to the maintenance of species and habitats either directly through a contribution to conservation and /or indirectly by providing revenue to the local community sufficient for local people to value, and therefore protect, their wildlife heritage area as a source of income.
Hugo (1999, p. 139)	Ecotourism is an enjoyable, enlightening, but responsible, travel experience to environments, both natural and culture, that ensures the sustainability of these environmental resources, whilst producing economic opportunities for the tourism industry in general and the host communities on a sustainable basis.
Sirakaya et al. (1999, p.171)	Ecotourism is a new form of non-consumptive, educational and romantic tourism to relatively undisturbed and under-visited areas of immense natural beauty and cultural and historical importance for the purpose of understanding and appreciating the natural and socio-cultural history of the host destination. Ecotourism is expected to result in minimal negative impacts on the environment, while protecting and conserving the environment including its socio-culture.
Blamey (2001)	Ecotourism is nature-based, environmentally educated, and sustainable managed in terms of natural and cultural environment.
Weaver (2001, p. 15)	Ecotourism is a form of tourism that fosters learning experiences and appreciation of the natural environment, or some components thereof, within its associated cultural context. It has the appearance of being environmentally and socio-culturally sustainable, preferably in a way that enhances the natural and cultural resource based of the destination and promotes the viability of the operation.
Fennell (2003, p.25)	Ecotourism is a sustainable form of natural resource-based tourism that focuses primarily on experience and learning about nature, and which is ethically managed to be low-impact, non-consumptive, and locally oriented. It typically occurs in natural areas, and should contribute to the conservation or preservation of such areas.
Cristina (2004 cited in Eco Tour Director, 2007)	Ecotourism involves visiting natural areas with the objectives of learning, studying or participating in activities that do not bring negative effects to the environment; whilst protecting and empowering the local community socially and economically.

According to Table 2.1, there is no standardized ecotourism in international context. Given this fact, the lack of universal definition of ecotourism *challenges* tourism scholars in several ways. For instance, which definitions should we base on?, what are the key elements of ecotourism?, what are the scope of ecotourism?. With these challenges, it raises a question for us to identify what is the *actual common ground* or *key elements of ecotourism* to serve as the

guideline for ecotourism studies. This issue will be further discussed in section 2.3 (the development of Ecotourism Model for Tour Operators).

2.2 Overview of Ecotourism in ASEAN Countries

This section will overview ecotourism in ASEAN countries, particularly in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia in order to provide some backgrounds of the research project.

2.2.1) Overview of Ecotourism in Thailand

The concept of ecotourism has been introduced to Thailand more than two decades with the purpose to create environmental awareness and to conserve natural resources (Wangpaichitr, 1996). Recognizing the global awareness of sustainable tourism and the negative impacts of the mass tourism, the Tourism Authority of Thailand or TAT, the government agency in charge of country's tourism policies and development, pushed for several research projects to determine appropriate tourism management in Thailand during 1987 – 1990. This could be considered as the starting point of ecotourism development in Thailand (Wangpaichitr, 1996). Thailand adopted the concept of ecotourism from Western perspectives as an alternative tourism to alleviate the negative impacts resulting from the mass tourism. The main objectives of ecotourism in Thailand are to conserve ecosystems and natural environment as well as to generate socio-economic benefits to local people and their communities (TAT, 1997). During the past decade, ecotourism in Thailand has received significant attention in all levels as it is regarded as a form of responsible tourism and a core foundation to the sustainable tourism development.

In Thailand, the concept of ecotourism was originally from Western perspectives, however, the Tourism Authority of Thailand, in cooperation with relevant government agencies had adopted various definitions and incorporated them to the Thai tourism context. They defined ecotourism as “responsible travel in areas containing natural resources that possess endemic characteristics and cultural or historical resources that are integrated into the area's ecological system” (TAT, 1997). To provide a guideline for national policy, tourism planning and development, the Tourism Authority of Thailand has identified the four key principles contributing to the development of ecotourism which include 1) focusing the development on natural and ecological resources-based areas 2) incorporating sustainable management principles into all activities 3) promoting environmental and educational learning activities and 4) providing socio-economic benefits to local people and enhancing community participation. In other words, ecotourism development in Thailand appears to focus on the four major elements, namely, nature-based tourism, sustainable management, learning activities, and community participation. These four elements, in general, are basically similar to the key components of ecotourism development

in other developed countries such as Australia (e.g. Ecotourism Australia) and USA (e.g. International Ecotourism Society).

Today, ecotourism is important to Thailand's tourism development with key contributions to the development of sustainable tourism. As ecotourism continues to grow with the increasing number of tourists and business ventures, it is important for Thai government to maintain the balance between the growing demand (tourists) and the existing supply (ecotourism sites). Currently, it seems that ecotourism demand is increasing much greater than its supply side, particularly during the last decade. Therefore, there should be a concern on ecotourism growth since ecotourism is primarily based on natural environment which is a fragile area. Operating in natural settings, the potential for harm exists (Patterson, 2002). In particular, most ecotourism destinations in Thailand are located in protected areas such as national parks, forest parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and national forest reserves (Thailand Institute of Scientific and Technological Research, 1997). A primary concern for Thailand's tourism industry is to ensure that ecotourism should be well managed in the sustainable way so that there are minimal impacts to the protected areas. To develop successful ecotourism, several efforts and cooperation are needed from various ecotourism stakeholders including government agencies, private/business sector, educational institutions, local communities and tourists. Given the complexity of tourism industry, ensuring ecotourism is sustained and contributed to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural benefits would be a challenge for all parties.

A Glance at Thailand's Ecotourism Market

In Thailand, nature tourism and ecotourism is relatively related to each other as both use natural-based areas as the main attractions. Since they are highly interrelated, the government agencies who are involved with ecotourism (e.g. Tourism Authority of Thailand, National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department) rarely separate these two tourism segments. When addressing about ecotourism market, they usually include information from both nature tourism and ecotourism (mainly occur in national parks and protected areas). In this study, therefore, ecotourism market in Thailand includes the situations of both nature tourism and ecotourism.

During the past decade, Thai government agencies have actively promoted ecotourism among domestic and international tourists with the goal to contribute to natural conservation and local community development. Due to the growth of ecotourism market in many parts of the world, Thailand with the abundance of natural-based attractions has developed marketing strategies to promote itself as the leading ecotourism destination in the region. Today, ecotourism is the major special interest tourism promoted by the Tourism Authority of Thailand and other government agencies because of the huge revenues earned from tourism segment. With the

continuing growth of global tourism, particularly in the Asia Pacific region, ecotourism in Thailand is expected to expand. In Thailand, most of the ecotourism destinations are based on protected areas such as national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. Thailand consists of four different distinct sub-regions which are the north, northeast, central and southern regions. Each region has its own uniqueness of natural and cultural attractions. Due to the diverse ecological and geographical features of Thailand, there are currently a total of 148 national parks located throughout the country of which 25 are marine national parks (National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department, 2013). Popular national parks, based on number of visitors, among local and international visitors may include Doi Suthep-Pui (north), Doi Inthanon (north), Samet Islands (east), Phi Phi Islands (south), Similan Islands (south), and Surin Islands (south). According to the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department (2013), there were 12,832,758 Thai residents and 1,790,475 international tourists visiting the national parks. These two segments have been continuously growing during the past decade due to the expanding of both domestic and international tourism markets in Thailand. Popular nature-based activities among tourists are, for example, trekking, snorkeling/scuba diving, bird watching, nature and wildlife education, and canoeing/kayaking.

In addition to the growth of demand side (tourists), there has been an increase in ecotourism related-business expanded throughout the country to serve the needs of the markets. These businesses may include nature-based tour operators, specialized eco-tour operators, and ecolodges offering a wide range of products and activities such as bird watching, hiking/trekking, cave visiting, canoeing/kayak, snorkeling/scuba driving, mountain biking, and camping. In recent years, many travel companies have realized the importance of ecotourism and the necessity of an industry network to support Thailand's ecotourism industry. They have joined together to establish the association named 'Thai Ecotourism and Adventure Travel Association or TEATA with an aim to promote ecotourism. The association has created its own website for marketing and promoting nature tourism, adventure tourism and ecotourism. This is the only website containing most of related ecotourism businesses in Thailand. Furthermore, each travel company has created its website offering a wide range of nature-based products to serve the diverse needs of the travelers who desire to experience the nature beauty of Thailand.

Most of the ecotourism sites and activities in Thailand take place in national park that located through the country. Some of them are, for example:

North

- Doi Inthanon
- Doi Suthep Pui

- Doi Luang

Northeast

- Phu Ruea
- Khao Yai
- Phu Wiang

Central

- Phu Hin Rong Kla
- Khao Kho
- Nam Tol Sam Lan

South

- Mu Ko Chimphon
- Sirinat
- Ao Phan Nga

2.2.2) Overview of Ecotourism in Malaysia

Malaysia comprises the Peninsula (mainland Malaysia) and East Malaysia on the island of Borneo and covers a total area of 329,758 square kilometers. Malaysia is one of the most botanically diverse countries in the world. It is endowed with many natural attractions, particularly sandy beaches, enchanting islands, diverse flora and fauna, tropical forest retreats and magnificent mountains. According to Daud (2002: 128-132), the promotion of tourism and ecotourism activities in Malaysia involves a number of institutions. The Federal Government through the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism (MOCAT) undertakes the tasks to plan, implement and coordinate strategic policy decisions. It is also involved in managing development funds to provide basic infrastructure facilities as well as performing a regulatory role in the industry. Meanwhile, Tourism Malaysia, which is a federal statutory body, is involved in the marketing and promoting tourism products. Furthermore, under Malaysian constitutional law, land use is considered a state matter and therefore comes under the purview of the respective state governments. As such, all the 13 state governments in Malaysia are directly involved in developing and promoting land-based ecotourism activities in their respective states. The mechanism for implementing ecotourism development varies from state to state, but under normal circumstances the state tourism authority (in the form of either a State Ministry or a Tourism Executive Committee) would lead it. The state authority would decide on the tourism policy and provide the necessary funding to the relevant state implementing agencies, particularly Parks,

Forestry, and Wildlife departments. Like most economic activities, ecotourism development in Malaysia is mainly private-sector party. As such, private enterprises are encouraged to play their part to develop and promote ecotourism destinations in the country, within the guidelines prepared by the relevant authorities. The private sector is involved in developing eco-lodges, organising tours, and marketing products and, through their various business associations, conducting training programs for their members. Some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are also instrumental in promoting ecotourism in Malaysia, with the Malaysian World Wide Fund such as forest reserves, wildlife reserves, sanctuaries, wetlands and marine parks. Those protected areas are gazetted under the various federal and state laws such as the *Wildlife Protection Act*, the *National Park Act*, the *National Forestry Act*, the *Fisheries Act* and the *State Park Enactment (Pahang)*. In order to implement the ecotourism activities successfully, there must be joint efforts between the various levels of government, the private sector and the local communities. Thus, a special committee, which comprises members from the federal government, state governments, private sector and NGOs, has been formed in MOCAT to spearhead the overall implementation of the National Ecotourism Plan. Based on the recommended action, the activities that have been conducted are as follows: (i) a national workshop was held to promote and create awareness on the National Ecotourism Plan; (ii) a training program, the Malaysia Eco Host — Sustainable Tourism Training for Frontlines, has been prepared to develop awareness around the concept of ecotourism; (iii) a series of government-funded pilot ecotourism projects has been launched in the Seventh Malaysian Development Plan; and (iv) additional ecotourism projects have been proposed to be implemented in the Eighth Malaysian Development Plan (Daud, 2002).

Major organization/association promoting ecotourism in Malaysia is Malaysian Ecotourism Association. Malaysian Ecotourism Association or MEA is Malaysia's national association for ecotourism representing diverse sectors of the ecotourism industry throughout Malaysia. Its members represent governmental agencies, private enterprises, academic institutions, non-governmental agencies and professionals who are dedicated to the development and advancement of ecotourism in Malaysia. The Association is strongly committed to undertaking outreach, training and capacity building among local communities as well as advocating public-private-people partnerships in propagating best sustainable development practices and public sector policy consultancy. Its vision is to streamline ecotourism principles and practices in all forms of nature and culture based tourism in Malaysia (Malaysian Ecotourism Association, n.d.).

According to Tourism Malaysia (2008), Malaysia is one of the twelve mega-biologically diverse countries in the world, which boasts at least 15,000 species of flowering plants, 286 species of mammals, 150,000 species of invertebrates and 4,000 species of fishes in addition to

the countless micro-organisms. Covering almost 60 per cent of land mass, Malaysia's tropical rainforests are millions of years old and they are home to an incredibly diverse array of flora and fauna. There may still be animals, plants, flowers and trees yet to be discovered living beneath its canopy. Malaysia offers tourists a range of activities in which they may engage to experience and fully appreciate the ecotourism experience such as caving, hiking, jungle trekking, white water rafting, rock climbing, bird watching, diving and river cruising. There are also ecotourism-based events organized to create awareness about the importance of conservation of the country's natural and cultural assets. Such events include the Tabin Wildlife Conservation Conquest in Sabah, Fraser's Hill International Bird Race and Taman Negara Eco-Challenge competition. While promoting the natural attractions in the country to tourists, the Malaysian Government also realises the importance of sustainable tourism and of balancing conservation and development. As such, the Ministry of Tourism, Malaysia, has adopted the National Ecotourism Plan (NEP) to provide policies and guidelines for the conscientious development of ecotourism (Tourism Malaysia, 2008). Most of ecotourism sites in Malaysia are national parks, forest reserves, and animal sanctuaries, for example:

Peninsular Malaysia

- National Park, Pahang
- Kenong Rimba Park, Pahang
- Sungai Chilling Waterfall, Kuala Selangor, Selangor
- Royal Belum Forest Reserve, Perak
- Gua Tempurung, Perak
- Penang National Heritage Park, Penang
- Kilim Geopark, Langkawi Island

Sarawak

- Bako National Park
- Mulu National Park
- Batang Ai National Park
- Lampir Hill National Park

Sabah

- Sepilok Orang Utan Sanctuary
- Kinabalu National Park
- Tunku Abdul Rahman National Park
- Danum Valley

2.2.3) Overview of Ecotourism in Indonesia

Indonesia is the world's largest archipelago, consisting of more than 17,000 islands. The country is 5,000 km long, located around the Equator between Asia and the Australian continent, and between the Pacific and Indian oceans. Due to a diversity of natural resources, Indonesia is the second-most bio-diverse country after Brazil. The diversity of flora, fauna, and their ecosystems, as well as the diversity of culture, are potential attractions for the development of ecotourism in the country (Primack, 1998 cited in Dalem, 2002). Ecotourism in Indonesian version is defined as the activities of responsible traveling in the natural areas with the purposes of enjoying the natural beauty, understanding and supporting conservation as well as increasing the income of the local communities (Sudarto, 1999). Ecotourism in Indonesia have the five principles: (i) support nature conservation (ii) involve local communities (iii) provide economic benefit to the community (iv) preserve the socio-cultural and religious value of the local community, and (v) abide by the regulations related to tourism and environmental conservation (Anonymous, 1998). The development of ecotourism should be able to provide a significant amount of money to support Indonesian development programs. Moreover, Indonesia is rich in biodiversity and culture, there is a chance for ecotourism this country to get approximately 10% out of the overall tourism revenues (Dalem, 2002).

According to Dalem, 2002, ecotourism in Indonesia has not been optimally developed, something that could be done by utilizing its high potential (i.e. the diversity of flora, fauna, and culture). The situation for marine ecotourism is even further lagging behind its potential. Most marine resources utilized for development of tourism activities (snorkeling and diving) have not been adopting ecotourism concept, or the appropriate sites have not been opened up for tourism. Success in empowering communities in developing marine ecotourism some places need to be complemented by other activities. However, some scholars argue that Indonesian marine resources have great potential to be utilized in ecotourism activities (Sudarto, 1999).

Most ecotourism sites in Indonesia are located in national parks. Among the 50 national parks, 6 are World Heritage Sites, 7 are part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves, and 5 are wetlands ("National Parks in Indonesia", n.d.). Major national parks in Indonesia may include, for example,

Java

- Bromo Tengger Sermeru National Park
- Gunung Merbabu National Park

- Karimunjawa Marine National Park

Kalimantan

- Tanjung Puting National Park
- Gunung Palung National Park

Bali/Lesser Sunda

- Bali Barat
- Komodo National Park

Maluku and Papua

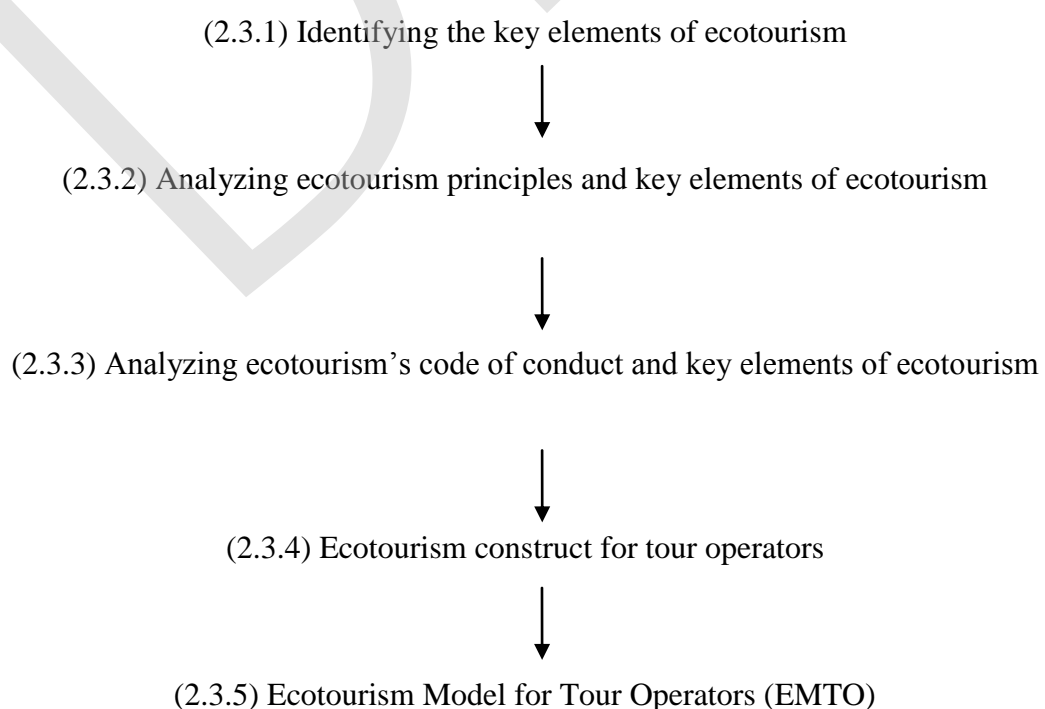
- Lorentz National Park
- Teluk Cenderawasih

Sulawesi

- Wakatobi National Park
- Lore Lindu

2.3 The Development of Ecotourism Model for Tour Operators (EMTO)

Since this study is the extended research based on previous study (Sangpikul, 2010), it's important to summarize how the Ecotourism Model for Tour Operators (EMTO) has been developed. This is because the EMTO will be employed as the key model to examine the ecotourism good practices of the tour operators in Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. The development of the EMTO from previous study consists of 5 steps as follows:



2.3.1) Identifying Key Elements of Ecotourism

Given a wide range of ecotourism definitions as shown in Table 2.1, and in order to find out the common elements of ecotourism, the definitions of ecotourism has been extracted and analyzed as shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 The identification of ecotourism elements based on its definitions

Sources of definitions (by authors)	Nature element	Education element	Conservation element	Impact element	Community element
Ceballos-Lascurain (1987)	√	√	-	-	√
Butler (1989)	√	√	√	√	√
Kutay (1989)	√	-	√	-	√
Boo (1991)	√	√	√	-	√
Williams (1992)	√	√	√	-	√
Blamey (2001)	√	√	√	√	√
Brouse (1992)	√	-	-	√	√
Figgis (1993)	√	√	-	√	-
Wight (1993)	√	-	√	-	√
Andersen (1994)	√	√	√	√	√
Buckley (1994)	√	√	√	√	-
Coll et al. (1995)	√	√	√	-	√
Goodwin (1996)	√	-	√	√	√
Hugo (1999)	√	-	√	-	√
Sirakaya et al. (1999)	√	√	√	√	√
Weaver (2001)	√	√	√	-	√
Fennell (2003)	√	√	√	√	-
Cristina (2004)	√	√	-	√	√

After the definitions of ecotourism have been extracted and analyzed, the key elements of ecotourism are identified into 5 key elements as shown in Figure 2.1 as follows.

