

FACTORS AFFECTING FREE INDEPENDENT TRAVELERS (FITs)' SELECTION
OF BUDGET HOTELS AROUND SUVARNABHUMI AIRPORT



Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts Degree in Business English for International Communication
at Srinakharinwirot University

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Sarit Petcharat. (2012) *Factors Affecting Free Independent Travelers (FITs)' Selection of Budget Hotels around Suvarnabhumi Airport*. Master's Project, M.A. (Business English for International Communication). Bangkok: Graduate School, Srinakharinwirot University. Project Advisor: Assistant Professor Sirinna Boonyasquan.

This study was conducted with the purposes to investigate the factors that most affected free independent travelers (FITs) in making a decision to stay at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport, and the effects of the factors on each element of the participants' demographic data.

The research tool was a questionnaire, based on the Marketing Mix strategy (the 4 P's): product, price, place and promotion. The research participants comprised 90 hotel guests who were free independent travelers (FITs) of three nationalities: American, Australian and British, gained by a two-stage random sampling process. All of them were customers of five sampled budget hotels around Suvarnabhumi Airport. The findings were analyzed and presented in terms of descriptive statistics i.e. frequency, percentage and mean in the form of tables with explanation.

The results of the study showed key personal characteristics of customers at budget hotels around Suvarnabhumi Airport. The majority of the participants were male and married, with an age range of 21-30 and a monthly income range of US\$, A\$ or £ 5,001 and above. Most of them stayed at a budget hotel for the first time, and spent around 6-24 hours

at the hotel while waiting for the next flight. The majority of them had visited Thailand before and traveled abroad on leisure purpose more than twice a year.

The findings also showed that seven out of the 16 factors in the questionnaire based on the Marketing Mix strategy “very strongly” influenced the majority of the participants in making a decision to stay at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport. They were as follows: “The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport”, “Round trip transfers to and from the airport included in room charges”, “The hotel being easily accessible”, “Information about the hotel available online”, “Attractive room rates”, “Uncomplicated reservation and payment process”, and “Positive information from customers' comments on the hotel’s web board”.

Meanwhile, the study of the effects of the factors on each element of the participants’ demographic data revealed the results that the factor “The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport” affected most elements at the highest level with the total average mean score of 4.8. This factor was categorized in the element of “place” of the Marketing Mix strategy. The factor “Cancellation charges being reasonable”, which was categorized in the element of “price”, was at the lowest level with the total average mean score of 2.8.

ปัจจัยในการเลือกโรงแรมราคาประหยัดบริเวณสนามบินสุวรรณภูมิของนักท่องเที่ยวอิสระ



เสนอต่อบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย มหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ เพื่อเป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษา

ตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต

สาขาวิชาภาษาอังกฤษธุรกิจเพื่อการสื่อสารนานาชาติ

มิถุนายน 2555

สฤณี เพชรรัตน์. (2555). ปัจจัยในการเลือกโรงแรมราคาประหยัดบริเวณสนามบินสุวรรณภูมิของ

นักท่องเที่ยวอิสระ. สารนิพนธ์ ศศ.ม. (ภาษาอังกฤษธุรกิจเพื่อการสื่อสารนานาชาติ). กรุงเทพฯ:

บัณฑิตวิทยาลัยมหาวิทยาลัยศรีนครินทรวิโรฒ. อาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาสารนิพนธ์: ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์
ศิริรนา บุญสงวน.

สารนิพนธ์ฉบับนี้ มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาปัจจัยที่มีผลกระทบมากที่สุดต่อการเลือกโรงแรมราคา
ประหยัดบริเวณสนามบินสุวรรณภูมิของนักท่องเที่ยวอิสระ และเพื่อศึกษาผลกระทบของปัจจัยต่างๆ ที่มีต่อ
ข้อมูลส่วนตัวของนักท่องเที่ยวอิสระในการเลือกพักโรงแรมราคาประหยัดบริเวณสนามบินสุวรรณภูมิ

กลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นนักท่องเที่ยวอิสระ 3 ชาติคือ ชาวอังกฤษ อเมริกา และออสเตรเลีย รวม 90 คน
นักท่องเที่ยวอิสระดังกล่าว เป็นแขกของโรงแรมราคาประหยัด 5 โรงแรมบริเวณสนามบินสุวรรณภูมิ ได้มา
ด้วยวิธีการสุ่มตัวอย่างสองชั้น (Two-stage Random Sampling) โดยเครื่องมือในการวิจัยคือ
แบบสอบถามซึ่งออกแบบโดยอ้างอิงจากทฤษฎีสุ่มผสมทางการตลาด วิเคราะห์ข้อมูลด้วยโปรแกรม
SPSS นำผลลัพธ์ที่ได้แสดงผลในรูปแบบของค่าความถี่ ค่าร้อยละและค่าเฉลี่ย พร้อมคำอธิบาย

ผลการศึกษาพบว่า ลูกค้าของโรงแรมส่วนใหญ่เป็นเพศชาย สถานภาพสมรส มีอายุระหว่าง 21 –
30 ปี มีวัตถุประสงค์ในการเดินทางคือการท่องเที่ยว และมีรายได้ต่อเดือนมากกว่า 5,001 ดอลลาร์สหรัฐฯ
หรือดอลลาร์ออสเตรเลีย หรือปอนด์สเตอร์ลิง ลูกค้าส่วนใหญ่เดินทางไปต่างประเทศมากกว่าปีละสองครั้ง
แม้ว่าลูกค้าส่วนใหญ่จะเคยเดินทางมาประเทศไทยแล้ว แต่ได้เข้าพักที่โรงแรมราคาประหยัดนี้เป็นครั้งแรก
และใช้เวลาในโรงแรมประมาณ 6 - 24 ชั่วโมง เพื่อรอเที่ยวบินถัดไป

นอกจากนี้ ผลการวิจัยพบว่า จากปัจจัย 16 ปัจจัยในแบบสอบถามซึ่งอ้างอิงตามทฤษฎีส่วนผสมทางการตลาด มีปัจจัย 7 ปัจจัย ที่มีผลต่อการตัดสินใจเลือกโรงแรมของนักท่องเที่ยวอิสระส่วนใหญ่ในระดับ “มากที่สุด” ได้แก่ “โรงแรมตั้งอยู่ใกล้สนามบิงสุววรรณภูมิ” “มีบริการรถรับส่ง สนามบิน – โรงแรม” “โรงแรมเข้าถึงได้ง่าย” “สามารถหาข้อมูลโรงแรมผ่านทางระบบอินเทอร์เน็ต” “ราคาห้องพักเหมาะสม” “ความสะดวกในการจองและจ่ายเงินค่าห้องพัก” “ข้อคิดเห็นในเว็บบอร์ดของผู้ที่เคยเข้าพัก”

ส่วนผลกระทบของปัจจัย 16 ปัจจัยที่มีต่อข้อมูลส่วนตัวของนักท่องเที่ยวอิสระในการตัดสินใจเลือกโรงแรมของนักท่องเที่ยวอิสระ พบว่า ปัจจัย “โรงแรมตั้งอยู่ใกล้สนามบิงสุววรรณภูมิ” ซึ่งจัดอยู่ในกลุ่ม “สถานที่” ของทฤษฎีส่วนผสมทางการตลาด มีผลกระทบสูงสุด ค่าเฉลี่ยโดยรวมอยู่ที่ 4.8 ส่วนปัจจัย “ค่ายกเลิกการจองห้องพักมีความเหมาะสม” ซึ่งจัดอยู่ในกลุ่ม “ราคา” มีผลกระทบน้อยที่สุด ค่าเฉลี่ยโดยรวมอยู่ที่ 2.8



The Master's Project Advisor, Chair of Business English for International Communication Program, and Oral Defense Committee have approved this Master's Project as partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Arts Degree in Business English for International Communication of Srinakharinwirot University.

Master's Project Advisor

.....

(Assistant Professor Sirinna Boonyasaquan)

Chair of Business English for International Communication

.....

(Dr. Prapaipan Aimchoo)

Oral Defense Committee

.....Chair

(Assistant Professor Sirinna Boonyasaquan)

.....Committee Member

(Dr. Wanlapa Thaijinda)

.....Committee Member

(Assistant Professor Nattha Kaewcha)

This Master's Project has been approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Business English for International Communication of Srinakharinwirot University.

.....Dean of Faculty of Humanities

(Dr. Wanee Aujsatid)

June ... , 2012

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Master's Project could not have been achieved without assistance of many people. I wish to, first of all, express my deep gratitude to Assistant Professor Sirinna Boonyasaquan, the Master's Project advisor, for her helpful guidance, valuable suggestions, and great encouragement. Without her, this research project would not have been achieved. I would also like to convey my sincerest thanks to Dr. Wanlapa Thaijinda and Assistant Professor Nattha Kaewcha, the project committee, for their valuable comments and recommendations.

My heartfelt appreciation is extended to Dr. Somkiat Phornphisutthimas of the Faculty of Science, Mr. Leroy A. Quick and Ajarn Sopin Chantakloi of the Faculty of Humanities, and Mr. Korakot Sangpin, a hotel manager, for their suggestions and advice on the research methodology and research tool.

Warmest thanks go to my friends, colleagues and those who worked for the hotels around Suvarnabhumi Airport for their kind assistance and support during the study. I would also like to express my appreciation for the precious time given by all the people who participated in this study.

Profound gratitude is given to my parents for their love and understanding. To them, I dedicate this study.

Sarit Petcharat

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Rationale of the Study

A hotel business has been one of the largest businesses in Thailand and it has been very crucial to the economy of the country. According to the report of National Statistical Office of Thailand (2010), the number of hotels and guesthouses in Thailand in 2009 totaled 5,420. The hotel business helped generate high employment since about 180,431 people were employed. The earnings per year of all hotels and guesthouses were about 95,848.4 million baht and all operating expenses per year were around 71,382.6 million baht. During the past years, the number of hotel and guest house customers has greatly been increasing, especially foreign guests who have always been most important to tourism business of Thailand (National Statistical Office of Thailand, 2010).

Since Suvarnabhumi Airport started its operation in 2006, a number of travelers generally need a place around the airport to take a short rest or wait for their next departure flight. Suvarnabhumi Airport is situated a long way from the heart of Bangkok so some tourists who have limited time do not want to waste their time and money on travelling from the airport to the city of Bangkok. Staying at an airport hotel is a preferred choice for them; therefore, an airport hotel is in great demand of some foreign passengers. Despite the fact that Suvarnabhumi Airport provides travelers with an official luxury airport hotel named Novotel Suvarnabhumi Airport, located close to the airport terminal, most guests of the Novotel Hotel are up-market. A demand in staying at a budget airport hotel still exists for

middle-income or down-market tourists and this has encouraged entrepreneurs to grasp the opportunity to serve these customers in investing in budget hotels.

At present there are 32 airport hotels in the area of four square kilometers around Suvarnabhumi Airport (Agoda Company Pte. Ltd., 2012). Competition in the budget airport hotel market is fierce. In such a situation, small hotel businesses owned by Thai entrepreneurs who do not have much operational capital are in difficult time. Good management and suitable marketing strategies are needed for budget hotels to survive. It is important that hoteliers have a clear vision of their guests' needs to prosper in the business (Yavas & Babakus, 2005). To understand guests' needs, it is necessary to study the consumer behavior. The consumer behavior involves thoughts and feelings of customers and the decision making process to consume a product or service. Consumers' buying behavior is obviously complicated, but it is essential to understand how customers respond to different product features, prices, and advertising appeals (Peter & Olson, 2003).

The researcher was interested in studying the factors which affected guests' decision to stay at a budget hotel. According to Lockyer (2005A), the understanding of the factors influencing guests in selecting hotels is an important issue for hoteliers. The more hoteliers understand guests' selecting process of a hotel, the better they are able to manage their business, resulting in higher profitability. Hoteliers have to learn and understand how customers perceive the products or services provided by hotels to be in a better position to develop effective marketing strategies to achieve competitive advantages (Chu & Choi, 2000).

Research Questions

1. What factors based on the Marketing Mix strategy most affected free independent travelers (FITs) in making a decision to stay at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport?
2. What were the effects of those factors on each element of the participants' demographic data?

Significance of the Study

The results of this study were expected to reveal the factors that influence customers in their decision to stay at budget airport hotels. The results of this study would help SME entrepreneurs understand customers' needs and enhance them to compete effectively in the market. Besides, this research was expected to be beneficial to those investors who were interested in running a small hotel business because the information would challenge their decision on starting a budget hotel business.

Scope of the Study

The participants of this study comprised 30 Britons, 30 Americans and 30 Australians, totaling 90. They were free independent travelers (FITs) who chose to stay at five budget hotels around Suvarnabhumi Airport. Meanwhile, the sample budget hotels consisted of five hotels situated around Suvarnabhumi Airport.

The research instrument was a questionnaire based on the Marketing Mix strategy (the 4 P's), comprising product, price, place and promotion (Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999),

Definition of Terms

1. Free independent travelers (FITs)

Free Independent Travelers (FITs) refer to single international travelers or a small group of international travelers (“Free independent traveler”, n.d.) who travel independently, and are not with a travel agency or a tour group (Baker, Bradley & Huyton, 1994; Chan & Wong, 2006). In this study, the research participants were free independent travelers who were customers of one of the five sample budget hotels.

