

Research Proposal

[Tourism]

Title: An Investigation of Self- Drive Tourism of Thailand: A Case Study of Thai Domestic Market

[Siripen Yiamjanya, Ph.D.]
[siripen.yi@ssru.ac.th]

Research Context and Significance

In the context of urbanisation where most parts of the world have become urbanised, Asia including Thailand and some other developing countries has changed in many aspects including patterns of traveling and spending on leisure time of its residents. People started to travel more frequently especially within short and longer distance both for weekends and long holiday. Short break traveling is usually based on road transport, which is a preferable for short distance. Studies about traveling mainly by road in Australian context suggest the term “drive tourism” (Carson *et al.* 2002, Prideaux & Carson 2003, Prideaux *et al.* 2005; Howat *et al.* 2007, Holyoak & Carson 2009). Drive tourism has played significance as a form of leisure travel in developed countries, such as the United States (Yi 2008). It is defined by Prideaux and Carson (2003, p. 308) as “*tourism that centres on travelling from an origin point to a destination by car that is either privately owned or rented, and engaging in tourism related activities during the journey*”. Drive tourism can increase travelers’ opportunities to drive out of the main highway to access further more remote areas. It also has a close relationship with how tourism in rural remote areas, which are reachable most conveniently by car, can be developed (Yi 2008). This visualises the idea of income distribution into local or rural businesses. International travel reported by the World Tourism Organisation (WTO) being predominated by air and self-drive transport in 1998. Self-drive accounted for 42 per cent of transport choices and was more popular in Europe, the Middle East and Australasia (Prideaux & Carson 2003). However, there is a limited study that addresses self- drive market in domestic travel sector.

Comment [u1]:

Address wider context of self- drive tourism/ definitions can be covered.

Thailand's domestic tourism has mainly based on self-driving. Having car ownership in Thailand continued to reach at rapid level, self-driving tour has gained high popularity among Thai visitors. Most of them use private car as the main vehicle in traveling within the country. Tour operators and travel agents in Thailand are currently facing the fact that Thai tourists have increasingly traveled by themselves, need less assistance and buy less service from travel companies. Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has also launched the self-drive touring campaign to promote domestic travel during green season, with aiming to responding new generation travelers' lifestyle and variety of demands, and to helping generate more income circulation within the country during off season. The TAT has designed the 15 driving routes. The tourist drive routes suggested by the TAT present the highlighted tourist attractions each region offers to driving tourists and they can be categorised into cultural, historical and natural attractions. Self-drive touring routes are usually designed in a circuit route starting at the main cities and then returning back to the area from which it started (Hennessey *et al.*2008). For Thailand, the main cities in each region of Thailand include Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Phuket. Domestic self-drive tourism in Thailand nowadays especially in winter has been dominated by the routes in the northern Thailand, which shows a greater potential to be the destinations for touristic route, regardless of the fact of distance travelled. This is due to the fact that there are more alternative attractions to stop en route. The length of stay for each holiday among Thai tourists is around 2-5 days. They usually make a short trip during the main holidays which include Songkran Holiday (Thai New Year) and New Year. Some other long weekends based on Thailand national holidays are spent with traveling to the provinces nearby, for example, from Bangkok to Korat (Nakornratchasima Province). Domestic travel represents the majority of revenue of the country. This means that each holiday period encourages people to spend money on traveling and other spending during trip. The main self-drive touring routes are also dominated by domestic tourism, indicating that self-drive market is considered the main market for domestic tourism of Thailand.

With a merit of road transport infrastructure in each part of Thailand projecting to give a better mobilisation ability to people, to enhance connectivity with other countries in Southeast Asia, and to promote economic growth, by improving the quality of roads and completing the road network, as to follow the ASEAN's strategic plan on transport under the pillar of ASEAN Physical Connectivity (Association of Southeast Asian Nations2011), plus a rising use and development of digital technology application helping in self-driving, thus there is an immense potential of growth of self-drive tourist market. However, what has been

Scope down to the context of self-drive tourism in Thailand

not known is the traveling behaviour of this growing market particularly of Thailand. Self-drive tourism is a recently new area in tourism market study. Literature from the past has demonstrated limited reviews. Most studies attempted to study self-drive market behaviour and its travel patterns for market segmentation and responding destination development and management based on the market's characteristics and preferences. From the review of the past studies, most of the studies concern the markets in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and U.S.A (Prideaux & Carson 2003, Becken & Wilson 2004, Hennessey *et al.*2008, Yi 2008,Lohmann & Zahra 2011). Some studies were examined for domestic drive tourist market of Japan and China (Cooper 2010, Yu *et al.*2011).