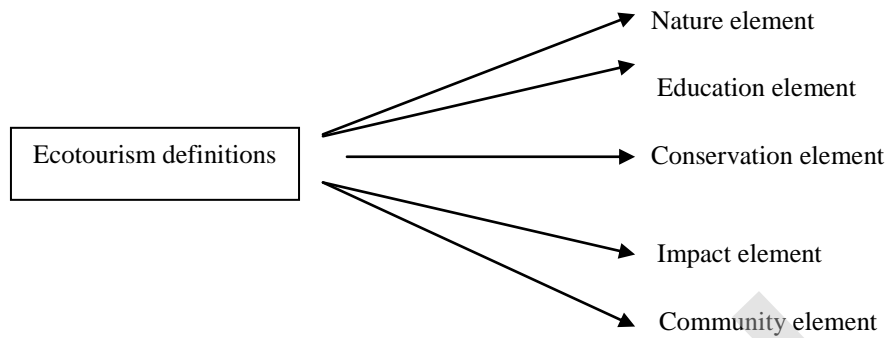


Figure 2.1: The identification of ecotourism elements based on ecotourism definitions
Source: Sangpikul (2010a)

In order to better understand the contents of each element, Table 2.3 summaries the characteristics of the five elements of ecotourism and their major practices.

Table 2.3 Summary of the five key elements of ecotourism

Elements of ecotourism	Major practices in each element
1. Nature element - In ecotourism, 'nature' is regarded as the basic component, and it becomes the first element identified from the literature. In general, natural areas that ecotourism occur may include national parks or relatively undisturbed areas, protected areas, wetlands, coastal and marine areas, wildlife reserves, and other areas of protected flora, fauna, and habitats. As ecotourism occurs in natural environment, it involves with a wide range of nature-based activities. There are a great number of nature-based activities that relate to ecotourism such as seeing wildlife, bird watching, hiking, climbing, trekking, nature education/walk, canoeing, sea kayaking, scuba or snorkel diving, cave exploring, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a visit to undisturbed/uncontaminated natural areas - nature-based activities (low or non-consumptive activity)
2. Education element - According to the literature, education or learning about the nature forms the basis of the ecotourism experience and products. Through the learning, it can provide travelers a better understanding and respect for the natural and cultural environment of the destination areas, and thereby reduce inappropriate behaviors and negative impact. With a minimal impact, the quality and the nature of ecotourism destination can be maintained.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - providing natural/environmental learning to travelers - promoting natural appreciation, awareness, respect for the natural environment of the destinations among related stakeholders - fostering the natural interpretation
3. Conservation element - Ecotourism is different from nature tourism in that ecotourism focuses on the quality of the natural environment such as well-preserved or protected natural areas and wildlife habitat. When concerning the quality of ecotourism destinations, it should be directly involved with the conservation of natural resources. Conservation will help maintain, protect and enhance the quality of the ecotourism destinations from misconducts and inappropriate behaviors of related stakeholders. Conservation may include something like the protection, maintenance, management, sustainable use, restoration and enhancement of the natural environment as well as it may cover the prevention of resource depletion, species extirpation or habitat degradation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - wildlife and/or plant conservation - maintenance and/or enhancement of ecosystems and natural environment

<p>4. Impact element - In order to support the conservation, the impact element should be involved in order to reduce the negative impacts from visitors' behaviors and tour operations. Other scholars have advocated the role of impact toward ecotourism in several perspectives. For example, ecotourism not only concerns the well-being of nature resources, conservation, and local economy but also it involves maintaining a minimum impact on the resources base. When visiting ecotourism destinations, damage and deterioration of the environment should be avoided. And, ecotourism is expected to result in minimal negative impacts on the environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maintaining low/minimal impacts to the environment - providing low/non consumptive activities - consideration of tourists' activities - consideration of small group of travelers
<p>5. Community element - Generally, it is accepted that the fundamental of sustainable tourism and ecotourism is concerned with the local tourism (community). Following the analysis of ecotourism definitions, it can be referred that ecotourism should involve local community as a key player in the sustainable development. In order to get the local people involved in ecotourism, we need to sustainably develop them in terms of economic, social, and environment dimensions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - local employment - local empowerment - purchase/use of local products and service - support local conservation / cultural appreciation

Source: Sangpikul (2010a)

Following Figure 2.1, in order to understand the relationships between the five key elements of ecotourism and ecotourism principles, both of them will be analyzed and discussed in section 2.3.2.

2.3.2) Analyzing Ecotourism Principles and Key Elements of Ecotourism

This section will demonstrate how the five key elements of ecotourism relate to ecotourism principles. Ecotourism principle(s) is a set of rules (or guidelines) that guides what we should do in ecotourism to achieve the sustainability. In fact, ecotourism is implemented through its principles in order to be sustainable. To show the relationship between ecotourism principles and the five key elements of ecotourism, the ecotourism principles were *content analyzed* in relation to the five key elements by using the **parentheses** to indicate their relationship at the end of each principle as shown in Table 2.3.

Table 2.4 An analysis of relationships between ecotourism principles and the five key elements of ecotourism

Sources	Ecotourism principles proposed by international scholars
Wight (1993)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ecotourism should not degrade the resources and should be developed in an environmentally sound manner. (<i>conservation and impact elements</i>) • ecotourism should provide enlightening experience. (<i>education element</i>) • ecotourism should involve education among all parties – local communities, government, non-government organizations, industry, tourists (before, during, and after the trip). (<i>education element</i>) • ecotourism should encourage all party recognition of the intrinsic values of the resource. (<i>natural & education elements</i>) • ecotourism should promote moral and ethical responsibilities and behaviors towards the natural and cultural environment. (<i>education & impact elements</i>) • ecotourism should provide long-term benefits (e.g. conservation, social, cultural or economic) to the resource, to the local community, and to industry. (<i>conservation and community elements</i>)

Tourism Authority of Thailand (1997)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ecotourism should focus on natural and ecological resources-based areas. (<i>natural element</i>) • ecotourism should incorporate sustainable management principles into its activities. (<i>natural, education, conservation, & community elements</i>) • ecotourism should promote environmental and educational learning activities for visitors and hosts. (<i>education element</i>) • ecotourism should provide socio-economic benefits to local people and enhance community participation. (<i>community element</i>)
Choo and Jamal (2009)	<p>Key ecotourism principles include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economic and socio-economic benefits (<i>community element</i>) • ecological conservation (<i>natural & conservation element</i>) • social-cultural consideration (<i>community element</i>) • education and learning opportunities (<i>education element</i>) • community participation (<i>community element</i>)
International Ecotourism Society (2009)	<p>Ecotourism principles include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimizing impact (<i>impact element</i>) • Building environmental and cultural awareness and respect (<i>education & conservation element</i>) • Providing positive experiences for both visitors and hosts (<i>natural, education and community elements</i>) • Providing direct financial benefits for conservation (<i>conservation element</i>) • Providing financial benefits and empowerment for local people (<i>community element</i>)

Table 2.4 shows that ecotourism principles from different sources are *relatively similar* and *interrelated* to the five elements of ecotourism. The analysis confirms that the concept of ecotourism principles falls within the areas the five key elements of ecotourism; suggesting that ecotourism with the five key elements can be regarded as the “true ecotourism”. Besides this, the five key elements of ecotourism will be also finally analyzed with ecotourism’s code of conduct as presented in next section (2.3.3).

2.3.3) Analyzing ecotourism’s code of conduct and key elements of ecotourism

In addition to ecotourism principles, Sangpikul (2010a) also analyzed the relationship between ecotourism’s code of conduct and the five elements of ecotourism. What is ecotourism’s code of conduct? It is a set of guidelines for appropriate social, cultural and environmentally responsible behavior (Wearing & Neil, 1999). It provides travelers for do and don’t practices in the responsible ecotourism. Its aim is to limit the negative impact of human presence on the natural habitat, and promotes the protection of natural and cultural heritage (Tourism Quebec, 2010). The reason for this analysis is to determine the linkage/relationship between academic concepts (*five key elements of ecotourism*) and practical aspects (*ecotourism’s code of conduct*). This will help us develop more appropriate framework to further investigate the ecotourism good practice of the tour operators. To analyze this linkage, the codes of conduct will be content analyzed against with the five core elements. Like the analysis of ecotourism principles, the **parentheses** with *highlighted italic* (after each code of conduct) will be used to indicate their relationship as shown in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5 An analysis of relationships between ecotourism's codes of conduct and the five key elements

Sources	Code of conduct
Ecotourism Australia (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be efficient in the use of(water, energy). (<i>conservation element</i>) • Ensure waste disposal has minimal environmental and aesthetic impact. (<i>impact element</i>) • Develop a recycling program. (<i>conservation element</i>) • Support principals (i.e. hotels, carriers etc.) who have a conservation ethic. (<i>conservation element</i>) • Strengthen the conservation effort, and enhance the natural integrity of the places visited. (<i>conservation element</i>) • Network with other stakeholders (particularly those in the local area) to keep each other informed of developments and encourage the use of this code of practice. (<i>community element</i>) • Endeavour to use distribution networks (e.g. catalogues) and retail outlets to raise environmental awareness by distributing guidelines to consumers. (<i>education element</i>) • Support ecotourism education/training for guides and managers. (<i>corporate element</i>)* • Employ tour guides well versed and respectful of local cultures and environments. (<i>corporate element</i>)* • Give clients appropriate verbal and written education (interpretation) and guidance with respect to the natural and cultural history of the areas visited. (<i>education element</i>) • Use locally produced goods that benefit the local community, but do not buy goods made from threatened or endangered species. (<i>education & community elements</i>) • Never intentionally disturb or encourage the disturbance of wildlife or wildlife habitats. (<i>impact element</i>) • Abide by the rules and regulations of natural areas. (<i>impact element</i>)
Ecotourism Norway (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norwegian ecotourism business is nature and culture based and has ecotourism as an underlying philosophy for all its business activities. It contributes actively to nature and culture conservation, is aware of its own effect on the environment and always practices a precautionary attitude. (<i>nature, conservation, and impact elements</i>) • It is run as sustainable as possible, constantly balancing ecological, cultural, social and economic considerations. (<i>nature, conservation, and community elements</i>) • It contributes positively in the local community, uses the local workforce, local products and services, works for increased collaboration and shows a general responsibility towards the community. (<i>community elements</i>) • It contributes to preserving listed buildings and has local adaptation, local architectural style and distinctiveness as a general goal in its choice of materials and solutions. (<i>conservation element</i>) • It offers memorable experiences and creates meeting places that give employees and guests insight into local culture, community and environment. (<i>corporate & community elements</i>)*

Remark: * represents a new element of ecotourism practice identified based on the codes of conduct

From Table 2.5, it shows that ecotourism's code of conduct provides similar ideas with the five key elements; *suggesting a close relationships between each other*. To explain this, it can say that the codes of conduct support the five key elements in that they provide more details of what the tour operators should do when conducting ecotourism. More importantly, the above analysis has identified the additional key element that is associated with eco-tour operators and crucial for

their business success. It is called '**corporate element**'. This element adds and becomes the 6th key element of ecotourism previously identified. The corporate element concerns with tour operators in the issue of, for example, communicating company's policy to staff and customers, and providing proper ecotourism trainings for guides and manager. This element will subsequently enrich visitors' travel experience. Next, we will formulate the ecotourism construct for tour operators.

2.3.4) Formulating Ecotourism Construct for Tour Operators

After determining the final elements of ecotourism (6th element), then ecotourism construct for tour operators was formulated as shown in Table 2.6. **What is an ecotourism construct for tour operators?** It is an idea established by the theoretical backgrounds (literature) to explain the characteristics of eco-tour operators (what they should do to offer ecotourism experience). This construct was formed by combining several pieces of knowledge from the existing literature including Tables 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, and 2.5 as well as Figure 2.1. Finally, we derived the ecotourism construct for tour operators that can help us understand the characteristics of eco-tour operators which consists of 6 elements, namely, **1) nature element 2) education element 3) conservation element 4) impact element 5) community element and 6) corporate element**. These elements would guide the ecotourism good practices for tour operators. Moreover, they are expected to assist in the establishment of the Ecotourism Model for Tour Operators (EMTO) which encompasses the component of social, economic, and environmental dimensions of sustainable ecotourism.

Table 2.6 Ecotourism construct for tour operators

Core elements and literature sources	Characteristics of ecotourism practices
1. Nature element Sources: Figure 2.3, Ceballos-Lascurain, 1987; Kutay, 1989; Boo, 1991; Wight, 1993; Andersen, 1994; Buckley, 1994; Goodwin, 1996; Hugo, 1999; Sirakaya et al., 1999; Blamey, 2001; Fennell, 2003; Cristina, 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1.1 a visit to uncontaminated natural areas or protected areas - 1.2 nature-based activities - 1.3 a visit to associated cultural attractions in the areas
2. Education/learning element Sources: Figure 2.4, Ceballos-Lascurain, 1987; Butler, 1989; Boo, 1991; Williams, 1992; International Ecotourism Society, 1993 Ecotourism Australia, 1994; Coll et al., 1995; Blamey, 2001; Andersen, 1994; Sirakaya et al., 1999; Fennell, 2003; Cristina, 2004; Ecotourism Norway, 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2.1 providing travelers the opportunity to learn about the nature - 2.2 providing ecotourism interpretation (educational activity to promote responsible travel) - 2.3 promoting natural appreciation, awareness or respect of the areas visited (among stakeholders) - 2.4 providing nature education/learning (including local culture) by offering literature, briefing or leading examples
3. Conservation element Sources: Figure 2.5, Butler, 1989; Kutay, 1989; Boo, 1991; Williams, 1992; International Ecotourism Society, 1993; Ecotourism Australia, 1994; Blamey, 2001; Andersen, 1994; Coll et al., 1995; Sirakaya et al., 1999; Fennell, 2003; Ecotourism Norway, 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3.1 wildlife and/or plant conservation - 3.2 controlled use and sustainable management of natural, cultural and environmental resources - 3.3 collaborative efforts between providers and community in natural conservation - 3.4 maintenance and/or enhancement of ecosystems and environment - 3.5 incorporation and /or implementation of preservation/conservation into management plans - 3.6 contributions to conservation of natural areas or biodiversity in terms of physical, financial or other assistances
4. Impact element Sources: Figure 2.6, Butler, 1989; Blamey, 2001; Brouse, 1992; International Ecotourism Society, 1993; Andersen, 1994; Buckley, 1994; Ecotourism Australia, 1994; Goodwin, 1996; Sirakaya et al., 1999; Fennell, 2003; Cristina, 2004; Ecotourism Norway, 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4.1 complying the rules and regulations of protected areas - 4.2 maintaining low or minimal impact to the environment and local community - 4.3 non consumptive activities (e.g. no fishing, hunting or collecting plant species) - 4.4 non intrusive exploitation of natural resources - 4.5 avoid disturbing wildlife or wildlife habitats - 4.6 proper waste management during the trips - 4.7 area's carrying capacity consideration - 4.8 scale of activity consideration - 4.9 small group consideration (e.g. less than 20 persons) - 4.10 promoting recycling use of materials
5. Community element Sources: Figure 2.7, Ceballos-Lascurain, 1987; Butler, 1989; Kutay, 1989; Boo, 1991; Brouse, 1992; Williams, 1992; International Ecotourism Society, 1993; Wight, 1993; Andersen, 1994; Ecotourism Australia, 1994; Goodwin, 1996; Hugo, 1999; Sirakaya et al., 1999; Blamey, 2001; Cristina, 2004; Ecotourism Norway, 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5.1 local employment relating to business operations - 5.2 local involvement and partnership of related activities - 5.3 local empowerment - 5.4 local culture appreciation - 5.5 purchase/use of local products and service - 5.6 Improvement of life of local community
6. Corporate element Sources: Figure 2.8, Table 2.8, International Ecotourism Society, 1993; Ecotourism Australia, 1994; Ecotourism Norway, 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 6.1 setting company policies and objectives on responsible tourism, ecotourism or sustainable tourism (e.g. written documents/plans) - 6.2 promoting staff's awareness on company's policy and code of conduct for tour activities - 6.3 providing staff training on ecotourism or natural environment

2.3.5) Developing the Ecotourism Model for Tour Operators (EMTO)

Once the ecotourism construct was formulated, then it's appropriate to develop the Ecotourism Model for Tour Operators (EMTO) based upon the construct. We call it as the model because it is the foundation on which the entire research project is based. In this study, the entire research project is based on the EMTO as appeared in Figure 2.2. The *model* shows the items (practices) that may affect the degree of being the eco-tour operator. Moreover, the model helps determine what variables (practices) we are going to investigate under this study. Since this is the model or the theoretical framework, it may be illustrated in terms of independent and dependent variables. According to Figure 2.2, **independent variables** (left items) are the good practices that the tour operators should do based on the literature, meanwhile, **dependent variable** (right items) is the degree or level of being recognized as the eco-tour operator. This relationship can be explained in that the six key elements and their guided practices need to occur first (must exist) before judging whether it is the eco-tour operator. In other words, if the tour operator conducts its tour corresponding to most or all of the guided practices, then, that tour operator can be recognized as the eco-tour operator. This suggests that the degree of being the eco-tour operator is determined by the implementation of the guided practices. Following this relationship, it shows that the six key elements and their guided practices will affect the degree of being the eco-tour operator.

Since the Ecotourism Model for Tour Operators (EMTO) is a complex issue, and needs more efforts on tour management of the tour operators. In addition, each ASEAN country may focus on different ecotourism conducts due to different cultures and tourism development. It is therefore predicted that the evaluation scores on the ecotourism practices of tour operators in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia are different from one another (**research hypothesis**).

