

**MOTIVATIONS AND FACTORS THAT ATTRACT THAI
PEOPLE TO SCUBA DIVING INDUSTRY IN THAILAND**



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TO SCUBA DIVING INDUSTRY IN THAILAND**

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TO SCUBA DIVING INDUSTRY IN THAILAND**

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to investigate further into the motivations, or the factors that attract so many Thai people into the SCUBA diving industry in Thailand recently, and the decision that they had made or will make on the selection of SCUBA diving school as their first step into this industry.

The result from this research could not clearly explained or identified every aspect of motivations and factors that people have on their way to SCUBA diving. The majority of the research results were that the participants have been attracted to the SCUBA diving industry from referral by peer to peer with influence via the internet marketing and social media sharing of the activity. The participants also have to go through different types of barriers of the activity; including, the barriers of entry and the barriers within the activity. Furthermore, this research founded that Thai people do not do much research on choosing the SCUBA diving certification agencies; they seems to go with whatever the SCUBA diving school has to offer. Nevertheless, there are also different types of motivation and factors that could be discover for the future research.

KEY WORDS: SCUBA diving/ Thai consumer/ Motivations/ Consumer behavior

21 pages

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Beaches and marine resources in Thailand are among the worlds greatest; therefore, they attract tourist from all over the globe. Numbers of activities and attractions were emerged around these resources, and SCUBA diving was one of them. Since SCUBA diving has been brought to Thailand for leisure, the majority of the people who participate in this activity were foreigners instead of Thai people and it remains like this for decades with the sluggish growth rate.

The changes began in 2012 when the industry was suddenly shifted towards the Thai market and it was growing consecutively every year with the potential to grow larger in the future. The industry is growing in the term of the number of participants on Thailand Diving Expo (SCUBA diving trade fair that held annually in Bangkok) both on the exhibitor side and customer side that has been increasing since 2012 until today especially for the Thai participants.

1.2 Problem Statement

These changes suddenly occur without the rationale or the reason behind them; therefore, this research would investigate further into the motivations, or the factors that attract so many Thai people into the SCUBA diving industry in Thailand recently, and the decision that they had made or will make on the selection of SCUBA diving school as their first step into this industry.

1.3 Research Objective

The result from this research would more of less likely to project or infer more precise marketing strategies for the industry and it would enhance the performance of the diving centers that they might be more accurate on finding their potential customers or their potential market in Thailand.



CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter would explore into the motivation and factor behind the consumption on SCUBA diving industry by using different techniques from theoretical foundations then develop the hypotheses. The theoretical foundation is consisting of the motivation and factor seeking by conducting different theories along with the secondary data from past researches on the topic.

2.1 Theoretical Foundation







2.1.1 SCUBA Diving

SCUBA diving is a type of diving that the diver carries self-contained underwater breathing apparatus (SCUBA) with them to be able to breath in the human hostile environment or in this case is underwater, and the SCUBA unit would normally be a compressed gas in a cylinder that connects to the regulator for the user to breath on. There are lots and lots of SCUBA diving destinations around the world and Thailand is among the world best, where hundreds of dive sites are available all year round both on the Gulf of Thailand and Andaman Sea.

2.1.2 SCUBA Diving School/Organization

To be able to SCUBA diving, most of the time the diver must be certified or get some kind of training from the underwater diver certification agencies. There are numbers of agencies all over the world and the major players in Thailand on the following table.

Table 2.1 SCUBA Diving Agencies

Organization		
	PADI	Professional Association of Diving Instructors (USA)
	SSI	SCUBA Schools International (USA)
	SDI	SCUBA Diving International (USA)
	NAUI	National Association of Underwater Instructors (USA)
	BSAC	British Sub Aqua Club (UK)
	CMAS	Confédération Mondiale des Activités Subaquatiques (FRA)

These agencies provide the curriculum for SCUBA diving and the participant must pass all of the requirements and tests in order to obtain the certification or diving license. These major training agencies follow the ISO standards or the European equivalent. Two ISO standards are most relevant to those looking to become certified, they are: Diver Level 1 – Supervised Diver ISO 24801-1 and Diver Level 2 – Autonomous Diver ISO 24801-2. These correspond to the SCUBA Diver Certification and the Open Water Diver certification. (Davis, 2016) Therefore, all of these agencies' training, regulations, curriculum, and certifications are quite similar, so there should not be a significant different between them. Furthermore, these agencies would distribute their deals for different diving centers across the country, then let the diving centers decide which agency they would like to represent, and they usually pick one agency to represent them. Diving certifications also divided into different levels; for example, on PADI recreational level are the following, Open Water Diver, Advance Open Water Diver, Rescue Diver, Dive Master, and Diving Instructor.