Since Thailand is one of the ASEAN Community which is attempting to position itself as the hub of tourism within Southeast Asia including Great Mekong Sub-region and ASEAN Community, an importance will be paid to physical infrastructure such as road construction, in order to reduce non-tariff barrier such as transportation of industrial products and greater accessibility. This development is expected to encourage more tourist flows within the country and the region. As self-drive tourists do not represent a homogeneous group of people even though they have some common characteristics (Olsen, as cited in Prideaux & Carson 2003, p. 308-309) it is therefore interesting to find those characteristics that are different among the group and nationality. The study of self-drive tourism is interesting because there is a potential growth. Besides, its findings may provide better understanding of self-drive tourist market of Thailand which will be finally supporting the self-drive campaign of Tourism Authority of Thailand and will be the guideline for tour operators, travel agents and other kinds of travel companies (i.e. car rental) in Thailand in developing creative tourism products that relate to self-drive tourism such as themed route drives tour and other promotional activities to respond this self-drive market. At a more outwards outlook, understanding the characteristics of self-drive tourists and the nature of visitor flows is crucial for the sustainable development of tourism in many destinations (Carson *et al.* 2002). The results could assist in promoting regional tourism and would be beneficial in terms of tourism resources development as well as improvement of infrastructure related to drive tourism facilities, in suburban or peripheral areas both in terms of physical infrastructure, service elements and investments to be more allocated to those areas. Moreover, seeing that self-drive touring is a symbol of freedom and independence of driving tourists, it is thus that they can make their own routes with more accessibility which is a way to increasing traveling expenditure out of the tourism enclaves at the center.

Address possibility in conducting research / research problem

Therefore, self-drive tourism can help boost a local economic and tourism industry in particular (Hennessey *et al.* 2008).

Academically, the results of this study are expected to contribute to a wider range of literature related to drive tourism and self-drive tourist behaviour. This can fill a missing gap of this sector particularly in terms of tourist behaviour and demographic profile, to be anticipated as worth for investigating similarities and differences among the previous studies on self-drive markets, especially those concerning the countries in the same region like China and Japan.

This proposal has been outlined with reviews of theories, past studies related to drive tourism, research methodology to be employed, proposed timescale and limitations.

Review of the Theory of Tourist Behaviour

(1.) Trip Planning and Decision Making Process

Tourists' decision making process towards destination is complex as it involves many factors from an individual psychological determinants including personality, perception, learning, attitudes and motives, to environmental factors including role and family influence, reference group, culture and subculture, and social classes (Mayo & Jarvis 1981, as cited by Bowen & Clarke 2009, p. 63). Past experience, benefits sought, information search, attitudes and intention also are the factors of tourist decision making process (Shih, as cited in Heung *et al.* 2001, p. 259). An explanation of tourist decision making process was later added with an influence of intra-personal, interpersonal and structural constraints on tourist behaviour (Hudson & Gilbert 2002, as cited by Bowen & Clarke 2009, p. 64-65). Decision making process for both rational and hedonic benefits works through a circle of five steps which are need recognition, information search, information processing, evaluation of alternatives, decision to purchase and outcome (Engel *et al.* 1993, as cited by Bowen & Clarke 2009, p. 59). Kolb (as cited in Dumitrescu & Vinerean 2010, p. 758) verified tourist decision making process as identification of need to visit / go on holiday, search for destination information; emotional evaluation of alternatives; the visit / holiday, post-visit/ post-holiday assessment. These steps can be demonstrated as three main stages of consumption including pre-consumption (pre-purchase), consumption stage (purchase) and post-consumption stage. In each step of decision making during which tourists are engaged, there are several elements that come into play such as environmental determinants and individual travel awareness which impinge on felt need and desire for travel; trip features that take into account in the

