

ผลกระทบของสถานการณ์ความไม่ปลอดภัยต่อการท่องเที่ยวของประเทศไทย

The Impacts of Insecurity Situation on Tourism In Thailand

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บทคัดย่อ

ประเทศไทยเป็นประเทศที่มีศักยภาพสูงในด้านอุตสาหกรรมบริการและการท่องเที่ยว อันเนื่องจากการมีทรัพยากรทางการท่องเที่ยวที่หลากหลาย ทั้งทางธรรมชาติ สังคม วัฒนธรรม ประเพณี รวมทั้งโบราณสถานและโบราณวัตถุต่างๆ อีกทั้งลักษณะนิสัยของคนไทยอันโอบอ้อมอารีและเอาใจใส่แขกผู้มาเยือนด้วยความยิ้มแย้มแจ่มใส ซึ่งสิ่งเหล่านี้คือกลไกหลักที่ขับเคลื่อนเศรษฐกิจที่สำคัญที่ทำให้ประเทศไทยมีรายได้เพื่อนำมาพัฒนาประเทศได้เป็นจำนวนมากในแต่ละปี

แต่แม้ว่าจะมีศักยภาพและความพร้อมเพียงใดก็ตาม สถานการณ์ทางการท่องเที่ยวของประเทศไทยก็ต้องเผชิญกับวิกฤติการณ์เรื่อยมา นับตั้งแต่ภายหลังจากเหตุการณ์คลื่นยักษ์สึนามิ พ.ศ.2547 ต่อด้วยการทำรัฐประหาร พ.ศ.2549 รวมไปถึงการยึดสนามบิน และอีกหลายเหตุการณ์ความไม่สงบต่างๆ จนกลายเป็นปัจจัยหลักที่ฉุดรั้งสถานการณ์ทางการท่องเที่ยวในภาพรวมของประเทศไทยไม่ให้เติบโตไปในทิศทางที่ควรจะเป็น

บทความวิชาการเรื่อง “ผลกระทบของสถานการณ์ความไม่ปลอดภัยต่อการท่องเที่ยวของประเทศไทย” นี้ ผู้เขียนได้นำเสนอผลกระทบจากสถานการณ์ความไม่ปลอดภัยต่างๆ ที่เกิดขึ้นและมีผลโดยตรงต่อภาคบริการและการท่องเที่ยว ใน 3 ด้านที่สำคัญ ได้แก่ สถานการณ์ความไม่สงบจากภัยธรรมชาติ สถานการณ์ความไม่สงบจากการขาดไม่มีเสถียรภาพทางการเมือง และสถานการณ์ความไม่สงบจากการก่อการร้ายในจังหวัดชายแดนภาคใต้ ซึ่งทั้งหมดที่กล่าวมานั้นเกิดขึ้นและกระทบต่อความปลอดภัยของนักท่องเที่ยวโดยตรง ทำให้นักท่องเที่ยวเกิดความไม่มั่นใจในด้านความปลอดภัยต่อตนเองและทรัพย์สิน จึงต่างพากันยกเลิกเที่ยวบิน หอพัก และบริการอื่นๆ ทำให้ผู้ประกอบการหลายคนต้องประสบกับภาวะขาดทุน อย่างไรก็ตาม จากการพยายามในการกระตุ้นตลาดและฟื้นฟูแหล่งท่องเที่ยวต่างๆ ที่ได้รับผลกระทบจากเหตุการณ์ข้างต้นอย่างเร่งด่วนของภาครัฐบาลและเอกชนก็ส่งผลให้อุตสาหกรรมการท่องเที่ยวและบริการเริ่มมีแนวโน้มที่ดีมากขึ้น

Abstract

Thailand is a great potential country in hospitality and tourism industry because there have been a variety of tourism resources both of natural

and cultural, archaeological sites and artifacts including the characteristic of the Thai people who is generous and extrovert to visitors. These are the major

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factors drive and develop the country generating huge amount of profits to Thailand each year.

But even if there is a potential and readiness, the tourism situation always have to face with the crisis. Since the wave of the tsunami in 2547 B.E. then the coup in 2549 B.E. as well as the airport seizing, including the other insecurities in the Thailand. The previous causes restrained the growth ability in Thailand more than it should be.

