

Chapter 3

Research Methodologies

This chapter aims to describe research methodologies employed to investigate travel motivations and travel behaviors of international tourists to Thailand. The objective of this chapter is to discuss about population, samples, sampling method, research instrument, pre-testing, data collection, and data analysis.

3.1 Population, Samples, and Sampling Method

The population in this study was international tourists who were visiting Thailand for holiday and leisure purposes whose age were 20 years old and above. Since the population or number of international tourists visiting Thailand each month is unknown in term of exact arrivals and the elements (research respondents) in the population have no probabilities for being equally selected as the samples/representatives, non-probability sampling by a convenience sampling method was chosen for this study (Cavana, Delahaye, & Sekaran, 2001). According to the statistical report by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (2007), the average number of international tourists to Thailand each month (previous data) was approximately 1,080,000 people (given population). Based on the standard statistical estimation such as a published sample size table (Table A) by Cavana et al. (2001), the approximate sample size by 384 people or more was required for this study.

Table A: Determining sample size for a given population size

Given population (N)	Appropriate sample size (S)
40,000	380
50,000	381
75,000	382
1,000,000*	384*

Source: Cavana, Delahaye, and Sekaran (2001, p.278)

3.2 Research Instrument

The research instrument (questionnaire) for examining travel motivations of international tourists to Thailand was developed from a comprehensive review of relevant literature focusing on push and pull factors (i.e. Zhang & Lam, 1999; Huang & Tsai 2002; Kim, 2003; Jang & Wu, 2006). Most of the research questions in this study regarding push and pull factors were mainly based on previous studies, and only some of them were modified to correspond to the purpose of the current study. For example, some pull factors (destination attractions) were modified to be applicable to Thailand's destination setting. This is because destination attractions could be

varied, and they may be different from one country to another (Kozak, 2002). In this study, the destination attractions of Thailand may be different from other countries due to country's background, location, and geographical environment, and they should be modified to suit Thailand case. For the part of tourist behavior, the research questions developed for this study were reviewed from related studies (e.g. Baloglu & Uysal 1996; Hsu & Sung, 1997; Heung, Qu, & Chu, 2001; Laksanakan, 2003). Some questions were modified to meet the research objectives and the target samples in relation to tourists' behavior in Thailand. To enhance the validity of the research instrument, a draft questionnaire was reviewed by tourism scholars who provided helpful comments and feedback to revise and develop appropriate research questions.

The questionnaire was originally designed in English and consisted of 3 sections, i.e. 1) demographic characteristics 2) travel behaviors and trip characteristics and 3) travel motivations (push and pull factors). Each section is briefly presented as follow:

1) Section one - demographic characteristics: This section consisted of 7 questions asking general information of the research respondents: i.e. gender, age, marital status, education, occupation, income, and country of residence.

2) Section two – travel behaviors and trip characteristics: This section consisted of 16 questions asking the research respondents about their travel behaviors and trip characteristics, e.g. number of visits to Thailand, trip planning, tourism activities, travel expenses, accommodation choice, travel information search, and the likelihood of revisiting Thailand. The respondents answered the questions from a set of multiple choices.

3) Section three - push and pull factors: There were 2 sub-sections in this part which were push and pull factors. The aim of push factor section was to investigate travel motives of international tourists, particularly their overseas travel motives. The push factors (13 items) were mainly based on socio-psychological motives (e.g. knowledge seeking, novelty seeking, adventure experience, new cultural learning). These push factors were measured by having the respondents indicate their agreement or disagreement with the statements relating to their reasons/desires to travel abroad. For example, a participant was asked "I travel abroad because I want to see something new and exciting". Then, he or she could express the level of agreement or disagreement by choosing on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree). Many studies examining push and pull factors used the 5-point Likert scale to measure travel motivations since the length of the scale is deemed to be appropriate for expressing people's opinions (Kozak, 2002; Jang & Wu, 2006). For the part of pull factors, the aim was to identify what destination attractions drawing the respondents to visit

Thailand. The pull factors (13 items) were mainly associated with the features or attractiveness of Thailand's attractions (e.g. culture, beaches, food, shopping, etc). These pull factors were measured by having the respondents indicate their agreement or disagreement regarding the attractions in Thailand. For example, a participant was asked "Do you think Thai culture is an important factor attracting you to Thailand." Then, he or she chose the level of agreement on the 5-point Likert scale, the same scale with push factors.