2. Budget airport hotels

Budget airport hotels are those hotels located in the area of four square kilometers from Suvarnabhumi Airport, with the room rates of not more than 1,500 baht. In this study, the budget airport hotels refer to five hotels comprising Convenient Resort, Great Residence Suvarnabhumi Hotel, Queen's Garden Resort at Riverview, Floral Shire Resort and Thong Ta Resort & Spa.

CHAPTER 2

RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents related literature on five topics to provide concepts and theories as guidelines for the study as follows: hotel business, Marketing Mix, consumer behavior, buyers' decision process and related previous studies.

2.1 Hotel Business

What people in the modern era calls a hotel occurred from people's needs to travel. There were trails of this kind of accommodation in writings of ancient Greece and Rome. In the ancient era, hotels were not for business. People provided accommodations for strangers probably because of their well-being, their religious belief, their superstitious belief that strangers might be a representative of god or devil, and the belief of "give and take" philosophy i.e. if they helped a stranger today, the stranger might help them in the future. (Gray & Liguori,1996).

In late 1920, a great number of modern hotels were built. These hotels came with facilities, innovations and modern architecture. Not only was a change in the quality of a hotel, but also its locations. In early 1900, most people travelled by train, so hotels were located around train stations. Once people travelled more and more by automobile, low-cost hotels called motels were built along highways to serve those automobile travelers. Later, when the airline business boomed, hotels around airports were built to serve airplane

passengers. Many kinds of hotels were developed to serve different kinds of travelers who have various needs (Gray & Liguori, 1996).

Types of Hotels

A hotel can be simply classified according to the period of stay of their customers into two types. The first one is a short-stay hotel which serves people who are temporarily away from home for days or months on business or leisure. The second one is a residential hotel; one who stays in this kind of hotel is like a resident who lives in a second house rather than a guest stay in a room. A serviced apartment is exactly what a residential hotel means.

However, hotels can also be classified by location as follows: city hotels, resorts, airport hotels and motels of which details are as follows (Gray & Liguori, 1996):

City Hotels

A big city which is a commercial, industrial financial and cultural center will attract people for both business and leisure purposes. City hotels are established in various sizes and types, and facilities offered are various. Hotel rooms vary from standard rooms (superior rooms, deluxe rooms), business rooms (executive rooms) and luxurious rooms (suite rooms, executive suite rooms).

City hotels serve their customers for two main purposes. The first purpose is to provide an accommodation to those who are on business or just only spending a night there. Another purpose is to serve as a social center where weddings, conferences, parties and other social activities are often held.

Most city hotels have such facilities as coffee shops, restaurants, fitness centers, business centers, swimming pools, spas, laundry services, room services, limousine services, souvenir shops, tailor shops, meeting rooms, banquet services, function rooms, etc. Room

rates directly reflect on facilities offered. The more facilities are provided; the high room rates are charged.

Resorts

A resort hotel targets guests who are mainly on relaxation and entertainment. Resorts can be classified into two types. First, a resort is a hotel which provides customers with recreational facilities such as pools, tennis courts, golf courses, etc. The hotel itself attracts tourists. Second, it is a resort which is situated near tourist attractions such as seashores, lakes, national parks and even in legalized gambling areas. For these hotels, the surroundings are more attractive than the hotel itself.

Airport Hotel

When an airline industry grows, another need has developed. An airport is usually away from a city center. When flights are delayed or cancelled, airlines have to take care of their passengers by providing them with foods, compensations, and even accommodations. Transferring a number of passengers from the airport to a hotel in a city is a waste of both money and time, so hotels have been built around the airports to serve this purpose.

Not only are airport hotels for passengers who are in trouble because of unforeseen problems regarding their flights, but some individual tourists are also looking for a hotel as places to rest while they are waiting for their connecting flights. People who have an early-morning flight prefer to stay overnight at an airport hotel because they do not want to face with heavy traffic on the way to the airport in the morning.

An airport hotel is also regarded as a competitor of a city hotel. Good airport hotels also have such facilities as restaurants, coffee shops, pools and fitness centers. Moreover, some airport hotels also have banquets and meeting rooms. Guests can fly from different

places and countries to attend a meeting or a conference at an airport hotel and it takes less time and money rather than having a meeting at a hotel in city centers. These advantages attract those who travel by airplane.

Motels

In the beginning, motels were just small accommodation for automobile travelers. They were available along highways. There were neither luxurious facilities nor any attractive furniture. Travelers could stay in motels at low prices. When auto traveling grows, a number of motels have been built to serve the need.

Later, an economic recession made people decline to pay for high prices for luxurious hotels in a city center. Checking in at a motel which was not far away from a city and going to the city center by bus or car was a new trend of travelling. This trend made motel owners improve their business both in services and facilities to attract customers. Most of the motels began to provide their customers with good bedrooms, restaurants, pools and any other convenient facilities. Today, motels become more and more similar to city hotels in all aspects. Besides, motels are usually located in suburban areas, so operation costs are less than those of city hotels. These advantages, therefore, allow motels to charge less room rates, attracting travelers to stay at motels

Famous hotel chains are also interesting in the motel market. They have launched new hotel brands to compete in the market. Budget hotels operated by world-class hotel chains have been built in the suburban areas. With reputation of world-class hotel management, good services and facilities as well as reasonable prices, the market for this type of hotels is more and more competitive. Customers always choose the best one, so hotel entrepreneurs have to keep improving their hotels.

Bed and Breakfast (B & B)

Bed and Breakfast is known as a kind of budget accommodations offered by house owners who had vacancy rooms for lodging. Bed and Breakfast offers simply overnight stay with breakfast cooked and arranged by host. Bed and Breakfast could be found both in cities and rural or remote areas of many countries worldwide. However, in some cases, Bed and Breakfast can be costly if it features gorgeous or historic houses or located in cultural sites and tourism areas. (“Bed and breakfast”, n.d.)

Bed and Breakfast can be classified into two types of perspective; “destination” and “place to stay”. Traditionally, Bed and Breakfast is a temporary place to stop during trips or a place to stay while visiting tourist attractions. In contrast, Bed and Breakfast itself can be destination for a trip of those who seek a break in homely atmosphere and look for experience of traditional life styles.

On the other hand, Bed and Breakfast has some disadvantages in guests’ perspective. For example, Bed and Breakfast has less privacy. Food or meals are not conveniently provided and personal bathroom facilities might be limited. Besides, getting along with other guests might be uncomfortable.

In conclusion, hotels are classified into many types to serve various needs of customers, so hotel industry is obviously a customer-oriented business. Hotels can be classified by the length of stay: short-stay hotels and residential hotels. A hotel can also be categorized by location as follows: city hotels, resorts, airport hotels, motels and B&B.

2.2 Marketing Mix

Marketing is the process of pricing, promoting, and distributing a product or service to customers. In large companies, it also involves product manufacture, market research, product development, product design and product testing. Marketers pay attention on buyers or consumers, so they must be sure that a product meets customer needs. After determining customers' needs, marketers apply marketing strategies to introduce a product to customers and to encourage customers to make a purchase. These marketing strategies are widely known as Marketing Mix (Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999).

Marketing Mix is a mixture of marketing techniques which organizations use to attract or satisfy their customers. It comprises four components: product, price, place and promotion. These components can be applied separately or combined with one or more variables to suit an organization's targets. Details of these variables are as follows:

Product

Introducing the right product to the market is the key. Marketers believe that products must serve what consumers need and want. As people's needs and interests always change over time, so companies tend to change their products after a certain period of time in order to gain competitive advantages, to respond to changes in the market, or to increase sales by encouraging consumers to buy a new product or a new model of product. For example, when recession hits, a manufacturer may use cheaper parts in order to launch competitive products. On the other hand, companies may launch new products with state-of-the-art technologies and sell them at high prices during a favorable economic climate.

In hotel business, product means both facilities which are tangible items and services which are intangible. Once a hotel is established, it is not easy to change its structure.

Entrepreneurs, therefore, have to plan well what kind of building or what kind of hotel is best for their target markets. While, some facilities and services offered can be improved or tailored all the time to attract target customers.

Price

The two basic factors which affect product pricing are costs of manufacturing and competition in selling products. It is unprofitable to sell a product below its outlay; however, it is unwise to sell a product more expensive than a competitor.

Pricing for hotels should be attractive to target customers. For example, if a luxury hotel which targets up-market travelers offers low or medium room rates, high-end customers may be doubtful in the quality of the hotel or may feel reluctant to choose a low room-rate hotel. On the other hand, if a hotel is tailored for down-market customers, but sets too high room rates, customers will look for other alternatives. Therefore, the price charged must strike a balance between benefits of an organization and the needs and wants of the target group.

Place

In marketing, place or a distribution channel is where suppliers or service providers distribute products or services to final customers. It is essential that the product is distributed at the most convenient place for customers to buy it. The easier customers can reach or get access to products or services, the more chances customers make a purchase. No matter how good products are, if customers cannot reach the products, there will be no sale.

Traditionally, distribution channels which suppliers use are to sell products through middlemen who are wholesalers and those wholesalers distribute the products to retailers or customers. In the hotel industry, most tourists buy tours or book a hotel through travel agents who are middlemen. In this process, the one who gains most benefits is a middleman. Thus,

suppliers or producers try to avoid using middlemen by selling their products directly to customers via direct selling or selling their products through the Internet. Technologies also help cut middlemen out of service industries.

In hotel business, place refers to a location of a hotel. Nowadays, tourists can search hotels via the Internet. They have access to hotel information via hotel websites which belong to a hotel not a travel agency. Tourists can directly book a hotel via a hotel website and pay by credit card. In the future, travel agencies will probably be redundant although some tourists still prefer travel agencies because they want to get their trips done in a face-to-face communication. Therefore, middlemen are obviously playing less important roles in the present business world.

Promotion

Promotions is defined as “the pre-determined actions designed to increase consumer demand, stimulate market demand or improve product availability for a limited time i.e., contests, point of purchase displays, rebates, free travel, and sales incentives” (Lambert, 2008). Promotion is considered ways to promote a product or service. They are the ways in which a company or organization convinces customers to buy, or to ensure that the market knows that the product or service is available (Best, 2010).

Promotion is used by organizations to affect the way consumers behave. It is important to ensure that the promotion is right. Organizations use a variety of methods to promote their products or services such as advertising campaigns, brochures, press, public relations, sales promotions, personal selling, direct mailing, merchandizing and sponsorship. These methods are applied according to the type of product, the aims of the campaign and the

market characteristics because they will have different effects on consumer behavior (Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999).

Press or public relations techniques are used when organization want to create a favorable impression of the organization in the consumers' mind. A brochure is used when organizations are trying to initiate sales. Advertising is developed when organizations want to reach large audiences in an efficient manner. Sales promotion is often applied to try to encourage the potential consumers to try the product for the first time or to attract repeat purchases. Personal selling is used to initiate sales or encourage consumers to buy more (both face-to-face sale or via phone calls). Direct mailing can be used to communicate with consumers to develop good relationships and to keep in touch with existent customers.

In the context of hotel business, promotion is quite similar to other businesses. Hotels provide various ways of promotion to attract guests to stay at the hotels. Examples of hotel promotions include discounts for repeat guests, special rates for government organizations, membership for hotel customers to strengthen customer relationship and advertisements in tourism magazines or websites, As stated, promotions have different effects on consumer behavior, so hoteliers should apply promotions properly at the right place and the right time in order to reach the objective of the promotion.

In brief, Marketing Mix comprises marketing activities which organizations use to achieve their marketing purposes. Marketing Mix comprises four components: product, price, place and promotion (the 4 P's). Effective marketing occurs from a right combination of these four elements. Because marketing is sophisticated, there is no instant formula of how to use the 4 P's. The 4 P's should be studied and planned intelligently according to the kinds of businesses in order to gain as much competitive advantages as possible.

2.3 Consumer Behavior

In running a business, knowing customers' behavior is essential because it helps business entrepreneurs or operators know what customers in general like or dislike, how often customers buy the product or get the service, how much customers can afford for each purchase, and many other consuming behaviors. The information about the behavior of customers enhances business entrepreneurs or operators to plan or improve the business for more efficiency.

Solomon (2007) defines consumer behavior as “a study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas or experiences to satisfy needs and desires” (p. 7). In other words, consumer behavior involves thoughts and feelings people experience and the actions they perform in consumption processes. It also includes things which influence the thoughts, the feelings and the actions (Peter & Olson, 2003). Meanwhile, Kotler, Bowen and Makens (2006) state that consumer behavior is strongly influenced by the cultural, social, personal and psychological characteristic factors as follows:

Cultural Factors

Cultural factor affects consumer behavior greatly. It consists of three elements: culture, subcultures and social classes.

Culture is the most basic determinant of a person's wants and behavior. It comprises the basic values, perceptions, wants, and behaviors that a person learns continuously in a society.

Subcultures are smaller groups of people in cultures. These groups of people share the same beliefs and values based on common experiences and situations.

Social classes are ordered divisions in a society whose members share similar values, interests, and behaviors. In different nations, social classes can be indicated variously. It can be indicated by such a single factor as income or it is measured by a combination of factors such as occupation, source of income, education, wealth and etc.

Social Factors

Consumer behavior is also influenced by social factors which include reference groups, family, social role and status.

Reference groups serve a reference in the form of a person's attitude and behavior.

Family has a strong influence on buyer's behavior. Some customers buy a product because of their family's recommendations.

Role and status also play a role in enhancing a consumer to make a purchase. A role consists of the activities that a person is expected to perform according to people in a society. People often choose products that show their status in society.