This academic article “The impact of Insecurity situation on tourism in Thailand” presents 3 major aspects about insecurity situation that occurred and have a direct impact on the service and tourism sectors which are the natural disasters, political crisis and instability, and the terrorism in the southern provinces. All of the above took place and affected tourists in terms of physical safety and property. The insecurity situations caused many flights, rooms and other services cancellation to the entrepreneurs. However, from fast attempt in stimulating the market and restoring the situation by the government and private sectors, the tourism industry has slightly improved.

Overview

Thailand is a constitutional monarchy. Approximately 95 percent of the population is ethnically Thai and Buddhist, with Muslim and Christian

minorities. Standard Thai is the official language of Thailand and is spoken in every province, although many areas also have a local dialect, and a variant of Malay is widely spoken in the deep south. Most Thais working in the tourist industry and in other businesses dealing with foreigners can speak at least rudimentary English. Thailand is a popular travel destination, and tourist facilities and services are available throughout the country. (USA Bureau of Consular Affairs, 2011)

Tourism industry is an important economic sector in many countries and provides the country's main income. Many hotels act as independent microcosms, with their own stores, restaurants, gyms, pools, and other facilities where guests, visitors, and administrative, service and technical personnel interact. But it is often described as a “fragile industry” in that demand for travel is highly susceptible to numerous shocks as wars, outbreak of deadly contagious diseases, incidents of terrorism, economic fluctuations, currency instability, energy crises, and so on. When people travel, they do not want to be exposed to personal hazards, so safety is a paramount concern of most travelers. Not surprisingly, terrorist incidents and other threats to personal safety whether they are natural disasters or deadly contagious diseases reduce people's propensity to travel. A number of major events have had significant

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negative impact on international travel and tourism during the past decade, among them, the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 (9/11), the Bali bombings (October 2002), The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), outbreak and the war in Iraq, the destructive tsunami in the Indian ocean (December 2004), London bombing (July 2005). These shocks appeared to have exerted different impacts in the countries directly affected, in neighboring countries and the global tourism market (Edmund and Mark, 2005). Alternatively, some people may opt to change their travel plans and visit destinations where they are exposed to less personal risk. Therefore, hospitality

security has become one of the industry's most important.

Tourism Situation in Thailand

Tourism is one of the most important sectors driving the development and growth of the Thai economy. The industry aims to target around 16 million international tourist arrivals for 2011 with an expected revenue of 600 billion Baht. However, the number may not be reachable mainly because of the current political instability in the country and in the Middle East, along with the aftermath of higher oil prices. These can be seen as the main threats to the tourism and hospitality industry in this quarter.

Month	2551	2552	2553	$\Delta\%53/52$	2554	$\Delta\%54/53$
January	1,437,686	1,269,978	1,605,505	+26.42	1,805,947	+12.48
February	1,481,458	1,138,220	1,614,844	+41.87	1,802,476	+11.62
March	1,407,649	1,237,132	1,439,401	+16.35	1,702,233	+18.26
April	1,222,253	1,085,293	1,108,209	+2.11	1,552,337	+40.08
May	1,172,310	923,918	826,610	-10.53	1,407,407	+70.26
June	1,155,004	954,772	964,959	+1.07	1,484,708	+53.86
July	1,275,557	1,094,658	1,275,766	+16.54	1,719,538	+34.78
August	1,214,678	1,149,288	1,270,883	+10.58	1,726,559	+35.86
September	890,066	1,040,538	1,214,810	+16.75	1,486,333	+22.35
October	1,094,452	1,209,473	1,316,806	+8.87	1,422,210	+8.00
November	1,076,156	1,361,574	1,478,856	+8.61	1,213,826	-17.92
December	1,156,951	1,684,997	1,819,751	+8.00	1,774,749	-2.47
Total	14,584,220	14,149,841	15,936,400	+12.63	19,098,323	+19.84