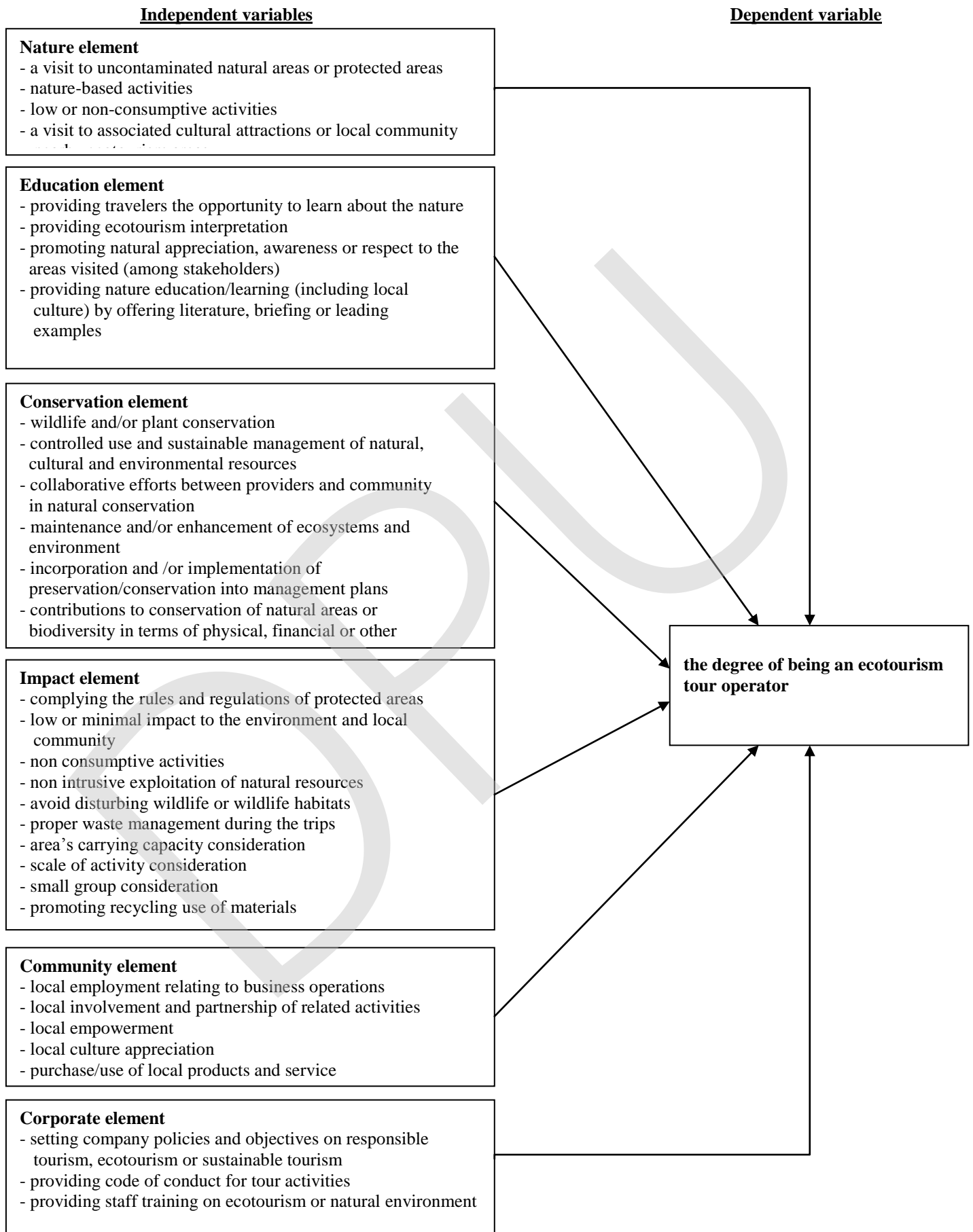


Figure 2.2 Ecotourism Model for Tour Operators (EMTO)
Source: Sangpikul (2010)

2.4.) Ecotourism Good Practices

2.4.1) What is Good Practice?

In most cases, the word ‘best practice’ and ‘good practice’ are frequently used interchangeably. In this study, we prefer to use the word ‘good practice’ to ‘best practice’ because there is no single set of best practice that works for everyone or everywhere. And the word ‘best practice’ often refers to the *most* efficient and effective way of accomplishing a task (Issaverdis, 2001) or the best method or approach of doing the task. In this sense, ‘best practice’ seems to focus on ‘*the best method*’ or ‘*the best procedure*’ of doing something. **In writer’s opinion**, this word may be too ideal to achieve in the real setting, particularly in the case of ecotourism business in Thailand. This is because (based on writer’s knowledge and experience) ecotourism development in Thailand has not yet well developed and fully implemented in most concerned sectors, particularly the stakeholders such as government, business sector, and local residents. Since this study aims to develop the proper ecotourism practices that are congruent with ecotourism principles and practical with business operators, therefore, ‘good practice’ or in another sense of ‘better practice’ is more appropriate to be used in this study.

As there is a wide range of definitions for good practice, this study defines good practice as a set of guidelines that produces a superior, better or improved performance. In order to use that meaning for ecotourism operators, **good practice** in this study refers to ‘a set of practices or guidelines that eco-tour operators should implement (or make changes) in their operations for a better performance, and that performance would contribute a more sustainable outcome (or sustainable development) for local tourism and its related stakeholders.

2.4.2) Relationship between Good Practices and Industry Standard

In this part, we will discuss the importance of good practices toward the development of industry standard. As earlier mentioned, **tourism standard** is a way tourism products are assessed by measuring their practices or performances to the specific requirements. Tourism standard establishes measurable criteria for tourism development and operation as well as clarify what is required for a tourism business to be considered “environmentally responsible” and “sustainable” (Patterson, 2002). Ecotourism standard is important because in the business setting there are vast differences in tour operators’ practices and performances. Some argue for no impact activities while many cause problems or impacts to the environment. In other cases, some also claim they are ecotourism tour operators, however, many of them are not. These situations make it difficult to determine a business’s philosophy and commitment to the ecotourism or responsible practices, the need for standard arises.

In order to develop the industry standard, the good practices are needed. According to the literature, good practice has a relationship with industry standard and accreditation program (Weaver, 2001; Wearing & Neil, 2009). In some countries like Australia or New Zealand, they have established ecotourism standard for the tour operators as well as the accreditation programs to certify or accredit the tour operators. In general, industry standard determines what is required for a tourism business (e.g. hotels, tour operators, transportation providers) to be considered environmentally 'responsible' or 'sustainable' (Patterson, 2002). In the tourism industry, many business operators try to claim that they operate in such manners. However, in the real world, it seems that there are vast differences in their practices and performances. In fact, it is also difficult to determine a company's philosophy and commitment to such practices, therefore, the need for industry standard arises. Ecotourism standard would ensure that ecotourism rules or principles are met or implemented by tourism operators. To establish ecotourism standard, it requires the measurable criteria that are developed from the ecotourism good practices. In other words, the 'good practices' developed/proposed from this study can serve as the measurable criteria that can be used to establish the standard for guiding or measuring tour operators' practices. Therefore, this discussion reveals the relationship between 'good practice' and 'ecotourism industry standard' in that the criteria developed from the **good practices** can be further implemented as the measurable criteria for the **ecotourism standard**. Moreover, with the establishment of ecotourism standard, the accreditation and certification program could be further developed.

2.4.3) Relationship between Good Practices and Quality Controls

Since the good practice(s) is related to the quality controls (Weaver, 2001; Wearing & Neil, 2009), it is necessary to briefly discuss their relationships in this part. Quality control is a process employed to ensure a certain level of quality in a product or service by ensuring that the products, services, or processes provided meet specific requirements (Wise Geek, 2010). In tourism, there are several quality control mechanisms in a form of spectrum or continuum ranging from the basic one to the advance measures. These may include code of practice (or good practice), compliance, accreditation, quality system, and certification, respectively (Weaver, 2001; Wearing & Neil, 2009). This suggests that the good practice is the initial form and fundamental to the development of other quality control mechanisms. Among them, the accreditation is one of the popular methods in the tourism industry, particularly the ecotourism sector in developing countries. The accreditation is a program that provides a means of establishing the extent to which a business offering tourism experience meets industry standard (Issaverdis, 2001). It encourages the delivery of consistently high quality products and promotes continuous improvement (Weaver, 2001). Therefore, the accreditation would help distinguish genuine eco-tour operators from the

fake ones, and support the branding and the marketing of the ecotourism industry, like the current program in Australia and Norway (Matysek & Kriwoken, 2003). In the long run, it is foreseen that the ecotourism accreditation program would be an important mechanism for the development of the quality of ecotourism operators in many developing nations (including Thailand) due to the increasing demand in high product quality and the concern of environmental practices (Matysek & Kriwoken, 2003). Indeed, the accreditation scheme can play an important role in bring about more sustainable ecotourism because it provides participating companies with an action plan for business improvement, natural protections, and socio-economic development (WWF, 2000 cited in Matysek & Kriwoken, 2003).

Chapter 3

Research Methodologies

This chapter describes research methodologies that were used in this study. It discussed about population, samples, sampling method, research instrument, data collection, and data analysis. The outline of chapter 3 is presented as follows:

Outline of chapter 3

Section	Main contents
Section 3.1	Population
Section 3.2	Samples and sampling method
Section 3.3	Development of research instrument
Section 3.4	Determining weights for criteria and indicators
Section 3.5	Discussion of research instrument 3.5.1 Observation 3.5.2 Interview
Section 3.6	Data Collection
Section 3.7	Data analysis

3.1 Population

Since the research objective is to investigate the *ecotourism practices* of the tour operators, therefore the population in this study is a tour operator who claims or offers ecotourism tours (may be called eco-tours or eco-trips) through the marketing media (e.g. magazines, brochures, the Internet, travel books, etc.). It should be noted that in the actual business setting, there is no formal identification, classification or registration of ecotourism tour operators in the tourism industry except for the marketing purpose. Due to such characteristics, the number of the population is unable to determine. (unknown/unlimited population).

3.2 Samples and Sampling Method

This study used samples from the tour operators who claim or offer eco-tours through marketing media. In particular, the study aimed to examine the ecotourism good practices, therefore the purposive sampling method was employed to select the tour operators on the referral of previous research (i.e. Kontogeorgopoulos, 2003; Sangpikul, 2010). These studies revealed that there were some tour operators in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia offering natural tours that are congruent with ecotourism concept or qualifying as ecotours. Therefore, two samples (two tour operators) were chosen from each country because of budget limitation and time constraint for data collection. With a total of 6 tour operators, one tour program per one company was

investigated (overall 6 tour programs). It should be noted that the name of the tour operators was not disclosed throughout the research report due to research ethics and confidentiality. However, they were labeled as company A and B for Thailand, company C and D for Malaysia, and company E and F for Indonesia. The area of investigation in those 3 countries were referred from previous research's suggestion (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2003) which were Phuket (Thailand), Penang (Malaysia) and Bali (Indonesia). These places are claimed to possess a range of natural resources that make it possible to engage in ecotourism activities such as rafting, cycling, canoeing, and trekking (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2003; 2005). In addition, Phuket, Penang, and Bali are the ecotourism sites that are often discussed on ecotourism issues (Weaver, 2002; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005). For instance, several authors conducted ecotourism research in Phuket (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2005; Wanichanugorn, 2002) while some explored ecotourism in Penang (Muslim, 2012; Hong, & Chan, 2010), and several ecotourism studies were examined in Bali (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2003; Dalem, 2002). Therefore, the investigation of those 3 places for this study is reasonable.

3.3 Development of Research Instruments

In this study, there were 2 research instruments – observation form and interview form. Both of them were employed from previous research (Sangpikul, 2010). They were based on the framework of the 6 E's Ecotourism Model for Tour Operators (EMTO). The observation and interview forms were tested on the quality of the instrument through the construct validity (reviewed by 3 academics on research construct) and face validity (tested by 3 tour operators on research content). Construct validity was done by having the academics review the **construct** of the criteria and indicators (developed from the literature) appeared in the evaluation form in order to determine its appropriateness and validity. While face validity was tested by having the tour operators review the **content** measured in the evaluation form to determine its practical application in the real business setting.

Table 3.1 shows the final version of the research instrument for the observation and interview methods. The criteria and indicators on the left column were operationlized (defined) into a form of question as appeared on the right column to make them measurable. Table 3.1 also shows what items (practices) are suitable for which research methods (e.g. observation or interview) as presented in the **highlighted parentheses** in the right column. The reason to use two methods is because not all the items (what to be measured) are suitable for one particular method. The information like the practices (doing something) can be appropriately obtained through the

observation while the other information (e.g. policy, ideas or opinions) may be suitable through the interview method.

It should be informed that when evaluating something (performances or practices), there is a measurement to be involved that are *criteria* and *indicators*. Criteria are the guidelines, rules or dimensions that are used to judge the quality or characteristics of certain things while indicator is a measure (either quantitative or qualitative) that provides simple and reliable means to monitor or evaluate the achievement of that thing (Shin et al., 2010). In this study, the six key elements of ecotourism (see Table 3.1) will serve as the **criteria**, meanwhile, their sub-issues (guided practices) will be regarded as the **indicators** to measure the practices of the tour operators.

Table 3.1 Operationalization of ecotourism model for tour operators (EMTO)

Criteria and indicators	What to investigate (measurable indicators)
1. Nature elements 1.1 a visit to uncontaminated natural areas or protected areas 1.2 providing nature-based activities 1.3 maintaining low or non-consumptive activities 1.4 a visit to associated cultural attractions or local community located nearby ecotourism areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 1.1 Does the company provide a trip to visit uncontaminated natural areas or protected areas? (observation) ❖ 1.2 Does the company provide any nature-based activities? (observation) ❖ 1.3 Does the company maintain low or non-consumptive activities? (observation) ❖ 1.4 Does the company provide a trip to visit cultural heritage or local community located nearby ecotourism areas? (observation)
2. Education element 2.1 providing travelers the opportunity to learn about the nature 2.2 providing travelers ecotourism interpretation (education activity) at ecotourism destinations 2.3 Encouraging natural appreciation, awareness or respect for the nature among travelers 2.4 promoting natural education/learning as well as natural appreciation, awareness or respect for the nature among local residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 2.1 Does the company provide information for tourists to learn about the nature, the areas visited or surrounding environment? (observation) ❖ 2.2 Does the company provide educational activity for tourists to learn or understand the ecosystem, the nature or the environment? (observation) ❖ 2.3 Does the company provide any information to encourage tourists to appreciate or respect the natural environment? (observation) ❖ 2.4 Does the company provide education or knowledge for local residents regarding natural awareness or conservation? (interview)
3. Conservation element (in the areas visited) 3.1 conservation of wildlife, plant or natural resources in terms of physical, financial or other assistances 3.2 collaborative efforts between business and community/state agency in natural conservation 3.3 maintenance or enhancement of ecosystems and environment 3.4 incorporation of preservation/conservation into management plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 3.1 Does the company have any activity/project to help protect or conserve wildlife, plants or natural resources in terms of physical, financial or other assistances? (interview) ❖ 3.2 Does the company have any activity/project to do with local community or state agency in natural conservation? (interview) ❖ 3.3 Does the company have any activity/project to maintain or enhance the ecosystem or environment of the areas visited? (interview) ❖ 3.4 Does the company incorporate preservation/conservation into management plans? (interview)

Criteria and indicators	What to investigate (measurable indicators)
4. Impact element 4.1 complying the rules and regulations of protected areas 4.2 maintaining low or minimal personal impact to the environment and local community 4.3 avoid disturbing wildlife or wildlife habitats 4.4 proper waste management during the trips 4.5 area's carrying capacity consideration 4.6 small group consideration (e.g. less than 20 persons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 4.1 Does the company comply the rules/regulations of the areas visited? (observation) ❖ 4.2 Does the company maintain low or reduce tourists' impact to the environment/local community? (observation) ❖ 4.3 Does the company avoid disturbing wildlife or wildlife habitats? (observation) ❖ 4.4 Does the company have a proper way to manage waste/garbage occurred during the trip? (observation) ❖ 4.5 Does the company consider the area's carrying capacity? (interview) ❖ 4.6 Does the company maintain a small group of travelers when visiting the destinations? (observation)
5. Community element 5.1 local employment relating to business operations 5.2 local involvement in tour activities 5.3 local involvement in tour planning 5.4 purchase/use of local products and service 5.5 promoting local culture learning or appreciation among travelers 5.6 contribution in local education, environment or conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 5.1 Does the company hire local people in relation to business operations? (interview) ❖ 5.2 Does the company involve local people in any tour activities? (observation) ❖ 5.3 Does the company involve local people in any tour planning? (interview) ❖ 5.4 Does the company encourage local use or purchase of local products/services? (observation) ❖ 5.5 Does the company provide any activity for travelers to learn or appreciate local culture? (observation) ❖ 5.6 Does the company assist local community in terms of education, environment or conservation? (interview)
6. Corporate element 6.1 setting company policies and/or objectives on sustainable tourism, ecotourism or responsible tourism 6.2 providing a code of conduct for tour activities 6.3 providing staff a training on ecotourism or related training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 6.1 Does the company have a policy or statement to promote sustainable tourism, ecotourism or responsible tourism? (interview) ❖ 6.2 Does the company provide staff the code of conduct for conducting the tours? (interview) ❖ 6.3 Does the company provide employees a training on ecotourism or the environment? (interview)

Source: Sangpikul (2010)

3.4 Determining Weights for Criteria and Indicators (allocating score for the evaluation)

This part will discuss how the criteria and indicators are weighted for the evaluation purpose. Since the six key elements of EMTO and their guided practices were set as the criteria and indicators to evaluate the practices of tour operators, it is necessary to determine them on the basis of *weighted score*. This is because the weighted measurement would produce a better comparison in terms of a quantitative approach (Shin et al., 2010). Therefore, the criteria and indicators must be given a particular weight to generate an overall score of the comparison (Shin et al., 2010). As previously discussed, the six key elements are interrelated and equally important to the success of ecotourism, therefore, each element (criterion) is equally given the weight of 10 scores. Then, the total scores for the 6 elements (criteria) would be equal to 60 scores. The reason to allocate the score on each criterion as equal to 10 is to *simplify* the evaluation process. The score of 10 for each criterion is deemed to be not too large or small when summing up the overall scores, and together with the following explanations. As for the indicators under each criterion, they should share an equal score within its category. For example, the first criterion (nature element) is weighted 10 scores. Under this criterion (see example in **Table 3.2**), there are 4 indicators within it (1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4). These indicators should be equally weighted by dividing by 4 or $10/4$. As a result, each indicator is weighted 2.5 scores. In each indicator (1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4), it is given a choice of 'YES' or 'NO' answer. If there is no such practice in a particular indicator, this is given 'NO' (zero score). But if the tour company performs one particular indicator, this is given 'YES', and the score of 'YES' would be further judged on the two sub-levels which are 1) 'needs improvement' or 2) 'acceptable'. This means that the score of 2.5 from each indicator will be again equally shared by the two sub-levels ($2.5/2$). Under this approach, the score of 'needs improvement' would be given as 1.25 (half score) while the score of 'acceptable' would receive a full score of 2.5 (double rate of 'needs improvement').