Personal Factors

Personal factor is one of the important factors which influence consumer behavior, comprising age and life-cycle stage, occupation, economic situation, lifestyle and personality.

Age and life-cycle stage influence the types of goods and services people buy and the types change during their lifetime. When people grow up, they become more mature and their needs and desires change. Also, a single person plans and spends money differently from a couple with children do.

Occupation of a person affects the goods and services consumed. For example, Airlines tend to have business contracts with hotels, so those who work for airlines look for hotels provided them corporate room rates.

Economic situation greatly affects product selection and a decision to purchase. If the economy is good, people tend to buy more and vice versa.

Lifestyle creates a person's patterns of acting and interacting to people or situations. A person's different lifestyle has different styles of spending.

Personality means different characteristics that lead to consistent and enduring responses to the environment. Each person's personality influences buying behavior.

Psychological Factors

The last factor which influences consumer behavior is psychological factors, consisting of perception, learning, belief and attitude, and motivation.

Perception is the process which people select, organize, and interpret information to create a meaningful picture of what they want to consume.

Learning describes changes in a person's behavior arising from experience. One's experience prompts a need to buy a product or service.

Beliefs and attitudes are descriptive thoughts that a person has about something or what describes a person's evaluations, feelings, and tendencies toward objects or ideas.

Motivation becomes a need when it is aroused to a sufficient level of intensity. Consumers are aroused by advertisements, promotions and other stimuli. When a motive reaches a particular level, they will have a need to buy a particular product and a buyer's decision process begins.

In sum, consumers are keys in the marketplace. Each consumer purchases, uses and disposes a product differently according to their cultural, social, personal and psychological characteristics. Market segmentation is an important key of consumer behavior. Marketers

should have a clear view that which groups of consumer are the target markets. Besides, marketers should understand the wants and needs of the target markets in order to offer products which are closest to their needs.

2.4 Buyers' Decision Process

The buyers' decision process is what happens before buyers make a decision to buy a product or get service, moves on to the purchase of a product and get service, and ends with the after sales performance. The decision process of buyers consists of five stages: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post purchase behavior. This model encourages marketers to pay attention to all the buying processes, rather than just a purchase decision (Kotler, et al, 2006). According to the model of buyers' decision process, it is implied that consumers go through all stages mentioned above to make a purchase; however, consumers may skip or reverse some of these stages when they make a purchase decision.

Kotler et al (2006) state that buyers' decision process comprises: problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision and postpurchase behavior.

Problem recognition is the situation that a person realizes that there is a need for a product or service, resulting in a buying process.

Information search is a state when a consumer recognizes a problem or need; a consumer may or may not search for more information. Factors which influence a consumer in searching information are the strength of motivation, the initial information, ease of getting more information, value of additional information, and satisfaction in searching for information.

Evaluation of alternative process used by customers or even a customer is very complicated. It is influenced by such factors as cultural, social personal and psychological characteristics factors.

Purchase decision is at the evaluation stage. Consumers rank brands in their minds. Generally, the most preferred brand will be purchased.

Postpurchase behavior is a measure of how successful marketing is. In marketing, the first purchase of consumers does not mean to a successful marketing.

2.5 Previous Studies

Chan and Wong (2006) studied effective strategies in attracting customers to choose to stay at a hotel. A questionnaire is a research tool. The participants comprised 573 travelers at the departure lounge at the Hong Kong International Airport. The study revealed that convenient hotel locations and good services influenced FITs in their hotel selection beyond prices. Business travelers paid attention to their previous hotel experience, good service, convenience and company recommendation while leisure travelers preferred travel agents' recommendations.

Lockyer (2005B) conducted a study on understanding the dynamics of the hotel accommodation purchase decision to investigate the factors that influenced the customers in selecting a hotel. The research was conducted on four focus groups utilizing a modified nominal group approach. The researcher randomly selected 42 people who were 20 years old living in Hamilton, New Zealand as the members of focus groups. TextSmart™, a content analysis software tool, was used for the analysis of the focus group data. The study found

that location, price, facilities and cleanliness were main factors which influenced customers in selecting a hotel.

Lockyer and Robert (2009) carried out research on motel accommodation: trigger points to guests' accommodation selection. The participants of this study were five focus groups. They had previous experience in staying in motel accommodation, either for business or on vacation or a combination of the two. Participants were selected and invited from a variety of occupations and backgrounds. The result showed that length of stay was an important factor in a hotel selection process. The shorter customers stayed in a hotel, the less they required. In turn, the longer they stayed the more in demands. Those who stayed for overnight considered convenience as a prime factor and the requirements for those who stayed for two to four nights were the aims to sleep, eat and relax while those who stayed longer than four nights had higher needs. The result indicated that hoteliers should provide marketing strategies according to the length of customers' stay.

Chu and Choi (2000) did a study on hotel selection of business and leisure travelers. The research instrument was a questionnaire and the participants of the study were international travelers departing by airplane from the Hong Kong International Airport. They were chosen by a systematic sampling approach. The six hotel selection factors were the quality of service, business facilities, value for money, rooms and front desk, food and recreation, and security. The two groups differed from each other in hotel selection. In choosing a hotel, business travelers considered room and front desk to be most important to them, while leisure travelers rated security to be most important to them.

Yavas and Babakus (2005) investigated whether hotel choices of business travelers and leisure travelers were the same. In collecting data, self-administered questionnaires were

distributed to the residents of a metro area who had ever stayed in a hotel for business or leisure purposes at least twice within the past 12 months. The result indicated that the congruence in selection a hotel between business travelers and leisure travelers was weak in terms of the importance of the factors and their correspondence.

Rewthongchai (1997) studied the opinions and factors influencing hotel selection of administrators in Phitsanulok. The samples of the study were 110 administrators in selected offices such as, government services, state enterprises and private sectors. The collected data were analyzed by means of statistical method. The results of the study indicated that the priority of the factors which influenced hotel selection decision were quality of rooms, transportations, parking lots, receptionists, room rates, conference rooms, hotel reputation, restaurants, salespersons, and other facilities.

Netirangsiwatchara and Wichian (2008) undertook research on factors influencing accommodation choice in Nakhon Ratchasima Province. The samples, gained by simple random sampling method, were tourists staying at hotels in the province. A questionnaire was an instrument of this study. The results of the study revealed that most tourists chose accommodation themselves. They gained hotel information from their relatives. Reasonable prices for them ranged from 500 to 1,000 baht. The first top three marketing factors affecting tourists' decision making were price, place and people. Besides, differences in demography affected accommodation choice according to different Marketing Mix factors.

According to the previous studies, customer behavior in selecting a hotel is various due to a number of factors varying from length of stay, occupation, purposes of stay, room rates as well as demographic differences. This research aimed to reveal factors influencing FITs in selecting a budget airport hotel. The researcher hoped that the results of the study would be useful for people in the hotel industry.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter gives information on the research participants, sites for the study, research instrument, research procedure and data analysis.

Research Participants

The participants of this study initially included 150 foreign travelers who were free independent travelers to Thailand. The nationalities of the participants in this study were British, American and Australian of equal number. However, after the process of the two-stage random sampling, the total actual number was 90. The details about how to get this number of the research participants are provided below.

As stated earlier, the initial number of participants was set to be 150 on the assumption gained from the interview of five hotel representatives, one from each hotel, whose duties were to take care of arrival and departure customers. The five representatives revealed that the number of British, American and Australian customers was 30 on average per hotel a day. Therefore, the total number of the customers from these three countries in a day is around 150. The researcher, as a result, conducted this study on a sample group of 150.

The reason why participants of only three nations were included in the study was that the researcher found out from the data obtained from the Department of Tourism (2009) that the top ten nationalities of tourists to Thailand were Japanese (10.74%), Chinese (7.08%), British (6.79%), Korean (6.16%), American (5.63%), Indian (4.90%), Australian (4.78%),

German (4.57%), Taiwanese (3.42%), and French (3.26%), respectively. So as to avoid language barriers, only tourists from three English speaking countries were chosen as sampled participants comprising Britons, Americans and Australians.

In addition, this study focused on free independent travelers or FITs because they made their own decisions in staying at a budget hotel. The decision was not made by a tour agency or other organizations.

To make the sample size reliable, a two-stage random sampling process (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006) was applied. In the first stage, 10 Britons, 10 Americans and 10 Australians, amounting to 30 participants from each of the five hotels, totaling 150 participants, were asked to be research participants. In general, when potential participants arrived at Suvarnabhumi Airport, they would report to the hotel representatives. When the target nationalities of the customers were identified by the hotel representatives, the researcher would approach them and ask them to fill out the questionnaire. The researcher stopped distributing a questionnaire as soon as the number of participants reached the targeted number of participants.

In the second stage of the two-stage random sampling, 60 percent of the participants from each of the three nationalities were randomly sampled as the research participants, using a table of random numbers (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). This made the total number of the participants of each from the three nationalities to remain at 30 resulting in the final total number of the participants being 90.

Sites for the Study

According to the data from the website of Agoda Company (2012), there are 32 hotels around the Suvarnabhumi Airport. For this study, five hotels were conveniently sampled as sites for data collection because they are all situated not more than four square kilometers away from the Suvarnabhumi Airport. Besides, the room rates of these five hotels are not over 1,500 baht per night. It is reasonable to imply that these hotels are similar in terms of standard, services and facilities. The five hotels are as follows: Queen's Garden Resort at Riverview, Great Residence Suvarnabhumi Hotel, Convenient Resort, Floral Shire Resort and Thong Ta Resort & Spa. The researcher was granted permission from the hotel management of each sampled hotel to collect data from their hotel guests prior to the actual data collection.

Research Instrument

This was a survey research and a questionnaire was an instrument of this study. The questionnaire comprised two parts.

The first part of the questionnaire was designed to collect demographic and traveling data of the participants. Data on the participants' gender, age, nationality, marital status, length of stay in a hotel, monthly income, the number of visits to Thailand, the number of visits to this hotel, frequency of traveling abroad, purposes of travel and purposes of stay were collected. The personal data were needed for this study since the information gained was useful to analyze the characteristics of customers who preferred to stay at a budget airport hotel.

The second part of the questionnaire was based on the Marketing Mix (the 4 P's) (Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999), consisting of product, price, place and promotion. The total number of the questionnaire of Part 2 was 16, four items for each element of the 4 P's. The questionnaire was aimed at gaining information about factors which influenced the FITs in selecting to stay at a budget airport hotel. The questionnaire specification is shown in Appendix B.

The questionnaire was adapted by the researcher from previous related studies (Wasantawisuwat, 2008 & Chompoonuch, 2010) based on the Marketing Mix (the 4 P's) strategy (Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999). It was firstly approved by the project advisor before it was submitted for advice and recommendations of three other specialists, two were university lecturers and the other was a senior hotel personnel. The questionnaire was revised according to the advice and recommendations of the specialists before it was distributed to the targeted research participants.

The 5-point Likert scales (Likert, 1932 as cited in Chu & Choi, 2000) were applied to assess research participants' opinions. The interpretation of the scale was set as follows: 5 = Very Strong Influence; 4 = Strong Influence; 3 = Moderate Influence; 2 = Low Influence; and 1 = No Influence.

The questionnaire was in English because the research participants were from English speaking countries.

Research Procedure

The data collection was in December 2010 and January 2011. These months were in the high tourism season of Thailand, so tourists were great in number and of various characteristics.

When customers presented themselves to hotel representatives of each sample hotel, the representatives asked for the passports from those customers in order to check their reservation. The hotel representatives helped identify which customers were potential participants. After the target participants were done with their business with the hotel representatives, the researcher asked for their permission to fill out the questionnaire. The customers who were willing to participate in the survey filled out the questionnaire while waiting for a hotel shuttle transport. When the participants finished completing the questionnaire, the questionnaires were collected immediately.

The researcher expected to get a variety of participants. Therefore, the data collection lasted for four weekends, two weeks in December 2010 and two weeks in January 2011. The reason why the researcher collected the data on weekends was that, in general, hotel occupancy was high on weekends. Also, participants at that period of time were expected to be various since it was during the high season of tourism. The data collected were, therefore, anticipated to be more extensive.

Data Analysis

1. The data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed by SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program. The results were presented in terms of descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage and mean, and displayed in the form of tables.
2. Plausible explanations for the findings were attempted.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

In this chapter, the findings of the study entitled “Factors Affecting Free Independent Travelers (FITs)’ Selection of Budget Hotels around Suvarnabhumi Airport” are presented.

The findings are shown in the form of tables comprising the following: participants’ demographic data, factors affecting the participants’ selection of budget hotels around Suvarnabhumi Airport and effects of the factors on each element of the participants’ demographic data.

