CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The tourism industry is one of the world's largest industries (McIntoch & Goeldner 1990). It is an important aspect of many people's leisure activities especially, economic and social aspects. For many countries, tourism is a main instrument for development because it may have a positive economic impact on the balance of payments, employment, gross income and production, but it may also have negative effects, particularly on the environment.

Moreover, tourism is important for marketers and business operators to understand their customers or tourists (Jittangwattana, 1991). For example, tourism managers, understanding tourist behavior is important in minimizing the negative impacts of their travel and for creating the conditions for positive experiences between tourists and hosts.

In 1994, the total of 6,166,496 international tourists visited Thailand brought in income of 145,211 million baht, considered the highest source of national income in comparison with other types of export product (TAT, 1995). So, Thailand's tourism industry is a viable business generating billions of baht in income. Moreover, both public and private sectors must cooperate to develop and support the tourist destinations because if many tourists are satisfied with their destination, this may be a factor that attracts tourists to revisit. As a consequence, it generates revenue.

Thailand possesses a physical and ethnic richness that has led to its establishment among the world's major tourist destinations. Its location between East and West has produced a unique heritage that combines elements of ancient Indian, Chinese and Cambodian cultures with features of the Khmer kingdoms (TDRI, 1997). Thus, Thailand also includes diverse attractions that provide international and domestic

tourists. Thailand's importance as a tourist destination is reflected in the increasing number of tourists and income.

In 1991, United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) designated World Heritage Site in Thailand for three destinations; Sukhothai - Si Satchanalai - Khampang Pet Historical Park, Ayuttaya Historical Park, and Thung Yai Naresuan – Huay Kha Kaeng Wildlife Sanctuary as explained by TDRI (1997). Thus, these destinations are affected in the increasing number of tourists and income because the local culture, history and nature became popular, well-sold products, especially Sukhothai Historical Park where tourism is increasing. It is well-known for international tourists such as, Japanese, French, and German.

Sukhothai province is located on the lower edge of the northern region, 427 kilometres north of Bangkok or some 350 kilometres south of Chiang Mai. The province's major attraction is the ancient city of Sukhothai such as Sukhothai Historical Park, Sri Satchanalai Historical Park, Ramkhamhaeng National Park, and Sri Satchanalai National Park.

Additionally, Sukhothai Historical Park, which is a UNESCO designated World Heritage Site, is situated at the actual site of the capital of the ancient kingdom with many of the important ruins located within the walled Royal City in the middle of the entire layout. Ruins of royal palaces, temples, city walls, moats, dams, ditches and other infrastructures have been well preserved and constantly restored to display the magnificent beauty of Thailand's cultural heritage as cited by TAT, (2003).

