



Research Report

On

Critical Success Factors of Crisis Management in Tourism:

A Case Study of Political Crisis in Thailand

By

Kom Campiranon, Ph.D.

Dhurakij Pundit University

The research has received a research grant from Dhurakij Pundit University

2009

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank Dhurakij Pundit University for awarding me a research grant to undertake this research project. Secondly, I must also give recognition to the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) for facilitating the data sampling process of this research. Next, I would also like to extend my appreciation to all respondents for their cooperation throughout the in-depth interviews. This research would have never been possible without their generous and invaluable input. Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge and extend my heartfelt thanks to my parents and brother for their ongoing encouragement and support throughout this research.

ABSTRACT

Tourism is unarguably the major export service of Thailand which has benefited from its people's hospitality, rich culture, cultural heritage, and historical tourist destinations. However, the tourism industry in Thailand has been negatively influenced in recent years by a number of crises – predominantly recent political protests. Such a political crisis, consequently, has depicted Thailand as an unsafe tourist destination and discourages tourists from traveling to the country. Taken together, both the importance of tourism in Thailand and the impact of political crisis on tourism suggest that political crises can affect business continuity in the tourism industry in Thailand. In turn, tourism organizations need to understand the characteristics of political crisis and come to terms with the critical factors contributing to a successful crisis management in order to sustain their tourism businesses through political crisis situations.

To this end, the core aim of this research is to identify the critical success factors responsible for effective crisis management in the tourism industry. To achieve this, this research has developed three research objectives, and investigated these objectives through qualitative data collection and analysis of in-depth interviews with tourism organizations in Thailand. The findings of these interviews provide both rich and substantively meaningful understandings of pertinent crisis management issues. In sum, this research achieves its research aims by discussing the characteristics of political crisis, providing five critical success factors (CSFs) which organizations need to implement to successfully manage political crisis situations, and proposing a crisis management strategy map for political tourism crisis.

บทคัดย่อ

การท่องเที่ยวนับได้ว่าเป็นการส่งออกหลักด้านการบริการของประเทศไทยอันเป็นผลมาจากการบริการที่ดีของคนไทย วัฒนธรรม และสถานที่ท่องเที่ยวทางประวัติศาสตร์ อย่างไรก็ตาม อุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยวในประเทศไทยกลับได้รับผลกระทบจากวิกฤติต่างๆที่เกิดขึ้นในหลายปีที่ผ่านมา โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งการชุมนุมประท้วงรัฐบาล ซึ่งส่งผลในเชิงลบต่อภาพลักษณ์ด้านความปลอดภัยของประเทศทำให้นักท่องเที่ยวขาดความเชื่อมั่นและเดินทางมาประเทศไทยน้อยลง ดังนั้นองค์กรที่ให้บริการแก่นักท่องเที่ยวจึงมีความจำเป็นที่จะต้องเข้าใจลักษณะและผลกระทบที่เกิดจากวิกฤตการณ์เมืองและเข้าใจปัจจัยที่ส่งผลต่อความสำเร็จในการจัดการวิกฤตดังกล่าวเพื่อให้ธุรกิจอยู่รอดต่อไปได้

การวิจัยเรื่องนี้จึงมีวัตถุประสงค์หลักเพื่อเสาะหาปัจจัยที่ส่งผลต่อความสำเร็จขององค์กรที่ให้บริการแก่นักท่องเที่ยวในด้านการจัดการวิกฤตการณ์เมือง อนึ่งนักวิจัยได้ตั้งสามวัตถุประสงค์ย่อยและใช้การวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพในการเก็บข้อมูลเชิงลึกด้วยการสัมภาษณ์องค์กรต่างๆในประเทศไทยที่ให้บริการแก่นักท่องเที่ยว การวิจัยเรื่องนี้ได้บรรลุวัตถุประสงค์โดยการวิเคราะห์ลักษณะเฉพาะของวิกฤตการณ์เมือง ปัจจัยห้าประการที่ส่งผลต่อความสำเร็จ และนำเสนอแผนที่กลยุทธ์การจัดการวิกฤตการณ์เมืองสำหรับองค์กรที่ให้บริการแก่นักท่องเที่ยว

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Tourism is unarguably the major export service of Thailand (Vogt & Wittayakorn 1998), accounting for around 6 to 7 percent of the country's national GDP (EIU ViewsWire 2003). Moreover, growth in Thailand's tourism industry in recent years has been the result of numerous strengths including a tradition of hospitality (Koumelis 2004; National Identity Board 2000), rich cultural heritage and historical tourist destinations (Rittichainuwat, Qu & Brown 2001), strong natural attractions, and value for money (Rogers 2003, p. 276). Simply put, the multibillion-dollar tourism industry is a crucial component of the Thai economy (Watson 2008). The table below illustrates international and domestic tourist arrivals to/in Thailand between 1997 and 2006.

Table 1: International tourist arrival to Thailand

Year	International						
	Tourist		Average Length of Stay	Average Expenditure		Revenue	
	Number	Change		/person/day	Change	Million	Change
	(Million)	(%)	(Days)	(Baht)	(%)	(Baht)	(%)
1998	7.76	+ 7.53	8.40	3,712.93	+ 1.12	242,177	+ 9.70
1999	8.58	+ 10.50	7.96	3,704.54	- 0.23	253,018	+ 4.48
2000	9.51	+ 10.82	7.77	3,861.19	+ 4.23	285,272	+ 12.75
2001	10.06	+ 5.82	7.93	3,748.00	- 2.93	299,047	+ 4.83
2002	10.80	+ 7.33	7.98	3,753.74	+ 0.15	323,484	+ 8.17
2003	10.00	- 7.36	8.19	3,774.50	+ 0.55	309,269	- 4.39
2004	11.65	+ 16.46	8.13	4,057.85	+ 7.51	384,360	+ 24.28
2005	11.52	- 1.51	8.20	3,890.13	- 4.13	367,380	- 4.42
2006	13.82	+ 20.01	8.62	4,048.22	+ 4.06	482,319	+ 31.29
2007	14.46	+ 4.65	9.19 ^P	4,120.95 ^P	+ 1.80	547,782 ^P	+ 13.57

Source: Tourism Authority of Thailand (2009)

Table 2: Domestic tourist arrival in Thailand

Year	Domestic						
	Thai Visitor		Average Length of Stay	Average Expenditure		Revenue	
	Trip	Change		/person/day	Change	Million	Change
	(Million)	(%)	(Days)	(Baht)	(%)	(Baht)	(%)
1998	51.68	- 0.72	2.37	1,512.70	+ 3.19	187,897.82	+ 4.16
1999	53.62	+ 3.02	2.43	1,523.55	+ 2.29	203,179.00	+ 7.42
2000	54.74	+ 2.08	2.48	1,717.77	+ 12.75	210,516.15	+ 3.61
2001	58.62	+ 7.09	2.51	1,702.70	- 0.88	223,732.14	+ 6.28
2002	61.82	+ 5.45	2.55	1,689.52	- 0.77	235,337.15	+ 5.19
2003	69.36	+ 12.20	2.61	1,824.38	+ 7.98	289,986.81	+ 23.22
2004	74.80	+ 7.84	2.60	1,852.33	+ 1.53	317,224.62	+ 9.39
2005	79.53	+ 6.33	2.73	1,768.87	- 4.51	334,716.79	+ 5.51
2006	81.49	+ 2.46	2.65	1,795.09	+ 1.48	365,276.28	+ 9.13
2007	83.23	+ 2.14	2.63	1,767.35	- 1.55	380,417.10	+ 4.15

Source: Tourism Authority of Thailand (2009)

Nonetheless, the tourism industry in Thailand has been challenged in recent years by a number of distinct crises (Campiranon & Arcodia 2007; MICE Asia 2007; Tourism Authority of Thailand 2004), including the SARS epidemic (year 2003); the bird or avian flu (year 2004); and the tsunami which struck the region (December 26, 2004). The recent anti-government protest during August–December 2008 also affected Thailand’s tourism industry heavily, as international tourists avoid traveling to Thailand due to the fear of political turmoil (The Seoul Times 2008). In fact, Thailand’s political crisis dates back to protests against former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, and therefore it is crucial to briefly discuss timelines of Thaksin’s administration and this political crisis.

In the January 2001 elections, telecom tycoon Thaksin Shinawatra and his Thai Rak Thai Party won an overwhelming victory on a populist platform of economic growth and development. Thaksin’s package of bureaucratic reform legislation created six new ministries in an effort to streamline the bureaucratic process and increase efficiency and accountability. The general election held on February 6, 2005 resulted in another landslide victory for Thaksin and Thai Rak Thai, mainly due to the popularity of Thaksin’s populist policies in rural areas and the publicity gained from his swift recovery actions toward the Tsunami crisis in December 2004 (The Nation 2008a).

However, Thaksin later became the target of public protests that led to widespread calls for his resignation or impeachment. The discontent was caused by his family’s tax-free sale of shares in the telecom giant Shin Corp to the Singaporean government’s investment arm Temasek Holding. Thaksin dissolved Parliament on February 24, 2006, and called a snap election for April 2, 2006. The election was widely boycotted by the opposition, whilst the Supreme Court declared the election invalid. On April 4, 2006, Thaksin announced that he would step down as prime minister as soon as Parliament had selected a successor; meanwhile new elections were set for October 15, 2006. Until then, Thaksin would have remained as caretaker prime minister (The Nation 2008a). As a result, throughout the summer of 2006 many thousands of the anti-government protestors ‘PAD’ (People’s Alliance for Democracy) took to the streets to demand Thaksin’s resignation, prompting the army to oust him in a bloodless coup led by General Sonthi Boonyaratglin (CNN 2008).

The new election was held approximately a year after the coup. However, subsequent governments have been seen as Thaksin's nominees. Samak Sundaravej, Thaksin's successor, was forced to step down in August after Thailand's Supreme Court ruled he had violated the constitution by appearing on a TV cookery show; he was an avowed Thaksin ally. Somchai Wongsawat, who was the successor of Samak and brother-in-law of Thaksin, took charge as the Prime Minister in September 2008. However, underlying the mounting 2008 crisis was public discontent that both Samak and Somchai are proxies for Thaksin (CNN 2008).

In order to pressure Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat to resign, PAD rallies attracted massive crowds and occupied Government House, the Thai prime minister's main offices, in what they have called their "final battle" against the government (CNN 2008). Furthermore, on 25th November 2008, PAD members stormed police lines at Suvarnabhumi Airport, Thailand's main airport and a crucial regional hub, and entered the fourth-floor departure area. That forced officials to temporarily suspend outbound flights. Some arriving flights were suddenly rerouted to the northern city of Chiang Mai or the southern resort island of Phuket (Wire News 2008).

Figure 1: Anti-government protesters at Suvarnabhumi airport on November 26, 2008



Source: Getty Images (2009a)

Moreover, the PAD started massing at the old Don Mueang airport on 26th November 2008, aiming to prevent ministers from flying to Chiang Mai in the north to meet Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat. As a result of closing both Suvarnabhumi and Don Mueang airports, all international air links to and from Bangkok were closed (Bangkok Post 2008).

The closure of both airports had a direct impact on both the airports and airlines. Airports of Thailand (AoT) have estimated initial damage to its operations from the week-long closure of Don Mueang and Suvarnabhumi airports will cost 540 million baht, excluding lost business opportunities (Travel Blackboard 2008). Thai Airways, Thailand's major carrier, was facing an estimated daily loss of 500 million baht as a result of the closure of Suvarnabhumi International Airport by anti-government protesters (The Nation 2008b).

The protesters ended their siege early on 3rd December 2008 after the Constitutional Court dissolved Somchai's ruling party, effectively ousting his government from office. The court found the People Power Party committed electoral fraud, and it barred Somchai and other top party officials from holding public office for five years (CNN 2008). This allowed Bangkok's international airport to reopen on 5th December 2008. Although the airports were back in operation, business experts say the economic damage caused by the country's political crisis may linger for some time (Dawson 2008).

Importantly, Bangkok's airport closures suggested that the political conflict is rising to a new level, placing Thailand's tourism industry in jeopardy at the onset of the high season and raising the odds of a change in government as the country struggles to navigate the global economic crisis (Barta 2008). Such a statement has been strengthened by the Tourism and Sports Minister, Weerasak Kowsurat, that the closure of Suvarnabhumi Airport had caused severe damage to the tourism, hotel, airline, travel agency and related industries, as the airport is the country's main gateway to Thailand (The Nation 2008b).

In addition, media coverage and travel advisories also add enormous challenges to Thailand's tourism industry. This is because images of angry tourists stranded in an airport terminal besieged by demonstrators were being broadcast around the world just as struggling resorts and hotels prepared for the peak vacation season (Watson 2008). With the political crisis situation reported and broadcasted by a number of news media, such as the BBC (2008), many governments of tourist's generating destinations, such as the Australian Government (2008), have repeatedly issued a travel advisory warning their citizens to exercise caution when traveling to Thailand. This issue poses a serious threat to the tourism industry as tourism relies heavily on an atmosphere of safety, security, and positive perceptions (Cooper & Erfurt 2007).

In turn, John Koldowski, an executive with the Pacific Asia Travel Association in Bangkok, projected that tourism has been most immediately affected by the closure of Bangkok airports (Dawson 2008), whilst economists are predicting a gloomy year ahead for Thailand. The tourism sector could lose up to \$6 billion in revenue - a sum equivalent to 1.5% of Thailand's gross domestic product - and visitor arrivals next year could be half the 13.5 million expected for this year (Kaur 2008).

