Sun and Sand Holiday Makers' Assessment of Patong Beach, Thailand

Yuan Ping[1]

Abstract

With the increased international popularity of beaches in Phuket, a large number of foreign tourists are flocking there. However, owing to the rapid development of costal tourism there, some major beaches have been damaged by mass tourism and overdevelopment. The aim of this research is to study foreign tourists' perception of selected beaches in Phuket as sun and sand destinations and investigate the attributes of natural attractions, atmosphere and social ambience, tourism facilities, environmental conditions and activities based on selected trip characteristics, namely, nationality, purpose and frequency of visit. Data was collected by a set of questionnaires distributed to 384 foreign tourists, who visited the beaches in Phuket from February to May 2010. The findings reveal that while boasting tropic warm climate condition, beautiful scenery, clean water and mature tourism infrastructure systems, these destinations also have shortcomings. Beaches are crowded; some places are polluted by trash and litter, there a lack of adequate garbage bins, and designated bathing areas and the alarm systems are insufficient. The study also indicates that given their different nationalities, the frequency of their visit and purpose, foreign tourists have statistically different perception of Patong beach. The recommendations made include enhancing the infrastructure, strengthening the beach environmental management as well providing more information using multi languages

Key words: *Foreign tourists, sun and sand, Phuket, Patong beach, perception.*

Introduction

With its unique climatic conditions and particular location along the beautiful coastlines of the Gulf of Thailand Sea and the Andaman Sea, Thailand is attractive to tourists looking for adventure and exciting water-based activities such as scuba diving, snorkeling, kayaking, and canoeing.

One such place in Thailand is Phuket, the Kingdom's largest island nestled against the Andaman Sea coast 862 kilometers south of Bangkok. Apart from the warm climate and beautiful beaches, the island boasts a gorgeous undersea world and several excellent diving spots off its major beaches, Patong, Kata, Karon, and Nai Yang.

Although Thailand is one of the least-expensive places to get a scuba diving license, it is also probably one of the best places to learn it.

As one of the world's renowned international beach tourist destinations, Phuket attracts a large number of international tourists yearly. With the number of foreign tourist arrivals almost twice as much as the Thai tourists, foreigners play a very important role in Phuket's tourism industry; all the more as they spend more money than Thai tourists. In 2008, arrivals to Phuket exceeded 5.5 million, with international tourists accounted for 4.2 million of them (http://www.phuketgazette.net/archives/articles/2009/article7595.html/). Foreigners are also the top guests in terms of occupancy rate in accommodation establishments.

It all started in 1973 when the Tourist Authority of Thailand (TAT) drew up a master plan for Phuket tourism. In 1990, as part of the drive to push the tourism industry, Phuket was named center of international travel (Kuson, 2002). All this, however, has come at a cost.

As a seaside resort, Phuket has witnessed phenomenal development over the last 25 years and is now a bustling cluster of resorts, hotels and entertainment venues, which bring extensive damage to sun and sand. Although in 1992, Phuket was declared a pollution control and environmental protection zone, more needs to be done. This need for action has led the TAT to adopt a new five-year plan (2007-2012) which aims to ensure that tourism strategies strike a balance between economic growth and sustainable development. The aim is not simple to attract tourists and entice them to spend money but also to ensure that tourism destinations appeal to tourists and tourist operators who are now more sophisticated and environmentally conscious.

The aim of this research is to study foreign tourists' perception of selected beaches in

---

[1] Yuan Ping recently graduated from Assumption University Graduate School of Business. This research was completed under the supervision of Dr. Adarsh Batra.

Phuket as sun and sand destinations and investigate the attributes of natural attractions, atmosphere and social ambience, tourism facilities, and environmental conditions and activities. After reviewing the relevant literature and considering the methodology used in this study, this article will discuss the findings and make some recommendations.

1. Literature Review

Nowadays, beach destinations reflect the globalization and multi-culturalisation characteristic of tourism development. Once the beach is developed, mass tourism will be packaged and promoted under the 4S's –sun, sand, sea and sex (Falco, 2007) or the 5S's - sun, sand, sea, sex and surf (Lencek and Bosker, 1999).