2.1.3 Motivation

To understand the factors that have an impact on motivation on SCUBA diving, the concept of motivation must be clearly understand and defined. Motivation is the driving force which help causes us to achieve goals. Motivation is the term that generally used to describe the causes of behavior or actions that animals or human perform. Motivation could be intrinsic and extrinsic; in which, intrinsic motivation is the motivation that is driven by an interest or enjoying of the task, and exists within the individual rather than the external pressure. Extrinsic motivation is the motivation that comes externally, or it comes from outside of the individual (Lawyerment, 2011).

2.2 Hypotheses Development

The perception that most of the Thai people usually has towards SCUBA diving is that it is a luxurious leisure activity; in the way that, the activity consumes quite a lot of time, effort, and expenses. Furthermore, the nature of this activity is the exploring hostile territory, which is underwater that human should not be there at the first place. Then people get to travel to different places or location to dive and it does not limit within Thailand, they could travel all over the world. As a result, laddering technique has been conducted to explore on different variables about SCUBA diving and how do people portray the activity.

2.2.1 Laddering

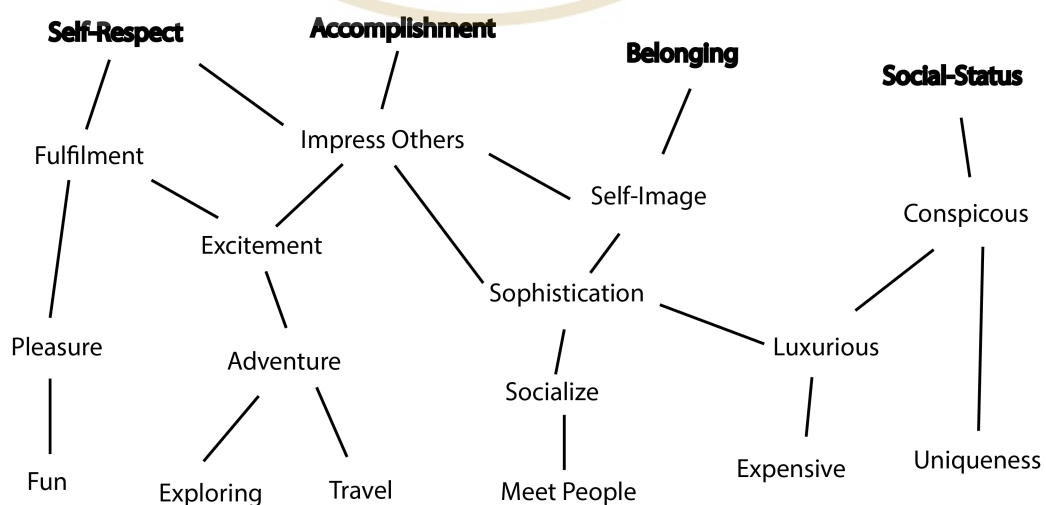


Figure 2.1 Laddering

The four main perceptions that came out from the laddering method are self-respect, accomplishment, belonging, and social-status. In addition, Eric Brymer's research on risk taking in extreme or risky sports has founded that the traditional theoretical perspective on extreme sports participation relates the experience to risk taking and views involvement as based on pathological self-deception or an unhealthy search for thrills, danger, uncontrollability, and uncertainty (Brymer, 2010).

Ewert and Hollenhorst examined the relationship between the degree of engagement in an adventure activity and personal attributes of adventure recreationists. As the level of engagement increases, skill, frequency of participation, internalized locus of control, and preferred level of risk all increase (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1989).

Ewert, Gilbertson, Luo, and Voight elucidated motivations for participation in recreational adventure activities, and identified three groups of motivating factors, which were social factors, factors related to sensation-seeking, and factors related to self-image. Participation in adventure activities can meet participants' psychological need for challenge (Ewert et al., 2013).