Having reviewed the series of events from Thaksin's landslide popularity to his downfall, this research can now illustrate the timeline of key events in the table below:

Table 3: Timeline of Key Events of Anti-Thaksin Protests

29 Jan 08	Samak Sundaravej, charged by the anti-Thaksin protestors as Thaksin's nominee, forms a coalition government and becomes prime minister after winning the majority of seats in the 2007 general election.
28 Feb 08	Former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra returns to Thailand. He and his wife face charges of corruption.
28 Mar 08	The PAD regroups, threatening to resume protests against Thaksin.
25 May 08	The PAD begins demonstrations at Democracy Monument, demanding Samak's resignation, and later settles at Makkhawan Rangsang Bridge.
27 Jun 08	Samak's government survives no-confidence motion in parliament.
11 Aug 08	Thaksin and his wife travel to the United Kingdom, violating bail.
26 Aug 08	PAD protesters invade Government House, three ministries and headquarters of the NBT (National Broadcasting Television). Little effort is made to remove the protesters from Government House, although minor clashes between police and protesters are seen.
29 Aug 08	Train and air transport are disrupted by PAD supporters, although services would resume a few days later and state enterprise unions would not follow up on their threat to disrupt services.
2 Sep 08	Anti-PAD protesters clash with the PAD, leaving 1 dead and 43 injured. A state of emergency is declared in Bangkok, which would last until 14 September.
9 Sep 08	The Constitutional Court finds Samak guilty of conflict of interest, terminating his premiership.
17 Sep 08	Somchai Wongsawat is ratified by the National Assembly and becomes prime minister. He is rejected by the PAD for being Thaksin's brother-in-law.
29 Sep 08	Deputy Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh begins negotiations with PAD leaders.
4-5 Oct 08	PAD leaders Chaiwat Sinsuwongse and Chamlong Srimuang are arrested by police on insurrection charges filed shortly after the invasion of Government House in August.
7 Oct 08	PAD protesters rally at parliament, attempting to block a parliament session in which Prime Minister Somchai is to seek approval of policies. Police attempt to disperse protesters using tear gas. Somchai is forced to cross a fence to exit, while members of parliament are stranded in the building for many hours. Intermittent day-long clashes leave 2 dead and over 300 injured, including 20 policemen. Military troops are deployed to help control the situation.
9 Oct 08	An appeals court withdraws insurrection charges against PAD leaders and releases Chamlong and Chaiwat on bail. The following day, The remaining PAD leaders turn themselves in to police and are released on bail.
21 Oct 08	The constitutional court finds Thaksin guilty in a land purchase conflict of interest case, and sentences him to two years in prison.
8 Nov 08	The Government of the UK, where Thaksin had been primarily residing, revokes the visas of Thaksin and his wife Pojaman.
25 Nov 08	The PAD blockades Don Mueang, where the government held its temporary offices, and Suvarnabhumi International Airports, leaving thousands of tourists stranded and cutting off most of Thailand's international air

	connections. Several explosions and clashes occur in the following days.
2 Dec 08	After weeks of opposition-led protests, the Constitutional Court of Thailand dissolves the governing People's Power Party and two coalition member parties and banned leaders of the parties, including Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat, from politics for five years. Wongsawat promptly resigns.
5 Dec 08	Suvarnabhumi and Don Mueang Airports reopened.
15 Dec 08	Thailand's parliament chooses opposition leader Abhisit Vejjajiva as the country's new prime minister, drawing angry protests from supporters of the recently dissolved Somchai ruling party.

Source: Various Sources

When Democrat Party leader Abhisit Vejjajiva was chosen as prime minister in December 2008, some Thais hoped the protests had finally come to an end. But it appears that Thailand's political crisis is far from over. Mr Thaksin still retains widespread support among the rural poor, who benefited from the populist policies he framed during his five years in power. His supporters call themselves the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD), and are known as "red-shirt" for wearing distinctive red shirts. The UDD has continuously argued that Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva came to power illegitimately and is a puppet of the military. The UDD wants Mr Abhisit to resign and call fresh elections. The protesters' tactics are similar to those used by anti-Thaksin protesters, with the aim of eventually changing the government (CNN 2009b). A timeline of key events of Thaksin's supporters' protests is shown below:

Table 4: Timeline of Key Events of Pro-Thaksin Protests

26 Mar 09	Thousands of Thaksin supporters in trademark red shirts begin rallying in Bangkok, calling on Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva and his government to resign and allow fresh elections. They are spurred on by Thaksin Shinawatra, who starts a series of almost nightly addresses to the crowd by telephone and video link.
27 Mar 09	Thaksin accuses Privy Council president Prem Tinsulanonda, privy councillors Surayud Chulanond and Charnchai Likitjitta of being behind the 2006 military coup that toppled him.
28 Mar 09	Gen Surayud rejects Thaksin's claim, saying privy councillors are not involved in politics.
2 Apr 09	Red-shirt leader Jatuporn Prompan says a mass rally planned for April 8 is aimed at pressuring Mr Abhisit, Gen Prem and the privy councillors to resign.
3 Apr 09	Thaksin refuses an invitation by Deputy Prime Minister Suthep Thaugsuban to negotiate with the government, and calls on his supporters to come out in force for a mass rally on April 8.
7 Apr 09	Mr Abhisit's car is attacked by red-shirts in Pattaya as he heads back to Bangkok after a cabinet meeting. Thaksin's three children and ex-wife leave Thailand.
8 Apr 09	More than 30,000 red-shirts rally at Government House, their main protest site.

9 Apr 09	Taxi drivers block main roads and Victory Monument, bringing the city to a halt. Mr Abhisit vows tough action against red-shirts who break the law, but no action is taken.
10 Apr 09	Thaksin's supporters, already spread out across Bangkok, launch a separate protest in the beach resort of Pattaya, where 16 Asian leaders are to meet for a major ASEAN-sponsored summit, with ASEAN chairman Thailand as the host.
11 Apr 09	Thousands of protesters storm the venue of the summit, forcing its cancellation. A state of emergency is declared as foreign leaders are evacuated - some by helicopter from the hotel roof.
12 Apr 09	A state of emergency is declared in Bangkok and surrounding areas as new anti-government demonstrations spring up. Pattaya protest leader Arisman Pongruangrong is arrested in Bangkok. About 50 protesters force their way into the Interior Ministry grounds while Mr Abhisit is inside; he escapes. Thaksin says he will lead an uprising if there is a coup.
13 Apr 09	The army cracks down on protesters in Bangkok. Two people die and 123 are treated for injuries in army assaults on groups of protesters and several ugly confrontations between red shirts and local people who formed neighbourhood militias.
14 Apr 09	Thousands of demonstrators who had retreated to their main camp outside Government House agree to disperse in the face of an overwhelming military operation to close down days of protests. The government extends the three-day Songkran holiday for two more days.

Source: Bangkok Post (2009)

Among the most severe political incidents caused by the UDD, or the red-shirt protestors, was the protest at the ASEAN Summit in Pattaya on 11th April 2009, depicted below.

Figure 2: Red-shirted supporters at the 14th ASEAN Summit in Pattaya, April 11, 2009



Source: Getty Images (2009b)

The UDD demonstrators flooded into the summit site after smashing through the hotel's glass doors, but they were otherwise non violent. Hundreds of them broke in, without police interference, forcing the cancellation of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit. Participating Asian leaders had to leave the country, and Thailand's prime minister had to declare a state of emergency in Chonburi province and the southern coastal city of Pattaya, where the summit was being held (CNN 2009a).

As a result of the political turmoil at the ASEAN Summit, countries whose nationals frequently visit Thailand have been quick to warn travelers. China's foreign ministry urged its people to 'exercise caution' if planning to travel to Thailand, and to be vigilant if already in the country. Hong Kong went a step further and told travelers to 'seriously consider' any trips to the kingdom. Then Australia, Singapore and Russia all updated travel advisories to urge their citizens to avoid the summit city of Pattaya and exercise greater caution throughout Thailand (Channel News Asia 2009).

Clearly, Thailand's recent political crises, triggered by both pro and anti Thaksin protests, have depicted the country's image as an unsafe destination to visit. Such an image therefore has influenced the tourists' perceived risk as traveling to Thailand at this time may involve a number of losses, such as financial loss (e.g. canceled flights), physical loss (e.g. injury caused by protestors), and psychological loss (e.g. a disrupted tourism experience), to name a few. Moreover, the greater the perceived risk, the less likely an individual will be to purchase the tourism products and services. This means the tourists are more likely to

postpone their travel plan to Thailand. In the worst case, they may cancel their trip to Thailand and choose other comparable destinations instead due to high risks.

Therefore, it is crucial for tourism stakeholders, such as the airport authority, tourism authority, tourism organizations, and tourism associations, to have a better understanding toward crisis management in order to be 'proactive' rather than 'reactive' when the political crisis hits the tourism industry. Moreover, tourism stakeholders need to recognize that political crisis is different from other types of crises, such as natural disasters and outbreaks, and hence a crisis management plan or scenario particularly prepared for political crisis is needed. This means there is an evident and critical need for an investigation examining best practices, or critical success factors, on how negative impacts from political crisis can be minimized or better managed. In order to meet such needs, this research has developed the following research objectives.

Research Objectives

Objectives of this research are:

1. To examine the differences between political crisis and other types of crises.
2. To identify critical success factors of crisis management in Thailand's tourism industry during political crisis.
3. To propose tourism crisis management strategies during political crisis.

Research Definitions

- **Crisis:** An adverse incident with an unpredictable outcome (Bland 1998; Campbell 1999; Coombs 1999; Coombs & Holladay 2002; Ruff & Aziz 2003).
- **Crisis management:** A systematic effort by organizational members to avert crises, or to effectively manage those that do occur (King III 2002).
- **Critical success factor (CSF):** The limited number of areas in which results, if they are satisfactory, will ensure successful performance for the organization (Rockart 1979, p. 85).
- **Perceived risk (or risk perception):** A consumer's importance-weighted, subjective assessment of the expected value of inherent risk, in each of the possible alternatives for a given decision goal (Conchar et al. 2004, p. 422).
- **Political instability:** A situation in which the established political order is threatened by internal or external forces, resulting in change and uncertainty (Henderson 2006).
- **Political tourism crisis:** A crisis for tourists and the tourism industry which is political in its origins (Henderson 2006).
- **Risk:** Any unintended or unexpected outcome of a decision or course of action (Wharton 1992, p. 5).

Research Frame

This research mainly examined crisis management approaches used during Thailand's political crisis situation which occurred up until March 2009. Approaches utilized during previous crises will also be investigated and compared against approaches used during the political crisis in order to determine similarities and differences. However, crises which occurred after March 2009, such as the Red-shirt's massive protest in April and the Swine Flu outbreak, are not covered in the data collection process.

Research Limitations

Due to time and financial constraints, the researcher will not be able to collect primary data from all tourism stakeholders in Thailand. Therefore, data will be collected in the Bangkok area only as key tourism stakeholders (e.g. airport authority, tourism authority, tourism association, and leading tourism organizations which are members of Pacific Asia Travel Association) are located in the Bangkok area. Nonetheless, it is envisaged that tourism stakeholders in Bangkok will be able to provide sufficient insightful information in regard to crisis management approaches used during crisis situations.

Research Justifications

This research essentially focuses on the impact of Thailand's political crisis on tourism organizations and how such a crisis can be managed. Results from this research will enable tourism stakeholders, such as the airport authority, tourism authority, tourism organizations, and tourism associations, to have a better understanding toward crisis management in order to be 'proactive' rather than 'reactive' when a political crisis hits the tourism industry.

Moreover, it is envisaged that this study will provide a variety of key outcomes and specific deliverables to the tourism industry. The study will inform the literature in this field and offer a series of recommendations which can be considered and implemented by various tourism bodies, not only in Thailand but also in the Asia Pacific region.

Summary

This chapter has laid the foundations for this research and presented its key concerns, research considerations, and research focus. It has supplied background to the research by illustrating the significance of the tourism industry in Thailand and how it has been affected by recent political crises within the country. Taken together, this forms the basis for the research objectives which underpin this inquiry.

In turn, Chapter 2 will now review a series of literatures in regard to crisis management in the tourism industry.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEWS

Introduction

The key objective of this chapter is to develop an understanding toward crisis management in tourism during the political situation. Firstly, the chapter introduces the concept of crisis and the crisis types. The impacts of crises on tourism will then be explored in detail, followed by the concept of crisis management and political crisis management respectively.

Crisis

There have been several attempts to define the concept of crisis (Tiernan et al. 2007, p. 311; Zehir 2005), with a whole tier of academic work concerned essentially with this task (Tiernan et al. 2007, p. 311). Having a specific definition is important however, as how one defines a subject dictates to a large extent how one approaches it (Coombs 1999).

Within the course of this literature review, a number of selected definitions of 'crisis' from various crisis management experts will be used. At its core however, this research adopts a definition of crisis as 'an adverse incident with an unpredictable outcome', a definition similarly proposed by a considerable number of authors in crisis management (e.g. Bland 1998; e.g. Campbell 1999; Coombs 1999; Coombs & Holladay 2002; Ruff & Aziz 2003). In addition, this is supported by the Cambridge Dictionary's (2004) definition which states that crisis is a situation which has reached an extremely difficult or dangerous point, and a time of great disagreement, uncertainty and suffering. Similarly, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2005) has described a crisis as an unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change is impending. Along very similar lines, Moreira (2007, p. 52) argues that crises are periods of great uncertainty in which predictability and control are lost or severely diminished.

The concepts of 'risk', 'crisis', and 'disaster' have also been used interchangeably by a number of authors. Therefore, it is crucial for one to understand the differences and similarities between these respective concepts. The Pacific Asia Travel Association (2003) stated in its widely used crisis management handbook that crisis is an extension of risk. Likewise, Glaesser (2003), as discussed in Pechlaner et al. (2007, p. 158), pointed out that crisis and disaster are directly related, yet different events. This has been highlighted by both Glaesser (2003) and Prideaux (2003), that disasters imply clearly unpredictable events that can normally only be responded to after the event. Faulkner and Russell (2000, p. 341) argued, however, that while crisis and disaster are interrelated, the distinction between these two is somewhat blurred, and to some extent dependent upon the perspective one adopts.

There are a number of different perspectives on how the impact of crises can be viewed. Bland (1998) recognized that crises can affect human safety, the environment, and/or a product or corporation's reputation, which has either received or been threatened by adverse publicity. Another perspective has been provided by the Pacific Asia Travel Association (2003), which stated that a crisis also affects long-term confidence in an organization or a product, and may interfere with an organization's ability to continue operating normally.

Coombs (1999) added that a crisis can cause financial loss, injuries or deaths to stakeholders, structural or property damage, discredit reputations, and cause environmental harm. Moreover, crises can equally affect both the tangible and intangible assets of an organization, with Mitroff et al. (1996) pointing out that a crisis can affect the entire organization; a major product line; a business unit; an organization's financial performance; or even cause the death or adversely affect the well-being of customers, employees, the surrounding community, and the natural environment. On top of that, a crisis can destroy the public's basic trust in an organization, along with its reputation and public image. Yet Zehir (2005) has argued that crises can have both negative (threat) and positive (opportunity) effects; normally, companies aim to avoid the threat of crisis with minimal loss while commensurately improving their opportunities to maximize profit.

Crisis Types

A number of authors have sought to develop typologies of crises, which can be useful in building an understanding of crisis as well as appropriate managerial responses (Evans & Elphick 2005, p. 140). According to Coombs and Holladay (2002), identifying the crisis type allows an organization to foresee the amount of crisis responsibility the public will expect from their organization. Assessments are made based on two key factors: severity and performance history. In this context, severity refers to the amount of damage generated by a crisis, and can include financial, human, and environmental costs; while performance history refers to the past actions and conduct of an organization. As severity increases or performance history worsens, stakeholders will expect greater crisis responsibility from the organization.

As the list of potential crises is extremely long (Coombs 1999; Tiernan et al. 2007, p. 312), it is simply not feasible to develop a comprehensive list of incidents that have the potential to develop into crises (Pacific Asia Travel Association 2003). Augustine (2000) also agreed that the spectrum of business crises is so wide that it remains virtually impossible to list each type. Clearly, such a task is well beyond the limitations of this chapter. Instead, selected typologies of crisis have been examined and summarized in the table below.