Address research gap/
and benefits
(academic benefits or
commercial/ business/
development benefits
in the future

Sometimes, literature
reviews for theories
and concepts can also
be added at this point,
but these should be
explained more in
Literature Review
Chapter (Chapter 2).

steps of information search, alternative evaluation, decision and trip planning; and factors on destination attributes such as destination resources and characteristics which manipulate tourists in perception and image formation, decision to travel, behaviour en route, travel experiences and outcomes. Moreover, with the intangibility characteristic of tourism product, during a decision making process, tourists usually have encountered with complexities of their behaviour. These complexities include, for example, high involvement in purchase decision, high levels of insecurity linked to intangibility, high level of information search, emotional significance and strong influences of other people (Swarbrooke & Horner 1999, p. 71-73).

(2.) *Travel Motivation*

Motivation is the dynamic process in buyer behaviour that bridges the gap between the felt need and the decision to act or purchase (Middleton & Clarke 2001, as cited by Bowen & Clarke, 2009, p. 88). Motivation is a significant psychological determinant of demand for travel in ways that it explains why people travel and why they select to travel to particular destination (Ryan 1991, as cited by Page & Hall 2003, p. 57), in which images, perceptions, attitudes, availability of time and money are influencing factors (Cooper *et al.* 1993, as cited by Page & Hall 2003, p. 58). Travel motivation can be categorized in intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, in other words, they are push and pull factors or motives that motivate people to travel. Using the dimension of push and pull factors in many studies regarding travel motivation analysis have been generally accepted (Yuan & McDonald, Uysal & Hagan, as cited in Mat Som 2010, p. 41). Push motives are intrinsic desires, intangible and relate with individuals' origin, such as the desire for escape, rest and relaxation, adventure, health or prestige (Kozak 2002, as cited by Bowen & Clarke 2009, p. 92). In tourism, tourists make holiday "*as a response to what is lacking yet desired*" (Dann 1981, as cited by Bowen & Clarke 2009, p. 92). On the other hand, pull motives are external; they are factors that attract individuals to act. In tourism, pull motives relate with the attractiveness of a destination perceived by travelers (Bowen & Clarke 2009, p. 92). Attractiveness of destination covers both tangible and intangible elements which include destination's resources, physical setting, facilities and amenities, routes and accessibility, and destination image and marketing effort or stimuli such as commercial packages, which can be perceived by travelers (Baloglu & Uysal, as cited in Mat Som 2010, p. 41, Bowen & Clarke 2009, p. 93). The linkage between destination attributes and tourist motivations emphasises an importance of pull motives as the very crucial factor in tourism motivation study for marketing segmentation and tourism

promotional strategy (Bowen & Clarke 2009, p. 97), especially in the age in which tourism industry is within the competitive environment and the age of consumption.

Tourism motivation studies from the past investigated travel motivations, in which as a result, different types of tourist motivations were suggested. Studies of drive tourism motives revealed different motivations in regard to driving tourists. Travel motivation of domestic self- drive tourists was base on the purpose of sightseeing including spectacular sights, leisure and recreation, food and fun, visiting friends and relatives, family bonding, getting away from urban environment, going somewhere independently with family and friends (freedom), visiting spa and green belt for leisure, seeking for novelty of driving long distance, self- actualisation, health and fitness, purifying of one's heart, and photography (Chen2004, Li & Sang2007, as cited in Yu *et al.*2011, p. 95,du Cros & Ee Ong 2010, Cao & Luo's 2005, as cited in du Cros &Ee Ong 2010, p. 110).