Tsaur and Lin identified seven classes of challenge for adventure recreationists, which were uncertainty in the environment, insufficiency of resources, relationships with partners, difficulty of the activity, the ability of partners, equipment, and a sense of competition (Tsaur & Lin, 2013). These variables would be defined as the constructs to explore further using the questionnaire for qualitative research.

2.2.2 Hypotheses 1

SCUBA diving might make the participants gain more self-respect, and make them feel like they had accomplished something in their lives along with the sense of belonging when they join the SCUBA diving community, and they might also get more social recognition due to the perception towards the activity that people perceive the activity as a luxury. One of the secondary data that has been acquired about consumer values and motivation of purchasing luxury goods has found that; in a consumer society, consumers seek 'positional goods' to demonstrate group membership, identify themselves and mark their position. With positional goods, satisfaction arises in large part from a product's scarcity and social exclusiveness (Nwanko, 2014). Therefore, SCUBA diving might attract Thai people who were seeking

for something like this by serving them as a ‘positional goods’ in the form of activity that they are a part of. This would help explain a little more about the motivations or the factors that attracts Thai people to the SCUBA diving industry.

2.2.3 Hypotheses 2

Entering the SCUBA diving industry, the divers must first choose the diving agencies or diving school to get the certification. Normally, diving centers in Thailand would pick just only one SCUBA diving training agency to represent their diving center, and certified their customer exclusively just for that one agency. To find out the reason why or how people make their decision on selecting SCUBA diving school or training agencies would be difficult to the certain extend, because different people would have different approach to the industry; some might be more prone to the word of mouth, some might be easily influenced by the media, or some might just go straight forward out of the curiosity. The result that could be expected might be the reason of word of mouth and peers to peers recommendation; due to the past research on what influence Thai people’s purchasing decision. The impact on Thai people’s purchasing intention might be as high as 49% (Pakapatpornpob et al., 2017) from the word of mouth, and electronic word of mouth.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The topic for this study will be motivations or factors that attract people into SCUBA diving industry and their decision on selecting the certification agencies.

This study needs to be conducted because the researcher needs to complete his Thematic Paper, and the researcher's background is a SCUBA diving instructor who has been in the industry since 2012 that he has seen the annual growth of the SCUBA diving industry, so this research was conducted.

3.1 Research Design

The objective of this research is to understand more on consumer's motivation and explore the factors that attract so many Thai people into the SCUBA diving industry in Thailand. The study will need to be involved in the details of understanding in form of exploratory research; therefore, the "Qualitative" interview approach will be used in this research. Individual in-depth interviews for the total of 10 participants will be conducted.

3.2 Data Collection Methodology

Data collection will be collected during the interview conducted to explore on consumer's feeling, perception and behavior towards the motivations when considering to SCUBA diving. The data collected also include the reason why they decide to SCUBA diving with a certain diving center and hopefully could get useful consumer insights and recommendations.

The opening questions will begin with regard to respondent's perception and attitude toward SCUBA diving. And then the researcher will relate them to more detailed questions to find out what factors motivate them to participate SCUBA diving.

More detailed questions will be asked in order to get in-depth understanding what make respondents decide to SCUBA diving and also learn how they perceive on SCUBA diving.

3.3 Research Instrument

The interview and mini focus groups sessions will be conducted and then transcribed for analysis and part of them will be used for the presentation.

The following questions will be used to gather information from the participants. The questions are structured into thirteen parts along with the key motivations that has to be focus on along the interview or mini focus groups sessions; which are, self-respect, accomplishment, belonging, and social status.

1. Basic info: Gender, Age
2. How long have you been SCUBA diving?
3. How often do you dive? Approximately how many dives?
4. What level of certification are you?
5. What brings you to the industry? Who? Why? Through which channel?
6. What does SCUBA diving mean to you and why does it so? (In terms of the characteristic of the activity)
7. What would be the perception towards the activity for the people who do not participate in the activity?
8. How do you feel before and after taking the first diving course is it meet or exceed your expectation?
9. Do you recommend others to join the SCUBA diving community and will you recommend the same dive center and agencies as yours? Why?
10. Do you do any underwater photography or video?
11. Do you often post those pictures or videos on social media and why?
12. What are other activities that you do besides SCUBA diving?
13. Which dive center and diving agency did you certified with and why did you choose them?