This paragraph will further explain the interpretation of 'needs improvement' and 'acceptable'. If the tour operator performs one indicator and is judged as 'needs improvement', this may be referred that the company performs one particular practice but with a minimal level. In other words, they just do it (or just have it) but it is not good enough based on ecotourism practices. In this regard, they get a half score of the full rate as explained above. In the meantime, if it is judged as 'acceptable'. This may be referred that the practice is *acceptable* based on ecotourism practices. The meaning of 'acceptable' here may cover from 'fair' to 'good' performance. Although the word 'needs improvement' and 'acceptable' is a subjective term but they will be *carefully judged* based on ecotourism concepts and principles. This approach applies to other criteria (2, 3, 4, 5 and 6) in the evaluation process. But it should be noted that the score of

‘YES’ under each criterion may be different from one to another (see example in Table 3.2). Because the key factor is the number of indicators (dividers) under each criterion are not the same. One criterion may have 4 indicators (dividers) while the others may have 5 or 6 indicators. Thus, the number of indicators in each criterion *directly affects* the score allocation. Following this quantitative measurement, the tour operator with higher overall scores is likely to perform a better ecotourism practice than those with lower scores. It should be advised that the above evaluation method (weighted scores) is used for **observation** and **interview** methods. The summary of weighted score allocation for all criteria and indicators is presented in Table 3.2 with a total of 6 criteria and 27 indicators. Most of these indicators were developed as the observation form (see Table 3.3) while some were established as the interview form (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.2 Summary of weighted score allocation for the evaluation method (developed from Table 3.1)
(total of 6 criteria 27 indicators)

What to investigate (observation or interview)	Weighted score allocation	
Criteria 1 - Nature element (10 scores)	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement (1.25) Acceptable (2.5)
Indicator 1.1 observation (2.5 scores)		
Indicator 1.2 observation (2.5 scores)		
Indicator 1.3 observation (2.5 scores)		
Indicator 1.4 observation (2.5 scores)		
Criteria 2 - Education element (10 scores)	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement (1.25) Acceptable (2.5)
Indicator 2.1 observation (2.5 scores)		
Indicator 2.2 observation (2.5 scores)		
Indicator 2.3 observation (2.5 scores)		
Indicator 2.4 interview (2.5 scores)		
Criteria 3 - Conservation element (10 scores)	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement (1.25) Acceptable (2.5)
Indicator 3.1 interview (2.5 scores)		
Indicator 3.2 interview (2.5 scores)		
Indicator 3.3 interview (2.5 scores)		
Indicator 3.4 interview (2.5 scores)		
Criteria 4 – Impact element (10 scores)	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement (0.83) Acceptable (1.66)
Indicator 4.1 observation (1.66 scores)		
Indicator 4.2 observation (1.66 scores)		
Indicator 4.3 observation (1.66 scores)		
Indicator 4.4 observation (1.66 scores)		
Indicator 4.5 interview (1.66 scores)		
Indicator 4.6 observation (1.66 scores)		
Criteria 5 – Community element (10 scores)	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement (0.83) Acceptable (1.66)
Indicator 5.1 interview (1.66 scores)		
Indicator 5.2 observation (1.66 scores)		
Indicator 5.3 interview (1.66 scores)		
Indicator 5.4 observation (1.66 scores)		
Indicator 5.5 observation (1.66 scores)		
Indicator 5.6 interview (1.66 scores)		
Criteria 6 – Corporate element (10 scores)	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement (1.66) Acceptable (3.33)
Indicator 6.1 interview (3.33 scores)		
Indicator 6.2 interview (3.33 scores)		
Indicator 6.3 interview (3.33 scores)		
Total observation and interview scores (6 criteria 27 indicators)	60 scores	

3.5 Discussion of Research Instrument

This part will discuss about the observation and interview forms. As earlier noted, the reason to use different methods is due to the characteristics of the data collected. Each research instrument is designed for a particular purpose.

3.5.1) Observation Form

The purpose of using the observation form is to observe how the tour operators conduct their tours in the natural settings and to determine if those conducts (or practices) correspond to ecotourism principles. Hence, participant observation (direct observation) seemed to be appropriate for this case to collect required data. What should be observed are the practices of the tour operators while they are conducting the tours in the natural areas. There are specific issues needed to be observed during the tours as shown in Table 3.3 with 4 criteria and 15 indicators.

Table 3.3 Outline of **observation form** developed from Table 3.2 (4 criteria 15 indicators)

Criteria 1 - Nature element	What to be observed	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement (1.25) Acceptable (2.5)
Indicator 1.1 (2.5 scores)	1.1 Does the company provide a trip to visit uncontaminated natural areas or protected areas?		
Indicator 1.2 (2.5 scores)	1.2 Does the company provide a nature-based activity?		
Indicator 1.3 (2.5 scores)	1.3 Does the company arrange a low or non-consumptive activity? (<i>observation</i>)		
Indicator 1.4 (2.5 scores)	1.4 Does the company provide a trip to visit cultural attractions or local community nearby ecotourism destination? (<i>observation</i>)		
Criteria 2 - Education element		‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement (1.25) Acceptable (2.5)
Indicator 2.1 (2.5 scores)	2.1 Does the company provide information for travelers to learn about the nature or environment of ecotourism destination?		
Indicator 2.2 (2.5 scores)	2.2 Does the company provide educational activity for travelers to learn/understand about the nature, ecosystem or environment of ecotourism destination?		
Indicator 2.3 (2.5 scores)	2.3 Does the company provide information to encourage travelers to appreciate or respect the nature?		
Criteria 4 - Impact element		‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement (0.83) Acceptable (1.66)
Indicator 4.1 (1.66 scores)	4.1 Does the company comply the rules/regulations of the areas visited?		
Indicator 4.2 (1.66 scores)	4.2 Does the company maintain low or minimal travelers’ impact to the environment and/or local community?		
Indicator 4.3 (1.66 scores)	4.3 Does the company avoid disturbing wildlife or wildlife habitats?		
Indicator 4.4 (1.66 scores)	4.4 Does the company have a proper way to manage waste occurred during the trip?		
Indicator 4.6 (1.66 scores)	4.6 Does the company maintain a small group of travelers when visiting ecotourism destination?		
Criteria 5 - Community element		‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement (0.83) Acceptable (1.66)
Indicator 5.2 (1.66 scores)	5.2 Does the company encourage local use or purchase of local products/services?		
Indicator 5.4 (1.66 scores)	5.4 Does the company provide travelers an activity to learn or appreciate local culture?		
Indicator 5.5 (1.66 scores)	5.5 Does the company involve local people in any tour activities?		
Total observation scores (30.8)	4 criteria 15 indicators		

3.5.2) Interview Form

The interview form has two functions. The first function is to get general information of the company such as company policy, business objective, and motivations of doing the business. The second function is to search for additional information that may not be available from the observation. Interviews were made on the following days after the field trips. Key people to be interviewed were recommended by company staff (reservation or sale officers). They suggested interviewing key persons such as owners or general managers, operation managers and tour guides (approximately 3-4 key informants from each company). To facilitate the interview process and collect required information, the semi-structured interview was employed. The topics to interview were mainly based on Table 3.4 with 4 criteria and 12 indicators.

Table 3.4 Outline of **interview form** developed from Table 3.2 (4 criteria 12 indicators)

Criteria 2 - Education element	What to be observed	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement (1.25) Acceptable (2.5)
Indicator 2.4 (2.5 scores)	1.4 Does the company provide education or knowledge for local residents regarding natural awareness or conservation?		
Criteria 3 - Conservation element		‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement (1.25) Acceptable (2.5)
Indicator 3.1 (2.5 scores)	3.1 Does the company have a project /activity to help protect or conserve wildlife, plants or natural resources?		
Indicator 3.2 (2.5 scores)	3.2 Does the company have a project /activity to do with local community or state agency on natural conservation?		
Indicator 3.3 (2.5 scores)	3.3 Does the company have a project /activity to maintain or enhance the ecosystem or environment of ecotourism destination?		
Indicator 3.4 (2.5 scores)	3.4 Does the company incorporate conservation issue into its management plan?		
Criteria 4 - Impact element		‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement (0.83) Acceptable (1.66)
Indicator 4.5 (1.66 scores)	4.5 Does the company consider the area’s carrying capacity?		
Criteria 5 - Community element		‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement (0.83) Acceptable (1.66)
Indicator 5.1 (1.66 scores)	5.1 Does the company hire local residents in relation to business operations?		
Indicator 5.3 (1.66 scores)	5.3 Does the company involve local people in any tour planning?		
Indicator 5.6 (1.66 scores)	5.6 Does the company provide any local contribution such as education or natural conservation?		
Criteria 6 - Corporate element		‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement (1.66) Acceptable (3.33)
Indicator 6.1 (3.33 scores)	6.1 Does the company have a policy or a statement to promote sustainable tourism, ecotourism or responsible tourism?		
Indicator 6.2 (3.33 scores)	6.2 Does the company have a code of conduct for tour activities to prevent the degradation of the environment?		
Indicator 6.3 (3.33 scores)	6.3 Does the company provide employees a training on ecotourism or related field?		
Total interview score (29.2)	4 criteria 12 indicators		

3.6 Data Collection

It should be first to address some limitations that affect data collection of this research. Due to the constraint of time and budget, it is almost impossible to participate in all trips of the 6 tour operators. Having discussed these limitations with tourism scholars, it is acceptable to choose (survey) 1 recommended ecotourism trip per company to collect the required data for an exploratory research. Since there were 6 companies to survey (2 companies for each country), therefore, there were a total of 6 trips/tours to be collected.

Data were collected during March – May 2014. To collect the data by participating in each tour (observation method), researcher asked tour operators to recommend the tour that was claimed to be an ecotour. If there was more than 1 tour recommended, the simple random sampling was used by drawing only 1 tour from the tour list of each company. During the surveys, researcher asked permission from tour operators to conduct the research. When joining the tours, the observation was undertaken at the beginning of the tours until the end. During each tour, the observation form was used to record the tour conducts and practices. With regard to the interview, the interviewees were recommended by company staff. Interviewees could be various positions such as general managers, operation managers and tour guides (2-3 interviewees from each company). The interviews were conducted at tour company's offices by making an appointment, and ranged from 30 - 40 minutes each person. A short note was made during the interviews. In overall, there were a total of 15 interviewees.

3.7 Data Analysis

This study used a **combination** of quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyze the data. Data from observation were content analyzed to determine how the tour operators conducted their tours and to find out whether those conducts corresponded to ecotourism principles. Later, this set of data from the observation were analyzed by using the descriptive statistics (e.g. mean and percentage) to evaluate and compare the practices of 6 companies. Likewise, the data from the interview were content analyzed to determine if the company's policy and operations corresponded to ecotourism principles. Later, the data from the interviewees were also analyzed by the descriptive statistics (e.g. mean and frequency) to evaluate and compare company's policy among 6 companies. To test research hypothesis, inferential statistics (i.e. ANOVA) were used to determine the mean differences (scores of observations and interviews) among 6 companies.

In relation to score interpretation from the observation and interview methods, once the scores from the observation and the interview are combined together, this represents the overall scores of the evaluation which is equivalent to 60 scores (maximum) or 100%. In this study, the score interpretation basically is almost similar to university grading system (e.g. 80% = good, 70% = fair, 49% = poor/unsatisfactory) but it may be slightly modified to be suitable for the research characteristics. Therefore, Table 3.5 demonstrates how the evolution scores are interpreted.

Table 3.5 Interpretation of evaluation score

Overall scores	Percentage	Interpretation
48 – 60 scores	80% - 100%	The practices are highly congruent with ecotourism principles. With 90 - 100% represents very good practice. With 80% - 89% represents good practice.
30 – 47.9 scores	50% - 79%	The practices are fairly congruent with ecotourism principles (fair practice).
0 – 29.9 scores	0% - 49%	The practices are less likely congruent with ecotourism principles (unsatisfactory practice).

Chapter 4

Research Findings and Discussions

The aim of this chapter is to present research findings and discussions. In order to simplify the construct of this chapter, it has been divided into 6 sections as shown in the following outline:

Outline of chapter 4

Section	Main contents
Section 4.1	General information of the samples
Section 4.2	Results of tour observation
Section 4.3	Results of interview from tour operators
Section 4.4	Summary of research findings
Section 4.5	Hypotheses testing
Section 4.6	Research discussions

Section 4.1 General information of the samples

Table 4.1 - 4.3 provide general information of the tour operators (samples) from each country as follows:

Table 4.1 General information of Thailand's tour operators

General information	Company A	Company B
1. Product	canoeing, kayaking, trekking, camping	safari tour, elephant riding, cultural tours
2. Number of tour programs	4-5 tours	6-7 tours
3. Price range per person	Baht 3,000 – 20,000	Baht 1,200 – 15,000
4. Target market	international tourists	international tourists
5. Environmental award	environmental awards	environmental awards
6. Location	Phuket	Phuket

Table 4.2 General information of Malaysia's tour operators

General information	Company C	Company D
1. Product	trekking, cycling, snorkeling, camping	trekking, cycling, snorkeling
2. Number of tour programs	5-6 tours	5-6 tours
3. Price range per person	Baht 1,500 – 15,000	Baht 1,800 – 17,000
4. Target market	international tourists	international tourists
5. Environmental award	no	no
6. Location	Penang	Penang

Table 4.3 General information of Indonesia's tour operators

General information	Company E	Company F
1. Product	trekking, cycling, elephant riding, rafting	cycling, rafting, camping
2. Number of tour programs	5-6 tours	2-3 tours
3. Price range per person	Baht 1,200 – 16,000	Baht 1,500 – 18,000
4. Target market	international tourists	international tourists
5. Environmental award	environmental award	no
6. Location	Bali	Bali

According to Table 4.1, there is a variety of ecotourism products among 6 companies. However, the common products are natural trekking, cycling and elephant riding. In general, most companies offer approximately 5 - 6 tour programs. Regarding tour price, the price starts from Baht 1,200 for a day trip to more than Baht 10,000 for an overnight trip (e.g. 2 -3 tour programs). All companies have the similar target which is international tourists. For an environmental award, there are 2 companies in Thailand and 1 company in Indonesia that received the environmental awards for their tour practices.

Section 4.2 Results of tour observation

This section (Tables 4.4 – 4.9) presents the results of tour observation from each tour operator (company). The issues to be observed were based on the **outline of observation form** in Chapter 3 (Table 3.3).

1. Company A (Thailand)

Table 4.2 Results of tour observation - Company A

Issues to be observed			
1. Nature element	‘NO’	‘YES’	
	(0)	Needs improvement (1.25)	Acceptable (2.5)
1.1 Does the company provide a trip to visit uncontaminated natural areas or protected areas?			√
1.2 Does the company provide a nature-based activity?			√
1.3 Does the company arrange a low or non-consumptive activity?			√
1.4 Does the company provide a trip to visit cultural attractions or local community nearby ecotourism destination?			√
2. Education element	‘NO’	‘YES’	
	(0)	Needs improvement (1.25)	Acceptable (2.5)
2.1 Does the company provide information for travelers to learn about the nature or environment of ecotourism destination?			√
2.2 Does the company provide educational activity for travelers to learn/understand about the nature, ecosystem or environment of ecotourism destination?			√
2.3 Does the company provide information to encourage travelers to appreciate or respect the nature?		√	
3. Impact element	‘NO’	‘YES’	
	(0)	Needs improvement (0.83)	Acceptable (1.66)
3.1 Does the company comply the rules/regulations of the areas visited?			√
3.2 Does the company maintain low or minimal travelers’ impact to the environment and/or local community?			√
3.3 Does the company avoid disturbing wildlife or wildlife habitats?			√
3.4 Does the company have a proper way to manage waste occurred during the trip?			√
3.5 Does the company maintain a small group of travelers when visiting ecotourism destination?			√
4. Community element	‘NO’	‘YES’	
	(0)	Needs improvement (0.83)	Acceptable (1.66)
4.1 Does the company encourage local use or purchase of local products/services?			√
4.2 Does the company provide travelers an activity to learn or appreciate local culture?			√
4.3 Does the company involve local people in any tour activities?			√
Total score (30.8)		29.53	

According to Table 4.2 (company A, Thailand), this tour was an overnight trip (two-day trip) by visiting Yao Noi island by a two-storey boat (18 customers). Several practices were observed. For example, at the beginning of the trip, tour guides provided tourists necessary information such as island location, its environment and geographical characteristics as well as informed them regarding proper behavior when visiting the natural areas. Information regarding natural conservation such as protecting wildlife and plants was given in a folder available for tourists at all times. During the trip, tourists learned about the nature and its environment by canoeing around the nearby islands. Some trips made a short visit to learn and experience island-caves. The practices of minimizing negative impacts and urging environmental awareness were implemented during the trip. Garbage and waste occurred during the trip were collected in a plastic bag and taken back to the mainland. Before arriving at the village, tour guides briefly informed tourists about the local culture. They also urged tourists not to buy shells or other animal products as souvenirs. Being the overnight trip, tourists stayed in a bungalow or a tent camp on the island (Yao Noi island). The accommodation was simple and basic (no TV or air conditioners). It was observed that many tourists spent their time outside their rooms by exploring the nature, doing outdoor activities or visiting the community's market. With the overnight trip, tourists had a chance to learn local life and culture such as learning local language and Thai cooking. They also had a chance to watch and learn Thai boxing performance arranged by tour company. As joining the overnight trip, it was seen that local people got involved with tour company by providing some services to the tourists such as preparing some meals, providing a long-tailed boat to travel around the island, selling local products, and local show. In overall, this tour was scored of 29.53.