Falco (2007) investigated the beach image through essential natural attributes (sun, water, vegetation, climate, etc), and found that compared with the traditional 4S's, the 3S's (sun, sand, and sea) give a better beach image as there is a consensus among cultural groups around sun, sand and sea, which are seen as attractive by all, but not around sex and surf. As Garcia et al. (2004) mentioned, coastal areas with sun, sand, sea, together with benign climate will always attract tourists.

With coastal areas offering excellent natural attractions, Weaver (2001) interpreted sun and sand destinations as one type of nature-based tourism which relies on attractions related to the natural environment.

Another theory related to beach tourism is beach space (Whyte, 2004). Beach areas include into two dimensions: first, a "material space," a boundary zone that offers water, sun, warm climate to tourists; second, a "cultural space" where border land allows cultural integration, that is traditional local cultures merging together with foreign cultures.

At 3S destinations, tourists not only focus on nature-based tourism, they also pay close attention to recreational activities. However, as Gartner (1996) stated, tourism activities may cause environmental disruption at the destinations. Pollution issues at 3S destinations are all the more present as large-scale tourism facilities and resorts have been built on beach areas, negatively affecting their aesthetic quality.

Developed by Swarbrooke (2002), the concept of 'Aesthetic Pollution' emphasizes the effect of the environment on one's sense of beauty. Visual impact is considered one of the major impacts of tourism on the environment conditions related to sun and sand destination, as identified by Oppermann and Chon (1997), along with pollution, erosion, natural resources, all of which causing the tourism destination to be damaged. The areas tourism operators are most concerned about are litter and water pollution (*Ibid*).

The checklist assessment of beach rating comprises physical, biological, and human use factors (Phillips and House, 2009). As Rupert (2007) emphasized, crowding is one of the factors that has led to the dissatisfaction of tourists at tourism destinations. Crowding, however, can be quite subjective. What is a crowded place for some may seem fine to others. As Swarbrooke (2002) noted, different tourists perceive differently on how many tourists should be allowed in the tourism destination before their tourist's own experience suffer.

Stein, Denny and Pennisi (2003) found that water-based activities are the best way to satisfy tourists in search of exciting and adventurous experiences. However, these activities are likely to disturb marine life and damage marine environment. For instance, divers' behaviors have had a destructive effect on the coral reef (Cope, 2003). So, tourists should take into account the environmental bearing capacity of the area before they embark on water-based activities (Daily, 2000).

As far as tourists' characteristics are concerned, tourists come from different countries with different cultures, attitudes, lifestyles, and therefore have different perceptions about one identical tourism product (Kotler and Armstrong, 2000). Investigating beach image through international visitors from North America, Europe, UK and Asia, Falco (2007) found that western tourists enjoyed looking for romantic, restorative and medicinal beaches, European culture groups liked vegetation and marine life, and the Asian culture groups had a preference for beaches with coconuts and small mountains. For European tourists who choose sun and sand destination for their holiday and vacation, their main purpose is to enjoy fresh air on the beach, with swimming coming as second (Jedrzejczak, 2004). Different culture groups had different feelings and preferences in terms of travel to the beach areas.

In addition, compared with repeat visitor,

first time visitors are less satisfied than repeat visitors (Kozak, 2001). From a marketing point of view, if a destination can provide high quality service, visitors will be likely to return. And once a destination has been visited, tourists are more apt to consider this destination as secure to return to in the future. However, satisfaction will not guarantee a repeat visit rate as no evidence can prove that a dissatisfied visitor will not return, and a satisfied one will return for sure (Weaver et al., 2007).

2. Conceptual Framework and Methodology

The model developed in this study includes two sets of variables: dependent and independent ones. There are three independent variables. Two have been adopted from Aleger and Cladera's (2006) model, nationality and repeat visit, and one from Jędrzejczak's (2004), travel purpose (also referred to as purpose of visit).