However, the role of drive tourism is explained in relation with passenger traveling within the transit zone, within the destination and for travel between destinations (Prideaux &Carson2011), using car (Schmalleegger 2011), caravan (Heerden 2011), recreational vehicle or RV (Hardy & Gretzel 2011, Mcclymont *et al.* 2011), four- wheel drive (Taylor & Carson 2011), and even motorcycle (Walker 2011)as their main transport mode. Drive tourism including specific self- drive tourism motivation may be found of particularly unique travel motivations. Vehicle also becomes part of self- drive tourist motivation and experience. An example was 4WD travel to deserts in Australia which emphasised the ability of 4WD in transporting independent tourists to places where they can have 4WD- related experiences, undertaking preferred activities and obtaining desired experiences, which are their primary motivation (Taylor & Prideaux 2008).

(3.) *Tourists' Expectation and Satisfaction*

Expectation can be defined as prior estimations made by customers' while receiving service (Oliver, as cited in Neal & Gursoy 2008, p. 54).Tourists' expectations have a relationship with their level of satisfaction towards travel experiences gained. Tourists' satisfaction or dissatisfaction could be evaluated by tourists themselves towards travel and tourism services during various stages of tourism experiences such as during trip planning, when travel to and from destination, and at destination, and the results in each stage could also affect the overall level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Neal & Gursoy, 2008). Satisfaction can be measured in relationship with cost, time, and effort tourists have invested during trip planning and in their travel (Oliver & Swan, as cited in Neal & Gursoy 2008, p.

54). Destination image set by norms or reference points as well as by individual tourists' past experiences was studied to be the factor used by tourists in comparing their actual experience of tourism products and services with the images they have formed by the influence of the norms or reference points and past experiences (Chon, Yoon & Uysal, as cited in Neal & Gursoy 2008).

(4.) *Tourism Experiences*

A tourism product cannot be tested or sampled prior to visit and it is experiential in nature. Tourism experience, as Kozak & Decrop (2009, p. 99) stated, is “*subjective, based on sensations, involving participation in activities, and resulting in learning or knowledge acquisition*”. Besides, as tourism product “*is produced and consumed at the time and on site*”(Ahmed, as cited in Heung *et al.*2001, p. 259), performance of experience is very crucial to whether tourists will be satisfied with the experience. The stimulus- response model of buyer behaviour suggests that experience has a relationship with perception and attitude, or in other words, how experience received helps tourists construct or even change their perceptions and attitudes towards destination attributes (Middleton 1994, as cited by Swarbrooke & Horner 2005, p. 46). New term related to tourism experience in order to clarify its role and importance in measuring individual tourist's experience in situ, is called “in- situ experience” that is measured by highlights, disappointments and unexpected events in a vacation experience faced by tourists in the context of automotive travelers (Andereck & Vogt, 1999). In self- drive market, today tourists are increasingly constructing their experience based on the consumption of products and services along the ways, drive routes and at destinations, and by this way, they create a new form of holiday experience (Buhalis, as cited in Taylor & Prideaux 2008, p. 73). It means that tourists also have their role in shaping their own travel experience. One of the factors related to personal experience is the intensity of the visit or the extent of an individual's interaction or involvement with the place (Beerli & Martin 2004, as cited by Govers & Go 2008).

The Drive Experience in Drive Tourism Model

When discussing about road trip, transport factors are involved. The factors such as road safety, travel times, transport services are important in increasing quality of tourist flow or movement. These can be integrated to give higher accessibility to tourists. Prideaux & Carson (2011) modeled the demand of drive tourism experience (Drive Tourism Model) at national level highlighting affordability of private cars, the capacity of national highways

systems and the provision of sufficient attractions and activities that can be attractive enough and gain interest to drive tourists. Future trends that can be considered as constraints and motivator shaping drive tourism demand and experience include climate change, peak oil, Emissions Trading Schemes (ETS) and new technologies (Prideaux & Carson 2011).