2. Company B (Thailand)

Table 4.3 Results of tour observation – Company B

Issues to be observed		
1. Nature element	‘NO’	‘YES’
	(0)	Needs improvement Acceptable (1.25) (2.5)
1.1 Does the company provide a trip to visit uncontaminated natural areas or protected areas?		√
1.2 Does the company provide a nature-based activity?		√
1.3 Does the company arrange a low or non-consumptive activity?		√
1.4 Does the company provide a trip to visit cultural attractions or local community nearby ecotourism destination?		√
2. Education element	‘NO’	‘YES’
	(0)	Needs improvement Acceptable (1.25) (2.5)
2.1 Does the company provide information for travelers to learn about the nature or environment of ecotourism destination?		√
2.2 Does the company provide educational activity for travelers to learn/understand about the nature, ecosystem or environment of ecotourism destination?		√
2.3 Does the company provide information to encourage travelers to appreciate or respect the nature?	√	
3. Impact element	‘NO’	‘YES’
	(0)	Needs improvement Acceptable (0.83) (1.66)
3.1 Does the company comply the rules/regulations of the areas visited?		√
3.2 Does the company maintain low or minimal travelers’ impact to the environment and/or local community?		√
3.3 Does the company avoid disturbing wildlife or wildlife habitats?		√
3.4 Does the company have a proper way to manage waste occurred during the trip?		√
3.5 Does the company maintain a small group of travelers when visiting ecotourism destination?		√
4. Community element	‘NO’	‘YES’
	(0)	Needs improvement Acceptable (0.83) (1.66)
4.1 Does the company encourage local use or purchase of local products/services?		√
4.2 Does the company provide travelers an activity to learn or appreciate local culture?		√
4.3 Does the company involve local people in any tour activities?		√
Total score (30.8)		23.70

Following Table 4.3 (company B, Thailand), this tour was a day trip visiting a forestry area (near the national park) in Surat Thani Province by a bus (14 customers). Despite of the natural areas, the land seemed to be owned by the company (private land). The observations were made since the beginning of the trip. It was found that only some practices were implemented such as briefing the areas visited, guiding some proper behavior (e.g. what can do and don't in the areas), and informing tour activities (i.e. elephant trekking and river canoeing). While providing any information, a tour guide always used a verbal communication by informing or talking without any hard copy of the information. Furthermore, during the tour activities, no explanation was given regarding the nature or the ecosystem of the areas visited. However, the company maintained a small group of travelers by dividing them into two groups in order to do two activities at the same time; one group took elephant trekking while another group did canoeing along the river. The canoeing activity took place in the natural area (along the river), however, the elephant trekking was conducted in a private land of the tour company. In the elephant camp, there were local products (souvenirs) for sale but not all of them were made by local residents as tour guide said they were made from company staff (non-local residents). Furthermore, it was observed that many products were not originally from the local community in Southern area. They were more likely from the northern Thailand because they were made from wood. For this trip, there was a local visit but it seemed to be community that the company B has established. The total score earned from this trip was rated 23.70.

3. Company C (Malaysia)

Table 4.4 Results of tour observation - Company C

Issues to be observed			
1. Nature element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement (1.25)	Acceptable (2.5)
1.1 Does the company provide a trip to visit uncontaminated natural areas or protected areas?			√
1.2 Does the company provide a nature-based activity?			√
1.3 Does the company arrange a low or non-consumptive activity?			√
1.4 Does the company provide a trip to visit cultural attractions or local community nearby ecotourism destination?	√		
2. Education element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement (1.25)	Acceptable (2.5)
2.1 Does the company provide information for travelers to learn about the nature or environment of ecotourism destination?			√
2.2 Does the company provide educational activity for travelers to learn/understand about the nature, ecosystem or environment of ecotourism destination?			√
2.3 Does the company provide information to encourage travelers to appreciate or respect the nature?		√	
3. Impact element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement (0.83)	Acceptable (1.66)
3.1 Does the company comply the rules/regulations of the areas visited?			√
3.2 Does the company maintain low or minimal travelers’ impact to the environment and/or local community?			√
3.3 Does the company avoid disturbing wildlife or wildlife habitats?			√
3.4 Does the company have a proper way to manage waste occurred during the trip?			√
3.5 Does the company maintain a small group of travelers when visiting ecotourism destination?			√
4. Community element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement (0.83)	Acceptable (1.66)
4.1 Does the company encourage local use or purchase of local products/services?	√		
4.2 Does the company provide travelers an activity to learn or appreciate local culture?	√		
4.3 Does the company involve local people in any tour activities?	√		
Total score (30.8)		22.05	

Following Table 4.4 (company C, Malaysia), this tour was a day trip (trekking tour) visiting Penang Natural Park with 9 people joining the trip. When arriving at the natural park, tour guide took us to the visitor office to brief some information about the park. At the visitor office, there was information about the flora and fauna in terms of posters and brochures. There was enough information for tourists to learn about the natural resources of the park. This trip was a trekking with a low impact nature-based activity in ecotourism. While walking through the park (nature trail), tour guide pointed us to observe the tourist signs informing visitor of what is prohibited in the park, for example, no littering, no entrance and no picking flowers. When passing through the important flora areas, tour leader explained us different types of the flora and their value. Wildlife (e.g. monkeys, birds, squirrels) were also found occasionally during the trip. When seeing them, tour leader pointed us to see them and talked about their species and habitants. In the mid of the trip, tour guide took us to a canopy walk activity. Canopy walk is a walkway providing pedestrian access to the forest. The objective of the canopy is to provide a nature-based activity for having visitors explore/experience rainforest's treetops. The walk-way was about 100-200 meter-length and 20 meter-height above the trees. It was observed that taking the canopy walk also enhances learning about the rainforest. Tourists seemed to have fun for this canopy walk. However, there was no local or community visit on this trip. The score on this trip was 22.05.

4. Company D (Malaysia)

Table 4.5 Results of tour observation - Company D

Issues to be observed		
1. Nature element	‘NO’	‘YES’
	(0)	Needs improvement (1.25) Acceptable (2.5)
1.1 Does the company provide a trip to visit uncontaminated natural areas or protected areas?		√
1.2 Does the company provide a nature-based activity?	√	
1.3 Does the company arrange a low or non-consumptive activity?		√
1.4 Does the company provide a trip to visit cultural attractions or local community nearby ecotourism destination?		√
2. Education element	‘NO’	‘YES’
	(0)	Needs improvement (1.25) Acceptable (2.5)
2.1 Does the company provide information for travelers to learn about the nature or environment of ecotourism destination?		√
2.2 Does the company provide educational activity for travelers to learn/understand about the nature, ecosystem or environment of ecotourism destination??		√
2.3 Does the company provide information to encourage travelers to appreciate or respect the nature?		√
3. Impact element	‘NO’	‘YES’
	(0)	Needs improvement (0.83) Acceptable (1.66)
3.1 Does the company comply the rules/regulations of the areas visited?		√
3.2 Does the company maintain low or minimal travelers’ impact to the environment and/or local community?		√
3.3 Does the company avoid disturbing wildlife or wildlife habitats?		√
3.4 Does the company have a proper way to manage waste occurred during the trip?		√
3.5 Does the company maintain a small group of travelers when visiting ecotourism destination?		√
4. Community element	‘NO’	‘YES’
	(0)	Needs improvement (0.83) Acceptable (1.66)
4.1 Does the company encourage local use or purchase of local products/services?		√
4.2 Does the company provide travelers an activity to learn or appreciate local culture?	√	
4.3 Does the company involve local people in any tour activities?	√	
Total score (30.8)		21.63

According to Table 4.5 (company D, Malaysia), this trip was a day trip visiting Penang Hill. There were 11 people joining the trip. Penang Hill is one of the famous natural areas in Penang. In order to reach to the top of the hill, the group took a cable car up to the hill with a five-minute ride. When arriving at the hill, tour guide quickly briefed about the background of the place and gave a brochure containing map of Penang Hill and the information of flora and fauna. It was observed that the area of Penang Hill has been developed for the mass tourism rather than a protected area. This trip was more likely to be an educational trip (or nature trail) in the natural areas. Besides walking around the area, tour guide hired a golf cart (low impact) to take the group to explore the nature of the hill. The route was approximately 3-4 kilometers. By taking the golf cart, tourists can learn a bit about the nature on Penang Hill. However, tourists were not really encouraged to appreciate the nature. They were more likely to be in the sightseeing trip in a natural area. On the route, the golf cart stopped at major interesting points, for example, old houses, heritage buildings and forestry areas. Some fauna were also found such as birds, squirrels, and monkeys. Little information was provided regarding the fauna. On the Penang Hill, there were some local vendors selling some products such as tea, local food and souvenirs. However, little attention was highlighted by tour guide. The overall score on this tour was 21.63.

5. Company E (Indonesia)

Table 4.6 Results of tour observation – Company E

Issues to be observed		
1. Nature element	‘NO’	‘YES’
	(0)	Needs improvement (1.25) Acceptable (2.5)
1.1 Does the company provide a trip to visit uncontaminated natural areas or protected areas?		√
1.2 Does the company provide a nature-based activity?		√
1.3 Does the company arrange a low or non-consumptive activity?		√
1.4 Does the company provide a trip to visit cultural attractions or local community nearby ecotourism destination?		√
2. Education element	‘NO’	‘YES’
	(0)	Needs improvement (1.25) Acceptable (2.5)
2.1 Does the company provide information for travelers to learn about the nature or environment of ecotourism destination?		√
2.2 Does the company provide educational activity for travelers to learn/understand about the nature, ecosystem or environment of ecotourism destination??		√
2.3 Does the company provide information to encourage travelers to appreciate or respect the nature?		√
3. Impact element	‘NO’	‘YES’
	(0)	Needs improvement (0.83) Acceptable (1.66)
3.1 Does the company comply the rules/regulations of the areas visited?		√
3.2 Does the company maintain low or minimal travelers’ impact to the environment and/or local community?		√
3.3 Does the company avoid disturbing wildlife or wildlife habitats?		√
3.4 Does the company have a proper way to manage waste occurred during the trip?		√
3.5 Does the company maintain a small group of travelers when visiting ecotourism destination?		√
4. Community element	‘NO’	‘YES’
	(0)	Needs improvement (0.83) Acceptable (1.66)
4.1 Does the company encourage local use or purchase of local products/services?		√
4.2 Does the company provide travelers an activity to learn or appreciate local culture?		√
4.3 Does the company involve local people in any tour activities?	√	
Total score (30.8)		27.87

Following Table 4.6 (company E, Indonesia), this tour was a day trip (trekking tour) visiting a natural park in Bali with 8 people joining the trip. Trekking is a low impact nature-based activity in ecotourism. At the site, tour guide introduced us to a naturalist who was a tour leader for this trip. It was observed that the company did not use its own guide to conduct the tour in the natural park. At the beginning of the trip, tour leader gave an introduction of the area visited. He explained us about the area, environment, flora and fauna. When passing the important flora areas, tour leader explained us different types of the flora. He also demonstrated how some flora could be used for wound healing and medical herbs. When seeing wildlife (e.g. monkeys, birds, snakes), tour leader pointed us to see them and talked a bit about the wildlife, for example, their species and habitants. Furthermore, some advice was given for not making loud noise and disturbing them. It should be noted that the trekking trip in Bali usually has a small number of travelers in a group; resulting in a minimal impact to the environment. There was no local or community visit on this trip. The score on this trip was 27.87.

6. Company F (Indonesia)

Table 4.7 Results of tour observation – Company F

Issues to be observed		
1. Nature element	‘NO’	‘YES’
	(0)	Needs improvement Acceptable (1.25) (2.5)
1.1 Does the company provide a trip to visit uncontaminated natural areas or protected areas?		√
1.2 Does the company provide a nature-based activity?		√
1.3 Does the company arrange a low or non-consumptive activity?		√
1.4 Does the company provide a trip to visit cultural attractions or local community nearby ecotourism destination?		√
2. Education element	‘NO’	‘YES’
	(0)	Needs improvement Acceptable (1.25) (2.5)
2.1 Does the company provide information for travelers to learn about the nature or environment of ecotourism destination?		√
2.2 Does the company provide educational activity for travelers to learn/understand about the nature, ecosystem or environment of ecotourism destination??		√
2.3 Does the company provide information to encourage travelers to appreciate or respect the nature?		√
3. Impact element	‘NO’	‘YES’
	(0)	Needs improvement Acceptable (0.83) (1.66)
3.1 Does the company comply the rules/regulations of the areas visited?		√
3.2 Does the company maintain low or minimal travelers’ impact to the environment and/or local community?		√
3.3 Does the company avoid disturbing wildlife or wildlife habitats?		√
3.4 Does the company have a proper way to manage waste occurred during the trip?		√
3.5 Does the company maintain a small group of travelers when visiting ecotourism destination?		√
4. Community element	‘NO’	‘YES’
	(0)	Needs improvement Acceptable (0.83) (1.66)
4.1 Does the company encourage local use or purchase of local products/services?		√
4.2 Does the company provide travelers an activity to learn or appreciate local culture?		√
4.3 Does the company involve local people in any tour activities?	√	
Total score (30.8)		25.37

According to Table 4.7 (company F, Indonesia), this tour was a cycling day tour visiting a rural area (countryside) of Bali through natural and cultural attractions. Traveling by a bicycle is a low impact activity. There were with 11 people joining this trip. The routing of the trip was not fully qualified as an ecotourism trip like the one in the natural park or protected area. The starting point was at the rural area of Bali and went through a bamboo forest and local villages. At the beginning of the trip, tour guide gave us an introduction of the area visited by telling us about the area's background, its environment and local culture. During the trip, the group went through forestry area and local villages (communities). There were some explanation of the natural resources of the area visited such as names of the trees and its background. When passing the villages, we saw a local way of life, for example, planting and harvesting rice from the rice field and local markets (like an agro-tourism). It was observed that more information was provided for local way of life rather than the natural areas. Tour guide encouraged tourists to buy local products if they wished. Some tourists bought some local product from the market and vendors. When passing through the villages, the group stopped at major attractions (e.g. temples, local houses) and took some photos. At the end of the trip, it was observed that the information provided from tour guide was mainly about local culture, attractions and people rather than on the appreciation of the natural environment. The overall score of this trip was 25.37.

Section 4.3 Results of interview from tour operators

This section (Tables 4.8 – 4.14) presents the results of interviews from each tour operator (company). Similarly to the results of tour observation, the issues to be interviewed were mainly based on the **outline of interview form** in Chapter 3 (Table 3.4). The results are as follows:

1. Company A (Thailand)

Table 4.8 Interview result of company A

Issues to be interviewed		
1. Education element	'NO' (0)	'YES' Needs improvement Acceptable (1.25) (2.5)
1.1 Does the company provide education or knowledge for local residents regarding natural awareness or conservation?		√
2. Conservation element	'NO' (0)	'YES' Needs improvement Acceptable (1.25) (2.5)
2.1 Does the company have a project /activity to help protect or conserve wildlife, plants or natural resources?		√
2.2 Does the company have a project /activity to do with local community or state agency on natural conservation?		√
2.3 Does the company have a project /activity to maintain or enhance the ecosystem or environment of ecotourism destination?		√
2.4 Does the company incorporate conservation issue into its management plan?		√
3. Impact element	'NO' (0)	'YES' Needs improvement Acceptable (0.83) (1.66)
3.1 Does the company consider the issue of area's carrying capacity?		√
4. Community element	'NO' (0)	'YES' Needs improvement Acceptable (0.83) (1.66)
4.1 Does the company hire local residents in relation to business operations?		√
4.2 Does the company involve local people in any tour planning?	√	
4.3 Does the company provide any local contribution such as education or natural conservation?		√
5. Corporate element	'NO' (0)	'YES' Needs improvement Acceptable (1.66) (3.33)
5.1 Does the company have a policy or a statement to promote sustainable tourism, ecotourism or responsible tourism?		√
5.2 Does the company have a code of conduct for tour activities to prevent the degradation of the environment?		√
5.3 Does the company provide employees a training on ecotourism or related field?		√
Total score (29.2)		27.48

Following Table 4.8, interview result of company A (Thailand), the information can be summarized as follows. The company has a policy to promote sustainable tourism in Phuket. In fact, the company intends to be a responsible tour operator. As the owner is a local resident of Phuket, he wants his company to contribute both economically and environmentally to the local area by doing several things to develop his hometown. Company A has put a lot of efforts on training its tour guides on professional training. In addition to the professional training, all tour guides were trained in relation to the nature and the environment (e.g. ecosystem, flora, fauna, and wildlife). Company A not only urges its staff to have responsible minds, it also has established a written code of conduct for tour activities in order to avoid the degradation of the environment. Based on the interview, the company said that it considers the issue of area's carrying capacity by limiting the number of travelers joining the tours (can be seen from the observation as well). As concerning with the natural environment, company A aims to create the natural and environmental awareness among its tour guides, customers, and local residents by educating them when possible. Since the owner of the company has built a good relationship with the local residents, he has encouraged them to respect the nature on the island by establishing some conservation projects such as monkey and forestry conservation projects. Company A strongly supports local employment, especially for those who base in Phuket and nearby islands. All staff are local residents (both full-time and part time staff). Moreover, the company has encouraged local residents to offer home stay for travelers because this is another way to generate local economy. In terms of local involvement, the company attempts to let the community involved with the tour activities. For example, in a case of the overnight trip, local residents provide some services to tourists such as providing long-tailed boat for sightseeing and natural learning; preparing meals, and performing local show (cultural performance). However, local residents did not really participate in the tour planning. Each year the company pays money to the local community and arranges the activities with local residents and state agencies to clean up the pier and the destination areas around the islands (local clean-up project). It also educates local residents on Yao Noi and Yao Yai islands regarding environmental awareness and natural conservation by protecting mangrove forest and planting more beach forest on the islands. According to company A, it has frequently arranged a tour (e.g. student or voluntary groups) to visit the local community on the islands with the purpose to assist local schools in terms of physical or financial support such as repairing or building school's facilities, hosting lunch for school students or donating educational funds to poor students. In overall, company A earned a total score of 27.48.