Table 5: Crisis types

Author / Context	Crisis type	Explanation
(Coombs 1995) / General business	Internal crisis	Crisis caused by the organization itself.
	External crisis	Crisis caused by something done by some person or group outside of the organization.
Lerbinger (1997) / General business	Crisis of the physical world	Crisis such as natural disaster and technology malfunction.
	Crisis of the human climate	Crisis such as confrontation and malevolence by individuals, groups, or governments.
	Crisis of management failure	Crisis caused by skewed values, deception, and misconduct of management.

Coombs and Holladay (2002) / General business	Victim cluster	Crises such as natural disasters, rumors, workplace violence, and product tampering.
	Accidental cluster	Crises such as challenges, mega damage, technical breakdown accidents, and technical breakdown-recalls.
	Preventable cluster	Crises that can be prevented, such as human breakdown accidents, human breakdown recalls, organizational misdeeds management misconduct, organizational misdeed with no injuries, and organizational misdeeds with injuries.
Pacific Asia Travel Association (2003) / Tourism	Natural-made crisis	Crises such as avalanches, earthquakes, fires, floods, hurricanes, mudslides, medical epidemics, and violent storms.
	Human-made crisis	Crises such as acts of terrorism, adventure sports, aircraft crashes, assaults, building fire/collapses, civil/political unrest, cruise ship/ferry disasters, fires, hijacking, industrial action, kidnapping, murder, hostage situations, mechanical/system failures, personal harassment, political actions, riots, surface transport accidents, terrorism, and wars.
Ruff and Aziz (2003) / General business	Simmering crisis	Crises which lie beneath an organization's surface and can erupt into a crisis at anytime, such as industrial unrest, criminal actions of varying types and inefficient management would fall into this category.
	Sudden crisis	Crises such as accidents and emergencies, acts of terrorism, mechanical breakdowns, hostile take-over, or unexpected legal action.
Evans and Elphick (2005, p. 135) / Tourism	Internal crisis	Crises that can generally be assessed and controlled.
	External crisis	Crises beyond the company's control that inherently pose a greater degree of risk and uncertainty. Tourism, in particular, is particularly prone to external crises.
Henderson (2007) / Tourism	Economic crisis	Crises such as recession, rising costs, and unprofitability.
	Political crisis	Crises such as terrorism, government policy, and international relations.
	Socio-cultural crisis	Crises such as unrest, crime, staffing, and cultural conflicts.
	Environmental crisis	Crises such as natural disasters, pollution, and health scare.
	Technological crisis	Crises such as computer systems failure, fire, mechanical failure, and transport accidents.
	Commercial crisis	Crises such as regulations, government intervention, competition, labor disputes, management decisions, and human error.

Source: Campiranon (2007)

Wilks & Moore (2004) have suggested that the strategies for reacting to a crisis, as well as recovering from one are remarkably similar from one type of crisis to another. Whether the crisis is caused by terrorism, by natural disaster, or by an epidemic, organizations need to be prepared and need to understand how to respond while maintaining the confidence of both travelers and the travel industry. A number of authors (e.g. Aktas & Gunlu 2005; Henderson 2007; Tiernan et al. 2007, p. 324) have argued however that not all types of crisis lead to the same consequences, differing from one another in terms of the scope and extent of damage caused.

Moreover, Henderson (2007, p. 163) has emphasized that every crisis is in fact unique, with their characteristics, evolution, and resolution shaped by a multiplicity of different forces both internal and external to the organization and industry. Regardless of the considerable variety and diversity of crises however, some common types and features are discernible, with lessons learned from particular crises having a measure of broader applicability. In addition, Coombs (1999) has added that different crises require different skills from crisis team members; an emphasis on different stakeholders; as well as different crisis communication strategies. For example, a product recall requires a crisis team with the skills to communicate with consumers and inform shareholders of the financial impact of the recall. A rumor, however, requires greater skill and a response designed to present the truth to consumers and stop the source of the rumor.

Different reactions to human-made versus natural-made crises also provide a clear example of the critical differences in the public's reaction to different types of crisis. According to Pearson and Mitroff (1993, p. 48), the public generally reacts more negatively to the effects of human-made crises than to those of natural-made crisis. While it is generally conceded that organizations have little control over natural disasters, human-made crises can devastate the long-standing reputation of an organization. As human-made crises are usually preventable, this type of crisis often receives severe public condemnation.

Impacts of Crises on Tourism

International tourism flows are subject to disruption by a range of events (Prideaux, Laws & Faulkner 2007, p. 353), leading tourists to search for substitute destinations in turn (Freyer & Schroder 2007, p. 129; Prideaux & Laws 2007, p. 376). Major disruptions, often referred to as 'shocks', are felt in both origin and destination areas and affect both public and private sectors while disrupting the travel plans of potential tourists (Prideaux, Laws & Faulkner 2007, p. 353). Moreover, major disruptions to tourism flows as a result of crises have been challenging the tourism industry as a whole in recent years in particular (Henderson 2003; Hopper 2002; Lyon & Worton 2007, p. 200; Rosenthal 2003).

A number of authors (e.g. Pechlaner et al. 2007, p. 168; e.g. Prideaux, Laws & Faulkner 2007, p. 353) have suggested that a thorough understanding of the impacts unexpected crises can have on tourism flows is essential. While there are many crisis types which can affect tourism, every crisis is unique. Their characteristics, evolution, and resolution are shaped by a multiplicity of forces both internal and external to the organization and the industry (Henderson 2007, p. 163). In turn, not all crisis types lead to similar consequences, differing from one another in both the scope and extent of damage caused (Aktas & Gunlu 2005). The impacts of recent, major crises on tourism are summarized and presented in the table below.

Table 6: Impacts of Crises on Tourism

Crisis / Location		Impacts on Tourism
Human-Made Crises	September 11 (2001) / United States	The terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 is an extreme case of many potential crises that dominate a decision in business operation. In the United States, the complete shutdown of the U.S. aviation system, due to the September 11 tragedy, had a negative influence on the airline industry by pushing several carriers into bankruptcy and causing others to seek federal loan guarantees (Stafford, Yu & Armoo 2002).
	Bali Bombing (2002) / Bali, Indonesia	The terrorist incident that occurred in Bali in October 2002 killed over 180 people (most of whom were tourists), when a bomb exploded in a nightclub. Here the terrorists gained power as a political weapon through the mass media coverage of the event. Tourists were targeted, which had both short- and long-term effects on Bali's tourism industry. People fled the island; there were inevitable cancellations of bookings and a drastic reduction in new bookings, similar to the reaction of the public during the Gulf War (Evans & Elphick 2005, p. 137).
	Iraq War (2003) / Middle East	Because of the US-led Iraq war, concerns over travel safety during the war in Iraq caused tourists to cancel their travel plans to Thailand, depriving the economy of a key source of foreign income. According to the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), since the start of the war in Iraq, around 50,000 visits have been cancelled from April to June, and hotels experienced cancellation rates of 5-10 per cent (EIU ViewsWire 2003).
Natural-Made Crises	Foot-and-mouth disease (2001) / UK	The foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreak in Britain in 2001 had an impact on Britain's inbound tourism with a decline in tourism arrivals (Frisby 2002; Ritchie et al. 2003, p. 200; Yeoman, Lennon & Black 2005).
	SARS (2003) / Asia	The impact of SARS was felt worldwide, but especially in Asia. In Singapore, dubbed as one of the largest SARS affected countries, the outbreak showed an adverse impact on international arrivals and domestic leisure activity (Henderson 2003). In Taiwan, the outbreak of SARS dealt a sharp blow to the Taiwanese tourism industry, with the worst impact being suffered by the international tourism sector (Min 2005).
	Tsunami (2004) / Indian Ocean	The impact of natural disasters on tourism can be seen from the tsunami crisis, which affected the tourism industry in countries bordering the Indian Ocean. Some of the affected countries, including the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Thailand, rely heavily on tourism as a major source of income and employment (World Tourism Organization 2005). Thailand was among the affected countries suffering from the giant underwater earthquake (Tourism Authority of Thailand 2005). The affected areas included six provinces on the southwest coast of Thailand (Pacific Asia Travel Association 2004) which lost substantial tourism revenue for several months (Bangkok Post 2005).

Source: Campiranon (2007)

A series of studies have considered the differences between various tourism crises, with one area in particular devoted to the impacts of natural disasters. Without a doubt,

tourism remains especially vulnerable to natural disasters (Cioccio & Michael 2007, p. 1). The reasons why organizations as disparate as news media, governments, UN agencies, NGOs, and both private and public sectors respond more generously to natural disasters, include: (1) natural disasters can occur suddenly and anywhere in the world; and (2) cause and blame cannot be easily attributed to people. While human-made crises in contrast are more political, complex, and sullied, and there is always someone or some group one can blame or hold accountable, natural disasters involve sentiments of both inevitability and a lack of accountability (Spiegel 2005).

In addition, while a natural disaster can impede the flow of tourism, terrorism risk tends to intimidate the traveling public more severely, as demonstrated by the realignment of travel flows and cancellation of vacations during periods of heightened terrorist activity (Sonmez, Apostolopoulos & Tarlow 1999). Secondly, political threats cause more severe and long-term damage to tourist destinations when compared to other forms of crisis, especially if their effects spread internationally (Aktas & Gunlu 2005). And thirdly, despite the fact that a natural crisis can attract substantial media attention, this is often for a generally short and concentrated period of time. In contrast, the effect of continued and sustained media exposure to political crises can carry on for a much longer period. In this way, it can be seen that political crises hold more sustained and negative impacts on the perceived tourism image of a destination (Beirman 2002).

Unlike other types of tourism crises, health related crises such as SARS are likely to recur (Henderson 2003; Henderson & Ng 2004, p. 416). The fact that unknown viruses are predicted to emerge in the course of the 21st century, combined with the prevailing forces of globalization capable of facilitating their spread, can heighten fear about health related crises. As a result, doubts within the medical community about whether a crisis is over, and whether it could resurface anywhere in the world, are common in an aftermath of health-related crises (Henderson 2003). Moreover, such crises also have a substantial impact on tourism given the modes of transportation crucial to the industry. In the case of Singapore during SARS for instance, tourists from around the world either cancelled or postponed their trips, with passenger traffic at Singapore's Changi Airport halved and several airlines halting flights altogether (Henderson & Ng 2004, p. 413).

Crisis Management

Crises are largely unpredictable events (Coombs 1999; Lyon & Worton 2007, p. 209; Moreira 2007, p. 52; Pechlaner et al. 2007, p. 163; Prideaux & Laws 2007, p. 375). While the actual timing, location, and severity of crises cannot be accurately predicted, Laws et al. (2007, p. 8) have suggested, however, that it is possible to learn from previous crises, to pre-plan emergency procedures, and to lessen the severity of a crisis by adopting appropriate precautions.

A life cycle perspective on crisis has been emphasized by Coombs (1999) that different stages in the life cycle of a crisis situation require different actions. As a result, crisis management is not only about developing a plan and executing it during a crisis, but also recognizing effective crisis management as an ongoing process. The life cycle perspective has yielded a variety of staged/phased approaches to crisis management. In turn,

staged approaches provide a mechanism for constructing a framework for organizing the vast and varied situations which constitute crisis.

An effective crisis management framework can reduce the time it takes to complete the crisis life cycle. Developing such a comprehensive framework however requires an extensive review of the staged approaches to crisis management (Coombs 1999). For the purpose of examining these issues in greater depth, it remains useful to look at frameworks which have been used to describe these stages. While there are numerous frameworks and approaches to crisis management (Wilks & Moore 2004), several studies since 1999 have shown a strong link between crisis management theories and current crises, as illustrated in the following table.

Table 7: Crisis management approaches

Author / Context	Stage	Task
Campbell (1999) / General business	1. Identification or discover	Identify threats.
	2. Preparation and planning	Conduct threat and vulnerability audits, identification of emerging issues, safety inspection, emergency planning, and improved relationship with employees and external audiences.
	3. Control	Stop the effects of the crisis as soon as possible and limit the physical damage to people or property.
	4. Recovery	Develop short and long-term strategies to facilitate fast and orderly recovery from a crisis situation.
	5. Learning	Understand the crisis management plan, its checklists, and procedures. Also continually review the threats to the organization and review the crisis response.
Coombs (1999) / General business	1. Prevention	Avoid the crises.
	2. Preparation	Diagnose crisis vulnerabilities, select and train the crisis management team and spokesperson, create the crisis portfolio, and refine the crisis communication system.
	3. Performance	Implement the preparation components in time of crisis.
	4. Learning	Evaluate performance in both simulated and real crises.
Augustine (2000) / General business	1. Avoiding the crisis	Make a list of everything that could attract troubles to the business, consider the possible consequences, and estimate the cost of prevention.
	2. Preparing to manage the	Establish a crisis center, making contingency plans, select the members of the crisis team in advance,

	crisis	provide ready and redundant communications, and test those communications.
	3. Recognizing the crisis	Recognize that, in fact, there is a crisis.
	4. Containing the crisis	Make a decision in a timely manner.
	5. Resolving the crisis	Act swiftly.
	6. Profiting from the crisis	Recover some losses, at least partially, and begin to repair the disruption.
Schwartz (2000) / General business	1. Response	Respond quickly and make an effort in coping with the crisis.
	2. Damage control	Designate a key person who will be responsible for crisis management, respond to the crises, and plan for the next step of crisis management.
	3. Learning	Learn from the crisis management experience.
Faulkner (2001, p. 140) / Tourism	1. Pre-event phase	Have disaster contingency plans, scenarios or probability assessments in place.
	2. Prodromol phase	Initiate contingency plan.
	3. Emergency phase	Take necessary actions to protect people or property in the tourism destination.
	4. Intermediate phase	Address short-term and immediate needs of people. A clear media communication is also crucial in this stage.
	5. Long-term (recovery) phase	Rebuild the damaged infrastructure and reconstruct environmentally damaged areas.
	6. Resolution phase	Restore routine.
Pacific Asia Travel Association (2003) / Tourism	1. Reduction	Identify potential crises.
	2. Readiness	Exercise, acquire, and maintain crisis management skills and be ready for the impact and stress from crises.
	3. Response	Implement a contingency plan.
	4. Recovery	Recover from a crisis and gauge the effectiveness of crisis management.
Ruff and Aziz (2003) / General business	1. Emergency Preparedness	Prepare for a crisis.
	2. Emergency Notification	Inform key stakeholders on the crisis situation.
	3. Crisis Communications	Foresee what the stakeholders want to know and should know under given circumstances.

	4. Crisis Recovery	Restore both tangible (e.g. facility) and intangible (e.g. reputation) assets.
World Tourism Organization (2003) / Tourism	1. Before a crisis	Prepare for the worst.
	2. During the actual problems	Minimize damage from a crisis.
	3. Immediately after a crisis	Regain tourist confidence.