International Tourist Arrival Statistic since 2551-2554

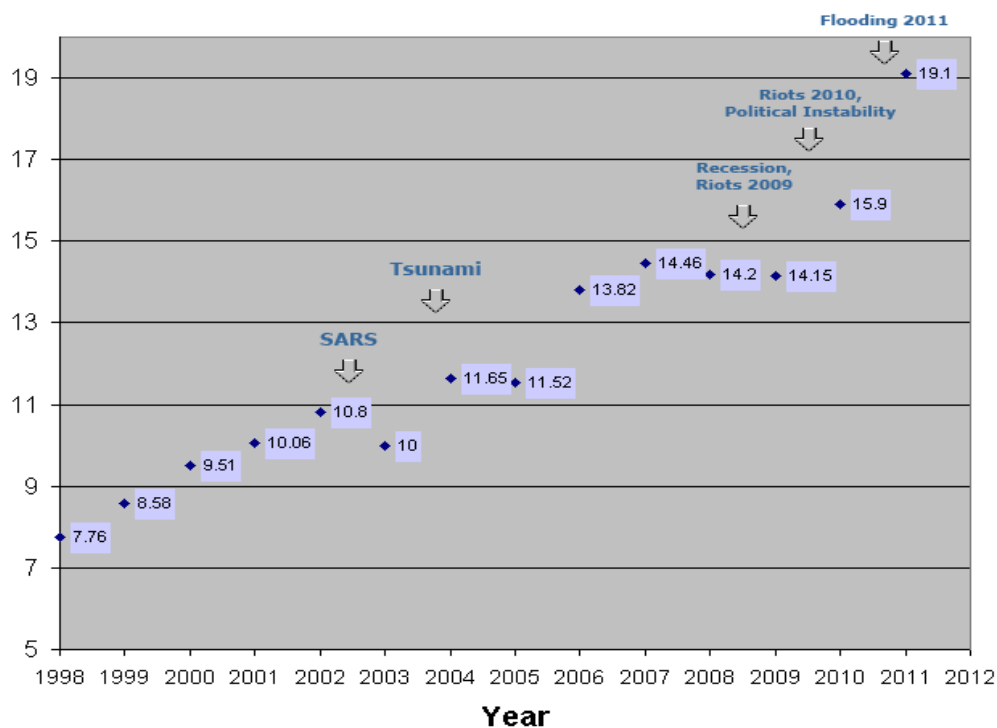
Source : Department of Tourism, Ministry of Tourism and Sport, 2554.

The world tourism situation has shown a resilient recovery with approximately 7% growth from 2009 to 2010, according to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). In 2010, Asia and the Middle East were the two regions with the highest growth in the tourism industry.

International arrivals to Thailand from 1998 to 2011 show a significant rise from 1998 onwards. There are significant dips with the SARS epidemic, and after the Tsunami of end 2004. Global recession (from end 2008), political disturbances in 2009 and 2010, and also the floods end 2011 had an effect on tourist arrivals. [See chart below].

Despite the latter untoward event, when most of Central Thailand and parts of Bangkok were flooded for many weeks, tourism arrivals in 2011 broke all records.

Both the Office of Tourism Development and the National Economic and Social Development Board (NSDB) provide arrival statistics, though not always timely or easy to find. We almost accidentally found the best updated files eventually on the Office of Tourism Development website (follow the little banner on the left saying : Tourism Statistics, on this otherwise Thai language website).



In the recent past, both SARS in early 2003, and the Tsunami of December 2004, had significant effects on the number of international arrivals. Bird flu also emerged at the beginning of 2004 in Thailand and probably with the Tsunami, caused a decreased number of visitors in the 2004–2005 period.

Since somewhere in the middle of 2008 a severe worldwide recession dampened the desire to travel. Thailand furthermore suffered from political instability, starting with the closure of Suvarnabhumi Airport (26 november 2008, by the Yellow Shirts protesters). A Red Shirt mob invaded the East Asia Summit in Pattaya on 11 April 2009, leading to a cancellation of the summit, with world leaders scurried away to safety. This was followed by violent riots the next day (during Songkran festival) and the declaration of a state of emergency.