Table 4.9 Interview result of company B (Thailand)

Issues to be interviewed		
1. Education element	'NO' (0)	'YES' Needs improvement Acceptable (1.25) (2.5)
1.1 Does the company provide education or knowledge for local residents regarding natural awareness or conservation?		√
2. Conservation element	'NO' (0)	'YES' Needs improvement Acceptable (1.25) (2.5)
2.1 Does the company have a project /activity to help protect or conserve wildlife, plants or natural resources?		√
2.2 Does the company have a project /activity to do with local community or state agency on natural conservation?		√
2.3 Does the company have a project /activity to maintain or enhance the ecosystem or environment of ecotourism destination?		√
2.4 Does the company incorporate conservation issue into its management plan?		√
3. Impact element	'NO' (0)	'YES' Needs improvement Acceptable (0.83) (1.66)
3.1 Does the company consider the issue of area's carrying capacity?		√
4. Community element	'NO' (0)	'YES' Needs improvement Acceptable (0.83) (1.66)
4.1 Does the company hire local residents in relation to business operations?		√
4.2 Does the company involve local people in any tour planning?	√	
4.3 Does the company provide any local contribution such as education or natural conservation?		√
5. Corporate element	'NO' (0)	'YES' Needs improvement Acceptable (1.66) (3.33)
5.1 Does the company have a policy or a statement to promote sustainable tourism, ecotourism or responsible tourism?		√
5.2 Does the company have a code of conduct for tour activities to prevent the degradation of the environment?		√
5.3 Does the company provide employees a training on ecotourism or related field?		√
Total score (29.2)		23.72

According to Table 4.9, interview result of company B (Thailand), the information can be summarized as follows. Company B has an aim to run a sustainable business that cares the environment and animals. In addition, the company concerns about children projects because it wants to help poor children with less opportunity, especially in the rural areas. The company has several conservation projects associated with animals (i.e. elephants) and children in some provinces. The company also has a policy to hire local people in Phuket and nearby provinces. The company cares about the area's carrying capacity at the destination by arranging different tours at different times to reduce congestion of the area. All tour guides received formal training

from the company regarding tour conducts, foreign language and first aid practice. According to company B, there are some trainings provided to the tour guides on the nature and the environment. In addition to helping local people by employment, the company helps the minority (hill tribes) in the northern Thailand by having them work at the elephant camps in Phuket and Surat Thani. The company also pays attention to wildlife conservation in Thailand, particularly Thai elephants due to a decreasing number of elephants in Thailand. It has established this project by setting the elephant camps in some provinces this is because the elephants from the northern Thailand are facing with the problems of starvation or overworking in illegal logging camps. According to company B, elephants working with the company have a better of living, and they are well protected (conservation). Revenues for helping these elephants come from the company and the donations of its customers when visiting elephant camps. Based on company B, most tour activities are conducted on its own land (elephant camps) both in Phuket and Surat Thani, thus, there is no much interaction with local residents. In terms of involving local residents on tour operations, Company B has no particular local community involvement with the tour operation. In overall, company B received a score of 23.72

Table 4.10 Interview result of company C (Malaysia)

Issues to be interviewed		
1. Education element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement Acceptable (1.25) (2.5)
1.1 Does the company provide education or knowledge for local residents regarding natural awareness or conservation?	√	
2. Conservation element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement Acceptable (1.25) (2.5)
2.1 Does the company have a project /activity to help protect or conserve wildlife, plants or natural resources?		√
2.2 Does the company have a project /activity to do with local community or state agency on natural conservation?		√
2.3 Does the company have a project /activity to maintain or enhance the ecosystem or environment of ecotourism destination?		√
2.4 Does the company incorporate conservation issue into its management plan?		√
3. Impact element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement Acceptable (0.83) (1.66)
3.1 Does the company consider the issue of area’s carrying capacity?		√
4. Community element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement Acceptable (0.83) (1.66)
4.1 Does the company hire local residents in relation to business operations?		√
4.2 Does the company involve local people in any tour planning?	√	
4.3 Does the company provide any local contribution such as education or natural conservation?		√
5. Corporate element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement Acceptable (1.66) (3.33)
5.1 Does the company have a policy or a statement to promote sustainable tourism, ecotourism or responsible tourism?		√
5.2 Does the company have a code of conduct for tour activities to prevent the degradation of the environment?		√
5.3 Does the company provide employees a training on ecotourism or related field?		√
Total score (29.2)		20.38

Based on Table 4.10, interview result of company C (Malaysia), the company did not have a particular activity for providing education or knowledge for local residents on natural awareness. However, the company has an activity to do with the locals in Penang. For example, it has joined the local organizations and schools to promote a project for tree-planting in Penang and wet areas. Regarding the impact element, the company disclosed that it has considered a group size when conducting a tour in an fragile environment (e.g. marine eco-tour). Most employees are Penang residents and nearby states. However, tour activity is overall controlled by the company. Company C also has a policy to promote sustainable tourism in Penang and Malaysia. Nevertheless, limited information is available through the Internet or other media. According to the company, tours offering in fragile areas do have a code of conduct for tour activities with written document. Most tour guides receive a general professional and standard trainings supported by the industry, not particularly focus on a special training. In overall, company C was rated the score of 20.38

Table 4.11 Interview result of company D (Malaysia)

Issues to be interviewed		
1. Education element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement Acceptable (1.25) (2.5)
1.1 Does the company provide education or knowledge for local residents regarding natural awareness or conservation?	√	
2. Conservation element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement Acceptable (1.25) (2.5)
2.1 Does the company have a project /activity to help protect or conserve wildlife, plants or natural resources?		√
2.2 Does the company have a project /activity to do with local community or state agency on natural conservation?		√
2.3 Does the company have a project /activity to maintain or enhance the ecosystem or environment of ecotourism destination?		√
2.4 Does the company incorporate conservation issue into its management plan?		√
3. Impact element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement Acceptable (0.83) (1.66)
3.1 Does the company consider the issue of area’s carrying capacity?		√
4. Community element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement Acceptable (0.83) (1.66)
4.1 Does the company hire local residents in relation to business operations?		√
4.2 Does the company involve local people in any tour planning?	√	
4.3 Does the company provide any local contribution such as education or natural conservation?		√
5. Corporate element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement Acceptable (1.66) (3.33)
5.1 Does the company have a policy or a statement to promote sustainable tourism, ecotourism or responsible tourism?		√
5.2 Does the company have a code of conduct for tour activities to prevent the degradation of the environment?		√
5.3 Does the company provide employees a training on ecotourism or related field?		√
Total score (29.2)		19.13

With regards to Table 4.11, interview result of company D (Malaysia), the information may be summarized as follows. The company does not have a particular activity for providing education or knowledge for local residents on natural awareness. However, the company works with state agency to fund a wildlife conservation project in Penang and Malaysia Peninsular. Furthermore, the company has an activity with the locals to promote an environmental earth day. This project aims to keep Penang clean and become a environmental friendly destination. Company staff have joined this annual activity with related stakeholders. Like other companies, the company revealed that it has considered a group size when conducting a tour in various areas. The company also recruits local residents to work with the company. More than half of the employees (local residents) have been working with the company more than ten years. All tour activities are administrated by the company. Company D also has a policy to promote environmental friendly tourism or green tourism in Penang. However, little information is available through the Internet or other media. According to the company, it has a code of conduct for natural tours. Most tour guides receive regular trainings from the company. In overall, company D was rated the score of 19.13.

Table 4.12 Interview result of company E (Indonesia)

Issues to be interviewed		
1. Education element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement Acceptable (1.25) (2.5)
1.1 Does the company provide education or knowledge for local residents regarding natural awareness or conservation?		√
2. Conservation element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement Acceptable (1.25) (2.5)
2.1 Does the company have a project /activity to help protect or conserve wildlife, plants or natural resources?		√
2.2 Does the company have a project /activity to do with local community or state agency on natural conservation?		√
2.3 Does the company have a project /activity to maintain or enhance the ecosystem or environment of ecotourism destination?		√
2.4 Does the company incorporate conservation issue into its management plan?		√
3. Impact element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement Acceptable (0.83) (1.66)
3.1 Does the company consider the issue of area’s carrying capacity?		√
4. Community element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement Acceptable (0.83) (1.66)
4.1 Does the company hire local residents in relation to business operations?		√
4.2 Does the company involve local people in any tour planning?	√	
4.3 Does the company provide any local contribution such as education or natural conservation?		√
5. Corporate element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement Acceptable (1.66) (3.33)
5.1 Does the company have a policy or a statement to promote sustainable tourism, ecotourism or responsible tourism?		√
5.2 Does the company have a code of conduct for tour activities to prevent the degradation of the environment?		√
5.3 Does the company provide employees a training on ecotourism or related field?		√
Total score (29.2)		25.80

According to Table 4.12, interview result of company E (Indonesia), the information may be concluded as follows. Company E consistently promotes and creates natural awareness and environmental conservation among the locals, particularly in the areas where its tours are conducted. The company also builds a good relationship with them. Moreover, the company has several projects to help protect/conservate wildlife by working with local organizations. For example, company E works with Bali Bird Park and Elephant Safari Park to bring public's attention to the conservation of the wildlife by raising funds for wildlife conservation. Some of its tour programs have a visit to those places. Regarding maintaining the ecosystem or natural resources, company E sometimes organizes conservation campaigns and works with related parties (e.g. local residents and subcontractors) to collect rubbish along the river and in the villages where it operates the tours. According to the interviews, the company incorporates the conservation issues (e.g. wildlife projects) into its management plan. On the impact element, company staff revealed that the company also pays attention to the issue of area's carrying capacity. When there is a big group (e.g. 20-30 people), the company may divide it into a small group (2-3 groups) for a better service and operation. In relation to community element, company E has a policy to hire local residents in several positions, for example, office staff, tour guides, and drivers. However, the company does not particularly involve local people in tour planning. Based on the interviews, it seemed that all of the tour planning is solely determined by the company's executives. The company also generates minimal community contribution on education/natural conservation in the areas where it operates. Regarding the corporate element, company staff disclosed that the company has a policy to promote sustainable tourism or ecotourism. However, it's not evidently appeared in the website or brochures. According to the interviews, the company has set up a code of conduct for tour activities since it needs to maintain the standard of tour activities, particular for the tour programs conducted in the natural parks. These tours are usually well planned by the operation department. The company also organizes several trainings to allow its guides to learn about environmental issues relevant to the specific destinations in which tours are conducted. The overall score for this company is 25.80.

Table 4.13 Interview result of company F (Indonesia)

Issues to be interviewed		
1. Education element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement Acceptable (1.25) (2.5)
1.1 Does the company provide education or knowledge for local residents regarding natural awareness or conservation?		√
2. Conservation element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement Acceptable (1.25) (2.5)
2.1 Does the company have a project /activity to help protect or conserve wildlife, plants or natural resources?		√
2.2 Does the company have a project /activity to do with local community or state agency on natural conservation?		√
2.3 Does the company have a project /activity to maintain or enhance the ecosystem or environment of ecotourism destination?		√
2.4 Does the company incorporate conservation issue into its management plan?		√
3. Impact element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement Acceptable (0.83) (1.66)
3.1 Does the company consider the issue of area’s carrying capacity?		√
4. Community element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement Acceptable (0.83) (1.66)
4.1 Does the company hire local residents in relation to business operations?		√
4.2 Does the company involve local people in any tour planning?	√	
4.3 Does the company provide any local contribution such as education or natural conservation?		√
5. Corporate element	‘NO’ (0)	‘YES’ Needs improvement Acceptable (1.66) (3.33)
5.1 Does the company have a policy or a statement to promote sustainable tourism, ecotourism or responsible tourism?		√
5.2 Does the company have a code of conduct for tour activities to prevent the degradation of the environment?		√
5.3 Does the company provide employees a training on ecotourism or related field?		√
Total score (29.2)		23.30

Following Table 4.13, interview result of company F (Indonesia), the information may be concluded as follows. Like company E, company F also promotes and creates natural awareness and environmental conservation among the locals, particularly in the areas where its tours are conducted. The company has maintained a good relationship with them for several years. According to the interviews, the company revealed that it has a conservation project with the locals. The company works with local schools on conservation projects and educational sessions on recycling. Furthermore, company F is currently raising fund for wildlife project by working with local zoo in Bali. However, these projects may not directly relevant to the areas where the tours are conducted. Regarding maintaining the ecosystem or natural resources, company F sometimes organizes conservation campaigns and works with related parties (e.g. local residents and subcontractors) to collect rubbish along the river and the areas where the tours are operated. On the impact element, company staff revealed that the company also pays attention to the issue of area's carrying capacity by monitoring a group size for tour activities, specially for a rafting activity. In relation to community element, company F has a policy to hire local residents in several positions, for example, office staff, tour guides, and drivers. However, the company does not particularly involve local people in tour planning. Like other companies, all of the tour planning is solely determined by the management team. Regarding the corporate element, company staff disclosed that the company has a policy to promote sustainable tourism or ecotourism. However, it's not evidently appeared in the website or brochures. According to the interviews, the company has set up a code of conduct for tour activities since it needs to maintain the standard of tour activities, particular for rafting and cycling activities. The company also organizes several trainings to allow its guides to learn about environmental issues relevant to the specific destinations in which tours are conducted. The score earned for this company is 23.30.

Section 4.4 Summary of Research Findings

This part is divided into 2 parts as follows:

- summary of qualitative findings
- summary of quantitative findings

1) Summary of qualitative findings

The first part summarizes the qualitative findings in term of the good practices (acceptable practices) of the tour operators from each country as previously presented from Table 4.2 – 4.7.

Table 4.14 Summary of the good practices from Thai tour operators

Ecotourism elements	Company A	Company B
1. Nature element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a visit to uncontaminated natural areas/protected areas (marine natural park) - Providing a nature-based and low/minimal activity (canoeing) - Arranging a trip to visit a local community (Yao Noi island) - Promoting natural awareness among the locals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing a nature-based and low/minimal activity (elephant riding and canoeing)
2. Education element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing information and activity for tourists to learn /appreciate the nature 	-
3. Conservation element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having monkey and forestry conservation projects with the locals on Yao Noi island 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having an elephant conservation project
4. Impact element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complying rules or regulations of the area - Maintaining a small group and low/minimal impact - Avoid disturbing wildlife - Having a proper way to manage waste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintaining a small group and low/minimal impact - Having a proper way to manage waste
5. Community element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encouraging local use/purchase - Providing an activity to learn/appreciate local culture (Thai boxing show) - Hiring local residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hiring local residents
6. Corporate element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having a policy to promote ecotourism/sustainable tourism - Having a code of conduct for tour activities - Providing a proper training for tour guides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having a policy to promote ecotourism/sustainable tourism - Having a code of conduct for tour activities - Providing a proper training for tour guides

Table 4.15 Summary of the good practices from Malaysian tour operators

Ecotourism elements	Company C	Company D
1. Nature element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a visit to uncontaminated natural areas/protected areas (Penang Natural Park) - Providing a nature-based and low/minimal activity (trekking and natural education) 	-
2. Education element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing information and activity for tourists to learn /appreciate the nature (canopy walking) 	Providing natural education/ nature trail
3. Conservation element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joining local organizations and schools for a tree-planting project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working with state agency for fund raising for wildlife conservation project in Penang
4. Impact element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintaining small group size 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintaining small group size
5. Community element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hiring local residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hiring local residents
6. Corporate element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having a policy to promote sustainable tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having a policy to promote environmental friendly tourism/green tourism

Table 4.16 Summary of the good practices from Indonesian tour operators

Ecotourism elements	Company E	Company F
1. Nature element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a visit to uncontaminated natural areas/protected areas - Providing a nature-based and low/minimal activity (trekking and natural education) - Promoting natural awareness among the locals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoting natural awareness among the locals
2. Education element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing information and activity for tourists to learn /appreciate the nature 	Providing a bicycle for a low impact activity
3. Conservation element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having a wildlife conservation project with local organizations (Bali Bird Park/Elephant Safari Park) - Organizing conservation campaigns with the locals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raising fund for a wildlife conservation project with the zoo - Organizing conservation campaigns with the locals
4. Impact element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintaining small group size 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintaining small group size
5. Community element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having a visit to local villages - Hiring local residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having a visit to local villages - Hiring local residents
6. Corporate element	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having a code of conduct for tour activities - Providing a proper training for tour guides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having a policy to promote ecotourism/sustainable tourism - Having a code of conduct for tour activities - Providing a proper training for tour guides

2) Summary of quantitative findings

The second part summarizes the quantitative findings in terms of observation and interview scores. The quantitative finding (Table 4.17 – 4.20) will provide an overall performance of the tour operators from 3 countries for the comparison and discussion purposes.

Table 4.17 Summary of observation and interview scores from Thai tour operators

Ecotourism elements	Company A	Company B
1. Nature element	10	7.5
2. Education element	8.75	5
3. Conservation element	10	7.5
4. Impact element	10	10
5. Community element	8.3	7.47
6. Corporate element	10	10
Total scores (60)	57.05	47.47

Table 4.18 Summary of observation and interview scores from Malaysian tour operators

Ecotourism elements	Company C	Company D
1. Nature element	7.5	6.25
2. Education element	6.25	6.25
3. Conservation element	8.75	7.5
4. Impact element	10	10
5. Community element	3.32	4.15
6. Corporate element	6.65	6.65
Total scores (60)	42.47	40.8

Table 4.19 Summary of observation and interview scores from Indonesian tour operators

Ecotourism elements	Company E	Company F
1. Nature element	10	8.75
2. Education element	8.75	7.5
3. Conservation element	10	7.5
4. Impact element	10	10
5. Community element	6.64	6.64
6. Corporate element	8.32	8.32
Total scores (60)	53.71	48.71

Table 4.20 Summary of overall scores for each tour operator

Company	A	B	C	D	E	F
Overall score (out of 60)	57.05	47.47	42.47	40.80	53.71	48.71
Ranking	1	4	5	6	2	3
Percentage	95%	80%	71%	68%	90%	81%
Performance	very good	good	fair	fair	very good	good

According to Table 4.20, company A from Thailand earned the highest score (95% representing very good performance), followed by company E from Indonesia (90% representing very good performance), company F from Indonesia (81% representing good performance), and company B from Thailand (80% representing good performance), respectively. These 4 companies received scores above or equivalent to 80%, suggesting that their tour practices are highly congruent to ecotourism practice. Whereas, company C (71%) and D (68%) from Malaysia got lower score than the other 4 companies, and their tour practices are interpreted as *fair* performance.

Section 4.5 Hypothesis testing

The research hypothesis is predicted that the evaluation scores on the ecotourism practices of tour operators in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia are different from one another.

In order to test the above research hypothesis, the statistical hypothesis is set up as follows:

H₀: The evaluation scores on the ecotourism practices of tour operators in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia *are not* different from one another.

H_a: The evaluation scores on the ecotourism practices of tour operators in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia *are different* from one another.

Table 4.21 F-test for the comparison of mean difference among 6 tour operators

	A	B	C	D	E	F	F value	Sig.
Overall scores	57.05a	47.47b	42.47c	40.80c	53.71a	48.71b	30.23	.002*

Remark: a, b, c indicates statistically mean difference (a > b > c)

Following Table 4.21, the F-test revealed statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) on the evaluation scores among the six companies. It indicated that the mean score among the six companies were different from one another (most companies). For instance, the scores of company A and E (similar performance) were different from those of company B, C, D, and F.

While the scores of B and F (similar performance) were different from those of company A, C, D, and E. Finally, the scores of company C and D (similar performance) were different from those of A, B, E, and F. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that evaluation scores on the ecotourism practices of tour operators in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia are different from one another. Therefore, the findings reject the null hypothesis (H_0).

Section 4.6 Research Discussions

This section will discuss the research findings in order to explain what this study has found when compared to ecotourism literature by using scores from **Table 4.17 – 4.19** (summary of observation and interview scores) as the base for discussions. The discussions are made on each element of ecotourism as follows:

On the first element - nature element, company A and company E did well on this element. They got full score of 10 because both companies arranged tours to visit natural parks which are highly appropriate places for ecotourism experience. According to the literature, ecotourism places are the natural areas that are uncontaminated, undisturbed or protected areas. These places are the focus of ecotourism trips because of the quality of the natural environment and the exposure to an entire ecosystem for natural learning opportunity (Sirikaya et al., 1999; Weaver, 2001; Cristina; 2004). Whereas company B, C, D and F arranged tours to visit similar places (e.g. forestry areas or developed areas) but the quality of the natural environment and learning opportunity/appreciation may be inferior. Because the areas being visited have been developed for a certain level; resulting in lower scores on this element.

Regarding the education element, company A and company E did well again on this element (better than other companies). They got equal score of 8.75 out of 10 scores. They missed some scores on the issue of providing information to encourage travelers to appreciate/respect the nature. Actually, they did but it seemed that there was little focus on this issue. During the observation, tour guides paid much attention to explain the places visited but almost ignored to encourage or urge travelers to respect the nature. However, they implemented education element better than company B, C, D and F. These companies got scores between 5 -7.5 scores. They ignored several practices on education element. For example, little information was provided for travelers to learn about the nature, lack of educational activities during the trips, and little effort to urge travelers to appreciate/respect the nature. Based on the literature, learning about the nature is a primary focus of ecotourism, and it forms the basis of ecotourism experience (Blamey, 2001; Fennell, 2003). The lack of education element can disqualify the component and experience of ecotourism (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996). Education element is important because it can provide

travelers a better understanding and respect for the nature of the destination areas, and thereby reduce inappropriate behaviors and negative impact (Weaver, 2001; Chester & Crabtree, 2002).