The major attraction in Sukhothai Historical is King Ramkhamhaeng the Great Statue, The Royal Palace, Wat Mahathat, Wat Sa Si, and Ramkhamheang National Museum (figure 1). Therefore, Sukhothai province is an interesting tourism site in the lower northern sub region of Thailand, especially Sukhothai Historical Park because it has many tourist sites to attract tourists to visit in area.
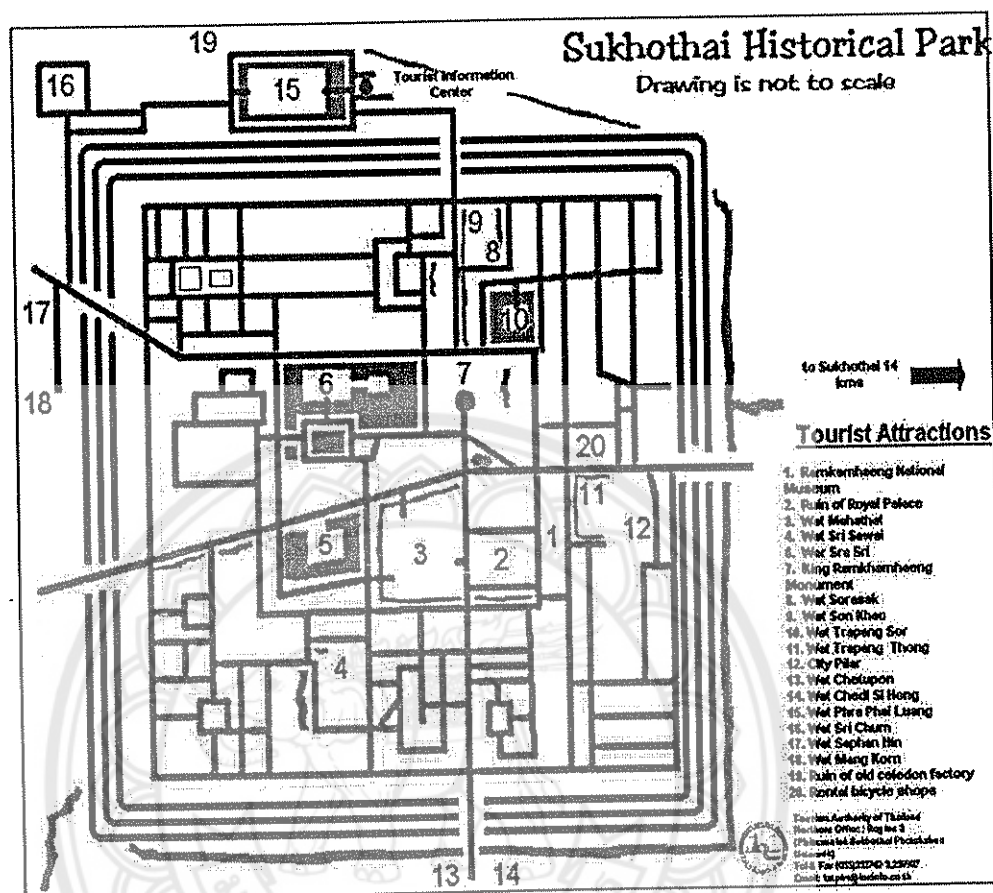
Figure 1 The Map of Sukhothai Historical Park

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As mentioned, Sukhothai Historical Park is an important tourism site in the lower northern sub region of Thailand. Moreover, Sukhothai Historical Park provides knowledge and an impression of Thai arts and culture for international tourists and attracts most of international tourists. The total of visitors who visited at Sukothai Historical Park in 2002 reached 510,350 of which 286,046 were international tourists (56.05%) as cited by TAT, (2003).

However, an increasing number of tourists can result in better cooperation between public and private sectors in Sukhothai Historical Park to better serve and meet the tourists' needs, especially tourist site such as The Royal Palace, Wat Mahathat, and King Ramkhamhaeng Monument in Sukhothai Historical Park, in order to respond to the tourists' satisfaction. At the same time, as a result of international tourists increasing, many problems of environment on historical park such as garbage and waste disposal also increase.

Before the topic of this study was selected the researcher had an opportunity to visit Sukhothai Historical Park to travel and collect information. The researcher found out many problems indications on international tourists to visit in Sukhothai Historical Park, for example, traffic management, and the toilet in historical park not clean.

At the same time, Sukhothai Historical Park have many interesting indications that show the potential to attract international tourists to visit in historical park such as tourist sites have possessing a unique or valuable characteristic and completeness of the structures of the area. Therefore, the researcher intends to study the international tourists' satisfaction towards environment management in Sukhothai Historical Park for success as a tourist destination.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to study the international tourists' satisfaction towards environment management in tourist destination for determining a way to improve the tourist destination. The researcher uses Sukhothai Historical Park in Sukhothai Province as a case study. Therefore, to be more specifically focused, the objectives of this research study are as follows:

1. To study the level of international tourists' satisfaction towards environment management in Sukhothai Historical Park