The dependent variable, foreign tourists' perception of Patong beach as a sun and sand destination, has been adapted from Garcia's et al. (2004) model and slightly modified to reflect the current tourism situation in Phuket.

This study includes fifteen hypotheses set to test the differences in foreign tourists' travel characteristics in terms of nationality, repeat visit and purpose of travel and with regard to their perception of national attractions, atmosphere and social ambience, tourism infrastructure and facilities, environment conditions and open air recreational activities available on Patong beach. The hypotheses can be grouped as follows.

H_0 1, 2, 3, 4, 5: There is no difference in foreign tourists' perception of Patong beach in terms of natural attraction, atmosphere and social ambience, tourism infrastructures and facilities, environment conditions, and open air recreational activities respectively as a sun and sand destination as classified by nationality.

H_a 1, 2, 3, 4,5: There are differences in foreign tourists' perception of Patong beach in terms of natural attraction, atmosphere and social ambience, tourism infrastructures and facilities, environment conditions, and open air recreational activities respectively as a sun and sand destination as classified by nationality.

H_0 6, 7, 8, 9, 10: There is no difference in foreign tourists' perception of Patong beach in terms of natural attraction, atmosphere and social ambience, tourism infrastructures and facilities, environment conditions, and open air recreational activities respectively as a sun and sand destination as classified in terms of repeat visit.

H_a 6, 7, 8, 9,10: There are differences in foreign tourists' perception of Patong beach in terms of natural attraction, atmosphere and social ambience, tourism infrastructures and facilities, environment conditions, and open air recreational activities respectively as a sun and sand destination as classified in terms of repeat visit.

H_0 11, 12, 13, 14, 15: There is no difference in foreign tourists' perception of Patong beach in terms of natural attraction, atmosphere and social ambience, tourism infrastructures and facilities, environment conditions, and open air recreational activities respectively as a sun and sand destination as classified in terms of purpose of travel.

H_a 11, 12, 13, 14, 15: There are differences in foreign tourists' perception of Patong beach in terms of natural attraction, atmosphere and social ambience, tourism infrastructures and facilities, environment conditions, and open air recreational activities as a sun and sand destination as classified in terms of purpose of travel.

The questionnaire was designed to collect information about foreign tourists' perception of Phuket as a sun and sand destination using closed-ended questions. It consisted of five parts, comprising 42 questions in total. The first part gathered information about foreign tourists' travel characteristics when traveling to Patong beach in Phuket. In the next parts, the respondents were asked to articulate their perceptions of national attractions, atmosphere and social ambience, tourism infrastructure and facilities, environment conditions available on that same beach. The last section included information on foreign tourists' perceptions of open air recreational activities available there. The ranking scale was: 5 – strongly agree, 4 – agree, 3 – neither agree nor disagree, 2 – disagree and 1 – strongly disagree and N/A – not applicable.

Prior to the survey, a pre-test was done in order to check the reliability of the questionnaire. A Cronbach Alpha test for internal consistency indicated that items were fairly reliable (α natural attraction = 0.72, α atmosphere and social ambience = 0.79, α tourism infrastructure and facilities = 0.79, α environment condition = 0.79, α open air recreational activities = 0.76).

The sample was designed as non-probability

convenience sampling involving 384 respondents who visited Patong beach between February 25 and March 1, 2010. A screening question was asked to ensure that respondents were foreign tourists traveling to Patong. The survey, conducted in English, required 10 to 15 minutes of the respondents' time to be completed. 410 questionnaires were distributed and 392 collected. The researcher picked up the 384 questionnaires which were fully completely to conduct the analysis. The data was analyzed by using the Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

Descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA and post-hoc analyses were used to test the differences in tourists' perception. P value of 0.05 or less was set as the criterion to determine the significance of the observed differences.

4. Discussion of Findings

- Perception of Patong as a Sand and Sun Destination

The largest group of respondents in terms of nationality came from China (27.1%) followed by the United Kingdom (25.8%). A majority of the respondents (69.5%) were visiting Patong beach for the first time. In terms of travel purposes, 28.4% of the respondents had chosen Patong beach for swimming purposes, and 22.1% for its warm climate. These were the two predominant reasons for coming to Patong beach.