On top of all that, flu cases emerged in March and April of 2009 in Mexico, with the official first announcement of the new H1N1 flu on 23 April. Despite the serious disturbances in April 2009, tourism arrivals for the whole year were only mildly affected, with a significant upturn (+28%) in the last quarter of 2009, when compared to the last quarter of 2010.

Serious demonstrations by the Red Shirts happened in April and May 2010. Rioters occupying a large area in the center of Bangkok's shopping district were

dispersed (with many casualties). This was world-news and had serious consequences for the tourism industry during the second quarter.

Anyway, at least the first 9 months of 2011 turned out to be a bumper year for tourism. Data for the whole year show arrivals going off the chart with 19.1 million visitors. If not for the flooding of large parts of the country, the number would clearly have gone pass the 20 million mark.

The health scare (and tsunami) had a much larger impact on tourist arrivals than the political events during 2009 and 2010. (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2012.)

It is clear that the level of impact will depend on the kinds of tourism and the amount of the tourist. Different kinds of tourism have different kinds of impacts. The following items show the common impact on tourism in Thailand which was evaluated by use of natural resources and non-renewable in general.

- Lack of water
- Lack of energy power
- Atmospheric pollution
- Noise
- Destruction of Biodiversity
- Social and culture sustainability

The majors insecurity impact on tourism in Thailand the ocean earthquake and tsunami disaster

The **2004 Indian Ocean earthquake** was an undersea mega thrust earthquake that occurred on Sunday, 26 December 2004, with an epicenter off the west coast of Sumatra, Indonesia. The quake itself is known by the scientific community as the **Sumatra–Andaman earthquake**. The resulting tsunami is given various names, including the **2004 Indian Ocean tsunami**, **South Asian tsunami**, **Indonesian tsunami**, and **Boxing Day tsunami**.

The earthquake was caused by subduction and triggered a series of devastating tsunamis along the coasts of

most landmasses bordering the Indian Ocean, killing over 230,000 people in fourteen countries, and inundating coastal communities with waves up to 30 meters (98 ft) high. It was one of the deadliest natural disasters in recorded history. Indonesia was the hardest-hit country, followed by Sri Lanka, India, and of course, Thailand. Many other countries, especially Australia and those in Europe, had large numbers of citizens traveling in the region on holiday. Both Sweden and Germany lost over 500 citizens each in the disaster.



2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and affected countries

Source: www.en.wikipedia.org



2004 Tsunami and affected areas in Thailand

Source: www.who.int

In Thailand, the tsunami disaster and disturbance in the 3 southern provinces, as well as the increased market competition in new destinations (Vietnam, China, India) and tourism product creation (Japan, Hong Kong, and Korea) were key factors of Thailand's steady tourism growth in 2005, with 11.52 million inbound visitors, a 1.15 % decrease

from the previous year. However, this slowdown is not that severe, due to the attempt of the public and private sectors to stimulate markets and recover the attractions affected by the disaster as fast as possible. These resulted in a slight impact of the above-mentioned factors on the Thai tourism industry.