Source: Various authors

It has been suggested that the ideal crisis management model should be able to accommodate all of these various models, plus additional insights provided by other crisis management experts. A comprehensive model therefore must be able to place ‘random’ insights into crisis management processes (Coombs 1999). While opinion varies greatly as to what are the most suitable stages/phases in managing a crisis, opinion is united that the multi stages/phases of crisis management should involve the following issues:

- Identification or discovery of threats (Augustine 2000; Campbell 1999; Coombs 1999; Pacific Asia Travel Association 2003; World Tourism Organization 2003);
- Crisis management planning (Augustine 2000; Campbell 1999; Coombs 1999; Faulkner 2001; Pacific Asia Travel Association 2003; Ruff & Aziz 2003; World Tourism Organization 2003);
- Crisis response (Augustine 2000; Campbell 1999; Coombs 1999; Faulkner 2001; Pacific Asia Travel Association 2003; Schwartz 2000; World Tourism Organization 2003);
- Crisis recovery (Campbell 1999; Faulkner 2001; Pacific Asia Travel Association 2003; Ruff & Aziz 2003; World Tourism Organization 2003);
- Learning from the crisis (Campbell 1999; Coombs 1999; Schwartz 2000).

Political Crisis Management in Tourism

Tourism may decline significantly if political conditions appear unstable. This is because political philosophies and practices in both destination and generating countries can be escalated into crisis when instability is generated and would cause tourists to choose alternative destinations which would then cause tourism to decline significantly (Henderson 2006). Issues underpinning the vulnerability of tourism to political crises are discussed below.

Firstly, a widely known notion within tourism literatures is that political stability is a prerequisite for the prosperity of tourism. In fact, it can be argued that tourism can only thrive under peaceful conditions (Hitchcock 2001). Unfortunately, many national leaders and tourism authorities either do not understand or will not accept the fact that political stability, not scenic or cultural attractions, constitute the first and central requirement of tourism (Henderson 2006).

Secondly, one of the factors which influence consumer decisions to visit a destination is the extent of travel insurance coverage. It is quite evident that some travel insurance companies have repeatedly denied normal travel insurance cover to travelers to destinations with high risk based on their interpretation of government travel advisories. This is largely because travel insurance companies have a general exemption which denies coverage of travelers who suffer death, injury or property loss resulting from political violence or civil disorder (Beirman 2002).

Thirdly, media reports and perceptions of political instability at the tourist destinations are key factors influencing decisions made by those travelers, the industry, and those investors who generally show an aversion to risk (Henderson 2006). While natural disasters can initially get substantial media attention, such media coverage often lasts for a relatively short but intensive period of time. Conversely, the effects of continued and sustained media exposures to political crisis can carry on for a much longer period of time. Unlike natural disasters, political crisis can continue to impact on the destination image for months if not years (Beirman 2002). Clearly, political instability has been dominating the discourse of contemporary media, which has a significant impact on tourism demand (Baral, Baral & Morgan 2004).

Fourthly, alarming pictures and stories of political incidents can be transmitted instantly around the world in today's era of mass communications technology (Henderson 2006). In turn, relatively localized political incidents may ultimately result in serious damage to the country as a whole, the wider region and even the world in what has been termed the "generalization effect" (Lepp & Gibson 2003). Furthermore, international tourists also tend to be more vulnerable to political crisis than domestic tourists. Due to the far distance and unfamiliarity, international tourists are likely to have distorted perceptions of risk caused by circulated inaccurate and incomplete information (Henderson 2006).

Although there is a growing number of studies on tourism crisis management, literatures in the area of political crisis management in tourism in particular are somewhat limited. This chapter has nonetheless reviewed selected studies in such areas with case studies of political crises from Fiji (King & Berno 2002), Nepal (Baral, Baral & Morgan 2004), and Israel – Palestine (Beirman 2002). Best practices from each case are summarized and illustrated as follows.

Fiji Political Crisis

According to King and Berno (2002), Fiji's two coups in 1987 and 2000 had posed a negative impact to its tourism industry. The tourism industry worked jointly with Fiji Visitors Bureau (FVB) and Air Pacific to come up with a crisis recovery plan; as shown in the table below.

Table 8: Fiji's Crisis Recovery Plan

Identified Issues →	Objectives →	→→ Recovery Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication with overseas markets, overseas diplomatic missions and the media. • Operational issues such as how to deal with cancellations and travel insurance issues. • Monitoring of key relationships for resorts and operations. • The need to develop a long-term strategy to address tourism industry issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an international plan that was fully coordinated. • Establish that Fiji is safe and desirable. • Finance the promotion of Fiji with cooperative support from the private sector and government. • Seek the involvement of wholesalers and retailers in all source markets. • Implement multi-phase marketing strategies to achieve both short-term and long-term objectives. • Re-instate lost employment in the industry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A public relations and media management consulting firm was contracted to assist in the management of the recovery program. • Funding was solicited from private and public sector sources to support a short and medium term advertising and promotion campaign in all major visitor markets. • Visits were made to consular representatives to encourage the lifting of travel advisories. • Travel agent/wholesaler visits were arranged. • A comprehensive media campaign was planned. • Special recovery fare packages were prepared.

Source: Adapted from King and Berno (2002, p. 50)

Nepal Political Crisis

Since 1993, there have been a number of changes in the Nepalese government, resulting in a culture of political fragmentation and continuing political instability. This internal political crisis has led to a prolonged negative media of Nepal which frequently focuses on the periodic incidents in different parts of the country. Hence, Nepal's image remains to be one of an unsafe tourist destination, which has caused foreign tourist-generating countries to issue travel advisories (Baral, Baral & Morgan 2004).

Baral et al. (2004) added that the greatest challenge for the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), the major tourism authority in Nepal, lies in the areas of communications and media management. This is, however, incredibly difficult for a small country like Nepal with very limited resources and, critically, with limited influence over global information networks. Therefore, NTB's response to its political crisis has been on a number of levels, primarily focusing on public and media relations and on targeted marketing campaigns. Key NTB strategies are as follows:

1. A crisis management team was established to consider a strategy to deflect the negative publicity and disseminate more positive stories.
2. A public relations focusing on the media and tour operator was launched in the major generating markets. This is mainly done in the form of familiarization trips for operators and journalists.
3. A concerted marketing campaign "Destination Nepal" which highlighted that Nepal is still a safe place for tourists and that, despite the domestic crisis, places of tourist interest remain risk-free.

Israel - Palestine Political Crisis

According to Beirman (2002), the political conflict between Israel and the Palestinian-administered areas in Gaza and the West Bank in 2000 has damaged the Middle-East tourism industry two fold. Firstly, this political crisis has caused the false impression extrapolated by isolated and localized incidents that all of Israel is enmeshed in violence. Secondly, it has caused another misunderstanding that the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is embroiling the entire Middle East. To tackle both challenges, Israel has implemented the following strategies during the Israel-Palestinian crisis:

- Suggesting unaffected neighbor destinations/countries to distance themselves from the affected area during the Israeli-Palestinian crisis.

- Increasing the number of travel industry educational trips to enable travel agents and trade press journalists to see Israel for themselves and report to colleagues and clients.
- Israel government tourist offices (IGTOs) sending regular situation updates to key tour operators, airlines, and travel agencies.
- Establishing a situation hotline where travelers and travel agents can be advised of the security situation in places they are visiting or booking.
- Upgrading internet sites including real-time video news updates.
- Introducing marketing initiative by offering special offers on packages and land arrangement.

Although every crisis is in fact unique (Henderson 2007, p. 163) and may require dissimilar crisis management approaches, different political crises from Fiji (King & Bero 2002), Nepal (Baral, Baral & Morgan 2004), and Israel – Palestine (Beirman 2002), as discussed above, show some similarities in regard to crisis management approaches. Firstly, one of the most common strategies employed during those crises is a communication strategy undertaken in various forms such as familiarization trip, media relation, public relation, and sending regular situation updates to tourism stakeholders. Secondly, marketing campaigns and special promotions had been planned so that they can be implemented at the right time when the political crisis has been resolved.

Summary

In order to gain a profound understanding toward this research topic, this chapter has drawn literature from five major areas: crisis, crisis types, impacts of crises on tourism, crisis management, and political crisis management in tourism which is central to this research. In the next chapter, Chapter 3, methodological approaches employed in this research will be discussed.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework utilized in this research to guide data collection and data analysis. To achieve this, the following discussion firstly outlined the research design, followed by its rationale in employing qualitative methods of data collection, in particular in-depth interviewing. In doing so, the chapter covers key methodological considerations including sampling strategy, data collection, and data analysis strategy.

Research Design

The key reason and motivation for this research is to study critical success factors of crisis management in tourism using political crises in Thailand as a case study. By drawing on literature from areas relevant to political crisis management in tourism, this research developed three main research objectives:

1. To examine the differences between political crisis and other types of crises.
2. To identify critical success factors of crisis management in Thailand's tourism industry during political crisis.
3. To propose tourism crisis management strategies during political crisis.

It should be pointed that this research is motivated by the lack of relevant research and literature concerned specifically with crisis management during political crisis. As little is known about this key issue, a crucial consideration for this research was to adopt those theoretical considerations of choosing qualitative research methods utilizing semi-structured in-depth interviews to obtain rich and substantively meaningful data.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research aims to provide an in-depth and interpreted account of the social world through the participation of social actors themselves (Snape & Spencer 2003). Qualitative researchers study 'things' in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of and interpret phenomena through the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln 2005). Sampling in qualitative research therefore is generally both small in scale and purposefully selected on the basis of salient criteria (Snape & Spencer 2003). To best achieve and communicate this, qualitative research usually emphasizes words as opposed to the quantification of data (Bryman & Bell 2003), and one of the key instruments employed in both this research and more generally, is the in-depth interview.

In-depth interview

An in-depth interview can be described as an unstructured, direct, and personal interview in which a single respondent is probed by a trained interviewer to uncover underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings on a topic (Malhotra 2004). This research chose in-depth interviewing as its key method of data collection for three major reasons.

Firstly, an in-depth interview is arguably the most widely employed method in qualitative research (Bryman & Bell 2003). Secondly, the method has also been used extensively in a series of crisis management studies (e.g. Elsubbaugh, Fildes & Rose 2004; Santana 1997; Srikatanyoo & Campiranon 2005). Thirdly, in-depth interview allows researchers to explore factors which underpin a respondent's answers, including key factors such as their reasons, feelings, opinions, and beliefs (Legard, Keegan & Ward 2003).

Using semi-structured interviewing, interviewers are able to direct interviews to a greater extent according to a specific list of topics or subject areas. In this way, the timing, exact wording, and time allocated to each question area are left more to the interviewer's discretion (Aaker, Kumar & Day 2004). Given that the aim of this research is guided by relevant literature, it was necessary for the researcher to adopt an approach to in-depth interviewing utilizing semi-structured interview techniques, as opposed to nondirective techniques, in order for slightly more control over question structure and sequence.

In-depth interviews are conducted on a one-to-one basis, and usually take a minimum of 30 minutes to complete (Malhotra 2004). In addition, interviews should generally be kept under 45 minutes, with respondents often losing interest after this length of time (Miller & Salkind 2002). To begin the interview, interviewers should start by asking general questions, thus encouraging respondents to talk freely and feel more at ease about communicating their attitudes on an issue. After these initial questions, interviewers should employ a more unstructured approach, given interviews are to some extent directed by the respondent's initial replies (Malhotra 2004).

Sampling Strategy

Sampling strategy implemented in this research began with the process of defining target population, identifying sampling frame, and then choosing sampling method as explained below.

Target Population

As the central aim of this research is to identify critical success factors of crisis management approaches utilized by Thailand's tourism organization, this research chose high-level executives (e.g. directors, general managers, company advisor, and president) at Bangkok-based organizations which provide tourism-related services in Thailand as a target population. Target population includes, but is not limited to, high-level executives at the tourism authority, tourism organizations, and tourism associations located in Bangkok, Thailand.

Sampling Frame

In this research, a sampling frame has been obtained mainly from a member directory of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) provided by the Membership Services at PATA. PATA is a membership association acting as a catalyst for the responsible development of the Asia Pacific travel and tourism industry. Currently, PATA has 904 members (Pacific Asia Travel Association 2009).

Sampling Method

Utilizing a multi-stage sampling, this research began with a purposive sample to list PATA members that are included in this research. It should be pointed out however that PATA members are located all over the Asia and Pacific region ranging from hotels to airlines and to tourism consultancies. For the purpose of this research, only 45 PATA members based in Bangkok were included in the data collection as they are the ones who have been directly affected by political crises in Thailand. This decision has been justified by the idea that qualitative research, as Creswell (2003) has pointed out, aims to purposefully select participants best able to help the researcher understand the research problem and answer research questions.

Next, a convenience sampling has been used to select high-level executives who would be able to provide insightful information in regard to this research topic. Convenience sampling constitutes a non-probability technique which attempts to obtain a sample of convenient elements; overall, it is both less expensive and less time consuming when compared with other sampling techniques (Aaker, Kumar & Day 2004, p. 388; Malhotra 2004), and thus particularly suitable to this research given its resource limitations.

The other non-probability technique employed in this research is snowball sampling. Using this technique, respondents are selected based on direct referral, or alternately information provided by initial respondents, thus constituting ultimately a snowball effect to obtaining interviewees (Malhotra 2004). While in this research convenience sampling has dominated the sampling process, snowball sampling has been utilized as a supplementary device when it became difficult to approach certain respondents.

Data Collection

To provide an overview of data collection in the context of this inquiry, this section discusses the pilot interviews utilized in this research; the major in-depth interviews which form the core of data collected; and relevant ethical considerations raised by the study. Details of each part are discussed as follows.

Pilot In-Depth Interviews

As suggested by Vant, Leven and Jonsson's (2002) study, a pilot interview can be conducted to test the interview guidelines, as well as help the researcher become acquainted with an interview situation. With these aims in mind, five pilot interviews for this research were conducted with tourism executives, prior to the main interviews. Each tourism executive in the pilot interviews, however, is in a different level within an organization. Observations from the pilot interviews revealed that respondents in a higher position tend to have a better understanding and knowledge of crisis management than respondents in a lower position. This has confirmed the researcher's decision to interview only high-level tourism executives. Moreover, all of them were also unsure which political crises are covered in this research, and it was therefore crucial that the researcher clarify this point in the beginning of each interview.

Main In-Depth Interviews

This qualitative research employed semi-structured interviewing which enables the researcher to employ an interview guide outlining a specific list of topics needing to be covered during an interview (Aaker, Kumar & Day 2004). As addressed in the Sampling Method section, 45 PATA members based in Bangkok were included in the data collection as they are the ones who have been affected directly by political crises in Thailand. To start with, the researcher sent an email to those 45 PATA members asking for cooperation with the in-depth interviews. In return, the researcher received a total of 21 responses out of 45 (a 46.6% response rate) from organizations willing to participate in an interview.