2. To propose the recommendation on the support of environment management in Sukhothai Historical Park

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on the international tourists' satisfaction towards environment management in Sukhothai Historical Park. Thus, the study provides hypothesis in order to study the level of international tourists' satisfaction towards environment management in Sukhothai Historical Park. Therefore, the hypothesis of this study is shown:

Hypothesis: Environment management in Sukhothai Historical Park affects the level of international tourists' satisfaction.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study presented the information of general concept of international tourists' satisfaction towards environment management in Sukhothai Historical Park. As a result, it will provide more understanding of the international tourists' satisfaction towards environment management in Sukhothai Historical Park. The information in this study is useful for several parties as follows:

1. Sukhothai Historical Park can also use this information and data to improve the tourist sites and environment in historical park in order to succeed as a tourist destination.

2. Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) can use this information and data about the requirement of tourists in historical park to plan the way to develop the historical park in Thailand.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study as defined as follows:

1. Demographic Scope: The study will focus on international tourists who visit in Sukhothai Historical Park.

2. Geographic Scope: The study will focus on areas- Sukhothai Historical Park, Sukhothai Province, Thailand.

3. Content Scope: The study will focus on international tourists' satisfaction towards environment management in Sukhothai Historical Park. Therefore, the content scopes of this study are following:

3.1. To study the level of international tourists' satisfaction towards environment management in Sukhothai Historical Park in three dimensions including:

3.1.1 Physical dimension

- Visibility of scenery and environment

- Accessibility to area

- Attractive of tourist site

- Completeness of historical site

3.1.2 Infrastructure and facility dimension

- Parking area

- Entrance

- Toilets

- Footpath

- Telephones

- Sign posts

- Food and beverage shops

- Souvenir shops

- Tram car

- Tourist information center

3.1.3 Administrative and management dimension

- The production of material for promote historical sites such as brochures

- Convenient opening hours to the tourist

- Maintain and take care of area

Therefore, the study of the level of international tourists' satisfaction towards environment management in Sukhothai Historical Park will based on three dimensions to measure the level of international tourists' satisfaction.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The limitation of this study relates to the collaboration of international tourists because most of tourists visiting at Sukhothai Historical Park are with tour agencies. They have limited time during a day. Therefore, the researcher could not spend much time on each questionnaire to obtain necessary information and data from all international tourists. The researcher chooses only international tourists who are pleased to do questionnaires.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

To understand this study, some of the definitions can be defined as follows:

1. The term 'International Visitor' refers to any person who travels to a country other than that in which he/she has his/her usual residence but outside his/her usual environment for a period not exceeding 12 months and whose main purpose of visit is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the country visited. Moreover, the term 'International Tourist' (overnight visitor) is an International visitor who stays at least one night in a collective or private accommodation in the country visited as cited by WTO, (1991) in Leiper, (1995). The term of "International Visitor", and "International Tourist" are used for this study.

2. Satisfaction is a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his or her expectations (Kotler, 2000: 36).

3. Tourist destination is an area with different natural attributes, features, or attractions that appeal to non – local visitors, that is, tourists. These attributes, features, or attractions can vary as much as types of tourists vary as described by Coltman, (1989).