1. Participants’ Demographic data

Personal information about the research participants’ gender, age, nationality, monthly income, marital status, length of stay at the hotel, the number of visits to Thailand, the number of visits to the hotel which the participants chose to stay when the survey took place, frequency of the participants’ travel abroad, the purpose of travel and the purpose of stay at the hotel, was collected. The results are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Demographic data

Personal Information	Number of Participants	Percentage
Gender		
Male	47	52.2
Female	38	42.2
Not indicated	05	05.6
Total	90	100

Table 1 (Continued)

Personal Information	Number of Participants	Percentage
Age		
21-30	36	40.0
31-40	19	21.1
41-50	17	18.9
51-60	07	7.8
61-70	10	11.1
71 and above	00	0
Not indicated	01	1.1
Total	90	100
Nationality		
American	30	33.3
Australian	30	33.3
British	30	33.3
Total	90	100
Monthly Income (\$US, A\$ or £)		
1,000 or Less	07	7.8
1,001 – 2,000	17	18.9
2,001 – 3,000	14	15.6
3,001 – 4,000	09	10.0
4,001 – 5,000	07	7.8
5,001 and above	26	28.9
Not indicated	10	11.1
Total	90	100

Table 1 (Continued)

Personal Information	Number of Participants	Percentage
Marital Status		
Single	39	43.3
Married	42	46.7
Others	07	7.8
Not indicated	02	2.2
Total	90	100
Length of Stay at the Hotel		
Less than 6 hours	08	8.9
6 - 12 hours	35	38.9
13 - 24 hours	35	38.9
More than 24 hours	12	13.3
Total	90	100
Number of Visits to Thailand		
First time	34	37.8
Repeat visit	55	61.1
Not indicated	01	1.1
Total	90	100.0
Number of Visits to This Hotel		
First time	74	82.2
Repeat visit	12	13.3
Not indicated	04	4.4
Total	90	100

Table 1 (Continued)

Personal Information	Number of Participants	Percentage
Frequency of Travel Abroad		
Once a year	21	23.3
Twice a year	22	24.4
More than twice a year	28	31.1
Occasionally	19	21.1
Total	90	100
Purpose of Travel		
Business or work	06	6.7
Leisure	80	88.9
Others	04	4.4
Total	90	100
Purpose of Stay		
Taking a rest	15	16.7
Waiting for a flight	68	75.6
Not indicated	04	4.4
Total	90	100

In Table 1, out of 90 participants in the study, 47 (52.2 %) were male, 38 (42.2%) were female while 5 (5.6%) did not indicate their gender.

In terms of age, the participants in the age range of 21 – 30 were at the highest number with the number of participants of 36 (40%), followed by those of the age range of 31-40 with the total number of participants of 19 (21.1%), 41-50 with the total of 17 (18.9%), 61-70

with the total of 10 (11.1%), and 51-60 with the total of 7 (7.8%) respectively. None of the participants was 71 years old or above. However, one participant did not state his/her age.

Regarding participants' nationality, in this study, the participants of three nationalities, American, Australian and British, were equally randomly selected as research participant with an equal number of 30 or 33.3 %.

As to a monthly income, the participants with a monthly income range of US\$, A\$ or £ 5,001 and above were at the highest number, totaling 26 people (28.9%), followed by those with a monthly income range of US\$, A\$ or £ 1,000 -2,000, totaling 17 (18.9%), US\$, A\$ or £ 2,001- 3,000 totaling 14 (15.6%), and US\$, A\$ or £ 3001-4000 totaling 9 (10%) respectively. The monthly income ranges of US\$, A\$ or £ 1,000 or less and of US\$, A\$ or £ 4,001-5,000 were at the smallest number, totaling 7 (7.8%). However, 10 participants (11.1%) did not indicate their monthly income.

In terms of marital status, research participants who were married were at the highest number (46.7%), followed by those who were single (43.3%) and those who were in other marital status such as divorced, separated or widowed (7.8%), with the total number of participants of 42, 39 and 7 respectively. However, 2 participants (2.2%) did not indicate their marital status.

Regarding length of stay at the hotel, two groups of participants who stayed at a budget hotel for 6 – 12 hours and 13 – 24 hours were at the highest level (38.95%), followed by those who spent more than 24 hours at a budget hotel (13.3%) and those who spent less than 6 hours (8.9%) with the total number of participants of 35, 12 and 8 respectively.

As to the number of visits to Thailand, the participants who were repeat visitors were at the highest number, totaling 55 (61.1%), followed by those who were first time visitors

(37.8%), amounting to 34. However, one participant did not state the number of visits to Thailand.

About the number of visits to the sampled budget hotel, out of 90 participants, 74 (82.2%) were new customers, 12 (13.3%) were repeat customers while 4 (4.4%) participants did not indicate their number of visits to the hotel.

In terms of frequency of travel abroad, the participants who traveled abroad more than twice a year were highest in number (31.1%), followed by those who traveled abroad twice a year (24.4%), once a year (23.3%) and occasionally (21.1%) with the total participants of 28, 22, 21 and 19 respectively.

Regarding the purpose of travel, the highest number of the participants was on a leisure trip totaling 80 (88.9%), followed by those who were on a business or work trip totaling 6 (6.7%) and lastly those traveling on other purposes totaling 4 (4.4%).

In terms of the purpose of stay, out of 90 participants, 68 (75.6%) chose to stay at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport because they waited for the next flight and wanted to be near the airport while 15 (16.7%) wanted to take a rest at the hotel. However, 4 participants did not indicate their purpose of stay at a budget hotel around the airport.

In sum, most research participants were male and married, aged between 21-30 years old with a monthly income range of US\$, A\$ or £ 5,001 and above. Most of them stayed at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport for the first time and spent around 6-24 hours at the hotel while waiting for the next flight. Most of them have visited Thailand before and they traveled abroad on leisure purpose more than twice a year.

2. Factors affecting the participants' selection of a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi

Airport

The effects of the 16 factors, based on the Marketing Mix (the 4 P's), on the participants' selection of budget hotels around Suvarnabhumi Airport were revealed. The degree of the influence, varying from "very strong influence, strong influence, moderate influence, low influence and no influence" is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Factors affecting hotel selection of the participants

Factor	Degree of Influence											
	Very Strong Influence		Strong Influence		Moderate Influence		Low Influence		No Influence		Not Indicate	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
The hotel is close to Suvarnabhumi Airport.	76	84.4	11	12.2	1	1.1	1	1.1	0	0	1	1.1
The hotel name/chain is reliable.	6	6.7	24	26.7	33	33.6	5	5.6	21	23.3	1	1.1
The exterior and interior designs of the hotel are attractive	15	16.7	23	25.6	38	42.2	3	3.3	9	10.0	2	2.2
Hotel advertisements feature information that attracts your interest in the hotel.	11	12.2	19	21.1	28	31.1	12	13.3	18	20.0	2	2.2
Information about the hotel is available online.	44	48.9	23	25.6	9	10.0	6	6.7	5	5.6	3	3.3
Positive information from customers' comments is on the hotel's web board.	27	30.0	20	22.2	20	22.2	8	8.9	13	14.4	2	2.2
The hotel room is guaranteed to be free from airplane noise.	11	12.2	13	14.4	33	36.6	15	16.7	15	16.7	3	3.3

Table 2 (Continued)

Factor	Degree of Influence											
	Very Strong Influence		Strong Influence		Moderate Influence		Low Influence		No Influence		Not Indicate	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
The hotel's sales promotion policy, including discounts, is interesting.	9	10.0	34	37.8	20	22.2	9	10.0	15	16.7	3	3.3
The room rates are attractive.	39	43.3	31	34.4	12	13.3	1	1.1	5	5.6	2	2.2
Breakfast is included in room charges.	16	17.8	15	16.7	30	33.3	8	8.9	19	21.1	2	2.2
Round trip transfers to and from the airport are included in room charges.	60	66.7	14	15.6	7	7.8	2	2.2	5	5.6	2	2.2
Cancellation charges are reasonable.	5	5.6	22	24.4	30	33.3	11	12.2	19	21.1	3	3.3
The hotel is equipped with various facilities.	9	10.0	23	25.6	22	24.4	21	23.3	13	14.4	2	2.2
There are many ways to make reservation at this hotel.	12	13.3	19	21.1	35	38.9	12	13.3	10	11.1	2	2.2
The reservation process, including payment, is not complicated.	35	38.9	25	27.8	19	21.1	4	4.4	5	5.6	2	2.2
The hotel is easily accessible.	47	52.2	24	26.7	11	12.2	2	2.2	4	4.4	2	2.2

Table 2 shows how the participants were affected by the 16 factors shown in the questionnaire, based on the 4 P's of the Marketing Mix strategy. The findings revealed that the majority of the participants indicated that seven factors "very strongly" influenced them in their decision to stay at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport. The seven factors

comprised the following: “The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport” (84.4%), “Round trip transfers to and from the airport included in room charges” (66.7%), “The hotel being easily accessible” (52.2%), “Information about the hotel available online” (48.9%), “Attractive room rates” (43.3%), “Uncomplicated reservation and payment process” (38.9%), and “Positive information from customers' comments on the hotel’s web board” (30.0%).

Only two factors were found to be “strongly” influencing the majority of the participants in their decision to stay at a budget hotel consisting of the following: “The hotel’s interesting sales promotion and discount policies” (37.8%) and “The hotel being equipped with various facilities” (25.6%).

There were seven factors that “moderately” affected the majority of the participants when they decided to stay at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport. They are as follows: “The attractive exterior and interior designs of the hotel” (42.2%), “Various ways available for making reservation at this hotel” (38.9%), “Reliable hotel name/chain” (33.6%), “Hotel rooms being guaranteed to be free from airplane noise” (36.6%), “Breakfast included in room charges” (33.3%), “Reasonable cancellation charges” (33.3%) and “Hotel advertisements featuring information that attracts participants’ interest in the hotel” (31.1%).

Interestingly, about 20% of the participants thought that four factors had no effect on their decision comprising the following: “The hotel name/chain being reliable” (23.3%), “Breakfast included in room charges (21.1%)”, “Cancellation charges being reasonable (21.1%)” and “Hotel advertisements featuring information that attracts participants’ interest in the hotel (20.0%)”.

In sum, it was found that the majority of participants considered most of the factors in the questionnaire to have some effects on them in their selection of a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport, ranging from “very strong influence” to “moderate influence”. Very few participants thought that the factors were of “low influence” or even “no influence” on them. The factor that was considered most influential to the participants was “The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport”.

3. Effects of the factors on each element of the participants’ demographic data

In this part, the personal information of the participants, comprising gender, age, nationality, monthly income, marital status, length of stay at the hotel, the number of visits to Thailand, the number of visits to this hotel, frequency of travel abroad, purpose of travel and purpose of stay at the hotel, was studied with the mean score of each factor. This was to explore how each factor influenced the participants in terms of their demographic data. The total score for each factor is 5 as the highest level of influence, while 1 as the lowest level of influence (See the questionnaire). The results are shown from Tables 3 to 13 in sequence of the numbers appeared in Part A: General information of the respondent in the questionnaire (See Appendix A). To make the tables concise, the 16 factors are coded as follows:

F1 = The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport.

F2 = The hotel name/chain being reliable.

F3 = The exterior and interior designs of the hotel being attractive.

F4 = Hotel advertisements featuring information that attracts the participants’ interest in the hotel.

F5 = Information about the hotel being available online.

F6 = Positive information from customers' comments being on the hotel's web board.

F7 = The hotel room being guaranteed to be free from airplane noise.

F8 = The hotel's sales promotion policy, including discounts, being interesting.

F9 = The room rates being attractive.

F10 = Breakfast being included in room charges.

F11 = Round trip transfers to and from the airport being included in room charges.

F12 = Cancellation charges being reasonable.

F13 = The hotel being equipped with various facilities.

F14 = Various ways available for making reservation at this hotel.

F15 = The reservation process, including payment, being not complicated.

F16 = The hotel being easily accessible.

(Note: F stands for "factor".)

Table 3 Effects of the 16 factors on the participants' gender

Factor	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	F11	F12	F13	F14	F15	F16
Gender	\bar{x}															
Male	4.9	3.1	3.5	2.9	4.0	3.4	2.9	3.2	4.2	2.9	4.4	2.7	2.8	3.3	4.0	4.3
Female	4.7	2.7	3.4	3.1	4.2	3.7	2.8	3.1	4.1	3.0	4.4	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.9	4.2
Total average mean score	4.8	2.9	3.5	3.0	4.1	3.6	2.9	3.2	4.1	3.0	4.4	2.8	2.9	3.2	4.0	4.2

Table 3 reveals how the 16 factors affected the participants in making a decision to stay at a budget hotel near Suvarnabhumi Airport in terms of gender.

The factor that most affected the male participants was the F1 factor ($\bar{x}=4.9$), “The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport”, while the one that least affected the male factor was the F12 factor ($\bar{x} 2.7$), “Cancellation charges being reasonable”.

The factor that most affected the female participants, was also the F1 factor ($\bar{x}=4.7$), “The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport”, but the one that least affected the female participants was the F2 factor ($\bar{x} 2.7$), “The hotel name/chain being reliable”.

Table 4 Effects of the 16 factors on the participants’ age

Factor	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	F11	F12	F13	F14	F15	F16
Age	\bar{x}															
21-30	4.7	3.0	3.4	3.1	4.0	3.6	3.2	3.4	4.0	3.1	4.1	2.9	3.1	3.3	3.8	4.1
31-40	4.8	2.6	3.3	2.7	4.1	3.4	2.6	2.9	4.2	2.6	4.6	2.4	2.9	2.8	3.9	4.5
41-50	4.9	2.5	3.1	2.1	4.0	2.9	2.8	2.8	3.7	3.0	4.4	2.6	2.5	3.0	3.7	3.8
51-60	5.0	3.1	3.3	3.3	4.3	3.3	2.7	3.0	4.7	3.8	5.0	2.7	2.2	3.0	4.2	4.2
61-70	5.0	3.6	3.9	4.0	4.3	4.0	2.3	3.4	4.6	3.3	4.7	3.4	3.6	3.2	4.6	4.8
Total average mean score	4.8	2.9	3.3	2.9	4.1	3.5	2.9	3.2	4.1	3.0	4.4	2.8	2.9	3.1	3.9	4.2

Table 4 shows how the 16 factors affected the participants in making a decision to stay at a budget hotel near Suvarnabhumi Airport in terms of the age range.