3.3 Pre-testing

According to Cavana et al. (2001), researchers should conduct a pre-test to evaluate the reliability and validity of the research instrument before gathering data. In this research project, there was a pre-test conducted before the final data collection. Using a convenience sampling method, the test was conducted with 50 international tourists in Bangkok to obtain feedback and comments on the clarity and appropriateness of the research questions. Most of the respondents in the pre-test process were mainly Asian and European tourists, few tourists from North America and others were found. Based on the pilot test, some modifications (e.g. wording, revision of some sentences) were changed and revised accordingly. In addition, a reliability test by Cronbach's coefficient alpha was also performed to determine the inter-item consistency reliability of the research instrument (Cavana et al., 2001). Based on the pre-test result, the Cronbach's coefficient alpha was calculated for the section of push and pull factors which were 0.81 and 0.87, respectively. The value of the alpha exceeded the recommended/acceptable level of 0.70 by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994); suggesting no further revision of the research questions. With the pre-test method, it ensured that the questionnaire was ready for data collection.

3.4 Data Collection

Data were collected when the research respondents were visiting Thailand, and the surveys were conducted during December 2008. During the surveys, the respondents were asked if they would be interested to participate in the survey. Once they agreed, questionnaires were distributed on site and collected by researcher team (researcher and college students). All research respondents received small souvenirs for their participation. The surveys were undertaken in Bangkok and nearby cities including Ayutthaya and Pattaya. Out of 480 questionnaires distributed, only 434 questionnaires were completed and usable for final data analysis. Among them, there were 220 Europeans from 9 countries, i.e. UK (38), German (35), France (33), Switzerland (28), Italy (25), Sweden (23), Denmark (16), Spain (12) and

Netherlands (10), and 180 Asians from 7 countries, i.e. Malaysia (40), Singapore (36), Hong Kong (29), South Korea (22), China (19), Japan (16), India (10) and Taiwan (8), and some were from North America (n= 19) and Australia (n= 15). Since the samples (representative) from North America and Australia were too small to represent the region when compared to the Asian and European tourists (due to the limitation of convenience sampling method), they may not be suitable to be analyzed and compared the results to those two markets, particularly when computing factor analysis or an analysis of variance (ANOVA). Thus, these two markets were not included in the final data analysis because of a convenience sampling. The samples from Asia and Europe (400 tourists) were used in the final data analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data were analysed by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program (version 13). Data analyses were performed through six steps which are discussed as follows. It should be noted that a 0.05 level of significance was employed in all of the statistical assessments in this study.

Firstly, descriptive statistics (i.e. mean, frequency, percentage) were used to describe general information of the respondents. **Secondly**, descriptive statistics (i.e. mean and standard deviation) were also employed to rank the push and pull factors in terms of individual item to determine which items served as major push and pull factors. Then, each push and pull factor was ranked in terms of the importance from the most important factor (highest mean) to the least important one (lowest mean). **Thirdly**, the push and pull factors were then grouped by using factor analysis to find the push and pull factor dimensions (or similar factor groupings) that may emerge among the respondents. Factor analysis was chosen because it is a statistical approach used to analyze interrelationships among a large number of variables and to explain the variables in terms of their common underlying dimensions or similar groupings (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 2006). **Fourthly**, to determine if there were any differences of travel related-behaviors among international tourists, a series of cross-tabulation (suitable for comparing frequency data) were used to profile each group and then chi-square tests were later performed to determine statistical differences among the groups. **Fifthly**, to examine if there were mean differences in the push and pull factors (statistical differences) among the two groups, t-test was undertaken. **Finally**, to examine the mean differences of push and pull factors among different demographic subgroups, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) or t-test when appropriate was implemented.