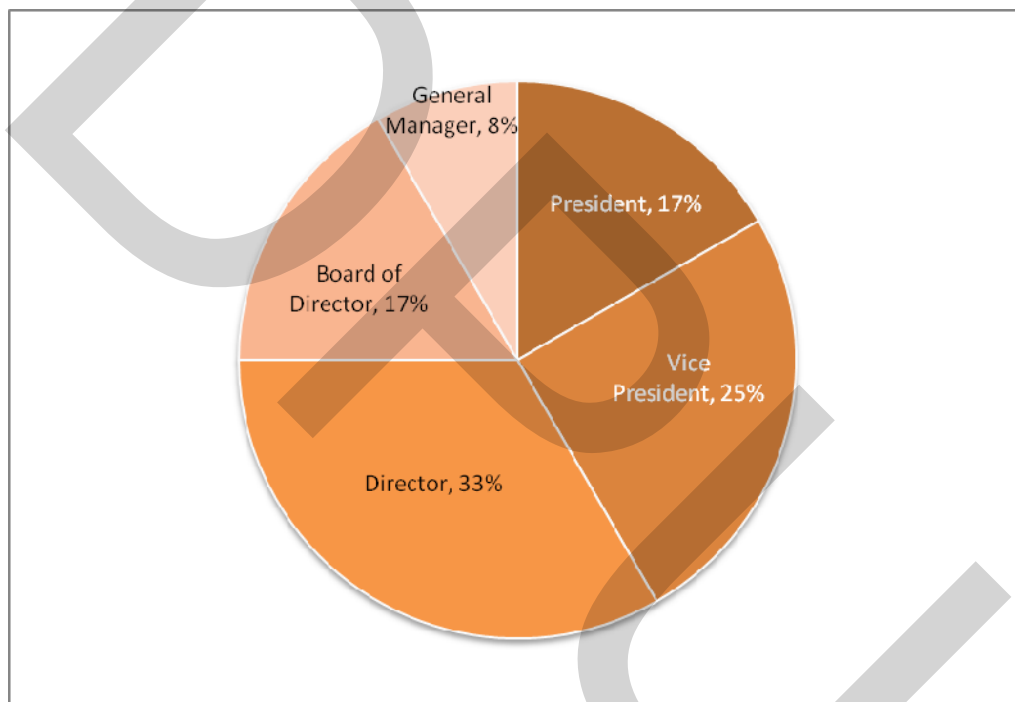
In addition, a large number of interviewees over the first few weeks of interviewing strongly suggested the researcher include tourism authorities and tourism associations in the data collection process, given representative informants from each would be able to provide their own valuable perspectives on crisis management in the tourism industry. A total list of respondents and their titles is illustrated in the following table and figure respectively.

Table 9: List of respondents

Respondent		Number
PATA Members	Hotels	14
	Tourism Experts & Consultants	4
	Airlines	3
Non PATA Members	Tourism Authorities	2
	Tourism Associations	2
Total		25

Source: Developed for this research

Figure 3: Profile of respondent titles



Source: Developed for this research

The major in-depth interviews in Bangkok, Thailand were all undertaken between March and April 2009, approximately 2 months. Each interview lasted between 30 and 40 minutes, and it remained very difficult to extend interviews beyond 45 or 50 minutes given most interviewees were senior management with busy schedules. At the same time, when the data became saturated the researcher carefully decided that data was sufficient to achieve the research aims, and further interviews were not needed.

Ethical Consideration

Crisis management has been considered a sensitive issue by a number of authors (Elsabbagh, Fildes & Rose 2004; Santana 1997). In particular, while some organizations have managed crises successfully, via well developed crisis management plans, others remain comparatively unprepared and susceptible. Moreover, various studies (Elsabbagh, Fildes & Rose 2004) have shown that an interview on an issue as sensitive as the organization's management of crisis could be linked to management failings caused by poor or unsafe practices. For this and similar reasons, an interview letter (see Appendix) given to each respondent clearly stated that *“any quotes that are used in resulting work will be anonymously attributed, and any descriptors that could result in your identification will be removed”* to ensure the confidentiality of respondents.

Data Analysis

In general, qualitative research produces a large amount of rich data, with data represented as textual units as opposed to the numeric representations of quantitative research. As a result, qualitative data needs to be reduced and transformed in order to make it more readily accessible, intelligible, and meaningful, effectively drawing out key themes and patterns essential to the issues being studied (Neuendorf 2002; Ruhanen 2006). This research has implemented the following data analysis steps.

Firstly, the data analysis of this research began by typing recorded interviews into a transcription format. Then “Tag Cloud” or “Content Cloud” analysis was used in order to generate a simple visualization of the most frequently used words. Tag clouds are visual presentations of a set of words in which attributes of the text such as size, weight or color can be used to represent features (e.g. frequency) of the associated terms (Halvey & Keane 2007). Preliminary evaluation suggests that the techniques may be useful for generating insights when visualizing large data sets (Slingsby et al. 2007). Moreover, the use of tag cloud from a usability perspective has been utilized by a variety of studies (Assenov, Burns & Cosh 2009).

Secondly, the researcher has analyzed data by organizing it into categories based on themes, concepts, or other common features, from which new concepts can then be developed, conceptual definitions formulated, and relationships between concepts drawn and examined. Such a process is commonly referred to as ‘content analysis’ (Ruhanen 2006), which may best be defined as ‘a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use’ (Krippendorff 2004). In this sense, content analysis is a technique for data collection, description, and interpretation (Norris & Jacobson 1998), with the goal of depicting the ‘big’ picture in terms of a given subject, and displaying conceptual depth through the thoughtful arrangement of a wealth of detailed observations (White & Marsh 2006).

Analyzed data would then be taken into consideration with an aim of achieving research objectives stated in Chapter 1.

Summary

This chapter has given an account of the methodological framework utilized in this study, and discussed its key methodological considerations. Firstly, this chapter has outlined the research design, then discussed sampling strategy, the methods of data collection, and data analysis respectively. In the next chapter, key findings from the main in-depth interviews will be presented.



CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

Whilst the previous chapter outlined and discussed methodology employed in this research, this chapter presents its findings in response to the following research objectives:

1. To examine the differences between political crisis and other types of crises.
2. To identify critical success factors of crisis management in Thailand's tourism industry during political crisis.
3. To propose tourism crisis management strategies during political crisis.

As has already been detailed in the previous chapter, a tag cloud analysis will be used to visualize words that have been mentioned frequently by respondents during the interviews. A content analysis approach will subsequently be utilized to analyze findings relating to the first and second research objectives.

Tag Cloud Analysis

Using a tag-cloud generator from <http://tagcrowd.com>, this research was able to generate a visualization of frequently mentioned words found during the interviews. The word size represents the number of times that a particular word has been mentioned. To visualize those key words, the researcher set the limit in the tag-cloud generator by displaying the top frequent words that have been mentioned at least 10 times. The result is shown in the figure below.

Figure 4: Tag cloud of interview transcription



Source: Developed for this research using <http://tagcrowd.com>

Clearly, words that have been mentioned most frequently by respondents are highly affiliated with the topic of this research. Those words are: Thailand, crisis, tourists, airport, and political. This is largely because the respondents have raised issues regarding the closure of Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport, due to Thailand's political crisis, and how it had affected the tourists and their tourism businesses. Interestingly, the only organizations among these top frequent words that have been brought up by respondents are Thai Airways and the Tourism Authority of Thailand. Although respondents have made both positive and negative comments toward these two, findings have shown that both organizations played a very important role during political crisis.

After visualizing key words and ideas from the interview transcription, this chapter will now move on to the content analysis section which analyzes the following contents:

- Strengths & Weaknesses of the Tourism Industry in Thailand
- Differences among Crisis Types
- Impact from the Closure of Suvarnabhumi Airport
- Critical Success Factors (CSF)

Strengths & Weaknesses of Tourism Industry in Thailand

Prior to an analysis of data regarding crisis management in the political crisis situation, it is vital to understand current strengths and weaknesses of the tourism industry in Thailand. These strengths and weaknesses are identified below.

When the respondents were asked to reflect on their opinions on the strengths of Thailand's tourism, almost all said that Thailand offers value with competitive rates and great services. In fact, one respondent added that 'value-for-money' should be a positioning of Thailand particularly during the current economic crisis. Hospitality, culture, and service mind of Thai people were also mentioned as strengths. Location wise, Thailand can be considered as an aviation hub for the Greater Mekong Sub region (GMS), Indo-China, and Asia which enabling Thailand to bring in worldwide tourists to the country. Thailand also has a wide array of tourism products and destinations.

Although Thailand's tourism seems to have several strengths, respondents have commented on a number of weaknesses. From the hospitality point of view, hotels in Thailand have been oversupplied with too many developments. Moreover, the competitiveness has gone up 10 times because of the economic crisis, and thus caused hotels to drop rates which are not sustainable for hotel properties in Thailand. From the tourism point of view, aging tourism destinations and products in Thailand need to be refurbished and rejuvenated. Essentially, Thailand has not come up with new tourism product in a while whereas the competing destinations in other countries have a long-term vision and have developed new innovative products. One of the reasons that Thailand has been slow to adapt

or adjust its tourism products is largely due to Thailand's bureaucratic approach toward tourism development. This is why Thailand has been relying on a pricing strategy by giving discounts to attract tourists which is, once again, not sustainable.

Apart from the above weaknesses, respondents have strongly pointed out that Thailand's political crisis is an increasing setback which depicts the country's image as an unsafe destination for tourists to visit; as one respondent said "*In fact, Thailand seems to have the lowest political stability in Asia*". Instead of spending their holidays in Thailand, foreign tourists chose substitute destinations in other countries that have a safer image. Clearly, political crisis is a growing crisis which can severely affect the competitiveness of Thailand as a tourism destination. In turn, it is crucial for one to appreciate the differences among crisis types, and why political crisis differs from other types of crisis, and this will be explained below.

Differences among Crisis Types

The in-depth interviews have focused on four types of crisis which generally affect tourism. Those crises are: natural disaster, terrorism, outbreak, and political crisis.

Natural Disasters

Natural disasters such as tsunami, storm, and earthquake affect the physical aspect of the destination but can be contained in order to minimize widespread physical impact to other areas. Tsunami, for example, only affected southern Thailand and did not affect Thailand as a whole. However this kind of crisis does not only affect the tourism destination physically, but also affect the tourists psychologically. During tsunami crisis, for example, tourists do not want to travel to Thailand, although they could afford to, as they wished to be safe. Having said that, natural disaster only happens for a short time with a fast bounce back usually within 6 months; as one respondent said "*It (natural disaster) was a one-time event that can't be predicted as it's the act-of-god. Tsunami, for instance, may not happen again in the next 20 years*". Evidently, media coverage during a natural crisis only lasts for a short while.

In addition, respondents perceived natural disasters as uncontrollable-yet-understandable crises. Tourists tend to be understandable and forgivable if this kind of natural disaster has never happened before in that particular destination. For example, Japan is expected by tourists to be more experienced with tsunami than Thailand. This is because Japan had crisis management experiences during tsunami disasters before, whereas tsunami was little known in Thailand. Therefore, if the affected tourism destination handles natural crisis well, just like the way Thailand coped with tsunami, then tourists will understand and will be likely to return to the destination once the crisis is over. On the other hand, if the natural crisis is not well managed, such as in

the way that the United States failed to handle Hurricane Katrina in a timely manner, then it will take a while for the tourists to return to the affected destination.

Terrorism

Terrorism can happen in any country. Small-scale terrorism is happening more often in Thailand, Indonesia, and the Middle East and therefore tourists from these countries are likely to be more resilient to terrorism crisis. Nonetheless, it can be a major shock if terrorism happens in a usually-safe destination.

Recent terrorism crises that affected Thailand's tourism industry are September 11 and southern Thailand's violence. However, both crises had minimal effect in that Thailand only lost the North American market in the aftermath of September 11 and this was later made up by attracting the Asian market. Violence in Southern Thailand, as another terrorism case, merely affected destinations in the southern tip of the country, and therefore the impact can be minimized

Partly due to media coverage, terrorism affects tourists psychologically. Hence, tourists will choose substitute destinations, unless the government of the crisis-affected destination takes precaution to ensure that the tourists will be safe. In turn, terrorism results in a higher level of securities and policies which, to a certain extent, makes it difficult for tourists to travel.

Outbreak

Outbreak predominantly affects air travel and therefore tourists stop traveling. No one knows when it will happen, what it is, and what to do. Although it can't be controlled initially, outbreak only causes short-term effects until it can be contained. The impact can be minimized if the government can ensure the safety of travelers, such as during SARS and bird flu.

During the SARS pandemic, for instance, the former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra announced that the Thai government would compensate 1 million Baht to any foreign tourist dying from SARS in Thailand. The campaign was successful and boosted confidence in tourists to visit Thailand after SARS. The same former Prime Minister used a different strategy during the bird flu crisis by eating an entire 15-piece bucket of KFC fried chicken on live television in order to reassure the public that poultry products in Thailand were safe.

Thailand and other Asian countries have learnt from the SARS experience and now have a better approach on how to deal with bird flu and other outbreaks that may occur in the future.

Political Crisis

Political crisis is uncontrollable and unforeseeable, meaning it can happen anytime. Political crisis, like other types of man-made disaster, leaves a stronger and longer memory of violence from the crisis in people's minds as this type of crisis should have been, or could have been, prevented. Crises caused by external factors (e.g. natural disaster) on the other hand are more understandable and forgivable, whilst political crisis is internal and therefore is difficult to explain.

Moreover, political crisis is not a one-time event and is likely to happen again. Once it happens, no one knows when it will end. Due to a frequent number of repeated political crises, media coverage would also worsen the situation and, in turn, tourists will lose confidence in the safety of the destination if the government authorities and the tourism industry of that affected destination have failed to prevent or minimize the violence and transportation blockage, including airport closure. This is primarily why many respondents have given comments similar to "*I think political turmoil is the worst crisis of all. There is no way out and it affected the whole country*".

Impact from the Closure of Suvarnabhumi Airport

The closure of Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport did not only influence business or MICE travelers but also leisure or FIT travelers. Business/MICE travelers were affected due to travel advisory which then affected the company's insurance policy. It was also difficult for leisure travelers to plan their vacation in Bangkok during the political crisis and therefore they would prefer other safer destinations in Thailand such as Phuket and, in the worst case, destinations in other countries. As a result, many travel plans were disrupted during the airport closure and such impacts are described, more or less, differently by airlines, hotels, and tourism experts as follows.

Airlines

The closure of Suvarnabhumi Airport made it extremely difficult for airlines to operate, as the airport is the essential part of airlines' operations. This affected the following stakeholders of the airline industry: investors, airline companies, and customers. Investors significantly lost their investments that have been well-spent in advance. Airline companies were not receiving enough volume of customers and in turn airlines can't feed enough number of customers to hotels and other tourism-related companies at the destinations.

Customers who had booked their flight to, or through, Bangkok were very disappointed as their travel plan was disrupted. Customers who were in Thailand

during the airport closure suffered, as they couldn't leave the country. From the tourist point of view, this incident is unacceptable as the protestors who closed the airport, and the authorities who allowed this airport to be closed, showed disregard to the international expectation on the safety of airport. Hence, tourists felt insecure and had little trust in the safety of being in Thailand.