In terms of perception of Patong beach as a sun and sand destination, as the results in Table 1 show (see Appendix one), the statement "beaches in Phuket offer a pleasant climate" has the highest mean score (4.30), followed by "beaches in Phuket present beautiful scenery" with a mean score of 3.71. With the lowest mean, 3.20, coming from the statement "The sand is clean and soft," it can be concluded that, in the eyes of foreign tourists, Phuket's pleasant climate and beautiful coastline are the main points of attraction.

Other strong attractive aspects of Phuket to non-Thai tourists are its "beaches [which] are "suitable for rest and relaxation" with the highest mean score of 4.31, and the fact that "tourists can purchase snacks and drinks on the beaches" (4.02). The lowest mean (2.55) pertains to the statement "beaches are not crowded". Interestingly enough, while most of the respondents felt that beaches in Phuket are safe and not noisy, many of them, however,

complained that they were overcrowded. This is the other side of the coin. Since beaches there are very attractive, foreign tourists flock there. Given that beaches are obviously not expandable, this is a real problem.

With regard to tourism infrastructure and facilities, the data indicates that "access from resort/hotel/parking [with] clearly visible road sign, or path to the beach" is a high priority for tourists. With a mean score of 4.11, it is the highest. Another important concern for tourists is that "the sanitation conditions of the toilets and bathrooms are appropriate" with a score of 3.69. As the statements "the number of bins is sufficient" and "there are few designated bathing areas" show, with the lower means of 2.67 and 2.59 respectively, foreign tourists clearly feel that while beaches are accessible and toilets areas clean, they also wish there would be more designated bathing areas and bins around Phuket. Given the high level of trash generated in today's consumer society, the latter concern is quite legitimate and encouraging as it reflects growing environmental concerns on the part of foreign tourists.

The respondents' answers pertaining to their perceptions of the environmental conditions corroborate this trend. With the second lowest mean score attached to the statement "beaches are free from trash and litter" (2.70), it can be seen that most of the respondents felt the beaches were polluted by garbage and plastic and saw this as a drawback, some even complaining that some places were dirty. In their view, the fact that "there {was} no floatable in the water," which was the statement with the highest mean score (4.14), was not enough to compensate for the trash littering all over the beaches.

In addition, with respect to foreign tourists' perception of open-air recreational activities, the statement "practicing water sports" has the highest mean score (4.33), followed by "taking photos of marine life" (3.79). The lowest mean (1.93) comes from the statement "walking on the beach with shoes". Foreign tourists clearly enjoy practicing water sports in Phuket and taking photos of the marine life. Another encouraging sign of the growing eco-trend among foreign travelers to Phuket is that most of the respondents indicating they did not like collecting shells and dead corals, showing thereby much respect for the environment. The fact that most of them "did not like to wear

shoes walking on the beaches," can be interpreted as another sign of a desire to be close to nature and enjoy it fully.

- Perception in Terms of Nationality

A Post Hoc test was used to identify the differences regarding items with significance at less than 0.05 in terms of nationality (see Table 2 Appendix Two). The research reveals that American and British tourists surveyed felt a lot stronger than Chinese and Korean ones about the fact the beaches offered beautiful sceneries. In addition, British, German and American tourists had different perceptions of the water as compared to Chinese, Japanese and Korean tourists. Those westerners felt much stronger about the fact that the water was crystal clear than their Asian counterparts. In other words, Asian tourists were not as satisfied with the natural scenery and the quality of the water as European and American tourists.