As self-drive tourism represents freedom and flexibility of traveling, accessibility factor is very important in enhancing self-drive tourists' experience. Gartner (2004) stated in his study about rural tourism development in the USA that accessing much of rural America required an automobile, and therefore rural domestic tourism in the USA was heavily tied to highway infrastructure. Thailand as a country with most rural provinces connected with highways is therefore similar. The study of Gartner questioned the highway users who used 11 different road segments in the state of Minnesota about the level of importance and their attainment of the following experiences (1) local culture; (2) local cultural events; (3) learning about the cultural history of the area; (4) local agricultural practices. The roads selected for the analysis included designated scenic highways, interstate highways and county maintained roads (Gartner 2004). Gartner's study discovered that the experiences that the respondents found interesting and attractive included learning new things from driving through rural areas and visiting small towns, stopping spontaneously and doing things while traveling.

A study of self-drive tourism in South Africa (Van Heerden 2011) suggested three factors that contribute to the quality of camping experience sought by travelers. These are the quality of physical facilities at the camping site, access to a natural, built or cultural environment, and emotional and intrinsic values. Moreover, the camping experience is accommodated by activities like relaxing and unwinding at the destination, exploring the surrounding, socializing in a club and with friends and family, and participating in recreational activities. This emphasises an importance of an interaction of tourists with destination, facilities and participation in activities, as this can contribute to the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the trip (Van Heerden 2011). This can be linked with an idea suggesting an importance of tourists as an element of tourism performance (Bowen & Clarke 2009). There are also other factors as the determinants of the quality of self-drive tourism experience and tourist level of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. These include constraints of distance travelled, traffic conditions, infrastructure, accessibility, i.e. close proximity of areas and public transport accessibility (Timothy 2011, p. 174), road condition, charges on freeways, parking spaces, route signage, and travel information (Yu *et al.* 2011, Li & Sang 2007, as cited in Yu *et al.* 2011, p. 95-96).

Drive Tourism Literature

Studies about this large market are within the countries that enjoy physically geographical variety in which offers of beautiful landscapes have been originated. These studies were conducted to explore the market in U.S.A, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, as the examples. Becken & Wilson (2004) studied about trip planning and decision making of self-drive tourists. The specially designed tourist map was developed from the information provided by the 27 regional tourism organisations (RTOs) of New Zealand, then distributed to self-drive tourists by Tourism Holding Limited (THL) staff in Auckland. The study sought to understand more about tourists' reasons for selecting particular travel itineraries, using independent self-drive travelers who hired rental cars or caravans and made self-drive tours in New Zealand as their samples. The finding revealed that most tourists had planned their routes in advance while some made a rough plan or even unplanned. Most of them were influenced by their own past experience and words of mouth especially from their friends and relatives in New Zealand. In terms of selecting routes and activities choice, most followed the main touristic routes, which was easier for them, and did activities highlighted in the Rough Guide. During the pre-trip, the tourists were aware of additional destinations, yet they could not be sure whether they would visit those destinations. However, comparing the pre-trip and post-trip, the finding unveiled that most of them lengthened the trips rather than shortened them. Interestingly the finding revealed that weather was an important factor that made them change their travel plan. When compared between first time and repeat visitors, the study found that repeat visitors had a more concrete idea of where they would visit especially the places they missed on their previous trips. Both first time and repeat visitors had fixed and loose plan. In terms of their en route stop overnight and accommodation booking, the study found that most tourists avoided booking their accommodation for the whole trip during the pre-trip stage, but rather booked the accommodation while en route each day. In retrieving local travel information when they arrived from the long haul flight at the destinations, information from brochure and words of mouth from the staff at the airport played a role, followed by the information from visitor centers, the accommodation in the first night.

Another exploratory study conducted by Hennessey *et al.*(2008) addressed an importance of scenic drive tourism by identifying the propensity and characteristics of scenic drive tourism market by comparing differences between Canadian and U.S. respondents. This exploratory study employed the survey questionnaire brought on the online panel of Tourism Research Centre and a total of 3240 panel members were invited to complete the survey, and