CHAPTER IV

FINDING AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Findings

After interviewing and conducting mini focus groups on 18 participants whom were involved in the SCUBA diving industry in Thailand range from beginners who just started less than a year to instructors that had experienced this field for more than five years. The participants are coming from different background, and some of them are SCUBA diving professional.

Table 4.1 Participants List

Gender	Age	Number of Dives	Certification Level	SCUBA Institute
M	27	1000+	Instructor	SSI
M	28	600+	Instructor	SSI
M	27	300+	Instructor	SSI
M	25	224+	Dive Master	SSI
M	33	150	Instructor	NAUI
F	25	147	Advance Open Water	SSI
M	25	139	Dive Master	SSI
M	28	100	Rescue Diver	SSI
F	29	87	Rescue Diver	SSI
M	28	50	Advance Open Water	BSAC
F	30	50	Advance Open Water	BSAC
F	26	40	Advance Open Water	PADI
F	32	40	Rescue Diver	PADI
F	23	36	Advance Open Water	PADI
F	26	32	Advance Open Water	PADI
M	23	30	Advance Open Water	PADI
F	27	16	Open Water	SSI
F	31	4	Open Water	PADI

4.1.1 Motivations

Finding the support for hypothesis 1 that the motivations or factors that attract Thai people into SCUBA diving industry in the recent years are self-respect, accomplishment, belonging, and social-recognition. Analyzing the research question about “What brings you to the industry?” Most of the people said that they were following their peers that their friends or relatives were asking them to join the activity, so this might lean towards the belonging factor that attracts people to the SCUBA diving industry. In addition, some of the participants said that they have been influenced by the celebrity that they had followed through Instagram and Facebook, that they saw the influencer went SCUBA dive and advertise for the dive resort; they then followed and went through the same processes as that influencer. One of the celebrity followers said “I just saw Pong Nawat (the celebrity) went SCUBA diving on the Instagram, and I found that it is quite interesting to me so I just went exactly to the same place as him to Koh Tao. I also ask couples of my friends to go along with me on the same trip to study SCUBA diving.” Therefore, the belonging factor could be the major motivations that attracts people to the industry.

Moreover, there are also some support on the other factors; for instance, on the self-respect factor which they participate in SCUBA diving because it might fulfill them, couples of participants said that they started snorkeling since they were just a kid and they were fascinated by it, so they wanted to explore the underwater world closer. One participant explained this thoroughly saying that “You know, since I went snorkeling for the first time, I always have a thought that it could be so incredible if you could be able to breathe underwater and I think it is one of the most amazing things that human being could achieved.” He then seeks for the school and get on with it by himself to fulfill his dream. After the first lesson, he became extremely addicted to the activity and could not stop doing it and became the SCUBA diving instructor. Some of the participants also said that they love extreme sport and adventure, so they considered that SCUBA diving is also one of the activity that could serve them as an extreme activity; furthermore, some of the participants who did not said that they love extreme sports or adventuring also provide the information on the question about the activities that they do besides SCUBA diving are golfing, wakeboarding, shooting, car racing, sky diving, go carting, surfing, boxing, trekking, cycling and triathlon. Nobody has said or

mentioned about the regular sports or activities; for instance, running, soccer, badminton, or swimming. Most of the activities that the participants mentioned are somewhat consider as luxurious, so this might mean that this characteristic of SCUBA diving might attracts those who are seeking for conspicuous consumption that might also emphasized their social-status.



Figure 4.1 Motivation Quotes

These motivations could not completely answer the question why does a lot of Thai people has been drawn to the SCUBA diving industry recently. There are some factors that could be raise from the research result; which are, the channels that people could get exposed to the activity, and how easy it is for people to get drag into it. Most of the participants were exposed to this activity through the Internet from the social network sites or online advertisements. Every participant said that they have posted either photo or video of them SCUBA diving on their social media accounts to show off their friends that they are participating in this activity; therefore, this might enhance the

awareness and recognition of SCUBA diving activity throughout the people. When people get exposed to the activity frequently, they could be more likely to develop the sense of wanting to participate in, combined with the vulnerability of Thai people for the word of mouth that could influence the purchase intention that could go up as high as 49% (Pakapatpornpob et al., 2017) which also could be relevant. Additionally, some participants mentioned that they also consider SCUBA diving as a group activity that they need to bring their peers along; in which, it suits the collectivism of Thai culture.