By the same token, the color of the sand fascinated Chinese tourists more than Korean tourists, yet far more than Western tourists far less sensitive to this feature. Clearly, white sandy beaches can be a major attraction for Chinese tourists. As for Indian tourists, they strongly felt that there was enough greenery (palm, groves, and vegetation), a view not shared by Chinese and British tourists. This largely explains why Indian tourists like beaches with greenery and enjoy its protection from the strong sun while still enjoying the beach setting. Korean tourists strongly felt that there were plenty of corals in the sea, a view not shared by Chinese and British tourists. Beautiful and abundant corals thus have the potential to attract large number of Korean tourist who appeared keen on watching underwater corals in Phuket. Cultural perceptions also came into play in other ways as British tourists felt that beaches were not noisy, whereas Chinese and Japanese holidaymakers had an opposite view of the noise level. To British tourists, noise on the beach was not an issue, reflecting beach trends at home. Asian tourists, however, turned out to be much more sensitive to this issue and also to the fact that some beaches had a lot of people. While beaches in China, for instance are known to be overcrowded, Chinese traveling abroad may have different expectations, hence their willingness to spend money in the hope of finding less crowded places. As to Europeans, they are used to crowded beaches in the summer time in Southern Europe where literally millions of Northern Europeans flock comes summer vacation.

British and Chinese have a stronger tendency to take photos of marine life than American and Korean tourists. They were quite exciting to see marine life and could not stop taking pictures, which they would then show back home, thus contributing to the popularity of the island – and to some extent to its being overpopulated.

- Perception in Terms of Repeat Visits

As Table 2 demonstrates (see Appendix Two)**,** first time visitors considered Phuket beaches to be safe from crime and to have a good safety record. However, they mentioned the high number of stray dogs on the beach, which to some unfamiliar with dogs seem dangerous. Compared with repeat visitors, first time comers preferred to practice yoga, meditation and massage on the beaches. When they did snorkeling and scuba diving, they enjoyed feeding fish. Foreign tourists also paid close attention to safety issues on the beaches. Compared with first time' visitors, those who had been in Phuket two or three times before found more corals and fish in the sea since they had more experience with marine life in the area. These visitors frequently returned to the beaches in Phuket (some more than four times) as the result of the beautiful scenery and also because they enjoyed the chance to be close to nature and look at the corals in the sea.

- Perception in Terms of Travel Purpose

Tourists who come for the warm climate and/or for swimming strongly felt that the beaches in Phuket have beautiful scenery whereas tourists whose purpose was to watch scenic scenes did not feel as strongly about it. Beautiful sceneries are the crucial factors to attract tourists who come for the warm climate and/or to enjoy the beaches. The former tourists also felt that there were many kinds of fish in the sea, another point of attraction to them. However, tourists, who are only into sunbathing, do not care much about fish. In addition, those who came for the warm climate felt that the sanitation condition of the toilets and bathrooms was appropriate, which was not the case with tourists into swimming and sunbathing. Therefore, good sanitation facilities can help build a good image for tourists looking for warm climate; however, those into swimming focused only on the quality of the water and not so much on the beach sanitation condition.

Tourists there essentially for the purpose of swimming liked to focus on adventurous experiences underwater. They liked to feed fish and take photos as did the tourists who visited this place for water sports purpose. However, tourists who visited the beaches for swimming purposes care about the number of bins around the beach areas and the beauty of the beaches themselves. In addition, they appreciated the quality of the clean and soft sand and enjoyed sunbathing. However, they found that the toilets and bathrooms in the beach areas were not very good and clean.

Conclusions and Implications

As the findings show, most foreign tourists feel that designated swimming areas, warning alarm systems and the number of bins around the beaches are insufficient. Therefore, it is necessary to increase the number of swimming facilities and also have good sign boards so that foreign tourists can easily find these places.

Some tourists consider the sand and water to be clean in Phuket. However, they see the lack of adequate sanitary systems, such as the lack of garbage bins and efficient garbage collection, as the main cause of the trash littering the beaches. Thus, increasing the number of garbage bins around the beaches could prove an effective way of protecting the beach environment. Other measures by the local authorities to prevent the beaches from being polluted could include putting up billboards in multi-languages to remind tourists not to litter the beaches; organizing groups of volunteers to clean up the beaches once a week; and cooperating with the restaurants and hotels near the beach areas to protect the beach environment. Cooperation between the government and local industries to manage and monitor the beach areas could be the best way to prevent beaches from being contaminated by trash and litter.