finally a total of 855 surveys were usable for this study. The research finding revealed that the majority was female, married and worked full time. Some were retired. The age, education level and annual household income of the respondents varied widely. Out of this, the majority was in the age group between 45- 54 years old, considered working age. To identify the propensity of the scenic drive market based on this sample group, in comparison of the Canadian and the U.S. scenic drive markets, the authors had divided the propensity factors into 3 types including the propensity to take scenic drives at destinations; the propensity to research scenic drives available before traveling to a destination and information sources regarding scenic drives; and the propensity for obtaining information about scenic drives and information sources used regarding scenic drives. There was a consistency in terms of statistics between the Canadian and U.S. respondents in that they tended to research the scenic drives available before traveling. The study also found that there was a difference across both countries of residence in terms of information source used in researching the scenic drives. The U.S. respondents obtained information about scenic drives both before traveling to a destination and while at a destination. Meanwhile, the Canadian respondents were more likely to rely on the advice or words of mouth of friends or relatives, advertisement on television, travel agents, and visiting to trade or travel shows was also their information source for scenic drives. The study also explored the level of influence of scenic drives in decision to visit a destination, timing of the decision to take a scenic drive, length of time stayed on a scenic drive, reasons for taking scenic drives at destinations, type of scenic drives interested, and attitudes toward scenic drive tourism. Statistical differences between the two countries of origin were evident in attitudes, reasons for taking scenic drives, preferred types of drives and information sources. Nevertheless, the vast majority of both Canadian and U.S. self-drive market took scenic drives at a destination while traveling and scenic drives accounted for a surprisingly high percentage of the decision to a visit a particular destination. In conclusion, it could be stated that the study illustrated the importance of scenic drive tourism in the aspects of capability to boost tourism receipts for regional tourist destinations, its importance as a determinant that influences tourism visitation and flow.

Driving sector is one of the causes of environmental impacts (i.e. gas emission) to driven routes and visited destinations. Seasonal flow of travel by car each year on long holiday occasion seems to be an obvious impact to the destinations visited, especially the popular ones. They usually are the destinations located within remote distance in high season. It is therefore studying on self- drive spending behaviour is very essential, as it provides a

more concrete idea how to encourage more expenditure. Encouraging tourists to spend during their trip is in its nature a way to promote local living quality and destination development. However, there was found of a little research that addresses the economic issue. A study found is the British Columbia (BC) Tourism's research on drive travelers on the Alaska Highway (Hardy 2006), which reported its finding of travelers' spending. The study found that those from the United States spent slightly more than Canadians who in turn spent more than those from other overseas countries per day. The highest spending was on transportation, followed by accommodation and activities. The paper used the average spending to compare different types of travelers. This result may imply that promotion for higher spending for activities done during trip should be considered. Yi (2008) studied about drive tourism demand focusing on lodging in rural areas. The study aimed at a quantitative understanding of drive tourism demand on lodging in rural areas, where the determinants and their effects on the demand were predicted. The study grants valuable results in terms of drive tourists' demand for lodging especially for rural tourism.

Drive Tourism in Asian Context

Recently, there have been papers examining issues in drive tourism in Asian countries like Japan and China. The study of Japan (Cooper 2010) profiled the drive tourism market using the case study based on Golden Week holiday periods to illustrate aspects of the particular Japanese approach to drive tourism. Japan has a significantly high level of car ownership. With an excellent highway network and sufficient disposable income, domestic tourism by driving is considered an important sector. The development of drive tourism travel behavior in Japan has recently changed from travel in big group such as companies, schools or neighborhoods, and agricultural and other associations, to individual travel with families and friends, with use of private car. The study also addressed the issue of being less-culturally aware of the Japanese. Moreover, the study revealed that drive tourism during the Golden Week of the Japanese was dominated by day trippers, who at best decided to stay single overnight. Besides, they do touring to more than one site, those of which are in close proximity to each other, and the routes are carefully selected. Road congestion as the problem of drive tourism in Japan has been foreseen as an influence for the Japanese to make drive day- trips holiday close to home in the future, and new drive market would be those in baby boomer generation.