As requested by the public and governments of Thailand and other countries, the main role of Thailand-based airlines during the airport closure was to help move stranded tourists out of Thailand by providing flight services from U-ta-pao airport, the only available airport near Bangkok. However there was a constraint to provide such flights because the airport operations and infrastructures at U-ta-pao airport were very limited. To accommodate those stranded tourists, many staff members at local airlines went that extra mile and offered to let those tourists stay at their homes until the airport was reopened.

While Thailand's flag carrier did not have a chance to move a number of its airplanes out of Suvarnabhumi Airport, only one airline, a low-cost carrier, made a timely decision to move all its aircraft from Suvarnabhumi to U-ta-pao airport which allowed this airline to provide charter flights to other neighboring countries. The respondent from that particular low-cost airline said *"We turned crisis into opportunity. We know the protestors did not want to hurt airlines. We did negotiate with them (the protestors) and were able to provide charter flights from U-ta-pao to Malaysia, Singapore, and Hong Kong. At that time, no other airline was flying out of Bangkok. So we tried to make as much money as possible and tried to get back to normal soonest."*

Hotels

Like airlines, hotels also suffered from the closure of Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport which resulted in cancellations from feeder markets. Due to the airport closure, many incoming flights from overseas to Bangkok were rerouted to nearby countries such as Hong Kong. In turn, some Bangkok-based international hotel chains sent their staff members, the ones based at their Hong Kong properties, to pick up and welcome guests who had booked their stays at the Bangkok properties but had been rerouted to Hong Kong.

For staying hotel guests who couldn't leave Thailand, a majority of respondents stated that hotels should try their best to accommodate these guests, such as providing complimentary international phone calls or even complimentary stays; as one respondent stated *"During airport closure, stranded tourists can stay at our hotels. If they don't have enough money to pay, they can pay later."* Some hotels also provided a free shuttle service from Bangkok to Chiang Mai Airport for guests who

wanted to catch a flight from there to other countries such as Singapore, which can connect them to a wide array of international flights.

Moreover, affected Bangkok hotels received a high level of media attention and therefore it was crucial for hotels and hotel executives to communicate appropriately with no bias, as one respondent has pointed out: *“One of our hotel properties is located within the (Suvarnabhumi) airport and we have to remain neutral and not choose the political sides, not yellow or red. At that time we only had 80 rooms occupied from the total 600 rooms. Media reporters were our only staying guests.”*

Tourism Experts

Airport closure had a negative impact on Thailand’s image as a tourist destination and hence posed immediate and dramatic negative impact to Thailand’s tourism. Tourists now believe this kind of incident may happen again anytime as Thailand’s political crisis is still ongoing and would affect Thailand’s tourism in the long term. Furthermore, images from the media made it worse, as people thought the political turmoil happened all over Thailand. Predominantly, this has to do with the audience’s poor geographical knowledge of Thailand.

Unfortunately, the closure of Bangkok airport was difficult to deal with as tourism stakeholders were unprepared. At the same time, Thai Airways president stepped down during the crisis, which resulted in a lack of leadership for this flag carrier during the difficult time. What is more, The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) did not know what to respond and coordinate, where as PATA/TICA/TCEB/TAT all tried to suggest solutions but no one took the lead.

One respondent added that *“They (authorities) weren’t prepared! Therefore the recovery process is slow. Also, it’s great that the governor apologized (to affected tourists) but should stop doing that, and instead see how fast it can recover. The government spent too much money on advertising.”* What the authority should have done, said the respondents, is to have a plan to divert passenger/cargo traffic to other airports that can be done in less than 12 hours. This plan should be able to be used as a guide on how to inform the public in case the airport can’t be operated due to certain reasons. It is suggested by respondents that there should be a crisis management team that does nothing else but crisis management.

Critical Success Factors (CSF)

When respondents were asked “**What are the critical success factors of crisis management in the political crisis situation?**” the majority of them highlighted the following elements as the most important factors:

1. CSF1: Crisis management plan
2. CSF2: Marketing strategies
3. CSF3: Human resources strategies
4. CSF4: Communication strategies
5. CSF5: Lessons learned

CSF1: Crisis Management Plan

Respondents have similarly agreed that it is crucial to have a crisis management plan in order to minimize cancellation and take care of customers. However, data gained from the in-depth interviews found that crisis management implemented by a number of tourism organizations were correction (reactive) rather than precaution (proactive) based. Those organizations assume that the crises that happened elsewhere will not happen to them and this is why tourism organizations had a hard time managing the closure of Bangkok airport even if a similar situation had already previously happened with Phuket airport.

According to the data analysis, it is vital for tourism organizations to have different scenarios or simulations for different types of crises in order to come up with plan A, B, and C. This plan should be able to ensure the safety of the organization’s assets, such as hotel property or aircraft, and also the safety of customers and staff. Moreover, the crisis management plan must address the commercial aspect of the organizational operation and how to match crisis management strategies with different levels of operation. For instance, if the hotel occupancy or airline load factor drops to less than 40%, then a leave-with-pay should be considered, whereas leave-without-pay should be used if the operational level is less than 20%. The crisis management plan should be reviewed and revised at least once a year in order to identify if any change is needed.

Furthermore, respondents added that tourism organizations have to nominate a crisis management leader, who is generally the top executive, or a crisis management team within an organization to be the person in command to direct the crisis management efforts. As crises may occur anytime, it is also highly suggested by respondents that the organization’s crisis management team, or the person in charge, keep a crisis management folder both at their office and at home. In fact, they should also have the telephone number of the contact person within an organization and of the emergency services.

From the perspective of international hotel chains, as an example, the head office should issue a crisis management plan that can be utilized at their properties globally. Having said that, they added such a crisis management plan should be flexible enough to be adapted in each property. Respondents have given interesting examples of the crisis management plan for outbreak and political crises. During outbreaks such as swine flu, hotels need to have a plan that enables the manager-on-duty to close down floors or areas once the infected-guests have been identified. Political crisis, however, requires a different back-up plan. One of those plans for political crisis is to monitor all hotel entrances and secure them within a timely basis if the protestors nearby are escalating the political demonstration in to a more violent one.

CSF2: Marketing Strategies

During the political crisis situation, tourism organizations need to identify possible revenue streams for the period of political turmoil by using marketing strategies. To begin with, a large number of respondents emphasized that tourism organizations must choose the right market segmentation. In general, regional resilient markets should be targeted, such as India which has its own political problem in the northeast region, or UAE in the Middle-East region which also has political tensions in nearby countries like Iraq. Vulnerable markets such as Japan and Australia, on the other hand, should not be targeted at this time as they have a very high level of sensitivity.

Tourism organizations should also consider focusing on emerging markets such as China, India, and Russia, which are recognized as 'Sleeping Giants'. In addition, local or domestic markets should not be overlooked as these markets, though their spending is a lot less than overseas markets, tend to be less sensitive to the political situation in Thailand and would therefore be willing to travel within the country.

One respondent who works at a very large international hotel chain added that the hotel is currently targeting a very niche untapped market from India which has a strong demand even though Thailand is having a political crisis. However, this respondent has asked the researcher not to reveal any information regarding this market as it is part of the hotel's strategic intelligence. This means targeting the right niche markets should be taken into consideration in order to lure tourists during the period of political instability.

When it comes to marketing campaign strategies during a political crisis, there seem to be mixed reactions among the respondents. One marketing strategy is to utilize marketing efforts based on different levels of the organization's operating level, such as occupancy or load factor. Another strategy is to launch value added campaigns such as 'Buy 1 Fly 2' which is equivalent to 50% discount. Value added has been a preferred strategy for the majority of respondents, whereas discounting is undesirable as it would be difficult for a tourism organization to resume normal rates after the political crisis is over; as one respondent said, "*Discounting can be useful but needs a time limit and needs to make commercial sense*".

Additionally, a small number of respondents pointed out that tourists will not come during the political crisis regardless of which market they target. They said “*Just let people (tourists) forget and not emphasize that Thailand is having a problem*” which means more marketing campaigns during the political crisis may send a message to the world that Thailand is desperately having a difficulty with the country’s political issues. What the tourism organizations should have done after the political crisis was over, said one respondent, is to revise their marketing strategy and to send the message that it is the best time ever to visit Thailand.

CSF3: Human Resources Strategies

During political crisis in Thailand, each tourism organization tends to have different policy and strategy in regard to human resources management. As the political crisis in Thailand is country-specific and does not happen elsewhere, large international hotel chains found an opportunity in this crisis by sending their staff from Thailand-based properties that have been affected by the political crisis to overseas properties. Another strategy is to transfer staff from one department that requires less personnel to another department which needs a higher number of personnel.

While most respondents are likely to be cost-conscious and spend less during political crisis, some of them, particularly the ones from large hotels in Bangkok, said that the hotel in fact spent more money during recent political crisis to train their staff during low occupancy, as they believed that trained skills, such as communication skills, would be able to help increase the staff’s productivity, which would then increase the hotel productivity. In turn, the hotel can minimize a staff turnover and maximize an opportunity from the political crisis.

Nevertheless, tourism organizations can only avoid staff retrenchment to a certain extent. When the political tension turned into a crisis, the closure of Bangkok airport, for instance, tourist overseas tended to postpone or cancel their holiday in Thailand, which then severely affected the survival of the tourism organization in Thailand. In that case, respondents suggested that tourism organizations ask their staff to use a leave-with-pay, leave-without-pay, reduced work hour, and hire freeze. When the worst comes to the worst, it is advised that tourism organizations keep well-trained staff and let go of others who are willing to leave an organization.

CSF4: Communication Strategies

Communicating timely and accurately during the political crisis is essential. In turn, it is highly recommended by respondents that tourism organizations, tourism associations, and tourism authorities set up a crisis communication center to handle enquiries not only from the customers but also from the customers’ relatives, media, staff, and its network. This center should be able to send out messages to its network in regard to the political crisis situation.

To do so, the center will need to establish a channel of communication, which has to be a 2-way communication such as telephone hotline, SMS, and email. Moreover, this center needs to come up with levels of warning which correlate to the crisis situation, so that tourism stakeholders understand the severity of the situation.

It should also be pointed out that tourism organizations must communicate honestly and inform their stakeholders as to how the organizations will be handling the political crisis. If the hotel property, for instance, is not directly affected by the political protest, then the hotel needs to isolate itself from the crisis. As one respondent said; *“We would say that this (political) incident happen but it’s very isolated and other parts of Bangkok and Thailand are still safe.”* Another respondent similarly stated that *“We need to explain that our properties have not been affected by protestors as the hotel is located far from the protest activities. Hence, only our Bangkok properties have been affected by the protest whereas other properties out of Bangkok did fine.”*

According to the in-depth interviews with respondents, there are three major stakeholders that tourism organizations should be communicating with during political crisis. Those stakeholders are customers, staff, and the media; this is explained below.

Communicating with the Customers

Again, being honest is the most important thing when communicating with the customers, as repeat customers are usually preferred by tourism organizations. If the organization has communicated sincerely, it is likely that the customers will return to use the services again the next time they are in Thailand. Nonetheless, tourism organizations need to carefully decide what to inform the customers and what not to inform them, as some information is unnecessary or too sensitive to customers.

During the recent political crisis in Thailand, a large number of hotels placed a note or newsletter in the guestroom advising the guests of the updates on the incident, how it will affect them, and what they should do to avoid getting into the middle of the political crisis. For instance, some hotels informed the guests to be cautious and stay away from large crowds of demonstrators during the yellow-shirt protest.

Respondents added that it is a good idea to waive cancellation fees should the customers decide to postpone or cancel their airline/hotel bookings. Another recommendation is to reduce room rates for staying guests at the hotel who can’t leave Thailand, particularly due to the Bangkok airport closure which left very limited chance for guests to leave the country.

Communicating with the Staffs

Respondents appreciated the importance of communication within an organization and there are a few ways to achieve this. Just like any kind of communication, tourism organizations need to establish a channel of communication which can be an intranet or a public space within an organization. As one respondent stated “*We posted our revenue chart in employee’s elevator everyday so they understand the (political crisis) situation and how it affected our revenue*”. Another preferred approach is to organize regular meetings between management and staff. It is crucial, however, that the management come up with a single and consistent message so that everyone within an organization has the same impression toward the political crisis that an organization is currently facing.

Communicating with the Media

The media played a crucial role during a political crisis in Thailand, and tourism organizations must take quick action when it comes to handling media enquiries. Any strategic and political question should be handled by an appointed spokesperson, which is likely to be Public Relation Director or top management at the organization. Among the frequently asked questions by the media during the political crisis were “*When will it (political crisis) be over?*” and “*When will tourism bounce back?*”

However, organizations need to send out a clear message that they are not related with, or choosing, either red or yellow protestors. Failure to do so may cause such an organization to be banned or boycotted by the public who choose the opposite side of the political game. It is also necessary for tourism organizations to isolate themselves from the political incident in the case that such an incident is very unusual and unlikely to reoccur. Such an example was given by one respondent: “*We need to send out the message to the media that the closure of Bangkok airport is a one-time event and will not happen again*”.

CSF5: Lessons Learned

Clearly, political crises in Thailand have a significantly negative impact on the tourism industry in Thailand and there are many lessons to be learned from these political crises. One of the most important lessons, as reflected by respondents, is that a political crisis will happen again. No one knows when it will happen as it is just a matter of time. Furthermore, a political crisis will increase in frequency and people around the world will be notified about crises faster by the media and internet. Therefore, the lead-time for crisis management planning will be shorter, and hence the crisis can’t be treated as business as usual; this means tourism organizations need to come up with a crisis management plan

before the crisis hits. During the political crisis, tourism organizations should evaluate the situation carefully and be prepared by starting to plan so that strategies can be launched and implemented right after the political incident has been resolved.

Another lesson learned, as suggested by the respondents, is that tourism organizations need to understand that political crisis is different from other types of crisis such as natural disaster, terrorism, and outbreak. In turn, the severity, scale, and negative impact of political crisis will be dissimilar to other crisis types as well. Moreover, each market also reacts to political crisis in Thailand differently, and hence tourism organizations need to attract the resilient markets accordingly. They also need to establish a communication channel, both internal and external, with media, the government, tourism authorizes, and embassies, to begin with.

By giving priority to the safety of the customers and staff during the political crisis, tourism organizations would then be able to protect their reputation and financial outlook, as one respondent highlighted: *“The main goal of our (crisis management) plan is to avoid them (tourists) being harmed and prevent them from being at the center of an internal political crisis. And best of all, avoid political crisis that involves foreign tourists. In other words, keep it local. In the case of Suvarnabhumi Airport incident, the protestors were smart to take the airport hostage. They turned a local problem into an international incident, which was their goal.”* Clearly, the tourism industry learned this lesson the hard way.

Being optimistic is another lesson learned by respondents, and not focusing on why the political conflict happened or blaming someone but trying to alleviate the situation. Last but not least, tourism organizations should be flexible when managing the crisis, particularly in terms of lines-of-command and spending the relief budget, and at the same time make sure that promises are being delivered.