In addition, according to this research, over half of the foreign tourists really enjoy water activities in Phuket. They particularly like to put on palms and go underwater to take photos when they go scuba diving or snorkeling. However, while wearing palms to go scuba diving or snorkeling can help them swim and also protect their feet from being hurt by marine life, it can also damage the undersea corals which are very fragile and sensitive to the slightest impact. Operators should thus give detailed and specific instructions and guidance to keep tourists from inflicting unnecessary

harm when diving or snorkeling. Furthermore, in order to attract tourists who enjoy marine life, operators could offer special services to those who, for example, are traveling without professional waterproof cameras. They could rent them cameras, sell waterproof cases, or offer the service of professional photographers.

The results indicate that different nationalities do not feel the same way about sun and sand resources on the beaches. Therefore, in order to attract foreigners from Asia, European, American or Oceania, the TAT and the relevant agencies in the tourism industry need to implement different tourism strategies. As compared with Asian groups, European and American tourists are more interested in natural beautiful sceneries and crystal clear water on beaches in Phuket and less in sandy beaches and vegetation. Besides, European and American tourists like diving, snorkeling and searching for adventurous experiences underwater such as feeding fish and touching corals. Thus, for European and American tourists, the advertising strategies need to focus on the undersea world more than on sandy beaches. Exciting diving, snorkeling, canoeing and kayaking photos and natural scenery videos may be the best way to present the sun and sand image of beaches in Phuket to European and American tourists.

The results show that, the majority of tourists visit the beaches in Phuket for swimming purposes and to enjoy the warm climate. Tourists with preponderant swimming purposes like to participate in exciting water activities. However, tourists who come for the warm climate are interested in relaxing on the beaches and watch the sunset but not in water activities. Therefore, the relevant agencies in tourism industry such as the TAT or tour agents need to launch different campaigns keeping in mind the different requirements of these two major groups of tourists. Apart from setting up a variety of water activities to attract foreign tourists, they should also ensure that water activities do not threaten the environment. Therefore, the TAT or Thai government need to restrict the number of visitors who can join on a day trip for diving, snorkeling, kayaking and canoeing in Phuket in order to reduce damage to the marine environment.

Some foreign tourists who come for the warm climate and for relaxation feel that the beaches are crowded and noisy. In order to provide a good environment for relaxation and ease the issues of overcrowding on the beaches,

the TAT or the Thai government could launch and promote tourism products designed to have the local tourists leave Phuket to other neighboring provinces or other tourism destinations during the high season.

Furthermore, most of the tourists frequently visit the beaches in Phuket as a result of the beautiful sceneries and the many opportunities to see the undersea world. Once tourists get a chance to see the marine life when diving or snorkeling, they are more likely to visit again. However, some visitors will not join the water activities when they travel to beaches in Phuket for the first time as they have no idea about what kind of water activities they can participate if they cannot swim. Hence, some tourists have no chance to get exciting experiences with marine life in the sea on their first visit. In response to this situation, the TAT, travel agents or travel operators need to provide more detailed information about marine life to foreign tourists or print brochures about the variety of water activities in different languages. In addition, they need to increase the lifeguard staff, send professional people to regularly check the water life jackets and other related equipment. This will strengthen water security and the perception of safety when tourists engage in water activities in the sea.

References

Aleger, J. & Cladera, M. (2006). Repeat visitation in mature sun and sand holiday destinations. *Journal of Travel Research,* 43(3), 288-297.

Cope, R. (2003). The international diving market. *Travel and Tourism,* 8 (6), 1–39.

Daily, G. C. (2000). Management objectives for the protection of ecosystem services. *Environmental Science and Policy*, 3, 333–339.

Falco, F. (2007). Beach images: more than just sun, sea, sand and sex. Proceedings of the 17th Annual CAUTHE Conference In: CAUTHE 2007: Tourism - Past Achievements, Future Challenges, Sydney, NSW, Australia.