The factor that most affected the participants of all age ranges was the F1 factor, “The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport”, with the total average mean score of 4.8. The

participants in the age ranges of 51-60 and 61-70 were affected by the F1 factor at the highest level with the mean score of 5.0.

Meanwhile, the participants of all age ranges were, on average, least affected by the F12 factor, “Cancellation charges being reasonable”, with the total average mean score of 2.8. However, the participants in the age range of 41-50 were affected by the F4 factor, “Hotel advertisements featuring information attracting the participants’ interest in the hotel”, at the lowest level with the mean score of 2.1.

Table 5 Effects of the 16 factors on the participants’ nationality

Factor	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	F11	F12	F13	F14	F15	F16
Nationality	\bar{x}															
American	4.7	3.2	3.5	3.1	4.3	3.6	2.7	3.1	4.2	2.8	4.6	3.1	2.9	3.2	4.0	4.3
Australian	4.9	2.8	3.0	2.6	3.7	3.0	3.0	3.3	4.0	3.3	4.1	2.6	2.9	3.3	3.8	4.2
British	4.8	2.6	3.5	3.0	4.3	3.7	2.9	3.0	4.1	2.9	4.4	2.7	2.9	2.9	3.9	4.2
Total average mean score	4.8	2.9	3.4	2.9	4.1	3.5	2.9	3.1	4.1	3.0	4.4	2.8	2.9	3.1	3.9	4.2

Table 5 reveals how the 16 factors affected the participants in making a decision to stay at a budget hotel near Suvarnabhumi Airport in terms of nationality.

The factor that most affected the participants of the three nationalities of the participants was the F1 factor, “The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport”, with the total average mean score of 4.8. The participants with Australian nationality were affected by the F1 factor at the highest level with the mean score of 4.9.

Meanwhile, on average, the participants of the three nationalities were least affected by the F12 factor, “Cancellation charges being reasonable”, with the total average mean score of 2.8. However, the Australians were equally least affected by the F4 factor, “Hotel advertisements featuring information that attracts the participants’ interest in the hotel” and by the F12 factor, “Cancellation charges being reasonable” with the same mean score of 2.6. Meanwhile, the British people were least affected by the F2 factor “The hotel name/chain being reliable” with the mean score of 2.6, as well.

Table 6 Effects of the 16 factors on the participants’ monthly income

Factor	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	F11	F12	F13	F14	F15	F16
Monthly Income (US\$, A\$ and £)	\bar{x}															
1,000 or Less	4.4	2.3	3.6	2.6	3.9	3.1	2.3	2.1	3.1	2.7	3.7	2.4	3.0	2.1	3.7	3.7
1,001 – 2,000	4.8	2.9	3.3	2.9	3.9	3.2	2.6	2.9	3.9	2.7	4.6	3.0	2.8	3.2	3.8	4.1
2,001 – 3,000	5.0	3.1	3.3	3.3	4.5	4.0	3.3	4.1	4.7	3.8	4.8	3.2	3.1	3.9	4.2	4.6
3,001 – 4,000	4.7	3.2	3.3	2.9	4.0	3.1	3.4	3.3	3.7	3.1	4.7	2.7	2.3	3.3	3.7	4.2
4,001 – 5,000	5.0	3.0	3.6	2.4	4.3	3.3	3.4	3.0	4.7	3.0	4.4	1.7	3.1	3.3	3.9	3.9
5,001 and above	4.9	2.9	3.6	3.2	4.2	3.6	2.4	3.0	4.2	2.8	4.3	3.0	2.8	2.8	4.1	4.3
Total average mean score	4.8	2.9	3.4	3.0	4.1	3.5	2.8	3.1	4.1	3.0	4.5	2.8	2.8	3.1	3.9	4.2

Table 6 indicates how the 16 factors affected the participants in making a decision to stay at a budget hotel near Suvarnabhumi Airport in terms of the participants' monthly income

The factor that most affected the participants of all monthly income ranges was the F1 factor, "The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport", with the total average mean score of 4.8. The participants in the monthly income ranges of US\$, A\$ and £2,001-3,000 and US\$, A\$ and £4,001-5000 were affected by the F1 factor at the highest level with the mean score of 5.0.

In total, on average, the participants of all monthly income ranges were least affected by three factors which were the F7 factor, "The hotel room being guaranteed to be free from airplane noise", the F12 factor, "Cancellation charges being reasonable", and the F13 factor, "The hotel being equipped with various facilities", with the equal total average mean score of 2.8. However, the participants with the monthly income range of 4,001-5,000 were affected by the F12 factor, "Cancellation charges being reasonable", at the lowest level with the mean score of 1.7.

Table 7 Effects of the 16 factors on the participants' marital status

Factor	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	F11	F12	F13	F14	F15	F16
Marital Status	\bar{x}															
Single	4.7	2.9	3.4	2.8	4.1	3.4	2.9	3.2	4.0	2.8	4.5	2.6	2.8	3.2	3.9	4.0
Married	5.0	2.8	3.4	3.0	4.2	3.4	2.6	2.9	4.2	3.1	4.5	2.9	3.0	3.0	4.0	4.4
Others	4.7	3.0	3.4	3.4	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.0	4.3	3.3	4.3	3.0	3.0	4.0	3.7	4.3
Total average mean score	4.8	2.9	3.4	2.9	4.1	3.4	2.9	3.1	4.1	3.0	4.5	2.8	2.9	3.1	3.9	4.2

Table 7 presents how the 16 factors affected the participants in making a decision to stay at a budget hotel near Suvarnabhumi Airport in terms of the participants' marital status.

The factor that most affected the participants of all marital status was the F1 factor, "The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport", with the total average mean score of 4.8. Married participants were affected by the F1 factor at the highest level with the average mean score of 5.0.

In total, participants of all marital status were, on average, least affected by the F12 factor, "Cancellation charges being reasonable", with the average mean score of 2.8.

However, participants who were single were affected by the F12 factor, "Cancellation charges being reasonable", and married participants were affected by the F7 factor, "The hotel room being guaranteed to be free from airplane noise", at the lowest level with the equal mean score of 2.6.

Table 8 Effects of the 16 factors on the participants' length of stay

Length of Stay at the Hotel	Factor	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	F11	F12	F13	F14	F15	F16
		\bar{x}															
Less than 6 hours		4.5	3.6	2.9	3.1	3.1	2.8	2.5	3.0	3.1	2.8	4.5	2.8	2.1	2.9	3.5	3.9
6 - 12 hours		4.8	3.0	3.4	2.8	4.3	3.7	3.1	3.4	4.3	3.3	4.3	3.0	2.8	3.4	3.9	4.2
13 - 24 hours		4.9	2.5	3.3	2.7	4.0	3.0	2.6	2.8	4.0	2.9	4.3	2.6	2.9	2.8	4.0	4.2
More than 24 hours		4.7	3.2	4.0	4.0	4.5	4.6	3.3	3.7	4.8	2.7	4.8	2.7	4.0	3.5	4.2	4.6
Total average mean score		4.8	2.9	3.4	2.9	4.1	3.5	2.9	3.1	4.1	3.0	4.4	2.8	2.9	3.1	3.9	4.2

Table 8 shows how the 16 factors affected the participants in making a decision to stay at a budget hotel near Suvarnabhumi Airport in terms of the length of stay at the hotel.

On average, the factor that most affected the participants of all lengths of stay at a budget hotel was again the F1 factor, “The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport”, with the total average mean score of 4.8. Particularly, the participants who spent 13-24 hours there were affected by the F1 factor at the highest level with the average mean score of 4.9.

In total, on average, the participants of all lengths of stay at the hotel were least affected by the F12 factor, “Cancellation charges being reasonable”, with the total average mean score of 2.8. However, the participants who spent 13-24 hours were affected by the F2 factor, “The hotel name/chain being reliable”, at the lowest level with the average mean score of 2.5.

Table 9 Effects of the 16 factors on the participants’ number of visits to Thailand

Factor	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	F11	F12	F13	F14	F15	F16
Visits to Thailand	\bar{x}															
First time	4.7	2.9	3.2	2.9	3.8	3.7	2.8	3.1	3.9	3.0	4.2	2.8	2.8	3.1	3.5	4.1
Repeat visit	4.9	2.8	3.5	2.9	4.2	3.3	2.9	3.2	4.2	3.0	4.5	2.8	3.0	3.1	4.2	4.3
Total average mean score	4.8	2.9	3.4	2.9	4.1	3.4	2.9	3.1	4.1	3.0	4.4	2.8	2.9	3.1	3.9	4.2

Table 9 indicates how the 16 factors affected the participants in making a decision to stay at a budget hotel near Suvarnabhumi Airport in terms of the number of visits to Thailand.

The factor that most affected the participants of both the first time visit and of repeat visit was the F1 factor, “The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport”, with the total average mean score of 4.8. In particular, the participants who made a repeat visit were affected by the F1 factor at the highest level with the average mean score of 4.9.

In total, both groups of participants were, on average, least affected by the F12 factor, “Cancellation charges being reasonable”, with the total average mean score of 2.8.

Interestingly, it was found that participants of the first time visit viewed also that the F7 factor “The hotel room being guaranteed to be free from airplane noise”, and the F13 factor “The hotel being equipped with various facilities”, besides the F12 factor, did not affect them much when deciding to stay at a budget hotel near Suvarnabhumi Airport ($\bar{x}=2.8$).

Similarly, the participants of repeat visit also regarded that the F2 factor “The hotel name/chain being reliable” affected them in their decision at the same level as the F12 factor, “Cancellation charges being reasonable” ($\bar{x}=2.8$).

Table 10 Effects of the 16 factors on the participants’ number of visits to this budget hotel

Visits to this Hotel	Factor	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	F11	F12	F13	F14	F15	F16
	\bar{x}																
First time		4.8	2.9	3.3	3.0	4.1	3.6	3.0	3.3	4.1	3.1	4.4	2.9	3.0	3.1	3.9	4.2
Repeat visit		5.0	3.0	3.7	2.2	4.2	2.6	2.5	2.8	4.6	3.0	4.6	2.4	2.4	3.3	4.3	4.7
Total average mean score		4.8	2.9	3.4	2.9	4.1	3.5	2.9	3.2	4.2	3.1	4.4	2.8	2.9	3.1	4.0	4.3

Table 10 illustrates how the 16 factors affected the participants in making a decision to stay at a budget hotel near Suvarnabhumi Airport in terms of the visit to a budget hotel.

The factor that most affected the two groups of participants: those who were new customers of a budget hotel and those who were repeat customers of the hotel, was the F1 factor, “The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport”, with the total average mean score of 4.8. However, the participants who were repeat customers were affected by the F1 factor at a higher level with the average mean score of 5.0.

Meanwhile, on average, both groups were least affected by the F12 factor, cancellation charges being reasonable, with the total average mean score of 2.8. However, the participants who were repeat customers were affected by the F4 factor, “Hotel advertisements featuring information attracting the participants’ interest in the hotel” at the lowest level with the average mean score of 2.2.

Table 11 Effects of the 16 factors on the participants’ frequency of travel abroad

Factor	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	F11	F12	F13	F14	F15	F16
Frequency of Travel	\bar{x}															
Once a year	4.9	3.1	3.7	3.0	4.2	3.4	3.2	3.4	4.0	3.1	4.5	2.9	2.5	3.7	4.5	4.5
Twice a year	4.8	2.9	3.2	3.3	4.0	3.8	2.9	3.5	4.2	2.9	4.7	2.6	3.0	3.0	3.8	4.2
More than twice a year	4.9	2.4	3.1	2.5	4.1	3.2	2.6	2.7	4.1	3.3	4.1	2.8	3.1	2.8	3.8	4.1
Occasionally	4.8	3.3	3.6	3.2	4.0	3.5	3.1	3.3	4.1	2.7	4.2	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.7	4.2
Total average mean score	4.8	2.9	3.4	2.9	4.1	3.5	2.9	3.1	4.1	3.0	4.4	2.8	2.9	3.1	3.9	4.2

Table 11 reveals how the 16 factors affected the participants in making a decision to stay at a budget hotel near Suvarnabhumi Airport in terms of the frequency of travel abroad.

The factor that most affected all the participants in terms of frequency of travel abroad was the F1 factor, “The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport”, with the total average mean score of 4.8. The participants who travel abroad once a year and more than twice a year were affected by the F1 factor at the highest level with the average mean score of 4.9

In total, all the participants were least affected, on average, by the F12 factor, “Cancellation charges being reasonable”, with the total average mean score of 2.8. However, the participants who traveled abroad more than twice a year were affected by the F2 factor, “The hotel name/chain being reliable”, at the lowest level with the average mean score of 2.4.