For the conservation element, company A and company E did well on this element. They got full score of 10. The rests for company B, C, D, and F also performed at the acceptable level on this element because their scores were in the good range of 7.5 – 8.5. What they missed is the conservation projects or activities which are not directly relevant to their tour operation. For example, some companies work with the local organizations (e.g. schools, zoos) in order to conserve natural resources or wildlife. Although these projects are good but they are not the ones that directly involved with the actual tour operations of the companies. Given a case of company A with full score, it has established several conservation projects with the local residents on Yao Noi and Yao Yai islands where the tours are operated. These project are, for example, monkey and forestry conservation projects. This means that company A makes the conservation in the places where they bring tourists to visit. In a simple word, its tour operation affect the local residents in terms of tourism, yet, the company is responsible for the community by maintaining the ecosystem through an establishment of the conservation projects on the islands. Similarly to company E, it has worked with Bali Bird Park and Elephant Safari Park by raising funds for wildlife conservation. Some of its tour programs have a visit to these places. Furthermore, the company also works with local parties to collect rubbish along the rivers and villages where the tours are operated. Conservation element is important because it is the goal of ecotourism (Diamantis, 1999; Ross & Wall, 1999). As mentioned in chapter 2, ecotourism focuses on the quality of the natural environment. In order to maintain the quality of the destinations, we need conservation of natural resources. This is because conservation will help maintain, protect and enhance the quality of the ecotourism destinations from misconduct and inappropriate behaviors of related stakeholders. Therefore, conservation of resources should be undertaken in the ecotourism destinations or the area being visited (Valentine, 1993; Wearing & Neil, 2009).

In relation to impact element, it was found that every company did well on this element by obtaining a full score of 10. This suggests these companies are responsible tour operators by carefully arranging tours and their activities with a minimal impact to the environment. According to the literature, impact element aims to support conservation by reducing the negative impact from visitors' behaviors and tour operations (Fennell, 2003; Cristina, 2004). Moreover, the impact element is argued to be one of the principles that qualify as true ecotourism (Wallace & Pierce, 1996). The impact practices implemented among 6 companies were, for example, complying the rules/regulations, avoiding disturbing wildlife, having a proper way for waste management, and maintaining a small group.

In terms of the community element, there is a variation of scores for this element ranging between 3.32 – 8.3 scores. Among 6 companies, company A got a higher score (8.3 scores) than other companies because it has done several contributions for the local community. For instance, when visiting a local community (Yao Noi island), company A urged travelers to buy local food and souvenirs. It also involved local residents in a cultural performance by presenting a Thai boxing show to travelers. Travelers had a chance to learn and appreciate Thai culture through the boxing performance and Thai food. In addition, company A also promotes local employment by hiring local residents from Yao Noi island to work with the company such bus/boat drivers, office staff and tour guides. Importantly, the company also educates local residents on the island regarding the environmental awareness and natural conservation by protecting mangrove forest and beach forest. The reasons why other companies got low scores than company A because several companies did not offer a local visit and overnight trip; resulting in a low score. Some of them also missed several practices when compared to company A. The local visit can give a great impact on the community contribution, like company A did.

For the final element – corporate element, company A and B got the full score of 10 for this element when compared to the other companies whose scores were between 6.65 – 8.32. As mentioned in chapter 2, the corporate element is argued to be a starting point of the tour operators' ecotourism practices. Because it gives an establishment of ecotourism elements (practices) from the beginning (nature element) to the end (community element) through company's policy (corporate element). Several companies may ignore this element and got a lower score such as the inexplicit (unclear) policy to promote ecotourism or responsible tourism as well as the lack of code of conduct for tour activities and proper environment training for tour guides.

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Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

This is the final chapter of the research report. The purpose of this chapter is to conclude research findings, provide recommendations, and address research limitations. In order to simplify this chapter, it has been divided into 3 main sections as follows:

Outline of chapter 5

Section	Main contents
Section 5.1	Conclusions
Section 5.2	Recommendations 5.2.1 Recommendations on the six elements of ecotourism 5.2.2 Recommendations on developing ecotourism standard for tour operators in ASEAN countries
Section 5.3	Research limitations and future research opportunities

5.1 Conclusions

This study had the major purpose to develop the ecotourism good practices for tour operators in ASEAN countries through the following research objectives: 1) to examine ecotourism practices of tour operators in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia by employing the criteria and indicators from the Ecotourism Model for Tour Operators (EMTO) 2) to compare and analyze the ecotourism practices of tour operators in those countries. As a result, Table 5.1 – 5.3 summarize the overall research findings as follows:

5.1.1) Conclusion of Company A and B (Thailand)

Table 5.1 Conclusion of company A and B

Criteria	Company A	Company B
1. Nature element	The company provided an overnight trip (travel by boat) to visit natural areas around Phang Nga bay national park by arranging canoes as a nature-based activity to enjoy the scenery as well as to learn the nature environment. In addition, they visited and stayed overnight on Yao Noi island.	The company provided a day trip (travel by bus) to visit a forestry area and an elephant camp near the national park in Surat Thani Province. There were some nature-based activities provided for tourists (i.e. canoeing and elephant riding).
2. Education element	The company provided tourists the knowledge and natural education during the trip by briefing an introduction of the areas visited, presenting a booklet on marine animals and plants. While canoeing, tour guides explained about the ecosystem of the areas. At certain points of interest, they stopped to explain more information. Besides tourists, the company also educates local residents on Yao Noi island to care and protect natural resources of their areas. However , little effort was done to encourage tourists to appreciate or respect the nature.	There was a short introduction briefing tourists the areas visited. However , during the trip, there was no written document given to tourists to learn about the nature. No effort has been made to promote natural learning or appreciation.
3. Conservation element	In overall , the company has done several things in relation to the conservation, particularly, on Yao Noi island (local community) where the tours are operated. It has encouraged local residents to care and protect the natural resources by not destroying them. In the meantime, the company has attempted to persuade local residents to plant beach forest and mangrove forest on the island. It has also funded wildlife conservation project (i.e. monkeys and birds) on the island. Furthermore, the company has set up a big cleaning day annually to work with the local community to clean up the areas where the tours are operated (piers, beaches and ecotourism destinations).	The company is currently running an elephant conservation project in Phuket and Surat Thani Province. It also sends the staff to participate in an event of cleaning tourist attractions in Phuket (piers, beaches, islands). However , the company still lacks the actual conservation on ecotourism destinations (the area where its tours are operated).
4. Impact element	There are several procedures that the company has attempted to reduce its impacts to the environment. When conducting the tours in natural areas, the company always complies rules and regulations of the areas visited (e.g. national parks or protected areas). During the trip, tour guides advised tourists regarding proper behavior when visiting the natural areas as well as what they can do and should not in order to reduce the impacts to the environment. The company usually limits the number of tourists (2 people) on a canoe to provide a personalized service and safety during canoeing. Normally, the company sets the policy of 24 tourists per trip. If the group is greater than this number, it would divide them into 2	In general, the company implements some impact consideration. For example, there was a short guidance advising tourists on proper behavior when visiting the natural area. Garbage was properly collected during the trip. There was a consideration of small groups while doing some activities (canoeing, elephant riding). However , other relevant practices were rarely undertaken during the trip.

	groups to reduce crowdedness and impacts to the destinations. Food and drink (including any plastic item) was not allowed to be taken when canoeing to prevent garbage impact. The garbage on board was properly collected during the trip.	
5. Community element	When visiting the local village (Yao Noi island), tour guides briefly informed tourists about the local culture. They also urged tourists not to buy shells or other animal products as souvenirs. With the overnight trip, tourists had a chance to learn local life and culture such as learning local language and Thai cooking. They also had a chance to watch and learn Thai boxing performance arranged by tour company. It was observed that local people got involved with tour company by providing some services to the tourists such as preparing some meals, providing a long-tailed boat to travel around the island, selling local products, and local show. However , the company revealed that most tours are organized by the company, there was no local involvement in tour planning. In relation to local employment, the company recruits local people from Phuket and Yao Noi island to work with it. Many of them work as tour guides, some are bus drivers, boat captains, boat assistants, and cooks.	During the trip, there was a visit at the elephant camp where there were souvenirs for sale. It was observed that most people at the camp might not be the local residents. According to the interview, some locals are employed in relation to business operations. However , the actual community involvement or participation was not implemented.
6. Corporate element	The company has a policy to promote sustainable tourism in Phuket and nearby areas where the tours operate. It also has a written code of conduct for tour activities. Furthermore, the company provides tour guide both professional and environmental trainings.	The company has a policy to promote sustainable tourism in Phuket and nearby provinces. It has a written code of conduct for tour activities. The company provides tour guides a professional training including the training on the natural environment.
Total score (60)	57.05 scores	47.47 scores

5.1.2) Conclusion of Company C and D (Malaysia)

Table 5.2 Conclusion of company C and D

Criteria	Company C	Company D
1. Nature element	The company provided a trip to visit Penang Natural Park. The area is a good place to learn and enjoy the beauty of the nature. There was a trekking activity and canopy walk as nature-based activities for tourists to enjoy the scenery and learn about the natural environment in the park.	The company provided a trip to visit Penang Hill. The area is fairly developed as nature-based mass tourism. However , there was no actual nature-based activity provided for tourists. Tourists spent much time on a golf cart to explore the area.
2. Education element	Tour guide briefed some information about the natural park as well as flora and fauna in the area. Information or knowledge was provided through learning from tour guide and park signs. Tourists also learn and appreciate the nature through the canopy walk activity.	There was a short introduction briefing tourists the areas visited. Nevertheless , tourists were not really encouraged to appreciate the nature. Little effort was made to promote natural learning or appreciation. The trip was more likely to be a sightseeing trip in a natural area.
3. Conservation element	The company has a conservation project working with local organizations and schools to promote planting trees around Penang island where its most tours are operated.	The company has a funding project for wildlife conservation in Penang and mainland peninsular. The company also join with the locals and the industry to keep the city clean.
4. Impact element	The company maintain a small group size when conducting tour activities in a fragile environment, particularly for the marine eco-tours.	The company maintain a small group size when arranging tour activities.
5. Community element	There was no local visit in this trip. However , the company has a policy to hire local residents to work with it in several positions.	Although there was no an actual local visit during the trip. However , on the Penang Hill, there were some local vendors selling local products such as tea, food and souvenirs. Tourist can buy these products from local people. Yet , little attention was highlighted by tour guide. In relation to local employment, the company recruits local residents to work with it. More than half of its staff have been working with the company more than 10 years.
6. Corporate element	The company has a policy to promote sustainable tourism in Penang and Malaysia peninsular. Nevertheless , limited information is available through the Internet and other media. The company also has a code of conduct for touring in fragile areas. Most of tour guides received professional and standard training.	The company has a policy to promote environmental friendly tourism and green tourism in Penang. However , little information is available from the company and on the Internet. The company also has a code of conduct for natural tours. Most of tour guides received professional and standard trainings.
Total score (60)	42.47 scores	40.8 scores

5.1.3) Conclusion of Company E and F (Indonesia)

Table 5.3 Conclusion of company E and F

Criteria	Company E	Company F
1. Nature element	The company provided a trip to visit a natural park in Bali. This was a good place to learn and enjoy the beauty of the true nature. There was a trekking activity during the trip. The trekking was arranged along the rainforest in the natural park with lots of flora and fauna.	The company provided a trip to visit a rural areas in Bali by traveling pass through natural and cultural attractions. This trip used a bicycle as a low impact activity. However , the routing of the cycling was not fully regarded as ecotourism site.
2. Education element	Tour guide gave an introduction of the natural park, and also explained about the environment, flora and fauna in the park. Tour guide reminded tourists to avoid disturbing wildlife. While trekking, there were some explanation from tour guide throughout the trip.	Tour guide made a brief information of the routing and the areas visited. Information was regularly provided when visiting major attractions including natural and cultural sites. More information was given on cultural aspect and local life of people.
3. Conservation element	The company has several projects to protect and conserve the wildlife by working with local organizations such as Bali Bird Park and Elephant Safari Park. Some of its tour programs have a visit to these places. The company also has a conservation campaigns to collect rubbish along the river and in villages where tours are operated.	The company has several conservation projects. For example, it works with local schools on recycling projects, and raises funds with Bali local zoo for wildlife conservation. However , these projects may not be directly relevant to the areas where its tour are operated. In relation to its operation, the company has a conservation campaign by collecting rubbish (with local residents) along the areas where tourists visit.
4. Impact element	The company pays attention to area's carrying capacity by controlling a small group when visiting a natural area. The company also informs tourists of what can do and should not do when visiting the protected areas.	The company pays attention to area's carrying capacity by controlling a small group, particularly for the rafting activity.
5. Community element	During the trip, there was no local visit. For employment, the company has a policy to hire local residents in several positions in the company. However , no local people are involved in tour planning.	There were local visits during the trip. Tour guides encouraged tourists to buy local products. For employment, the company has a policy to hire local residents in several positions. However , no local people are involved in tour planning.
6. Corporate element	The company has a policy to promote ecotourism and sustainable tourism in Bali. It has also set up a code of conduct for tour activities to reduce the impact. The company has a regular training for its guides including natural environment.	The company has a policy to promote ecotourism and sustainable tourism in Bali. Yet , information is not available through Internet and other media. The company has set up a code of conduct for tour activities to reduce the impact. The company has a training for its guides on natural environment.
Total score (60)	53.71 scores	48.71 scores

5.1.4) Conclusion of Evaluation Scores for 6 Companies

Table 5.4 Conclusion of evaluation scores for 6 companies

Ecotourism elements	Company A Thailand	Company B Thailand	Company C Malaysia	Company D Malaysia	Company E Indonesia	Company F Indonesia
1. Nature element	10	7.5	7.5	6.25	10	8.75
2. Education element	8.75	5	6.25	6.25	8.75	7.5
3. Conservation element	10	7.5	8.75	7.5	10	7.5
4. Impact element	10	10	10	10	10	10
5. Community element	8.3	7.47	3.32	4.15	6.64	6.64
6. Corporate element	10	10	6.65	6.65	8.32	8.32
Total scores (60)	57.05	47.47	42.47	40.8	53.71	48.71
(100%)	(95%)	(80%)	(71%)	(68%)	(90%)	(81%)
(interpretation)	very good	good	fair	fair	very good	good

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Recommendations on the six elements of ecotourism

This section will be the recommendations based on the ecotourism principles and the actual practices examined in this study. The recommendations are proposed on each element of ecotourism as follows:

Table 5.5 Recommendations on nature element and its good practices

1. Nature element	Recommended good practices
<p>The first and the basic component of ecotourism is a visit to natural areas, particularly the uncontaminated or undisturbed areas. Tour operators may choose the natural environment that is well maintained or protected as for the learning and appreciation purposes. Because if we travel to the contaminated areas, it could be possible that there is no natural heritage to learn or appreciate. According to the literature (Matysek and Kriwoken 2003), the quality of the natural environment and the exposure to the entire ecosystem for learning opportunity <i>form</i> the ecotourism experience. In this regard, the tour operators may choose the undisturbed or uncontaminated areas (e.g. national parks, protected areas or wetlands, coastal/marine areas, wildlife reserves, and other areas relating to flora, fauna, and habitats) to deliver ecotourism experience. As ecotourism occurs in natural environment, tour operators may consider the activities that promote enjoyment, natural experience and learning by arranging less impact and low consumptive activities. They may be, for example, nature or wildlife observation, bird watching, hiking, climbing, biking, trekking, nature education, bushwalking, canoeing/kayaking, scuba or snorkel diving, cave exploring, etc. According to ecotourism definitions, ecotourism may not only involve with natural attractions, it may include cultural component of the areas visited such as local people or cultural attractions associated in that area including a community visit. This suggestion may be useful for the tour operators to design their interesting tour programs. According to the current result, some companies did well on this element because they provided a visit to the protected natural areas (mainly marine national parks), and also provided the nature-based activities with less impact (e.g. canoeing/kayaking) for tourists' enjoyment and natural learning. In particular, an overnight trip should be offered to promote a complete ecotourism experience both naturally and culturally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Offer a trip to visit uncontaminated or protected natural areas through a wide ranges of natural attractions * In some programs (when appropriate), a visit to associated cultural attractions or local community should be promoted * Arrange a nature-base activity for natural enjoyment, experience and learning purposes by emphasizing on less impact and low/non-consumptive activity

Table 5.6 Recommendations on education element and its good practices

2. Education element	Recommended good practices
<p>The purpose of education element is to provide tourists with education, learning and appreciation about the natural attractions. There are several ways to do that while tourists are participating in ecotourism. This may start from the basic form of leaning to the enrich-educational activity. Basically, at the beginning of the journeys, tour guides should prepare general information of the destinations as well as the surrounding environment in order to provide tourists the overall backgrounds and a better understanding of the areas they are going to visit. In the simple way, tour guides may verbally talk about the information. Preferably, they may provide written materials (e.g. sheets, pictures, brochures, folders) in relation to the destinations, the surrounding environment and/or ecosystem. The reason for giving such materials may be based on a few points: 1) to foster tourists' understanding on the natural environment 2) to motivate tourists' interest or appreciation on natural attractions and 3) to provide tourists the materials on hand (available) at any time during the trips. Verbal information can be easily forgotten and less motivated/interesting when compared to the written materials. Given the case of company A (also company E), at the beginning of the trips, tour guides talked about the general information of the destinations as well as briefed about the tour program. At the same time, they also introduced and provided a folder of written materials regarding the marine ecosystem, wildlife and proper tourists' behavior when visiting lagoons and sea caves. One of the simple issues that may be mostly ignored by tour guides is informing tourists the significance or heritage value of a particular area visited (Armstrong and Weiler 2002). This may help create tourists' appreciation or respect for the natural heritage. Tour guides may explain the value of the areas in terms of biodiversity, flora, geological features or wildlife habitat. When tourists are informed about this, it may help tour guides easily encourage the natural awareness and appreciation among travelers. In other words, people usually protect what they respect (Wearing and Neil 2009). During the trip or before arriving at the destinations, tour guides may take this time to interact with tourists and give them the knowledge or information about the natural environment (e.g. flora, wildlife). At ecotourism destinations, while tourists are doing some nature-based activities (e.g. trekking, bush walking, natural trails, bird watching, canoeing, etc.), this is a great opportunity for tour guides to create natural appreciation or respect through the interpretation (enrich-</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Brief tourists the program of the tour and inform them about the destinations and the surrounding environment including its significance or value * Provide tourists additional knowledge regarding the natural environment of the areas visited (e.g. biodiversity, ecosystem, plants, wildlife) * Supply tourists with additional information to promote learning or interest in the natural environment if appropriate (sheets, brochures, books, pictures) * Interpretation should be delivered when arriving at ecotourism destinations or while doing nature-based activity through various techniques (e.g. verbal, picture, reference, comparison or sign) * Educate or encourage the local community (where tour programs are operated) to protect and preserve local natural resources

educational activity). According to the literature, natural interpretation is an educational activity that fosters a better understanding between the nature and visitors by delivering messages about the nature and related environment (Armstrong and Weiler 2002). The understanding of the nature would encourage tourists to behave properly, and this helps reduce the negative impacts of their visitation. It should be advised that interpretation is the important activity that helps distinguish ecotourism from other forms of nature tourism. The interpretation may be performed by tour guides in several ways (depending on type of tours, areas visited, and the way of communication). Some scholars addressed that educating tourists (including interpretation) should be enjoyable/fun and employed a conversational enthusiastic and interesting style of presentation that might encourage or involve visitor participation (Weaver, 2001). The communication may be made through the verbal, the use of references (e.g. pictures, brochure, body language) or the comparison that are meaningful to the visitors. Furthermore, tour guidelines may use other enjoyable methods to create both fun and knowledge among travelers such as playing game or giving a gift. Given the case of company A, tour guides asked tourists some environmental questions and gave them a sweet when they gave a correct answer. Following Kontogeorgopoulos (2003), he pointed out an interesting issue, in that although the majority of tourists participating in nature tours in Phuket and Bali were likely to be motivated for natural attraction, it did not necessarily mean they do not acquire a sense of environmental appreciation and awareness. This suggests that environmental education can be promoted for any tourists who are visiting the natural areas. In particular, tour guides would play an important role to educate them on this element.