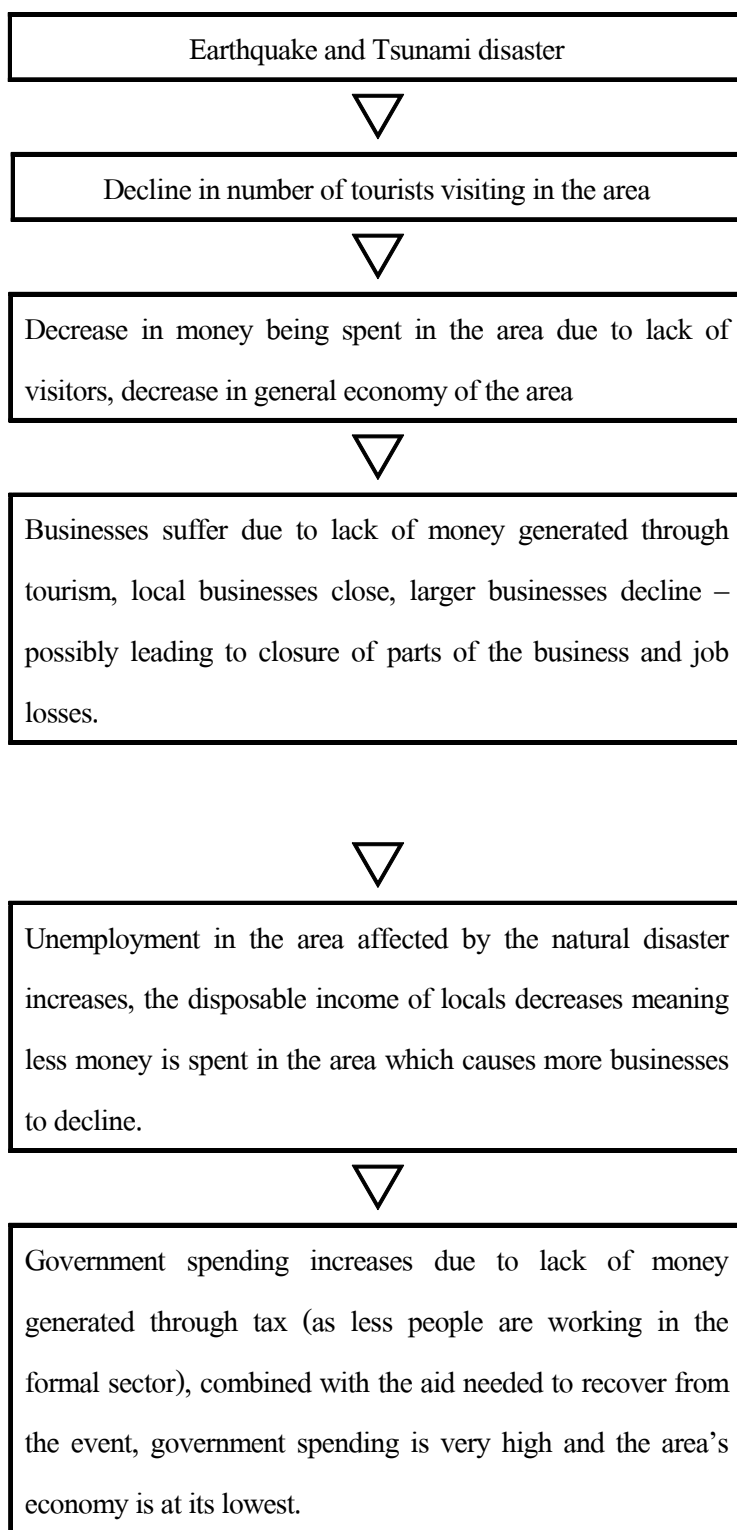
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In the first quarter, the tsunami dramatically discouraged Thai tourism growth (-10%) because visitors from all over the world were shocked by the unexpected terrible damage. Moreover, they waited and were looking forward to hearing of the safety, security measures, and what the disaster would bring. Nevertheless, in the second quarter, the situation gradually recovered. The rate of the slowdown decreased (-1%) and improved to be positive during the second half of the year, with a growth rate of 2% in the third quarter and 4% in the final quarter, compared with the same periods in the previous year. In addition, most tourists who prefer visiting beaches and the sea changed to visit other alternative provinces in the Gulf of Thailand, such as Trat, Hua Hin and Samui, rather than the Andaman coast. Those destinations had the highest occupancy rate during the past five years. Also, the ceremony to commemorate the first anniversary of the tsunami disaster created Thailand's good image and showed the world that all affected areas were recovered.

During the crisis, the Americas and Oceania were only two main regions which still tended to continually visit Thailand in each quarter, because the affected areas were not popular destinations among Americans, who preferred cultural tourism, while Oceania was stimulated by the great successful sales promotion, especially to bring the market back to the Andaman rapidly. However, East Asia, which was the largest market of Thailand was quite sensitive to the crisis and experienced a sharp drop. Although there was a rebound in the last quarter, it had only a 1% increase. Therefore, the overview of the Asian market in this year experienced a rate of -5%, and this was the key factor of a slowdown of the Thai tourism situation. (TAT Marketing Plan office, 2011)

The tsunami had two main affects on tourism: creating the image the area was unsafe and physical damage to the area (leaving most tourist resorts in ruins.) which can be created as a flow chart below.