Table 12 Effects of the 16 factors on the participants’ purpose of travel

Purpose of Travel	Factor	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	F11	F12	F13	F14	F15	F16
	\bar{x}																
Business or work		5.0	3.8	3.7	3.0	4.3	3.2	2.2	3.2	4.7	3.5	4.8	3.0	2.3	3.5	4.3	4.7
Leisure		4.8	2.8	3.3	3.0	4.0	3.5	2.9	3.1	4.0	2.9	4.3	2.8	3.0	3.0	3.8	4.2
Others		4.8	3.5	4.0	2.0	4.8	3.5	4.0	3.5	4.8	3.5	4.8	2.3	2.0	4.3	4.8	4.3
Total average mean score		4.8	2.9	3.4	2.9	4.1	3.5	2.9	3.1	4.1	3.0	4.4	2.8	2.9	3.1	3.9	4.2

Table 12 presents how the 16 factors affected the participants in making a decision to stay at a budget hotel near Suvarnabhumi Airport in terms of the purposes of travel.

The factor that most affected the participants with all purposes of travel was the F1 factor, “The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport”, with the total average mean score of 4.8. Particularly, the participants with business or work purpose of travel were affected by the F1 factor at the highest level with the average mean score of 5.0.

Meanwhile, in total, the participants with all purposes of travel were, on average, least affected by the F12 factor, “Cancellation charges being reasonable”, with the total average mean score of 2.8. However, the participants who traveled with other purposes were affected by the F4 factor, “Hotel advertisements featuring information that attracts the participants’ interest in the hotel”, and the F13 factor, “The hotel being equipped with various facilities”, at the lowest level with an equal mean score of 2.0.

Table 13 Effects of the 16 factors on the participants’ purpose of stay

Factor	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10	F11	F12	F13	F14	F15	F16
Purpose of Stay	\bar{x}															
Taking a rest	4.6	2.9	3.3	3.1	4.2	3.6	3.6	3.7	4.4	3.1	4.4	2.9	3.7	3.3	3.9	4.4
Waiting for a flight	4.9	2.9	3.4	2.9	4.1	3.4	2.7	3.1	4.0	3.0	4.4	2.8	2.8	3.1	3.9	4.2
Others	5.0	1.3	3.3	3.0	4.7	4.0	2.3	2.3	4.3	2.7	5.0	3.7	2.3	2.7	4.3	4.3
Total average mean score	4.8	2.9	3.3	2.9	4.1	3.5	2.9	3.1	4.1	3.0	4.4	2.8	2.9	3.1	3.9	4.2

Table 13 shows how the participants' purpose of stay at a budget hotel affected their decision on choosing to stay at a budget hotel near Suvarnabhumi Airport.

The factor that most affected the participants for all purposes of stay was the F1 factor, "The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport", with the total average mean score of 4.8. However, the participants with other purposes of stay were equally affected by the F1 factor, "The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport", and the F11 factor, "Round trip transfers to and from the airport being included in room charges", at the highest level with the average mean score of 5.0.

In total, the participants with all purposes of stay were, on average, least affected by the F12 factor, "Cancellation charges being reasonable", with the total average mean score of 2.8. The participants who traveled with other purposes were, however, affected by the F2 factor, "The hotel name/chain being reliable", at the lowest level with the average mean score of 1.3.

In sum, the findings revealed that almost all elements of the participants' demographic information, with only one exception, were affected by the factor, "The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport" at the highest level. On the contrary, the majority of the participants were, on average, affected by the F12 factor, "Cancellation charges being reasonable" at the lowest level. However, when studying in detail, the findings were different. The factors that least affected the participants' each element of the demographic data were various.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This chapter is the conclusion of the study on factors affecting free independent travelers' selection of budget hotels around Suvarnabhumi Airport. Plausible discussion is also attempted.

Conclusion

This study was conducted with the purposes to investigate the factors that most affected free independent travelers (FITs) in making a decision to stay at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport and to observe the effects of the factors on each element of the participants' demographic data.

The research tool was a questionnaire designed by the researcher with recommendations of the researcher's project advisor and three specialists. Two of the specialists were lecturers in the MA in Business English for International program and the other was a hotel manager who has long experience in hotel business. The questionnaire was based on the Marketing Mix strategy (the 4 P's): product, price, place and promotion (Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999). The questionnaire comprised 16 items, four items for each of the four elements of the Marketing Mix strategy. The questionnaire and the questionnaire specifications are shown in the appendices.

The participants in this study were 90 free independent travelers (FITs) of three nationalities: British, American and Australian. All of them were customers of one of the five sampled budget hotels, and they all granted consent in responding to the questionnaire.

To make the sample size reliable, a two-stage random sampling process (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006) was applied. In the first stage, 10 Britons, 10 Americans and 10 Australians, amounting to 30 participants from each of the five sampled hotels, totaling 150 participants, were asked to be research participants and fill out the questionnaire once they arrived at Suvarnabhumi Airport. Later, the second stage of the two-stage random sampling process was applied. Sixty percent of the participants from each of the three nationalities were randomly sampled, using a table of random numbers (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006), as the research participants. This made the total number of the participants of each from the three nationalities remained at 30 resulting in the final total number of the participants being 90.

Five budget hotels were randomly selected to participate in the study and based on the hotels' permission to collect data from the customers. All of the hotels were situated within four square kilometers from Suvarnabhumi Airport comprising the following: Convenient Resort, Great Residence Suvarnabhumi Hotel, Queen's Garden Resort at Riverview, Floral Shire Resort and Thong Ta Resort & Spa.

The results of the study showed key personal characteristics of customers at budget hotels around Suvarnabhumi Airport. Most participants were male (52.2%) and married (46.7%) with an age range of 21-30 (40%), and a monthly income range of US\$, A\$ or £ 5,001 and above (28.9%). The majority of the participants stayed at a budget hotel for the first time (82.2%) and spent around 6-24 hours at the hotel (38.9%) while waiting for the

next flight (75.6%). Most of them had visited Thailand before (61.1%) and they traveled abroad on leisure purpose (88.9%) more than twice a year (31.1%).

The findings also revealed the whole picture of the effects of the 16 factors, indicated in the questionnaire, on the participants' selection of a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport. It was found that the majority of the participants indicated that seven factors "very strongly" influenced them in their decision to stay at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport. The seven factors comprised the following: "The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport" (84.4%), "Round trip transfers to and from the airport included in room charges" (66.7%), "The hotel being easily accessible" (52.2%), "Information about the hotel available online" (48.9%), "Attractive room rates" (43.3%), "Uncomplicated reservation and payment process" (38.9%), and "Positive information from customers' comments on the hotel's web board" (30.0%) (See Table 2).

Moreover, the findings revealed how the 16 factors affected each element of the participants' personal information on their selection of a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport. The demographic data were studied with each of the 16 factors, based on the 4 P's of Marketing Mix as shown in the questionnaire (See Appendix A). The findings revealed that, on average, each of the elements of the demographic information of the research participants were affected by the factor "The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport" at the highest level with the total average mean score of 4.8. This factor was categorized in the element of "place" of the Marketing Mix strategy (Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999). Meanwhile, the factor "Cancellation charges being reasonable", which was categorized in the element of "price" of the Marketing Mix strategy, affected the participants' each element of the demographic data at the lowest level with the total average mean score of 2.8.

Discussion

The discussion was done according to the results gained from the analysis of the answers to the questionnaire, starting with discussion on the participants' demographic data, followed by discussion of answers to the two research questions: the effects of the factors on free independent travelers (FITs) in making a decision to stay at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport, and the effects of the factors on the participants' each element of their demographic data in selecting a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport.

Participants' Demographic Data

In this part, each element of participants' demographic data was discussed. However, the nationality of the participants was not included because in this study, the participants of three nationalities were equally randomly selected as research participants.

Gender: The study revealed that the majority of the participants were male (52.2%). It could be plausible to explain that male tourists might feel more comfortable to stay at a small unknown hotel which they never visited. However, the study of Ramast and Pisutseriwong (2010) revealed differently. Ramast and Pisutseriwong's study disclosed that the majority of the customers of an economy hotel in Prachin Buri were female. This was probably because the hotel in the study of Ramas was situated downtown, female customers might feel comfortable to stay at that hotel so that they might have a better chance to enjoy shopping.

Age: The study revealed that the participants who were free independent travelers (FITs) in the age range of 21-30 were the majority of customers (40%) who took part in the study. It can plausibly be explained that this group of participants was young people who

were generally not attached to a brand-name or a well- recognized chain hotel. It is possible that they would rather save for their journey or for other necessary things.

The study of Ramast and Pisutseriwong (2010) supported this finding. Ramast and Pisutseriwong studied factors affecting Thai tourists in selecting an economy hotel and found that most customers of the sampled hotel were in the age range of 25-35. Meanwhile, the studies of Thongtae (2009) and Saibuathong (2007) also revealed similar results that most hotel customers who were in the middle and old ages tended to choose more expensive hotels.

Monthly income: Regarding the monthly income of the participants, it was found out that the participants in the monthly income range of US\$, A\$ 5,001 and above were the majority group (28.9%). This showed that high income tourists also preferred to stay at budget hotels. It is plausible to explain this situation that luxurious hotels might not always meet middle or high income tourists' needs. Some customers wanted to avoid the traffic problems and did not want to take risks in missing their next flight. It was possible that they might think that they only spent very short time at the budget hotel so they did not mind much about luxurious furniture or facilities. Staying near the airport might serve their needs.

Marital status: As to marital status of the participants, the finding revealed that the majority of the participants were married (46.7%). It could be plausible to explain that free independent travelers traveled on their own, not with a tour agency, and if they traveled with their spouse, they might enjoy the trip more, with a good company. Also, it was possible that they might be accompanied by their children with lots of luggage, hence, a nearest hotel was probably the best choice for them if they did not have much time in the country they visited.

Length of stay: Most of the participants indicated that they stayed at the hotels for 6-24 hours which were considered a short period when compared with the studies of Pinpetch (2009) and Yooyen and Tungkiatsilp (2008). The study of Pinpetch (2009) revealed that length of stay of most customers of a hotel in the city of Bangkok was around 3 days while the study of Yooyen and Tungkiatsilp (2008) disclosed that length of stay of most customers of a hotel in Koh Samui was more than 4 days. It can be plausibly explained that customers of budget hotels around Suvarnabhumi Airport had limited time and stayed in Bangkok much shorter than customers of other kinds of hotels. At this point, hoteliers should recognize this difference. Besides, specific promotion should be launched to attract this unique type of customers. For example, room rates for short stay or per hours might be offered to attract short-stay customers.

The number of visits to Thailand: The findings also revealed that most of the participants who stayed at the sample budget hotels had visited Thailand before. Fifty participants (61.1%) made a repeat visit to Thailand. It is plausible to explain that most participants who had ever visited Thailand preferred to stay around the airport because they were probably not interested in visiting downtown Bangkok again. They, also, already learnt that traveling back and forth from the airport to a hotel in downtown Bangkok took a lot of time.

The number of visits to this budget hotel: It is surprising to find that the majority of participants were new customers of the budget hotels (82.2%). It can plausibly be explained that young tourists tended to spend less on accommodation as long as it is safe and comfortable. Also, they probably felt challenged to try something new. The number of 74

new customers found among the total number of 90 (82.2%) research participants showed that the market for budget hotels caught interest of travelers and is increasingly booming. The research finding coincided with that of Khamsamran (2008) who also found that most of the participants were in the age range of 18 – 25 and they visited Koh Samui for the first time.

Frequency of travel abroad: In terms of frequency of travelling abroad, most of the participants traveled abroad more than two times a year (31.1%). It can plausibly be explained that these customers were experienced tourists who loved travelling. The reason why they chose to stay at the budget hotels might be that they wanted to save their money so that they had more money to visit other places.

Purpose of travel: As of the purpose of travel, customers with leisure purpose were at the highest number (88.9%). This can plausibly be explained that since most customers at the sampled budget hotels were people of the young generation who were mostly tourists. Their main purpose in visiting Thailand was to relax and see the world. They were, of course, on leisure purpose. Unlike business people who were usually subsidized by their company or organization, their travel expenses including accommodation and transportation were covered. Most of the research participants who stayed at budget hotels were, therefore, not on business purpose.

The findings of the study of Chan and Wong (2005) contradicted this study's findings. Chan and Wong found that most customers of hotels in Hong Kong were on business purpose. It could be plausibly explained that hotels in Hong Kong were categorized as city hotels most of which were ranked as four to five star hotels. Obviously, Hong Kong hotels

differed from the sampled hotels in this study. Besides, Hong Kong is a business city and most visitors were there on business trip. Unlike the area around Suvarnabhumi Airport, it was far away from the business center of Bangkok. Thus, guests of hotels in Hong Kong and those of hotels around Suvarnabhumi Airport were different in nature.

Purpose of stay: Also, the findings revealed that most of the participants (75.6%) stayed at the budget hotels around Suvarnabhumi Airport because it was convenient for them to wait for the next flight and this is not surprising. Most airport hotels have been constructed to particularly serve this major purpose i.e. customers staying at the hotels near the airport to connect the next flight. The results of this study showed the fact that has worldwide been acknowledged that is most customers who stayed at an airport hotel could reach the airport in time. Therefore, it was not surprising that 75.6% of the hotel clients who were the research participants declared that they spent a night or two because they waited for the next flight.

Researcher Question 1: What factors most affected free independent travelers (FITs) in making a decision to stay at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport?

1. Factors that very strongly affected FITs

While the results revealed that the factor that affected free independent travelers (FITs) at the highest level in making a decision to stay at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport was “The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport”, when studying in detail, the findings showed that the majority of the participants were very strongly influenced by seven factors (See Table 2). Those factors were as follows: “The hotel being close to

Suvarnabhumi Airport” (84.4%), “Round trip transfers to and from the airport being included in room charges” (66.7%), “The hotel being easily accessible” (52.2%), “Information about the hotel being available online” (48.9%), “The room rates being attractive” (43.3%), “Uncomplicated reservation and payment process” (38.9%) and “Positive information from customers' comments on the hotel’s web board” (30.0%).