4. Tourist attraction is a place where tourists, foreign and domestic, normally visit (http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com). Some examples include famous historical places, zoo, museums and art galleries, national parks and theme parks.
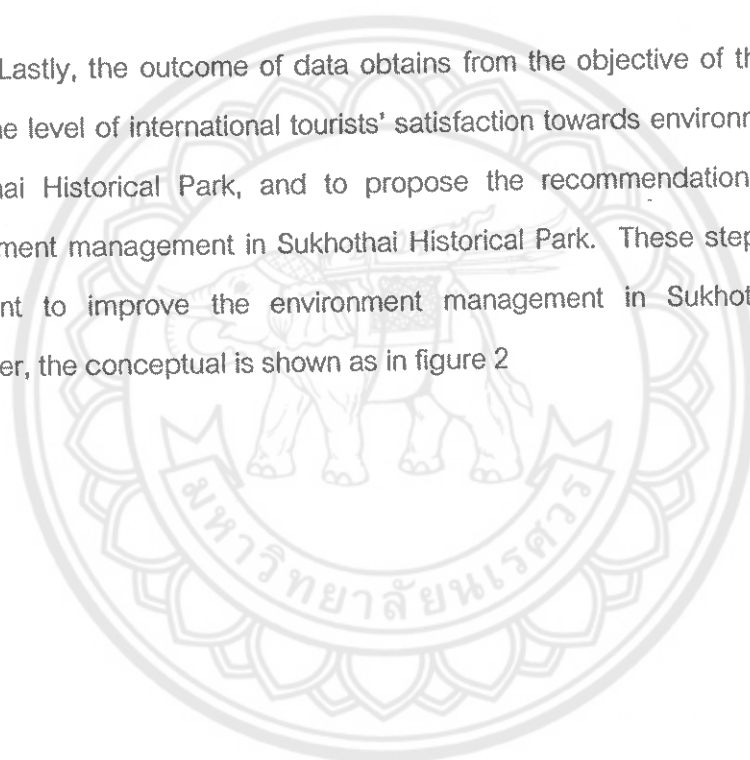
5. Environment can be classified into natural, built (or human – made) and cultural types (Hunter and Green, 1998)". The environments are divided into two groups: the natural environment and man-made environment. The natural environment includes land, plants, water and animals. The man-made environment includes buildings and streets, from the basis of the tourism industry. This research focuses on man-made environment, which includes parking area, footpath, entrance, toilet, telephone, sign post food beverage shops, souvenir shops, tourist information center and tram car of Sukhothai Historical Park.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

According to the purposes of the study of international tourists' satisfaction towards environment management in Sukhothai Historical Park, the conceptual framework includes three steps: input of the data, method, and outcome. Firstly, the input of data comprises of two variables: independent and dependent variables. Independent variables comprise of four variables: gender, age, region, and occupation. Dependent variables were satisfaction toward environment management in Sukhothai Historical Park as including three dimensions: physical, infrastructure and facility, and administrative and management dimension.

Secondly, this study was made using questionnaires as a tool. The researcher uses the concept of questions in questionnaire adapted from the three dimensions to measure the satisfaction. Moreover, the researcher uses the Likert scales to adapt for measuring international tourists' satisfaction as five levels of agreement, which will use in the questionnaire survey on environment management in Sukhothai Historical Park as following: strongly agree, somewhat agree, average, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree. Furhthermore, the satistics used to evaluate the data are percentage and mean.

Lastly, the outcome of data obtains from the objective of this study which is to study the level of international tourists' satisfaction towards environment management in Sukhothai Historical Park, and to propose the recommendation on the support of environment management in Sukhothai Historical Park. These steps of conceptual are important to improve the environment management in Sukhothai Historical Park, moreover, the conceptual is shown as in figure 2

1. INPUT

Independent Variables

Tourists' Characteristics

- Gender; male and female
- Age
- Region; Asia, America, Europe, Australia/New Zealand
- Occupation

Dependent Variables

Satisfaction on Environment Management

- Physical;
- Visibility of scenery and environment
- Accessibility to area
- Attractive of tourist site
- Completeness of historical site
- Infrastructures and facilities;
- Parking area
- Entrance
- Toilets
- Footpath
- Telephones
- Sign posts
- Food and beverage shops
- Souvenir shops
- Tram car
- Tourist information center
- Administrative and management ;
- The production of material for promote historical site such as brochure
- Convenient opening hours to the tourist
- Maintain and take care of area

2. METHOD

- Using the Questionnaire
- Likert scale
- Evaluating the data by percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