Table 5.7 Recommendations on conservation element and its good practices

3. Conservation element	Recommended good practices
<p>Conservation is a complex issue to be implemented in the real business setting. Many tour companies have ignored this element including some tour operators examined in this study. However, according to the literature, eco-tour operators should be a contributor in natural or environmental conservation in the areas where they operate. Generally, there is no a specific form of conservation for tour operators. Thus, eco-tour operators may consider the conservation through a wide range of projects or activities (e.g. forest, plant, flora, wildlife, and animals). In order to judge if the conservation is as the part of ecotourism, there are certain criteria to be considered. First, the goal of the conservation should aim to protect, conserve, maintain or enhance the quality of the nature resources and the environment. Second, the conservation should be taken place in the ecotourism areas where the tours are operated (or nearby). Third, the way to support the conservation can be either direct or indirect means. The example of direct conservation can be in a way that the company initiates, launches, establishes or undertakes a project or activity by itself or join with other parties (e.g. local community, government agencies or NGOs) to do the conservation project. According to the current result, company A and company E are currently undertaking direct conservation with the local community. Other direct conservation may include working with the national park authorities to protect or conserve natural resources in the parks. As for the indirect conservation, the fees that the tour operators pay to the park authorities may represent this case. Because these fees usually go to the conservation activities within the parks. Other indirect conservation may include donating, funding or sponsoring some conservation projects (e.g. plant, wildlife or animal conservation project). Although the conservation element is a bit complicated and mostly undertaken by the tour operators, there might be some activities that tourists may get involved. For instance, in some trips (e.g. a special group or a volunteer group), it's suggested the company may arrange an additional conservation experience during the trip for travelers by having them plant trees in the areas visited or even a local clean-up project with the community. Following this suggestion, both the company and tourists would have a direct involvement with the conservation. It should be advised that when tourists learn, understand and appreciate the nature, this may foster their interests or motivations to directly get involved in the conservation activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Determine the conservation as a part of business ethics or social responsibility * Choose the conservation activity that relates to company's policy or operation * Be a contributor on conservation through various supports (e.g. physical or financial means as well as direct or indirect method) * Encourage tourists' participation in conservation (when appropriate) * Alternatively, do the conservation with other stakeholders (e.g. community, government, NGOs or private sector) relating to business operation

Table 5.8 Recommendations on impact element and its good practices

4. Impact element	Recommended good practices
<p>The purpose of impact element is to reduce or minimize the negative impacts to the environment that mainly caused by tourists' visitation as well as from tour operations. First, we will suggest how the tour companies reduce tourists' impacts, and later will recommend how the company reduces its operational impacts. Indeed, impact and education elements are interrelated in terms of knowledge and behavior. According to Wearing and Neil (2009), when tourists are provided with simple and sufficient information about the nature environment (from education element), they are more likely to have a better understanding about the natural heritage. This may shift their attitudes to feel more positive and respectful to the natural environment. Having such attitudes and appreciation on the natural environment, they tend to be more careful of their behaviors when visiting the natural areas. Thus, providing tourists' knowledge on the natural environment is directly related to impact consideration. When tourists had a better knowledge and understanding about the nature and environment from tour guides, they tended to be more careful of their behaviors while visiting ecotourism areas including avoiding disturbing wildlife. Therefore, eco-tour operators and tour guides play a <i>crucial role</i> in creating natural responsibility and environmental consciousness. In particular, tour guides should be a role model for tourists to behave responsibly and encourage them to do so (Borelli and Ministrini 1999). According to Swarbrooke (1998), tourists have their basic responsibilities in tourism when traveling such as the responsibilities for obeying local laws and regulations. By applying Swarbrooke's notion, tour guides should inform tourists, at the beginning of the trips, regarding their personal garbage (littering) that may occur during the trips. Tourists should be informed how and where to drop their garbage. Meanwhile, tour guide should communicate to their customers regarding company's policy on ecotourism or responsible travel. These practices can be done in a form of verbal communication, sheets, pictures, or guide books. It is expected when tourists clearly understand what the company expects them to do, they are likely to do so.</p> <p>In order to reduce tours' operational impacts, there are several ways to be considered. It's about the carrying capacity in terms of physical and environmental aspects, this suggestion may be challenging (difficult) for a tour company that needs to make a balance between the profits and environmentalism in the business setting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Comply the existing rules and regulations of the areas visited to reduce unflavored impacts * Advise tourists regarding proper travel behaviors during the trips (including what they can do and should not) to reduce negative impacts on ecosystem, wildlife, flora, fauna, or habitat * Tour guides should be a role model for conducting the proper travel behavior * Manage waste or garbage occurring during the trip in an appropriate way * Use biodegradable or recyclable products when possible * Implement a small group conduct when appropriate to reduce physical and environment impacts

What we would suggest is just to make the balance between making the profit and reducing the tour impact. For example, in a case of large groups (more than 30 people), tour guides may divide tourists into smaller groups when visiting a particular area or doing some activities. Alternatively, if possible, the tour company may arrange a trip in different *time* or *day* to visit a popular ecotourism destination or arrange a trip to visit less crowded areas. The purpose of this suggestion is to reduce the physical and environmental impacts. In writer's experience, avoiding the crowdedness might create higher customer satisfaction because the company can better organize its tour programs such as saving time, less noise, less congestion and more privacy.

Table 5.9 Recommendations on community element and its good practices

5. Community element	Recommended good practices
<p>Another challenging task is the contribution to the local community. It should be advised that a trip with a local visit or an overnight trip will greatly contribute to the local community. This is understandable that the arrangement of tour programs (either a local visit or overnight trip) may depend on several factors such as customer demand, costs of operations or difficulty in tour programming. However, the eco-tours combining with a local visit is strongly suggested when appropriate. Any eco-tour with local visit or overnight stay would significantly contribute to community development that occurs from tourism related activities. The actual contribution can be seen from the case of company A (overnight stay). If appropriate and possible, the company may offer eco-tours combining with local experience. This type of tour may be a day trip visiting a local community or an overnight trip staying with local residents.</p> <p>For tours visiting or staying at the local village, tour guide should advise or brief tourists regarding the information of the community, local culture and proper behaviors of a particular culture (what can do and don't), particularly foreign visitors. Advising them about these may help reduce cultural conflicts or misunderstanding between the hosts and visitors. Additionally, tour guides should inform them how they can help generate local economy (Borelli and Minestrini, 1999). Following the result of company A, the company worked with the local residents to supply accommodation, meals and local touring for tourists. In relation to the accommodation, company A chooses the one that promotes responsible business and is local oriented. The company also provided a cultural learning by arranging Thai boxing performance. This may help promote cultural appreciation and mutual understanding between local residents and visitors. What company A did could be a good recommendation on economic and socio-cultural dimensions to the local community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Promote local employment (either full or part time) by having them work in relation to business operations (emphasizing local community related to tour operations) * Generate local economy through local purchase and use patronized by tourists and tour operators * Arrange the activity for tourists to learn and appreciate local culture or the way of life * Give the opportunity for local residents to involve with tour activities and planning when appropriate (e.g. local guides, guide assistants, service staff, cultural performance)

Table 5.10 Recommendations on corporate element and its good practices

6. Corporate element	Recommended good practices
<p>The first suggestion for the corporate element is that company should communicate and inform the staff regarding company's policy and objective, and make sure they are aware of it. Given the case of company A and company B, the owners of two companies have set the company's policy to be the responsible operator offering a quality and ecologically friendly tours. They have communicated this policy to all company staff since the establishment of the company. Today, they still encourage their staff to adhere (follow) the company's policy by conducting the tours with the responsible manner. In addition, tour operators should communicate their policy to customers as well by making them be aware of their role in helping achieving it (Borelli and Minestrini, 1999). The writer strongly agrees with Borelli and Minestrini's suggestion. Because when the customers are aware of and understand the company's policy, it's expected that they would be willing to comply with the rules and regulations set by the company. Once they take appropriate travel behaviors, the negative impacts could be reduced. Again, given the case of company A, during the participant observation, tour guides often informed tourists regarding its policy as being the responsible and ecologically friendly tours by requesting them to retain from unflavored/inappropriate behaviors. Because of this, it was observed that many tourists seemed to be more careful of their behaviors while canoeing at the lagoons/bays as well as during their stay at the local village. In contrast, when comparing to other companies, it was observed that several companies did not communicate any company's policy or objective to their customers. In the meantime, many customers of these companies were observed to be less concerned on caring the environment.</p> <p>Aside from the company's policy, the training for tour guides in relation to the special areas of nature and environment (e.g. ecosystem, wildlife, geology, botany, fauna) is also essential to the running of ecotourism business. Conducting eco-tours is different from other tours since tour guides need to have knowledge in relation to the natural environment and the ecosystem of the ecotourism areas. Company A seems to pay attention to this issue more than other companies. As previously mentioned, tour guides play an important role in educating tourists and be the role model on the responsible travel behavior. Thus, the eco-tour operators should focus on providing appropriate training for their guides.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Staff should be informed and aware of company's policy and objectives as well as the laws and regulations of the area visited. * Provide tour guides a training in relation to the nature and the environment (e.g. wildlife, ecosystem, geology, botany, flora, and fauna) * Communicate company's policy and objective to customers and make them aware of their role in helping protecting the natural environment

5.2.2 Suggestion on Developing Ecotourism Standard for Tour Operators in ASEAN

Countries

Due to the need of developing ASEAN Tourism Standards in ecotourism sector, this study has yielded the ecotourism good practices for tour operators in Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. The contribution of this study (ecotourism good practices) may be further modified to assist in the development of ecotourism standard for the tour operators in ASEAN countries. As standard is a way products, facilities, and services are assessed by measuring their level of conformity to prescribed requirements or achievement of specific objectives (Toth 2002), therefore, the ecotourism standard for tour operators may be assessed by measuring their level of conformity to the prescribed criteria and the indicators (good practices). Consequently, the proposed good practices together with their criteria (Table 5.5 – 5.10) may be one of the useful guidelines for developing the ecotourism standard for the tour operators in ASEAN countries. Since AEC is approaching in the year 2015 as well as the finding/hypothesis revealing different practices among ASEAN tour operators (chapter 4), the future development of ASEAN ecotourism standard for the tour operators is important and could be undertaken by the collaboration of each country. Related organizations may adapt the recommended good practices to be the parts or essential elements of ASEAN ecotourism standard. For example, the six key elements may be used to develop as the standard criteria, and the good practices may be employed as the indicators. In addition, related organizations may also review other sources to help develop the ecotourism standard. Figure 5.1 shows an example of a process for developing the ecotourism standard for tour operators. The process is adapted from the Department of Tourism (2013), Ministry of Tourism and Sports (Thailand) on the development of eco lodges' standard. Following Figure 5.1 in the **second step**, the ecotourism good practices (contribution of this study) may be ones of the guidelines and assist in the development of ecotourism standard for ASEAN's tour operators.

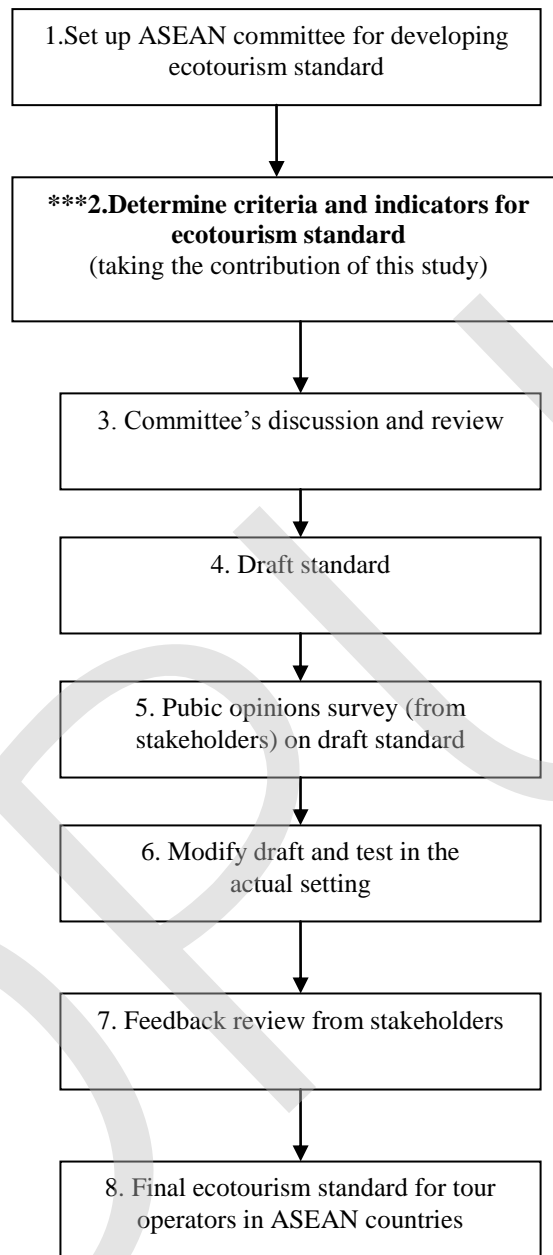


Figure 5.1 shows the process of developing the ASEAN's ecotourism standard
 Source: adapted from Department of Tourism (2013), Ministry of Tourism and Sports (Thailand)

In addition to the development of ecotourism standard, Figure 5.2 (page 92) shows how the ecotourism standard assists in the future development of certification program (through assessment process). The certification is an activity by which a product, process, service, or system is evaluated for conformance against a standard (Toth, 2002). It may be awarded on the basis of compliance with a specific criterion, a minimum number of criteria or achievement of a minimum score (Toth, 2002). The certification program would not only help promote the sustainable tourism and ecotourism businesses but also supports the marketing purposes for the business sector.

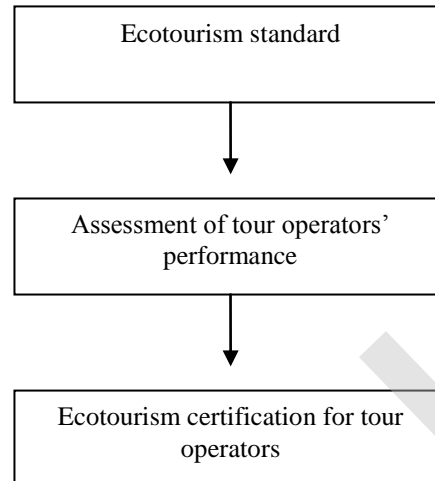


Figure 5.2 shows how ecotourism standard assists in the development of ecotourism certification

5.3 Limitations and Future Research Opportunities

Due to the budget and time constraint of this study, this may lead to some limitations with the current study. Firstly, two tour operators per one country were examined regarding their ecotourism practices. The number of the samples (tour operators) may be small when compared to the total population of each country. Secondly, only one specific location from each country was explored. Consequently, the areas of investigation may be limited, and not actually represent the whole ecotourism sites of each country. Therefore, the ecotourism good practices in other areas may be further explored, and the results of the study may not represent the overall ecotourism situation. Thirdly, it should be noted that the evaluation scores eared from each tour operator do not mean that this is the best they can do. The tour operators examined in this study were selected through previous research's referral on their good practices. There may be some other companies offering true ecotourism experience but not researched. Finally, some other issues, for example, the good practices for vehicle/transport, fuel or energy use are not examined in this study because they are not included in the research scope. Future researchers may objectively involve such issues in their examination.

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Observation form

Company Tour Date

Issues to be observed	Yes		No	Remarks
	Needs improvement	Acceptable		
1. Nature elements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 1.1 Does the company provide a trip to visit uncontaminated natural areas or protected areas? ❖ 1.2 Does the company provide any nature-based activities? ❖ 1.3 Does the company maintain low or non-consumptive activities? ❖ 1.4 Does the company provide a trip to visit cultural heritage or local community located nearby ecotourism areas? 				
2. Education element <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 2.1 Does the company provide information for tourists to learn about the nature, the areas visited or surrounding environment? ❖ 2.2 Does the company provide educational activity for tourists to learn or understand the ecosystem, the nature or the environment? ❖ 2.3 Does the company provide any information to encourage tourists to appreciate or respect the natural environment? 				
3. Impact element <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 3.1 Does the company comply the rules/regulations of the areas visited? ❖ 3.2 Does the company maintain low or reduce tourists' impact to the environment/local community? ❖ 3.3 Does the company avoid disturbing wildlife or wildlife habitats? ❖ 3.4 Does the company have a proper way to manage waste/garbage occurred during the trip? ❖ 3.5 Does the company maintain a small group of travelers when visiting the destinations? 				
4. Community element <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 4.1 Does the company involve local people in any tour activities? ❖ 4.2 Does the company encourage local use or purchase of local products/services? ❖ 4.3 Does the company provide any activity for travelers to learn or appreciate local culture? 				
Total scores				

DRU

Interview form

Company

Issues to be interviewed	Yes		No	Remarks
	Needs improvement	Acceptable		
1. Education element ❖ 1.1 Does the company provide education or knowledge for local residents regarding natural awareness or conservation?				
2. Conservation element ❖ 2.1 Does the company have any activity/project to help protect or conserve wildlife, plants or natural resources? ❖ 2.2 Does the company have any activity/project to do with local community or state agency on natural conservation? ❖ 2.3 Does the company have any activity/project to maintain or enhance the ecosystem or environment of ecotourism destination? ❖ 2.4 Does the company incorporate conservation into management plans?				
3. Impact element ❖ 3.1 Does the company consider the area's carrying capacity?				
4. Community element ❖ 4.1 Does the company hire local people in relation to business operations? ❖ 4.2 Does the company involve local people in any tour planning? ❖ 4.3 Does the company provide any local contribution such as education or natural conservation?				
5. Corporate element ❖ 4.1 Does the company have a policy or statement to promote sustainable tourism, ecotourism or responsible tourism? ❖ 4.2 Does the company have a code of conduct for tour activities to prevent the degradation of the environment? ❖ 4.3 Does the company provide employees a training on ecotourism or related field?				
Total scores				