The plausible reasons why these factors very strongly affected most of the participants in their decision to stay at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport are provided below.

First, the factor “The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport” was found to be the most influencing factor that affected 84.4% of participants in their decision to stay at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport. According to the Marketing Mix strategy (the 4 P’s), this factor is categorized in the “place” element. It is plausible to explain that the “place” element played a key role in the decision making of the participants. Probably, the participants had very limited time in Bangkok as the findings indicated that most of the participants spent only 6-24 hours at the hotel, just waiting for the next flight. They probably wanted to be certain that they could reach the airport in time. Therefore, a nearest place to stay hotel is a good alternative.

This result coincides with that of Chan and Wong (2006). Chan and Wong revealed that a convenient hotel location was an important factor influencing FITs in their final selection of a hotel, besides price. The research finding of Lockyer (2005B) also supported this point. Lockyer found out that location, price, facilities and cleanliness were the important points in hotel selection.

The second factor that very strongly affected most of the participants (66.7%) in their decision to stay at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport was “Round trip transfers to and from the airport were included in room charge”. According to the Marketing Mix strategy, this factor was considered a form of “price”. It can plausibly be explained that Suvarnabhumi Airport was located a long way from the city of Bangkok and the area around the airport as well as the hotels might be unknown to some people. Thus, transport service of the hotels was very advantageous. This service was very convenient for hotel guests; in addition, it helped them save both time and money. Moreover, most of the participants had visited Thailand before. They might have experienced that it was a waste of time and money to take a taxi from the airport to a hotel, so they were very interested in hotels with transfer services. This finding coincides with that of Ramast and Pisutseriwong (2010). Ramast and Pisutseriwong’s study revealed that convenient transport was one of the five factors that greatly affected tourists in choosing an economical hotel.

Shuttle service is considered necessary for the hotels’ customers. It is suggested that hoteliers should pay high attention to this service. Suitable budget for the shuttle service should be invested to make it outstanding and attractive. For example, comfortable vehicles as well as professional drivers who are well-trained in the English language should be provided. Transfer schedules should be well-organized. More transfer destinations such as nearby shopping centers or local markets should be offered with reasonable pricing or even without charges.

The third factor that very strongly affected most of the participants (52.2%) in their decision to stay at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport was “The hotel being easily

accessible”. This factor is considered a form of “place” in terms of the Marketing Mix strategy. It is plausible to explain that most participants stayed at the hotels allocated for this study for the first time. How to get to the hotel or how to contact the hotels was probably their concern, particularly if there is no transfer service provided. Moreover, as the participants were foreigners, it might be that most of them have made hotel reservation online. They had to make sure that once they arrived in Thailand, they could find their hotels. As a result, a hotel should not be in an isolated area or on byways. Also, noticeable directional signs should be available along the way to the hotel. In addition, the hotel should be reached conveniently at all time; if possible, information operators and contact staff at the airport should be available 24 hours. The study of Ramast and Pisutseriwong (2010) partly supported this point. The study revealed that convenience in getting to a hotel was one of the crucial factors affecting tourists in choosing a hotel.

The fourth factor that very strongly affected most of the participants (48.9%) in their decision to stay at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport was “The room rates being attractive”. According to the Marketing Mix strategy, this factor was considered a form of “price”.

Because the results of the study disclosed that most participants stayed at the hotels for a short time, those customers probably did not want to spend much money for their short stay. In addition, they might want to save their money to pay for other services or to visit tourist attractions. As a result, hoteliers should pay close attention to pricing. The room rate should not be much different from other hotels in the same area, type and standard.

This result coincides with that of the study of Netirangsiwatchra and Wichian (2008) which revealed that the room rate greatly affected tourists in selecting a hotel. In addition, a study of Khamsamran (2008) also supported that suitable pricing greatly affected tourists in selecting a hotel. The study revealed that room rates should be reasonable when compared with other hotels in the same standard or class. In addition, room sizes along with facilities should be proper to room rates.

The fifth factor that very strongly affected most of the participants (43.3%) in their decision to stay at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport was “Information about the hotel being available online”. This factor is considered a form of the “promotion” element in terms of the Marketing Mix strategy because it is a method applied to promote products or services of a hotel.

It is plausible to explain that most participants were in the age range of 21-30. This group of people belonged to the new generation who have grown up in the era of the Internet and been familiar with doing a lot of activities via the Internet. Hotel websites, online services, various ways of promotion such as discount for advanced online booking and payment are very useful and attractive because these services could be accessed easily for people in the era of information technology. This result coincides with that of the studies of Pinpetch (2009) and Thongtae (2009) which revealed that most hotel customers gained hotel information through the Internet and made a hotel reservation online.

As a result, hotel websites are worth investing. Professional and uncomplicated sitemaps as well as well-classified, informative and attractive websites should be provided. Information of the hotel location, hotel services and room rates which are crucial factors

should be advertised online. Besides, other necessary information such as hotel maps and how to reach a hotel should be available clearly online. Also, online booking via travel agencies' websites is another way to enhance more opportunity for potential customers of a hotel to reach information of a hotel. No matter how good a hotel is, if tourists could not access hotel information, it means nothing. Therefore, hoteliers should give attention to the information technology matter so as to enhance success in the business.

The sixth factor that very strongly affected most of the participants (43.3%) in their decision to stay at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport was the factor "Uncomplicated reservation and payment process". This factor is considered a form of the "place" element in terms of the Marketing Mix strategy because this factor is connected to the hotel itself as a distribution channel.

It was possible that as the participants had a very limited time in Thailand, so they might not want to waste their time dealing with the reservation and payment process. Thus, to make them feel convenient, real-time online reservation or 24-hour phone call reservation should be provided. Also, payment via convenient methods such as credit cards, cash in various currencies and fast check out might be offered to attract customers. The study of Tongkum (2008) partly supported this point that payment by credit cards and convenient online reservation influenced customers in choosing a hotel.

Lastly, the seventh factor that very strongly affected the majority of the participants in their decision to stay at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport was "positive information from customers' comments on the hotel's web board" (30.0%). This factor is

considered a form of the “promotion” element in terms of the Marketing Mix strategy because it is a method applied to promote products or services of a hotel.

As mentioned earlier, most of the participants were young and they were people of the new generation in the era of the Internet. Online information was convenient and it influenced the participants to make a decision to stay at a budget hotel. Besides, no matter how good hotels advertised themselves, comments or word of mouth from actual customers tend to be a trigger. This stance was supported by the studies of Phatthanawiriyaphisan (2007), Netirangsiwatchara and Wichian (2008) and Rewthongchai (1997). These studies revealed that comments or suggestions of those who ever stayed at a hotel influenced new customers in selecting a hotel.

As a result, hoteliers should provide boards in website of a hotel for customers to comment. Besides, the board and comments should be managed well to attract new customers. Good comments should be highlighted and put on top of the board while complaints should be placed low in the bottom of the board.

In sum, when studying the Table 2 in detail, there were seven factors that most affected free independent travelers (FITs) in making a decision to stay at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport. Out of the seven factors that were very strongly influencing, three were categorized in the “place” element, two in the “price” element, and two in the “promotion” element of Marketing Mix.

2. Factors that had no effect on FITs

On the contrary, four factors were rated by the participants that they had no effect on their decision to stay at a budget hotel (See Table 2). These four factors were the factors “The hotel name/chain being reliable” (23.3%), “Breakfast included in room charges (21.1%)”, “Cancellation charges being reasonable (21.1%)” and “Hotel advertisements featuring information that attracts participants’ interest in the hotel (20.0%)”.

Regarding the factor “The hotel name/chain being reliable”, 23.3% of the participants indicated that this factor had no influence on their decision. This factor belonged to the “product” element of the Marketing Mix. It could be plausibly explained that the participants might not pay attention to the brand names; rather their prime interest might be the location of the hotel. They probably needed to make sure that they could connect the next flight in time. Convenience is key; staying near the airport could guarantee guests that they would not miss the next flight. Well-known hotels might not serve their needs; they might be far in the city of Bangkok while they did not want to stay away from the airport. The famous hotels close to the airport might offer unattractive room rates while they did not want to waste their budget paying for expensive accommodation for a short stay. Lockyer (2005B) found that location and price were the trigger points in hotel selection. However, the study of Rewthongchai (1997) revealed differently that one of the important factors which affected hotel selection of guests was brand and reputation of a hotel. Probably, it was because the sample hotel in the study of Rewthongchai was different in type of hotel and target customers. Also, the sample hotel in the study of Rewthongchai was situated in the city and most of the customers stayed at the hotel for a longer period.

As to the factor “Breakfast included in room charges”, 21.1% of the participants indicated that this factor had no influence on their decision. This factor belonged to the “price” element of the Marketing Mix. It could be plausibly explained that as most of the participants’ main purpose was to wait for the next flight and it was possible that their flight might be in very early morning. Hence, free breakfast might not be of any use to them. Rather, the participants might have breakfast at the airport or on the plane.

About the factor “Cancellation charges being reasonable”, 21.1% of the participants indicated that this factor had no influence on their decision. This factor belonged to the “price” element of the Marketing Mix. It could plausibly be explained that room rates of the hotels were considered not so high when compared with the participants’ income. The findings revealed that 28.9% of the participants had a monthly income of \$US, A\$ or £ 5001 and above, the highest amount indicated in the questionnaire. The room charges at these budget hotels were not more than 1,500 baht or about \$US and A\$ 50 or £ 35 per night. Thus, the participants might not worry much about cancellation charges. Also, it was possible that the participants’ major purpose was to connect the next flight; therefore, it was convenient that the hotels were close to the airport.

Regarding the factor “Hotel advertisements featuring information that attracts participants’ interest in the hotel”, 20.0% of the participants indicated that this factor had no influence on their decision. This item was categorized in the “promotion” element of the Marketing Mix. It can be plausibly explained that most participants traveled abroad quite often since the findings revealed that the majority of the participants (31.1%) traveled abroad more than two times a year. They might be experienced travelers who probably gave more attention to the hotel website and other qualities of a hotel such as its facilities.

Advertisements might not significantly affect their decision making. They might probably rely on their direct experience in choosing hotels or word of mouth from their traveling counterparts. This reason was supported by the studies of Phatthanawiriyaphisan (2007), Netirangsiwatchara and Wichian (2008) and Rewthongchai (1997). These studies revealed that customers gained hotel information from those who ever stayed at a hotel, their friend and relatives.

In brief, out of the four factors that affected each element of the participants' demographic data at the lowest level, two were categorized in the "price" element, one each for the "product" and "promotion" elements of the Marketing Mix strategy.

Research question 2: What were the effects of the factors on each element of the participants' demographic data?

The findings indicated that the factors based on the Marketing Mix strategy as shown in the questionnaire had some effect on each element of the participants' demographic information. Two interesting points were obtained when studying the research results in detail (See Tables 3 - 13). The F1 factor, "The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport", was almost unanimously accepted to affect the participants' each element of the demographic data gaining the highest mean score, except for one (See Tables 3-13). However, the factors that affected the participants' each element of the demographic data at the lowest level were found to be various (See Tables 3-13).

On average, the F1 factor "The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport" affected all elements of the research participants' demographic information at the highest level. This factor was greatly accepted the most influencing factor. The participants considered the

“place” element of the Marketing Mix strategy to be important. Some examples to support this stance are illustrated below.

The participants in the age ranges of 51-60 and 61-70 considered the F1 factor “The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport” affected their decision to stay at a budget hotel near the airport at the highest level with the mean score of 5.0 (See Table 4). It is possible that older people gave more priority to the location or the “place” element of the Marketing Mix.

The participants with monthly income ranges of US\$, A\$ and £2,001-3,000 and US\$, A\$ and £4,001-5000 were affected by the factor “The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport” in their decision to stay at a budget hotel at the highest level with the mean score of 5.0 (See Table 6). It was possible that this factor was the major reason that made the participants decided to stay at a budget airport hotel because the findings of this study revealed that the majority of the participants of all monthly income ranges were affected by this factor at the highest level. The “place” element of the Marketing Mix played a key role. Because the hotels were located near the airport, the customers decided to stay at the hotels near the airport.

Again, when studying the participants’ personal information about the number of visits to Thailand, it was found out that the participants, both first time visit and repeat visit participants, indicated that the factor “The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport” influenced them at the highest level with the mean score of 4.8 (See Table 9).

Regarding the participants’ purpose of travel, the results remained the same. The majority of the research participants, those who were on business trip, leisure trip or other

purposes, indicated that the factor “The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport” affected them highly on their decision to stay at a budget hotel near the airport (\bar{x} 4.8) (See Table 12).

Although the findings revealed that the F1 factor “The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport” affected all elements of the research participants’ demographic information on average at the highest level, when giving attention to detail, it was found that the sole group of the participants who were not highest affected by the F1 factor was those who stayed at the budget hotels longer than 24 hours (\bar{x} 4.7) (See Table 8). Plausible explanation was attempted as follows:

Table 8 shows customers’ length of stay at the hotel ranging from less than six hours to more than 24 hours, which was the maximum length indicated in the questionnaire. Surprisingly, it was found that the participants who stayed at the hotel more than 24 hours were the only group that were affected by the F9 factor “The room rates being attractive” and the F11 factor “Round trip transfers to and from the airport being included in room charges” at the highest level with the equal mean scores of 4.8.