Jędrzejczak, M. F. (2004). The modern tourist's perception of the beach: Is the sandy beach a place of conflict between tourism and biodiversity? *Coastline reports*, 2, 109-119.

Garcia, H.C., Saura, I. G., Garcia, R.C.P. & Gallarza, M.G. (2004). The "Sun and Beach" tourism destination image: An application to the case of Cuba from the Spanish tourist-origin market. *Tourism Review.* 59(1), 16-24.

Gartner, C. N. (1996). Tourism Development: Principles, Processes, and Policies. VanNonstrand Reinhold: New York.

Kotler, P. & Amstrong, G. (2000). Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning, implication and Control. (9th ed). New Jersey: Prentice Hall International.

Kozak, M. (2001). 'Repeaters' behavior at two distinct destinations. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 28(3), 784-807.

Kuson, W. D. (2002). Phuket. (1st ed). Bangkok: Sarakadee.

Lencek, L., & Bosker, G. (1999). The Beach-the History of Paradise on Earth. New York: Penguin.

Oppermann, M. & Chon, K. (1997). Tourism in Developing Countries. (1st ed). International Thomson Business Press, Berkshire House: London.

Oppermann, M. (1999). Predicting destinations choice - a discussion of destination loyalty. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 5(1), 51-65.

Phillips, M. R. & House, C. (2009). An evaluation of priorities for beach tourism: Case studies from south Wales, UK. *Tourism Management,* 30, 176-183.

Rupert, F.G. (2007). Visitor perceptions and the shifting social carrying capacity of south Sinai's coral reefs. *Environ Manage*, 39, 472-489.

Stein, T.V., Denny, C.B., & Pennisi, L.A. (2003). Using visitors' motivations to provide learning opportunities at water-based recreation areas. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 11(5), 404-425.

Swarbrooke, J. (2002). Sustainable Tourism Management. (3rd ed). London: CAB International.

Weaver, D. (2001). Ecotourism. (1st ed). Crafe Print International Ltd: Singapore.

Weaver, P. A., Weber. K, J., & McCleary, K. J. (2007). Destination evaluation: the role of previous travel experience and trip characteristics. *Journal of Travel Research.* 43(3), 333-344.

Whyte, P. R. (2004). The Beach is a Liminal Space. A Companion to Tourism. (1st ed). Blackwell Publishing, UK.

Online Sources

Phuket Gazette: article7595.html/ Retrieved on 15, November, 2009. http://www.phuketgazette.net/archives/articles/2009/

Appendix One

Table 1: Natural attractions, atmosphere and social ambience, infrastructure and facilities, environmental condition and open air recreational activities available on Patong beach in Phuket as perceived by Foreign tourists (N_1=384)

Natural attractions	N_1	Mean[a]	Std. D
Beautiful scenery		**3.71**	.926
Pleasant climate		**4.30**	.887
Clean and soft sand		**3.20**	1.128
The color of the sand		3.63	1.009
Clear water		3.39	1.046
Enough greenery		3.60	.885
Enough corals in the sea		3.78	.867
Many fish in the sea		3.83	.981
Atmosphere and social ambience	N_1	Mean[a]	Std. D
Safe from crime		3.93	1.169
Good safety records		3.58	1.197
Lifeguard(s) at the beaches		3.22	.909
Enough entertainment on the beaches		2.61	1.038
Beaches are suitable for rest and relaxation		**4.31**	.973
Tourists can purchase snacks and drinks		**4.02**	.705
Tourists can buy handicrafts items		3.98	.936
Beaches have fitness and health benefits		3.84	1.095
Beaches are not noisy		3.36	.943
Beaches are not crowded		**2.55**	.841
Infrastructures and facilities	N_1	Mean[a]	Std. D
There is designated bathing area		2.59	.945
The warning alarm system		2.74	.978
The sanitation condition		**3.69**	.943
Number of bins are sufficient		2.67	.995
Too much vehicles		**2.19**	.809
Clearly visible road sign or path to beach		**4.11**	.935
Environment condition	N_1	Mean[a]	Std. D
Beaches are free from domestic animals		**2.67**	1.031
Beaches are free from trash and litter		2.73	.875
There are no floatable in water		**4.14**	1.035
Open air recreational activities	N_2	Mean[b]	Std. D
Collecting shells and coral in the sea	290	2.28	.812
Touching the coral reef while scuba diving	331	2.85	1.296
Touching the fish while scuba diving or snorkeling	317	2.49	1.170
Wearing fins while scuba diving or snorkeling	309	3.73	.973
Feeding the fish while scuba diving or snorkeling	299	2.92	1.384
Taking photos of marine life	295	**3.79**	1.033
Practicing water sports	384	**4.33**	.957
Collecting shells and coral on the beach	347	3.40	1.187
Sunbath using beach chair	384	3.18	1.429
Play volleyball on the beach	308	2.47	1.134
Have the picnic on the beach	341	2.79	1.375
Walking on the beach with shoes	384	**1.93**	1.109