In conclusion, the unpredictability of an earthquake and tsunami disasters and the tourism industry can have disastrous effects when occurring simultaneously. In general, disasters have the effect of initially decreasing tourism but destinations affected can then change and allow the industry to adapt to involve the disaster. As Thailand relies so much on tourism, there is a need to regenerate trade and deal with disasters in order to survive.

Political crisis and instability

Since 2008, there has been an ongoing political crisis in Thailand in form of a conflict between the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) and the People's Power Party (PPP) and later between the Democrat Party government and the National United Front of Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD). It is a continuation of the 2005–2006 political crisis.

Timeline of key events	
2008	Samak Sundaravej forms a coalition government and becomes prime minister, after winning the majority of seats in the 2007 general elections.
29 January	
28 February	Former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra returns to Thailand after his political allies won new elections and formed a coalition government. He and his wife face charges of corruption.
25 May	The PAD begins demonstrations at Democracy Monument, demanding Samak's resignation, and later settles at Makkhawan Rangsang Bridge.
26 August	PAD protesters invade Government House, three ministries and headquarters of the NBT. Little effort is made to remove the protesters from Government House, although minor clashes between police and protesters are seen.
2 September	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.

25 November	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.
2009 11–12 April	The UDD protest group stormed the Fourth East Asia Summit in Pattaya, forcing its cancellation. Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva declares a state of emergency in Bangkok and five neighboring provinces.
2010 13–16 May	Violence escalates as police and troops besiege protest camp. At least 35 people are killed and over 250 injured in clashes, including foreign journalists and medical workers. First reports of police officers joining with protestors and shooting at the army. "Red Shirt" leaders warn of the possibility of civil war.
2010 19 May	Army overruns red shirt camp resulting in the death of 12 people. Red Shirt leaders surrender and are arrested which is followed by rioting across Bangkok in which many buildings are destroyed by arson attacks including the CentralWorld shopping centre.

As the crisis is ongoing and fluid, the final economic consequences of the crisis are as yet unclear. After a state of emergency was declared on 2 September 2008, the SET Index reached its lowest point since January 2007 at 655.62; it had fallen 24.7% since the beginning of the PAD's demonstrations in May 2008. The baht hit a one-year low of 34.52 per US dollar, prompting the Bank of Thailand to intervene.

Especially when the PAD seizure of Don Muang and Suvarnabhumi Airports is estimated to have cost the Thai economy at least three billion Baht (approximately US\$100 million) a day in lost shipment value and opportunities. As of 1 December 2008, the number of stranded passengers was estimated at anywhere from over 100,000 to 350,000. The April 2009 unrest was reported to have caused nearly 10 million Baht (approximately

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300,000 USD) in property damages to the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, including 31 damaged and burned buses.

The political crisis and instability caused the hotels empty and travel services seeing steep drop in business as Thai capital remains dangerous for foreign tourists. The continuing clashes between government and demonstrators in the Thai capital of Bangkok and ongoing political instability have had a hugely negative effect on the country's tourist industry. While the protests have been limited to specific parts of Bangkok and have not directly affected visitors to the majority of the country's popular tourist destinations, the ongoing instability is still putting people off visiting Thailand. Since the beginning of April when the protests changed from being peaceful demonstrations to more violent clashes, there has been a steep decline in visitors to Bangkok and users of travel services.

Hotel occupancy in Bangkok has fallen by between 40% and 50% for the time of year, meaning that accommodation occupancy stands at just 20% approximately. Four of Bangkok's largest shopping malls have been forced to close due to the protests and it is estimated that the political unrest is costing Bangkok businesses as much as \$30m per day. (Andrew Bond, 2010)

Furthermore, Suraphol Sritrakul, the President of the Thai Travel Agents recently reported that "the number of

foreign visitors had fallen 31 percent in the first four months of the year," further adding: "But all major markets including Japan, China, the United Kingdom, South Korea and Russia have seen falls between 23 and 40 percent." (Sritama, 2009,1). Moreover, Thailand's tourism image has been severely impacted and the tourism sector materially damaged across the board with airlines, hotels, shopping and transportation equally affected. And, adding insult to injury, it is all taking place in the midst of a severe global economic crisis. (John Barnes, 2011)

Terrorism Risks

Terrorism is the "premeditated use or threat of use of violence by individuals or subnational groups to obtain a political or social objective through the intimidation of a large audience, beyond that of the immediate victim." (Enders, 2003).