Nevertheless, disregarding the motivations and factors that have been analyzed, every participant on the research asserted that they recommend this activity to everyone and encourage them to at least try it.

4.1.2 Barriers

In addition to the motivation and factors from the research result, there are some barriers that could be detected from the data collected from the research questions about the perception of the people towards SCUBA diving and feeling of the participants of the activity. These barriers are the factors that keep some of the people away from entering the SCUBA diving industry; which are the fear, the cost of the activity, and the time.

The first barrier that kept people from entering the industry is fear; it is one of the major factors that most of the people consider when they think about entering the water, some of the participants said that before taking the first course of SCUBA diving, they were afraid of different things; such as, sharks, or entering the hostile environment and some mentioned about it is dangerous, or uncontrollable. Some might say that they do not know how to swim, so it kept them from considering about entering the industry. For every participant that mention that they do have these kinds of fears, all of them could overcome these fears after they took the first lesson of SCUBA diving. Next, SCUBA diving is considered as luxurious; therefore, the cost of participating in this activity could be a great deal for some people. Taking the introductory course of SCUBA diving could cost the participant approximately 15,000 baht, which is the whole monthly salary for some. Furthermore, the expenses could be far greater than the initial cost of the first lesson; for example, a set of SCUBA equipment would cost around 50,000 baht, a weekend Pattaya diving trip could cost 5,000 baht, or a five days trip

liveaboard on the boat could cost at least 20,000 baht. To conclude, the cost of SCUBA diving could be the barrier for those who already enter the industry and those who are not. Last, learning or getting on the trip to SCUBA diving is time consuming, to get started on the first lesson it would take the participants around 3-5 days to get the lesson done, so some people might not have enough time to even take the lesson or take the trip.