Summary

The value of findings presented in this chapter lies primarily in crisis management issues, particularly in the political crisis situation in Thailand, which interviewees raised and discussed. In turn, this chapter has adapted tag cloud analysis and content analysis approaches to address issues found from the interviews. At this stage, this research can now consider relationships between the findings presented in this chapter and relevant literature reviewed in Chapter 2. These relationships remain the main aim and objective of the final chapter.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Introduction

The chapter comprises three major sections. Firstly, it will accomplish the research objectives by considering and discussing relationships between the findings presented in Chapter 4, and relevant literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Secondly, a summary of relevant managerial implications will be proposed. Thirdly, the recommendations for future researches will be outlined. Finally, this chapter will conclude the research with a number of closing remarks.

To begin with, the following research objectives will be discussed:

1. To examine the differences between political crisis and other types of crises.
2. To identify critical success factors of crisis management in Thailand's tourism industry during political crisis.
3. To propose tourism crisis management strategies during political crisis.

Discussion of Research Objective #1

The aim of the first research question underpinning this study was to examine the differences between political crisis and other types of crises. Prior to the discussion of this objective, this research has identified strengths and weaknesses of the tourism industry in Thailand. Apart from certain strengths, findings have revealed that a political crisis is among Thailand's weaknesses that pose serious negative impact on its tourism industry. Such an impact does not only depict Thailand as an unsafe tourist destination, but also scare tourists away. Thus, this supports relevant literature in the field (Barta 2008; Channel News Asia 2009; Dawson 2008; The Nation 2008b; The Seoul Times 2008) that a political crisis does affect Thailand's tourism industry, and therefore this issue must be taken into consideration.

Having justified the significance of the impact of political crisis, this section will now move on to discuss the differences between political crisis and other types of crises in the following aspects: probability of occurrence, duration of media attention, public reaction, and damage to the destination image, as shown in the table below.

Table 10: A comparison of different crisis types that affected Thailand as a tourist destination

	Natural-Made		Human-Made	
	Natural Disaster E.g. Tsunami	Outbreak E.g. SARS	Terrorism E.g. Southern Thailand's Violence	Political Crisis E.g. Bangkok Airport Closure
Probability of Occurrence	Rare	Infrequent / Seasonal	Moderate	High
Duration of Media Attention	Medium	Medium	Medium	Long, due to a high probability of occurrence
Public Reaction	Uncontrollable, but acceptable if such a disaster has never affected the destination before	Uncontrollable, but acceptable if such a disaster has never affected the destination before	Unacceptable and unavoidable	Unacceptable and should have been avoided by the government
Damage to the Destination Image	Medium for the damage to the destination image, but high on physical damage	Medium	Medium for the damage to the destination image, but high on physical damage	High

Source: Developed for this research

Probability of Occurrence

From the research findings, each crisis type tends to have a different probability of occurrence. Outbreak crisis can be seasonal and short-term yet somewhat unpredictable. Terrorism can occur in any tourist destination, particularly small-scale terrorisms which are happening more frequently in Thailand, Indonesia, and the Middle East. A large-scale natural disaster such as tsunami tends to be very rare and is every now and then considered as a one-time event that may not happen again in the subsequent decades. Political crisis, on the other hand, is not a one-time event and is likely to happen again. Once the political conflict arises, no one knows when it will be resolved. The high occurrence probability of political crisis is strengthened by the literatures that Thailand began to economically suffer from a series of political crisis as far back as 2005 until now (Year 2009) (Economy Watch 2009). In fact, one political crisis after another may prove too much for wary foreign tourists (Channel News Asia 2009).

Duration of Media Attention

The duration of media attention has a significant impact on the public reaction and the speed of crisis recovery. During an outbreak crisis, the media created widespread fear as an outbreak is a health-related crisis which is a critical issue for the tourist's safety. Nonetheless, findings have pointed out that tourists are likely to return to Thailand once the government restores the public confidence. The media also gives a similar duration of coverage during natural disasters, and terrorism crises also last for a short while.

A political crisis, however, tends to attract a longer duration of media attention as this type of crisis is likely to reoccur if the government of any particular tourist destination has failed to solve this internal crisis. Such intensive media coverage would amplify the negative image toward the destination, which makes foreign tourists misperceive that the political turmoil has happened all over Thailand.

Differences of media attention among different crisis types are in line with Beirman's (2002) report that although natural crisis can attract substantial media attention, this is often for a generally short and concentrated period of time. In contrast, the effect of continued and sustained media exposure to political crises can carry on for a much longer period. This means political crises generally hold more sustained and negative impacts on the perceived tourism image of a destination.

Public Reaction

This research has found that the public, both domestic and overseas, tend to have different reactions to a certain extent toward each type of crisis. An outbreak crisis primarily affects air travel and therefore discourages tourists from traveling. When SARS became a pandemic for the first time, no one knew what it was and what to do, and hence the public was understanding and forgiving. Natural disasters, too, are perceived by respondents as uncontrollable-yet-understandable. Like those who have witnessed an outbreak crisis, tourists tend to be understanding and forgiving toward the natural disaster if this kind of disaster has never happened before at that particular destination.

Political crisis and terrorism, like other types of man-made disaster, leave a stronger and longer memory of violence from the crisis in people's mind, as this type of crisis should have been, or could have been, prevented. Crises caused by external factors (e.g. natural disaster) on the other hand are more understandable and forgivable, whilst political crisis is internal and therefore is difficult to explain.

The discussion above has supported Pearson and Mitroff's (1993, p. 48) study that the public has different reactions toward different types of crisis. The public generally reacts more negatively to the impact of human-made crises than to those of natural-made crisis. While the public generally perceives that the tourism destination has little control over natural disasters, human-made crises can devastate the long-standing reputation of the destination. As human-made crises are usually preventable, this type of crisis often receives severe public condemnation.

Damage to the Destination Image

Terrorism and natural disaster have depicted a negative image toward Thailand as a tourist destination, as both crisis types can potentially harm not only the tourism infrastructure but also the tourists' safety and wellbeing. Outbreak too has affected Thailand to a certain extent; however, Thailand and other SARS-affected countries are now perceived as countries that successfully coped with the SARS crisis, and therefore Thailand and those countries are perceived and expected to perform well should an outbreak hit again in the future.

During a political crisis situation, tourists tend to lose confidence in the safety of the destination unless the government bodies and the tourism industry of that affected destination can help prevent or minimize the political crisis. This, clearly, reinforces crisis management literature in that political threats cause more severe and long-term damage to the image of tourist destinations when compared to other forms of crisis, especially if their effects spread internationally (Aktas & Gunlu 2005). Any

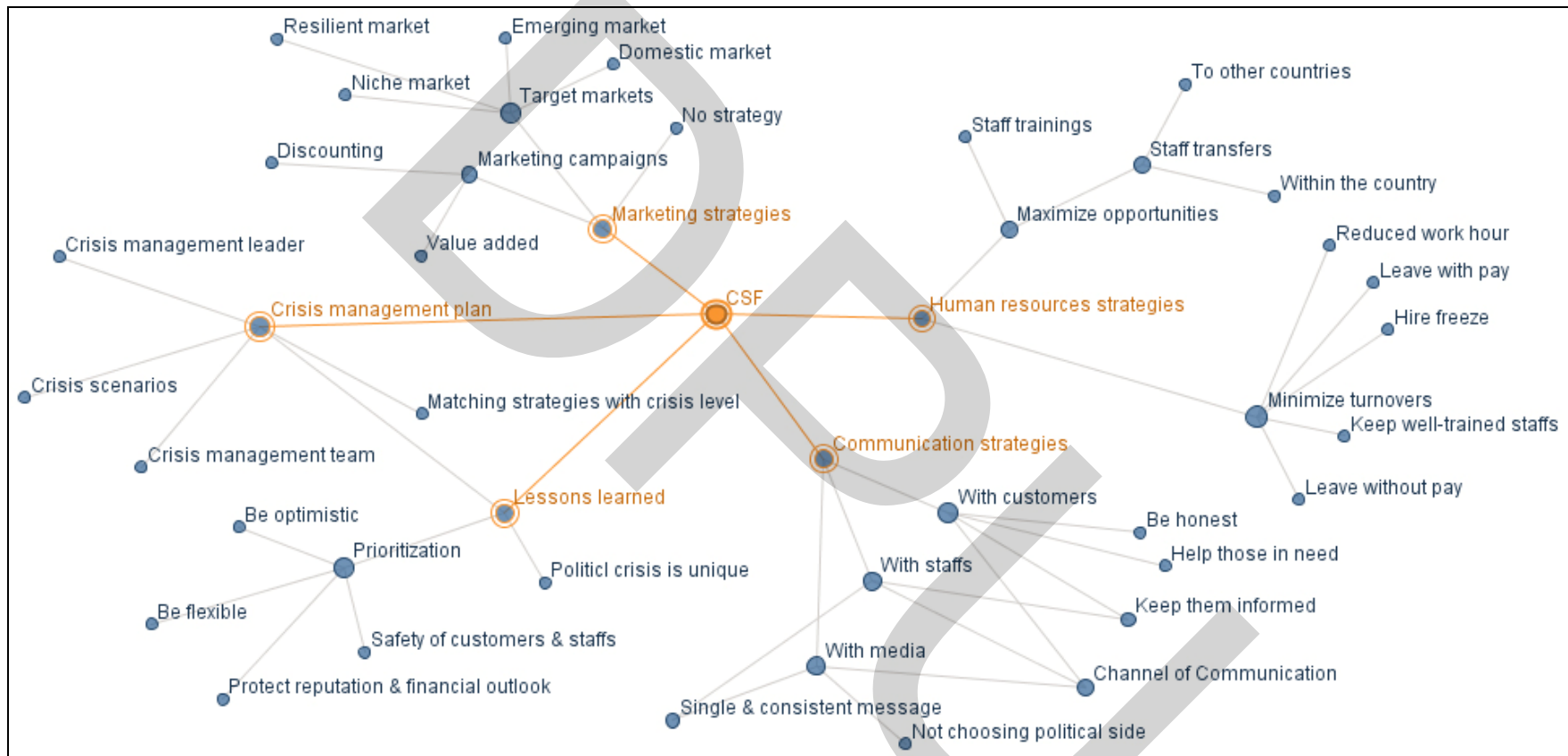
new political riots would further tarnish the country's image, and any recovery made during previous protests would subsequently be lost (Economy Watch 2009).

Discussion of Research Objective #2

Central to this research, the second research objective aimed to identify critical success factors of crisis management in Thailand's tourism industry during political crisis. According to the research findings, a network analysis illustrating relationships among CSFs has been developed and is shown in the figure below.



Figure 5: Network analysis of CSFs



Source: Developed for this research

CSF1: Crisis Management Plan

The first critical success factor (CSF) for tourism organizations is to have a crisis management plan in place and this is supported by a number of scholars (Augustine 2000; Campbell 1999; Coombs 1999; Faulkner 2001; Pacific Asia Travel Association 2003; Ruff & Aziz 2003; World Tourism Organization 2003). Based on previous political crisis management experiences, scenarios of political incidents need to be developed, as each crisis is different (Aktas & Gunlu 2005; Henderson 2007; Tiernan et al. 2007, p. 324); political crisis is no exception. This scenario, as part of the crisis management plan, should address strategies that would fit with different crisis levels, and those levels can be gauged by the hotel's occupancy or the airline's load factor, for instance. Another critical factor suggested not only by this research but also by Coombs (1999), is that tourism organizations must appoint a crisis management leader and team to oversee crisis management activities to be carried out by the organization.

CSF2: Marketing Strategies

This research has found that tourism organizations need to identify achievable revenue streams during political crisis by using marketing strategies. As shown in the findings, certain tourist markets, particularly the vulnerable ones, are unlikely to travel to Thailand during the country's political crisis due to a safety concern. Therefore, the success factor here is to target tourists in existing markets that are willing to travel to and in Thailand, such as the domestic market, emerging market, resilient market, and niche market. This has supported the literature (Johnson, Scholes & Whittington 2005, p. 524) in that organizations should focus on markets that will generate revenue.

Having identified the right markets, tourism organizations then need to come up with attractive marketing campaigns. Such campaigns can be either value-added or discounting; however, respondents suggested that value-added is a preferred strategy as it would be complicated for tourism organizations to resume normal rates after the political crisis is over. Some respondents nevertheless remain confident in using discount as a pricing strategy to lure tourists, which supported Thompson and Martin's (2005, p. 651) study that price decrease can result in increased revenue by stimulating the demand and consequently revenue.

Another possible marketing strategy is not to have a strategy at all and simply wait until the political unrest has been resolved. However, this no-strategy ideology is not widely supported by crisis management literature.

CSF3: Human Resources Strategies

According to this research, there are two major success practices toward human resources strategies during political turmoil. Those practices are: maximizing opportunities; and minimizing staff turnovers. Maximizing opportunity is a strategy dealing with a lower customer demand due to a political crisis which results in a lower staff's work load. This is in line with Johnson et al. (2005, p. 523), that non-profitable services should be eliminated whilst improving productivity. One way for an organization to do so is to relocate some staff from one department to the another department, or from one destination to another destination that still has a customer demand, meaning a number of personnel are still needed. Alternatively, tourism organizations can provide their staff with essential training.

The second human resources practice, minimizing turnovers, aims at maintaining well-trained staff. Due to low customer demands, however, tourism organizations may have to cut labor costs to survive a negative impact from political crisis. Minimizing turnovers strategies that can be introduced are: reduced work hours; leave with pay; leave without pay; and hire freeze. Such strategies are endorsed by the literature (Harrison & Enz 2005, p. 177) as approaches to reduce overhead costs which can help sustain the organization's financial outlook.

CSF4: Communication Strategies

Tourism organizations need to communicate clearly with three of their stakeholders: the customers, staff, and media. To begin with, tourism organizations will need to establish a channel of communication with all three stakeholders. This will ensure that a timely and accurate message can be delivered to all concerned. To communicate with the customers in particular, this research, together with tourism literature (World Tourism Organization 2003), recommended that customers should be well informed by a regular, caring, and honest communication which emphasizes on the importance of their safety and wellbeing.

Communicating internally with the staff is also crucial, as they are the ones who will be asked for assistance from the customers. This is endorsed by Ruff and Aziz (2003, p. 93) that organizations that communicate well internally tend to communicate better overall, achieving a more favorable perception among external audiences. This means it should be agreed within an organization to come up with a consistent message that will be sent to both the customers and the media. Lastly, tourism organizations need to take extra caution when communicating with the media by not choosing political sides. Failure to do so may result in boycotts by the opposite political supporters, which will damage the organization's reputation.

CSF5: Lessons Learned

As a political crisis has a tremendous negative impact on tourism and this type of crisis is likely to reoccur, one of the critical success factors in tourism crisis management is to recognize lessons learned from the previous political crisis. This critical success factor is highly recognized by Evans and Elphick (2005, p. 149); lessons should be fed back into an organization once an immediate crisis is over as crisis management is recognized as a continuous process involving a feedback loop from the pre-crisis to post-crisis stage.