[a] : 5-level scale was used where 1 mean strongly disagree and 5 means strongly agree
[b] : A 5-level scale was used where 1 mean highly dislike and 5 means highly like on the beach.

Table 2: The Difference in Foreign tourists' perception by tourists' nationality, frequency of visit and purpose of travel

Statements of foreign tourists' perception	Sig.	Comparison (nationality) [a]
Beautiful scenery	.000	American, British > Chinese, Korean
Rest and relaxation on the beach	.014	American, German, Japanese > Chinese
Clear water	.000	British , German, American > Chinese, Japanese
Can purchase snacks and drinks on the beach	.004	British, Chinese > German
Beach are not noisy	.022	British > Chinese, Japanese
Wearing fins while scuba diving	.025	British > American, Australian
Feeding the fish while scuba diving	.043	British, French > Chinese
Taking photos of marine life	.031	British, Chinese> Korean
Color of the sand	.006	Chinese > Korean > British
Many corals and fish in the sea	.002	Koran > British, Chinese
Sunbath using beach chair	.002	Japanese , Chinese > British
Walking on the beach with shoes	.000	Japanese, Chinese > American, British, German
Many greenery (palm, groves, vegetation)	.001	Indian > British, Chinese
Statements of foreign tourists' perception	**Sig.**	**Comparison (frequency of visit) [a]**
Beaches are safe from crime	.027	First time, 2-3 times > 4 or more times
There is a provision of lifeguards at the beaches	.010	First time > 2-3 times
Beaches have fitness and health benefits	.000	First time, 2-3 times > 4 or more times
Feeding the fish while scuba diving or snorkeling	.012	First time, 2-3 times > 4 or more times
Many fish in the sea	.030	2-3 times > first time
The warning alarm system is in place	.004	2-3 times > 4 time
Touching the coral reef while scuba diving	.021	4 or more times > 2-3 times, first time
Beaches are not noisy	.010	4 or more times > 2-3 times, first time
Beautiful scenery	.027	4 or more times > 2-3 times, first time
Statements of foreign tourists' perception	**Sig.**	**Comparison (purpose of travel) [a]**
Beautiful scenery	.000	Warm climate, Swimming > Scenic watching
Sufficient bins around beach	.000	Warm climate, Swimming > Scenic watching
Beach are not noisy	.030	Warm climate, Swimming > Fresh air
Walking on the beach with shoes	.003	Warm climate, Swimming > Water sports
Clear water	.026	Warm climate, Sunbathing > Swimming
Many fish in the sea	.019	Swimming > Sunbathing
Beaches are free from trash and litter	.041	Scenic watching > Swimming
The sanitation condition is appropriate	.001	Scenic watching, Warm climate > Swimming
Play volleyball on the beach	.000	Scenic watching > Swimming
Touching the coral reef while scuba diving	.015	Water sports > Warm climate, Swimming
Feeding the fish while scuba diving or snorkeling	.021	Water sports, Swimming > Warm climate
Taking photos of marine life	.001	Water sports, Swimming > Warm climate

Note: [a] Post-hoc test to examine the significant differences (p < 0.05)