It was possible that this group of participants paid more attention to the “price” element of the Marketing Mix strategy since the two factors, the F9 “The room rates being attractive” and the F11 “Round trip transfers to and from the airport being included in room charges” were both categorized in the “price” element. These people stayed at the hotel more than 24 hours for some reasons and they might not want to spend a lot of money on accommodation and preferred to pay for the best economical room rates. Besides, if they really were on a waiting list, free transport was extremely advantageous for them as they had to, every now and then, go back and forth between the hotel and the airport to check on the status of their

waiting list. In addition, it was found that the group of the participants who stayed longer than 24 hours had other interesting characteristics probably because they had different needs and more requirements.

As shown in Table 8, while all participants in this table were affected by the F4 factor “Hotel advertisements featuring information that attracts the participants’ interest in the hotel” and the F13 factors “The hotel being equipped with various facilities” at a low level with the equal average mean score of 2.9, it was very interesting that those who stayed for a longer period at the hotels was the only group that was affected by the F4 factor and the F13 factor at a high level with the mean score of 4.0. This group might have different requirements from the others.

The reason why those who stayed longer than 24 hours had more and different requirements from others could possibly be explained by the study of Lockyer and Roberts (2009). The findings revealed that the shorter customers stayed in a hotel, the fewer requirements were. The participants in this particular group stayed longer than others, so it could be said that they had more and different requirements from the others.

On the other hand, the findings revealed that the factors that affected the participants’ each element of the demographic data at the lowest level were various (See Tables 3-13). It was unlike the result about the factor that affected the participants at the highest level earlier discussed. All the participants, except one group, agreed that there was only one i.e. the F1 factor “The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport” which affected their decision at the highest level..

Examples showing that the factors that least affected the participants' each element of demographic data are various are as follows: the participants who were in the age range of 41-50 were least affected by the F4 factor "Hotel advertisements featuring information that attracts the participants' interest in the hotel" with the mean score of 2.1 (See Table 4), the participants with a monthly income of 1,000 or less were least affected by the F8 factor "The hotel's sales promotion policy, including discounts, being interesting" with the mean score of 2.1 (See Table 6), those who travelled abroad once a year were least affected by the F13 factor "The hotel being equipped with various facilities" with the mean score of 2.5 (See Table 11), etc.

In sum, when studying each element of of the participants' demographic information, the factor "The hotel being close to Suvarnabhumi Airport" is probably a key in running a budget hotel because this factor attracted the majority of the participants who were customers of budget hotels around Suvarnabhumi Airport. However, it is difficult to spell out a single factor which affects all elements of the participants' demographic data at the lowest level.

Applications of the Study

The characteristics of customers of budget hotels around Suvarnabhumi Airport disclosed in this study will help hoteliers segment their market more effectively. They should be able to gain more understanding about their potential customers and launch marketing campaigns to attract them. For example, this study revealed that most of the hotels' customers were on leisure trip and they usually had very limited time, hoteliers may offer facilities or services relating to leisure such as discounted spa packages at the hotel, city tours, travels to tourist attractions and transportation service to obtain good impression from customers. In contrast, a few customers were found to be on business trip, hoteliers can benefit this finding by having some data to decide on how much they should invest on business facilities and information technology services.

According to the findings, the distance of hotel location from Suvarnabhumi Airport was the most crucial factor which highly affected the participants in their decision to stay at a budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport. However, hotel owners whose hotels are not situated near the airport may take advantage from the findings as well. The information is greatly useful to the management or marketers of the existing hotels. They can invest or improve their hotels by using the findings of the study as basic information.

However, the research results showed that other factors, besides those categorized under the element of "place" of the Marketing Mix strategy, also affected the participants in their decision to stay at a budget hotel. For example, free transfers from the airport to the hotel, under the element of "promotion" of the Marketing Mix strategy, were revealed to greatly affect the participants. Although the hotel premises are away from the airport, if

hoteliers provide good transport services, they can possibly attract more hotel guests. Another example is the hotel website that was found to be very influential to the customers' decision. Hoteliers may benefit from this finding by improving or updating or doing something to make their own website attractive and convincing.

As to those who are interested in founding a new budget hotel around Suvarnabhumi Airport, the findings of this study are also very useful. Information regarding the factors surveyed along with the characteristics of customers disclosed in the study is worth considering before running a new hotel.

The researcher recommends that hoteliers should consider the factors which greatly affected customers as priority. Meanwhile, the factors which slightly affected customers should not be entirely neglected.

The findings are also able to help support or decline previous studies on similar topics for academic development and growth of research. Besides, this study may propose some inspiration for other researchers to conduct studies on hotel selection since not much research has been done locally. This kind of research will be useful for a tourism-oriented country like Thailand.

Limitations of the Study

This study possesses some limitations. First, to avoid language barriers, the research was only conducted on English native speaker FITs from three countries, United States of America, Australia and Great Britain on the basis that there had been a number of tourists from these three countries traveling to Thailand yearly (Office of Tourism Development of Thailand, 2008). The results of the study derived only from the mentioned group of participants and they could not be applied to all international tourists. Conducting research on participants with various nationalities or backgrounds might gain different results. For example, research conducted on Japanese or Chinese participants might yield different results.

Second, the research was conducted on the airport hotels around Suvarnabhumi Airport located on the mainland and away from the heart of a city. For other airports of different characteristics such as an airport on an island such as Phuket or Samui, or an airport which is close to the city such as Donmuang Airport, the findings might be different.

Third, the sample hotels of the study comprised only five budget hotels. Studying customers of other or more hotels around Suvarnabhumi Airport might reveal different results.

Lastly, the room rates of the sample hotels are not over 1,500 Baht. The findings from studying tourists staying in more expensive hotels may differ from those from the present study.

Recommendations for Further Studies

The study revealed the factors which were useful for hoteliers and those who are interested in running new budget hotels around Suvarnabhumi Airport. However, there are many other interesting aspects concerning budget hotel business around Suvarnabhumi Airport to be studied. The researcher would like to recommend the following:

First, as the participants of the study were only from three countries, the researcher recommends studies of a wider range of tourists or a more specific group of tourists. Chinese and Indians are large in both the number of population and economic growth. A number of potential tourists who are keen to travel from these countries to Thailand cannot be ignored. Tourists from the Middle East countries who had high purchasing power are also interesting to study. Besides, South East Asian tourists should be taken into account as well because the Asian community will be in effect in 2015. This will enable South East Asian people to travel in the region more conveniently and frequently becoming vital potential customers of the hotel business in Thailand.

Second, this research focused on only customers of hotels with the room rate of not over 1,500 Baht. It is also interesting to study the needs or attitude of customers who decide to stay at hotels with higher room rates. Meanwhile, it would be interesting to study the needs or attitude of customers who decide to stay at hotels with similar or even lower room rates. Bed and Breakfast (B&B), and home-stay are other kinds of low-cost accommodation. A comparison study between satisfaction of customers at budget hotels and B&B would yield interesting results.

Third, hotel facilities are most important in doing hotel business. Although the results of this study showed that the factor of facilities did not highly affect the participants, to know what facilities are needed in running budget hotels or any particular kind of hotel is advantageous for hoteliers so that they can invest wisely on the right facilities.

Fourth, as retained customers are important for businesses, factors which affect customers to reselect a hotel near the airport are very interesting. Studying factors that make customers come back to the hotel is useful for managing hotels, or, in other words, how the hotel can retain the old customers. The results are able to be applied for managing other different types of hotels as well.

Lastly, guests' satisfaction toward budget hotels around Suvarnabhumi Airport is another interesting topic to study because satisfied guests tend to come back to the hotel they are satisfied with. Moreover, to know what level of satisfaction that the hotel customers are having, or what their stance in terms of satisfaction is, hoteliers may use the information to improve their hotel standard and performance, enhancing the hotels more to be competitive.

In conclusion, the findings of this study inspires researchers to consider other topics that are interesting to conduct a study relating to the budget hotel business with a focus on other issues such as the number and nationalities of the sample group, budget hotel facilities, how to retain budget hotel customers or customers' satisfaction, etc.



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แรมของนักท่องเที่ยวชาวต่างประเทศ: กรณีศึกษาโรงแรม รีสอร์ท และบังกะโลในอำเภอเกาะสมุย.

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APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

Part B: Factors regarding Hotel Selection

Directions: Please rate **how strongly the following factors influence your decision to stay at a budget hotel** by marking ✓ in the that is most applicable to you.

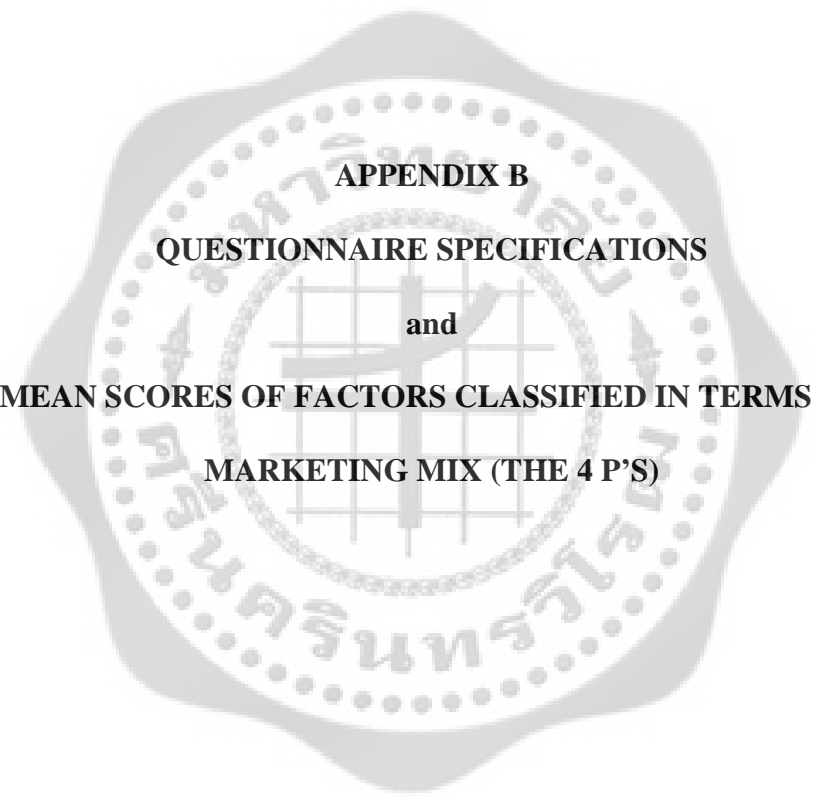
Very Strong Influence	Strong Influence	Moderate Influence	Low Influence	No Influence
5	4	3	2	1

Factor		Degree of Influence				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	The hotel is close to Suvarnabhumi Airport.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	The hotel name/chain is reliable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	The exterior and interior designs of the hotel are attractive (judged from pictures in the hotel website or in your previous experience).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Hotel advertisements feature information that attracts your interest in the hotel.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Information about the hotel is available online.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Positive information from customers' comments is on the hotel's web board.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	The hotel room is guaranteed to be free from airplane noise.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	The hotel's sales promotion policy, including discounts, is interesting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	The room rates are attractive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Breakfast is included in room charges.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Round trip transfers to and from the airport are included in room charges.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Cancellation charges are reasonable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	The hotel is equipped with various facilities such as a swimming pool, a spa, a fitness center, a massage service, and the Internet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	There are many ways to make reservation at this hotel.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	The reservation process, including payment, is not complicated.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	The hotel is easily accessible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*** THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND COOPERATION***

Mr. Sarit Petcharat

Email: psarit@hotmail.com



APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE SPECIFICATIONS
and
MEAN SCORES OF FACTORS CLASSIFIED IN TERMS OF
MARKETING MIX (THE 4 P'S)

Questionnaire Specifications

and

Mean Scores of Factors Classified in Terms of Marketing Mix (The 4 P's)

Factors	Mean
Price	
Round trip transfers to and from the airport are included in room charges.	4.39
The room rates are attractive.	4.11
Breakfast is included in room charges.	3.01
Cancellation charges are reasonable.	2.80
Average Mean Score	3.58
Place	
The hotel is close to Suvarnabhumi Airport.	4.82
The hotel is easily accessible.	4.23
The reservation process, including payment, is not complicated.	3.92
There are many ways to make reservation at this hotel.	3.13
Average Mean Score	4.02
Product	
The exterior and interior designs of the hotel are attractive	3.36
The hotel is equipped with various facilities	2.93
The hotel room is guaranteed to be free from airplane noise.	2.89
The hotel name/chain is reliable.	2.88
Average Mean Score	3.01
Promotion	
Information about the hotel is available online.	4.09
Positive information from customers' comments is on the hotel's web board.	3.45
The hotel's sales promotion policy, including discounts, is interesting.	3.15
Hotel advertisements feature information that attracts your interest in the hotel.	2.92
Average Mean Score	3.40



VITAE

Name Mr. Sarit Petcharat
Date of Birth 16 June 1983
Place of Birth Surat Thani
Address 82 Ta-krop, Chaiya, Surat Thani

Educational Background:

2007 M.A. (Business English for International Communication)
Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok
2001 B.A. (English)
Prince of Songkla University, Pattani
1998 High School Diploma (French)
Suratpittaya School, Surat Thani