Studies about drive tourism in relation to China were also found in the drive tourism literature (Yu *et al.* 2011, du Cros and Ong, 2011) that introduced the growth and structure of

drive tourism in general and self- drive market in China. Yu *et al.* (2011) reviewed previous research in China in regards to drive tourism by examining its growth, structure and opportunities for further research in the future. The paper suggested the profile of drive tourism market in China underlining economic and demographic characteristics, space and time travel patterns, travel motivation and satisfaction, plus the roles of organisations, information channels, travel agencies and development of destinations, infrastructure, and self- drive support services. Briefly the paper made a case that research about drive tourism in China rather had a focus on policy research and still saw a lack of in-depth examination of self-drive tourist behavior and experience.

Research Objectives

Following the review of literature on drive tourism, the objectives of this research have been established as follows:

1. To explore general profile of domestic self- drive tourist market of Thailand.
2. To investigate trip planning and decision- making process of domestic self- drive tourist market of Thailand.
3. To find out set of travel behaviour en route and experiences of domestic self- drive tourist market of Thailand.

Research Questions

In order to meet the objectives of this research, specific research questions have been formulated in the context of domestic self- drive tourism of Thailand, where a breakdown of behaviour for the study has been done.

- (1) What is the general profile of domestic self- drive tourist market of Thailand?
- (2) How can trip planning and decision- making process of domestic self- drive tourist market of Thailand be characterised?

In this research, trip planning also incorporates the following sub-questions that relate with their destination/ route choice:

- (2.1) What are their internal and external motives and preferences?
- (2.2) What are their expectations with self- drive holiday experience?
- (2.3) What determine their trip planning and decision making?
- (2.4) What are their perception towards routes, destination attributes and drive tourism elements, and what influence their route and destination choice?

State research objectives

Details of each objective

- (3) What are their en route behaviours including involvement in leisure and tourism-related activities, spending and travel decision made en route?

Methodology

Study Site: The site to be selected for this research is the route to the northern part of Thailand, primarily popular destinations visited, including stop points, bypass and stopover cities. The reason behind this selection is based on the 2012 statistical fact, stating that the northern route of Thailand was occupied with domestic tourists of approximate 27 – 30 percent, and high average tourist expenditure of both daytrip and overnight visitors to lower and upper north was revealed. The destinations unveil their potentials of increasing road-based travels across the borders with a merit of ASEAN Highway development. The selected main tourist destinations include Chiang Mai Province and Chiang Rai Province, whereas bypass and stopover cities include Sukhothai Province, Phitsanulok Province and Lampang Province.

Population and Sampling: The population of this research is self- drive visitors holding Thai nationality, who are travelling by self- driving by their private car during Songkran Holiday and New Year Holiday heading to the northern part of Thailand, and / or who are back from their self- drive trip. Sampling will be based on this population. The sampling technique to be employed with questionnaire is convenience sampling technique, and convenience and snowball sampling technique with interview.

Research Tool: The author has planned to do a pilot study using questionnaire before conducting the main study. The method to be utilised will be a mixed method approach. This includes use of self- administrative questionnaire with semi- structured interview and observation techniques. Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative methods will be employed. The reason for using questionnaire is that it is a sampling from large population. Data from answered questionnaires will provide assistance in generally profiling Thai domestic self- drive market. The data from the answered questionnaires will be used as a guideline for designing questions for a qualitative tool, interview technique. Interview will be applied to elicit more detailed data.

Brief detail of methodology as to show research conduct plan

Outline of Work Plan and Timetable

Year	Task	Month											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 st	Developing the proposal			■	■	■							
	Reviewing literature			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Attending workshops on research methodology			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	Designing research methodology	■	■	■	■	■							
2 nd	Designing questionnaire and semi-structured interview questions	■	■	■	■	■							
	Conducting pilot study	■											■
	Reflecting the effectiveness of research method and revising the method	■	■										
	Conducting main fieldwork (collecting data) and transcribing tapes of interviews			■	■	■	■	■					
	Analysing data					■	■	■	■	■			
3 rd	Developing findings and discussion report and submitting the dissertation								■	■	■	■	■
	Attending Viva Voce Examination												

Limitations

A limitation of this study concern the fact that drive tourism is relatively new in tourism literature especially in Asian context, resulting in limitation of past studies, thus related studies regarding tourist behaviour in similar types of holiday and transportation should be referred to overcome this limitation.

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