The threat of terror attack is a cause for perceived risks of injury and loss of life and belongings, and decrease of tourist confidence in travel. The terrorist attack on New York's World Trade Center on 11 September 2001 alerted authorities worldwide to the danger of transnational crime and its links to international terrorism. Even though Thailand was perceived as having low security risks and medium political risks, recent violence in the Muslim-dominated southern provinces of Thailand has led to negative images of Thailand.



Source : www.bangkokpost.com on 14 February 2012

Since 2004, when a group of Muslim activists agitated for the secession of the three southern provinces (Yala, Narathiwat, and Pattani) from Thailand and the establishment of an independent state, this country has suffered from threats of terrorism. From then on, violence such as bomb blasts, mass murders, and assassinations have taken place almost daily in these three provinces. Victims include civilians, monks, government officials, and Muslim activists. Images of these terrorist acts as well as images like that of the army forcing civilians to pile into trucks, which resulted in many suffocating, have also negatively impacted Thailand's image.

February 2012, there was a bomb blasts in Bangkok occurred by Iranian national when the device he was carrying exploded in the central district of the city. After a month, there were to bomb blasts in Yala and Lee Garden

Plaza in Hat Yai on March 2012. These were fairly clear that the blast were caused by terrorism

Consequently, those within the tourism industry became concerned that the terrorism problem would negatively affect Thailand's tourism industry. For example, Apichart Sankary, president of the Association of Thai Travel Agents (ATTA), called for government assistance in enhancing security systems with more technology to guard against terrorism. One such incident that directly affected the tourism industry was a bomb blast at Had Yai International Airport and Carrefour hypermarket, which resulted in cancellation by 20% of foreign tourists and 30% of local tourists, according to Songkla Tourism Association President Nimitr Chaichiratikul (Thai Press Report, 2005). The tension escalated when bomb blasts occurred in Bangkok on December 31, 2006, killing both Thai and international

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tourists. Though no one claimed responsibility for the attack, this incident became an international news headline and confirmed the perceived terrorism risks associated with Thailand. (Bongkosh Ngamsom Rittichainuwat, 2008)

In conclusion, terrorism can unravel a country's tourism industry. Terrorism directly affects tourist decision making. Tourists may substitute between vacation spots if they feel threatened or unsafe in a country. Fewer annual tourists as a result of terrorism will typically result in losses of tourism revenue. Losses in tourism revenue may have a larger impact in the country in which tourism constitutes a larger percentage of GDP.

Terrorism can also affect the amount of foreign investment that flows into the country, especially investment in tourism. Typically in less developed countries where resources are limited, foreign investment funds tourism businesses. The threat of terrorism discourages foreign investment as lenders invest their money elsewhere and may force governments to invest more in security than they would normally. These funds could have been invested elsewhere that may be more beneficial to the another economy sectors if it were not for terrorism.

Conclusion

Causes of many insecurity

situations in tourism are traceable to socio-cultural unrest, environmental and natural disasters, terrorism and also political crisis. These insecurities can be affected negatively to the destinations and tourists. Many situations that influence the Thai tourism industry have been mentioned and highlighted. It is up to the decision makers to take actions and prepare to deal with situations that might occur and create change leading to better outcomes for the industry, which is one of the country's most important. Using public-private cooperation as a tool in the management of change for tourism destinations might help Thai tourism industry recover from crisis and continue growing. But it is not always easy since the industry is also linked to politics. It is hard to imagine any improvement in the ongoing crisis of the country and the prospect of peaceful resolution seems hard to imagine. Nevertheless, the basic infrastructure of the industry remains in place and demand remains strong in many sectors of the international tourism market.

However, for all tourist who are planning to travel all around the fantastic country such as Thailand, All tourists are welcome here especially families on vacation. Occasional crimes happen, but the place is safer than most western countries in a general sense.

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