3. OUTCOME

- The level of international tourists' satisfaction towards environment management in Sukhothai Historical Park
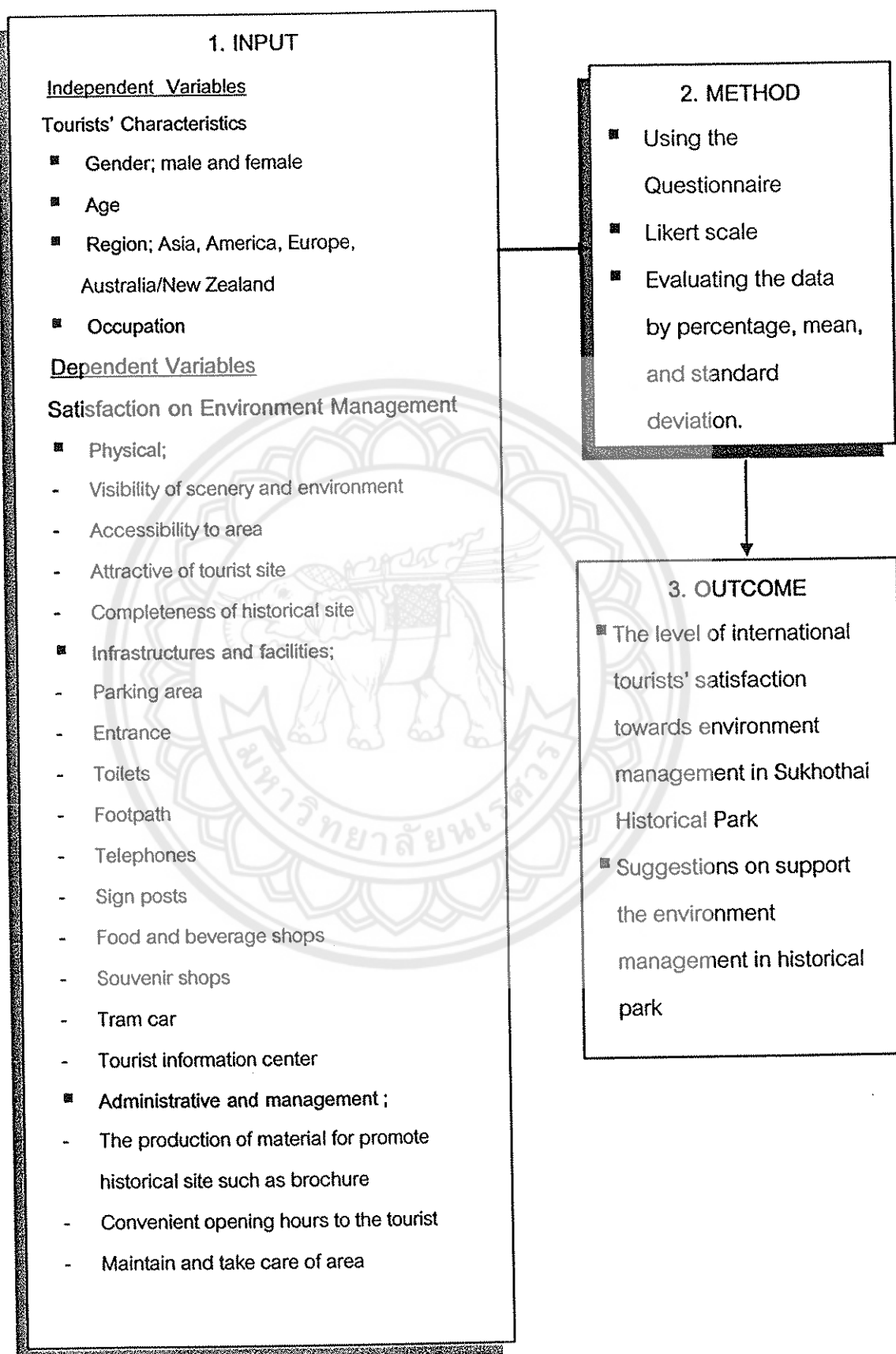- Suggestions on support the environment management in historical park

Figure 2 Conceptual Framework