This research also supported a number of authors (e.g. Aktas & Gunlu 2005; Henderson 2007; Tiernan et al. 2007, p. 324) that not all types of crisis lead to the same consequences, differing from one another in terms of the scope and extent of damage caused. In turn, it is crucial to recognize that a political crisis is unique and is different from other crisis types. This means a crisis management plan specially designed for, or able to be adapted to political crisis is highly critical.

Last but not least, learned lessons have suggested that tourism organizations give high priority to not only reassuring the safety of customers and staff, but also to protecting the reputation and financial outlook. Coombs (1999) also added that tourism organizations need to store this information for future use should a political crisis reoccur in the near future.

Discussion of Research Objective #3

Having discussed the first and second research objectives, the third research objective aimed to propose tourism crisis management strategies during political crisis. Whilst there are many approaches to do so, an effective one can be the development of a crisis management strategy map for political tourism crisis. Before illustrating such a strategy map, it is vital nonetheless to understand the concept of a strategy map and how it can be applied in this research.

Recognized by a number of authors (Allio 2004; Ashkenas 2004; Kiessling 2004) as the well-known originators of the balanced scorecard and strategy map concepts, Kaplan and Norton have argued that all organizations today create sustainable value from leveraging their intangible assets, which are: human capital; databases and information systems; responsive, high-quality processes; customer relationships and brands; innovation capabilities; and culture. Because an organization's intangible assets may easily represent more than 75 percent of its value, its strategy formulation and execution need to explicitly address their mobilization and alignment (Kaplan & Norton 2004). This is particularly true in the tourism industry where products and services are largely intangible.

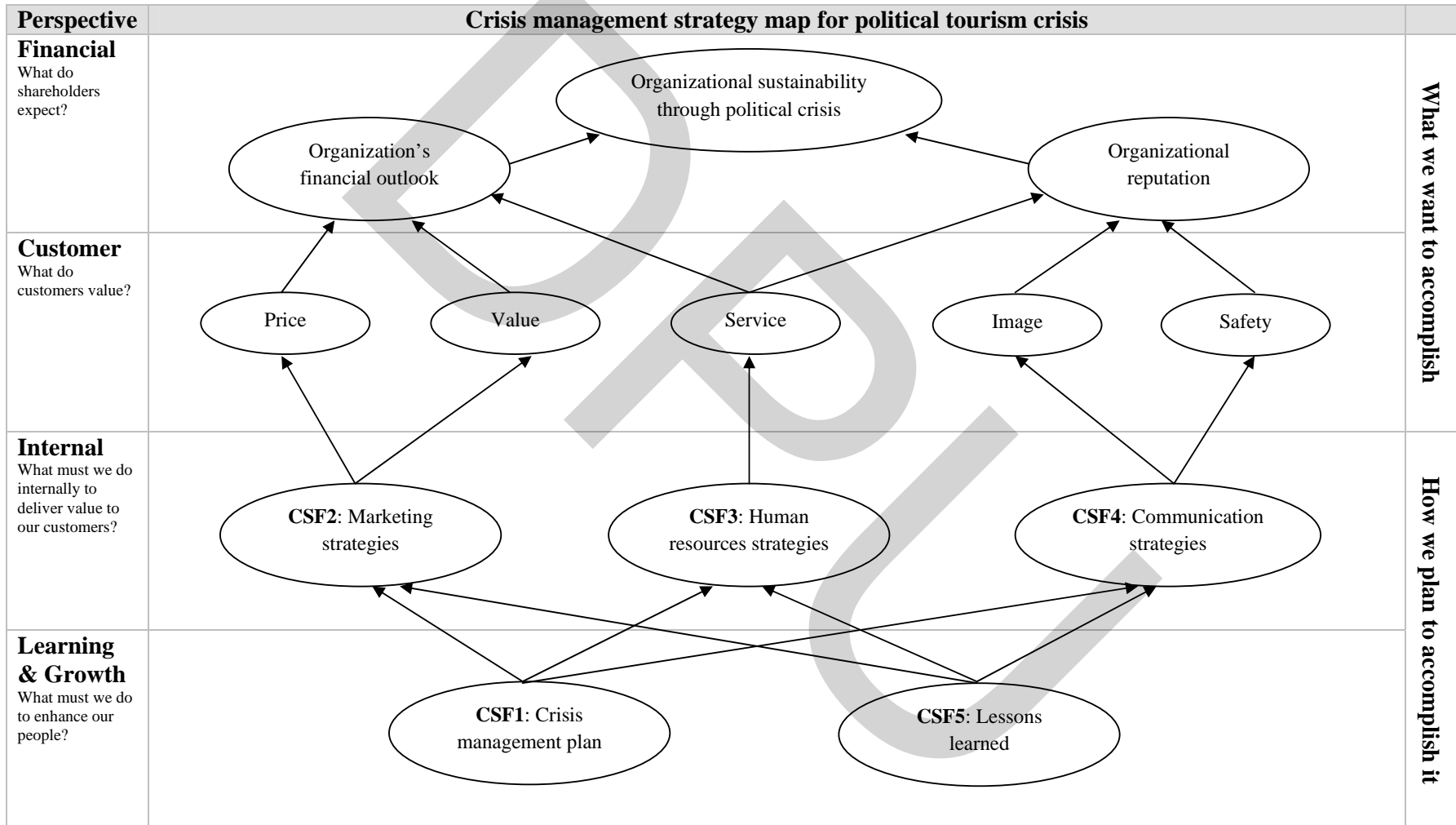
In converting intangible assets into tangible outcomes, Kaplan and Norton (2004) pointed out that the following components of a balanced score card should be focused:

1. Financial performance: creating sustainable growth in shareholder value.
2. Success with target customers: providing a principal component for improved financial performance.
3. Internal processes: creating and delivering the value proposition for customers.
4. Intangible assets: the ultimate source of sustainable value creation.

To provide an insight and facilitate discussions among executives within an organization regarding the linkages in the four balanced scorecard perspectives, a general representation called a strategy map should be utilized. The strategy map can serve as a checklist. If an organization's strategy is missing an element on the strategy map, its strategy is likely flawed (Kaplan & Norton 2004). It also reemphasizes the importance of managing an organization as a system by focusing on only a single dimension of an organization's activities (Allio 2004). Most importantly, a strategy map does indeed lay out the concepts and tools for creating a graphic representation of organizational strategy, and it does so in a useful and logical format (Ashkenas 2004).

By adapting Kaplan and Norton's (2004) concept of the strategy map, this research has developed a crisis management strategy map for political tourism crisis, based on the research findings, as shown in the figure below, and followed by a description of each balanced scorecard perspectives.

Figure 6: A crisis management strategy map for political tourism crisis



Source: Developed for this research

Learning & Growth Perspective

Located in the bottom of the strategy map, learning and growth objectives describe how the people, technology, and organizational climate combine to support the strategy. Improvements in learning and growth measures are lead indicators for internal process, customer, and financial performance (Kaplan & Norton 2004). In the context of political crisis, this research has found that a crisis management plan (CSF1) and lessons learned (CSF5) play a critical role by enhancing the people and the organization to be prepared for political crisis management. Having these two critical success factors will also lead to a successful internal perspective discussed below.

Internal Perspective

The performance of internal processes is a leading indicator of subsequent improvements in customer and financial outcomes (Kaplan & Norton 2004). To deliver value to customers during a political crisis, tourism organizations must internally develop their marketing (CSF2), human resources (CSF3), and communication (CSF4) strategies. As the tourism industry differs from other industries, and because a political crisis is unlike any other crisis type, these strategies should be specially designed for tourism organizations to tackle a political crisis. Having undertaken the second step of the strategy map, we can now move on to the third step, a customer perspective.

Customer Perspective

In addition to measuring the lagging outcome indicators of customer success, such as satisfaction, retention, and growth, the customer perspective defines the value proposition for target customer segments (Kaplan & Norton 2004). This research found that the destination image and safety have a high influence on the customers' decision to travel. If the destination is perceived as unsafe by a political crisis, it is likely that tourists will choose other comparable destinations. For those tourists who are willing to travel, then price and value of tourism products would be considered as to whether they are value-for-money. Tourists would also expect tourism organizations to provide a level of services equal to or better than those provided during a non-political crisis situation.

Financial Perspective

Located in the top of the strategy map, financial strategy describes how an organization intends to create sustainable growth in shareholder value (Kaplan & Norton 2004). As found in this research, the closure of Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport provides a good case study highlighting the importance of both the organization's financial outlook and the organizational reputation. The airport closure essentially shut down the revenue stream for those tourism organizations which rely heavily on international tourists. During such a difficult situation, those affected organizations therefore need to adjust strategies, whilst maintaining a superior level of service, to meet their financial needs.

Tourism organizations also needed to retain their reputation during the closure of Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport by ensuring the safety of staff and tourists. Extra efforts had to be made to assist stranded tourists or those in need. Once the political conflict had been resolved, tourism organizations had to send out a timely message through their communication channels to depict accurate and positive image of the destination.

In turn, this research has found that tourism organizations that achieved both the organization's financial outlook and the organizational reputation were likely to be able to sustain and survive through the closure of Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport which resulted from Thailand's political crisis.

Managerial Implications

There are three major managerial implications from this research. Firstly, a political crisis is unique and is different from other types of crisis such as natural disasters, outbreaks, and terrorism. Compared with other crisis types, a political crisis tends to occur more frequently, attracts longer media attention, draws less sympathy from the public, and places a higher negative image on the destination. Clearly, a political crisis can no longer be recognized as 'business as usual' and therefore top executives at tourism organizations must take this concern into consideration.

Secondly, it is important for tourism organizations as well as policy makers to note that all five critical success factors identified in this research are considered very important by respondents. To begin with, it is strongly suggested that tourism organizations develop a flexible, yet political-specific, crisis management plan in order to be proactive rather than reactive. In order to generate revenue during a political crisis, targeting resilient markets and employing the right marketing strategies are also equally important. Should an organization need to save overhead costs, reducing human resources capacity must be carefully undertaken by not compromising the standard of service. In addition, tourism organizations have to communicate an accurate and honest message to the customers, staff, and media in a timely manner. Last but not least, lessons learned from previous political crisis management experience should be stored within an organization for future use should a crisis reoccur in the near future.

Thirdly, this research has recommended that the success or failure of tourism organizations will be largely determined by their abilities to convert their intangible assets into tangible outcomes. Consequently, tourism organizations will have to develop a political crisis management strategy map, focusing on learning and growth, internal, customer, and financial perspectives, in order to provide an insight and facilitate discussions among executives within an organization. Simply put, the strategy map can be considered as an essential checklist. This means if an organization's political crisis management strategy is missing an element on the strategy map, an organization is unlikely to manage through political crisis.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research has achieved its aim of identifying and examining the critical success factors responsible for successful political crisis management in the tourism industry. Its results provide a foundation for further research in three major ways.

Firstly, this research mainly investigated crisis management approaches used during Thailand's political crisis situation which occurred up until March 2009, which was the end of the data collection timeframe. Political crises which occurred after March 2009, such as the Red-shirt's massive protest in April 2009, were not examined. As Henderson (2007, p. 163) has emphasized, each crisis is in fact unique; it is clear that the Red-shirt's protests in April 2009 had significant differences from the Yellow-shirt's airport closure in December 2008. Therefore, this research suggests that similar investigations in future political tourism crises need to be conducted. By comparing the findings of such research with those of this study, it is envisaged that the researcher will be able to develop a better understanding of political crisis management in tourism.

Secondly, this research has confirmed relevant tourism literature highlighting that each crisis is unique, and in addition, that the same crisis may often pose different degrees of severity across different destinations. Therefore, it would be beneficial if comparative studies are conducted in the future focusing on the same tourism sector, yet in different political crisis-struck destinations. For instance, this could involve an examination of crisis management in the tourism industry in Burma or Bali where political crises pose significant threats to tourism. The findings of such research can potentially provide important insights into the differences and similarities between political crisis management strategies in different regions.

Thirdly, while this research interviewed high-level executives in tourism organizations on political crisis management issues, another angle of this phenomenon needs to be collected directly from the tourists in Thailand. On this point, there are a number of key issues which future researches in the area could focus upon, including: the impact of travel advisories and media coverage on tourists' perceived risk; the influence of perceived risk on tourists' buying decisions; their attitude toward different price strategies; and their views on the substitutability of tourism products.

Summary

Tourism is unarguably the major export service of Thailand, benefitting from its people's hospitality, rich culture, cultural heritage, and historical tourist destinations. However, the tourism industry in Thailand has been negatively influenced in recent years by a number of crises, and particularly by recent political protests. Such a political crisis, in turn, has illustrated Thailand as an unsafe tourist destination and discourages tourists from traveling to Thailand. Therefore, effective crisis management approaches and strategies were needed.

In partially redressing these and related omissions in the field, this research has examined political crisis management issues in the context of Thailand's tourism industry. Its findings have provided in-depth and substantially meaningful insights and understandings of the political tourism crisis, and the ways this crisis affects tourists more severely than other crisis types, whilst simultaneously complicating its crisis management processes. More importantly, this research has not only provided tourism researchers with a number of contributions to knowledge in the field, but also provided the tourism industry itself with several potentially valuable managerial implications. In sum, both the contributions and implications of this research have the potential to contribute to better political crisis management in the tourism industry as a whole.

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APPENDIX



DPU

มหาวิทยาลัยธุรกิจบัณฑิต Dhurakij Pundit University

แหล่งวิชาการประสานความรู้ธุรกิจ

๑๑๐/๑-๔ ถนนประชาชื่น หลีกสี กรุงเทพฯ ๑๐๒๑๐ โทรศัพท์ (๖๖๒) ๙๕๔-๗๓๐๐ โทรสาร (๖๖๒) ๕๘๙-๙๖๐๕-๖

110/1-4 Prachachuen Rd., Laksi, Bangkok 10210 Tel. (662) 954-7300 Fax. (662) 589-9605-6 www.dpu.ac.th

Dear Participant:

Thank you very much for participating in the research on “Critical Success Factors of Crisis Management in Tourism: A Case Study of Political Crisis in Thailand”, and giving me an invaluable opportunity to interview you on this research topic.

This research has been approved and funded by Dhurakij Pundit University. It involves a series of interviews with key informants, such as senior management in hotels, tourism authorities, tourism associations, and airlines. The interview will focus on your views about issues related to crisis management during recent political crisis situations in Thailand.

To ensure the confidentiality of this interview, the results will only be reported in a conference paper, book chapter, and journal article. Any quotes that are used in resulting work will be anonymously attributed, and any descriptors that could result in your identification will be removed.

Once again, I greatly appreciate your assistance. If you have any questions with regards to this research, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Kom Campiranon, Ph.D.
Director of Hospitality & Tourism Management Program
DPU International College

Tel: 0-2954-7300 Ext. 766, 663
Email: kom@dpu.ac.th
Web: www.dpu.ac.th/dpuic

Dhurakij Pundit University
110/1-4 Prachachuen Road
Laksi, Bangkok 10210