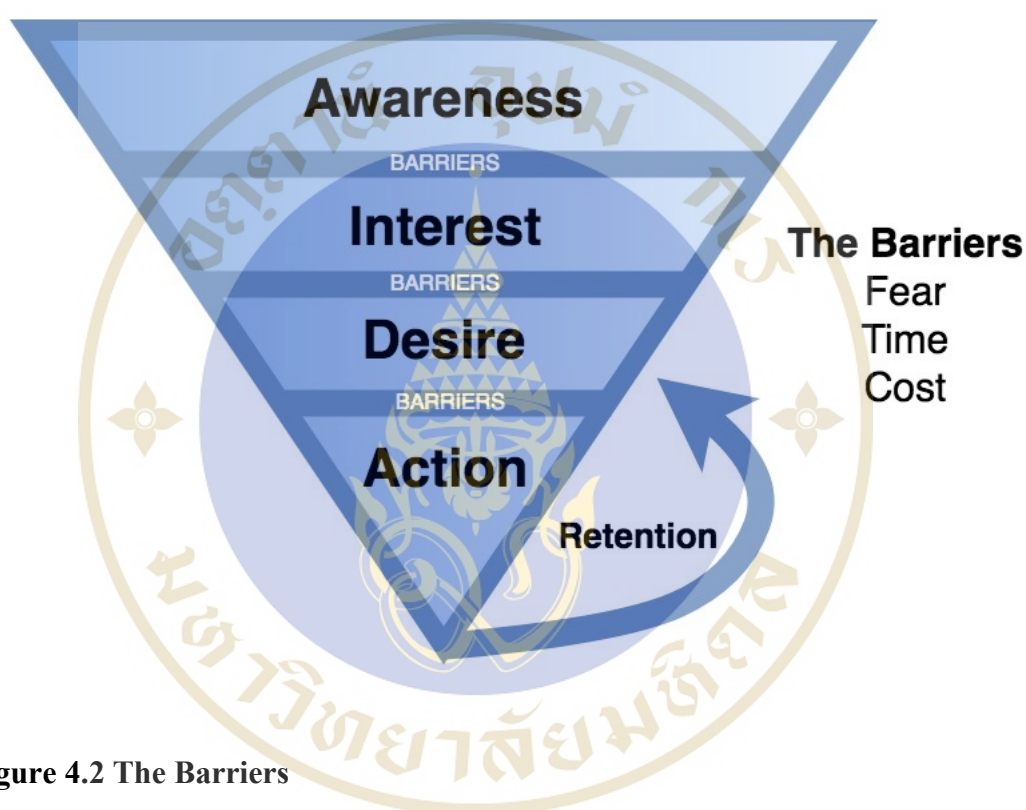
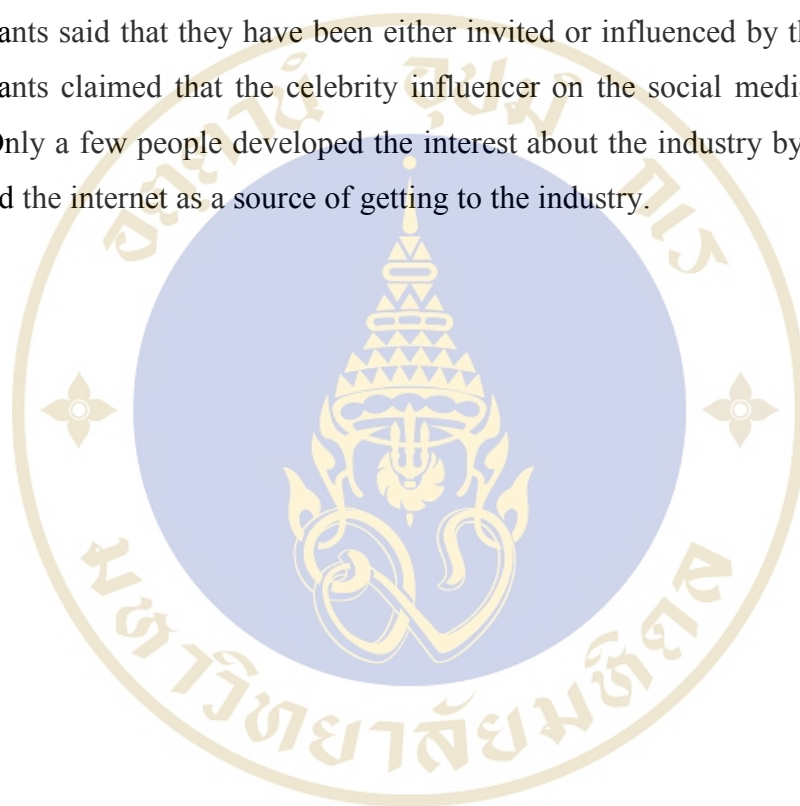


Figure 4.2 The Barriers

From the figure, customer going through different stages on AIDA model which implies the customer's trails through different steps before they make their purchasing decision. Since they were exposed to the activity, barriers are embedded within every stage throughout the trail. Even they had already completed the trail, customer retention also needs the go through the barriers. As a result, the barriers are preventing people from entering the industry in number of ways, and for those who already entered the industry might still have been blocked by the barriers.

4.1.3 Sources

The sources that Thai people are going through to get to SCUBA diving industry that could be detected from the research are mostly from the internet and the word of mouth. As mentioned above on the motivation result, most of the participants considered SCUBA diving as a group activity, so they would not go SCUBA dive alone. Thus, they would go with their peers and also ask their friends to join them. Moreover, as the usage of social network has been growing tremendously among Thai people, the sources are mostly coming through the social media. For instance, most of the participants said that they have been either invited or influenced by their peers. Some participants claimed that the celebrity influencer on the social media has influenced them. Only a few people developed the interest about the industry by themselves, but still used the internet as a source of getting to the industry.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This research examined the motivations, and the factors that attract Thai people into the SCUBA diving industry in Thailand, and the decision that they had made or will make on the selection of SCUBA diving school as their first step into this industry. Assumptions has been made that there are some motivations and factors that attract Thai people to the industry in the recent years; for instance, self-respect, accomplishment, belonging, and social-status are among the major motivations and factors. Qualitative research has been conducted on this research established mini focus groups, personal interviews, and telephone interviews on 18 participants.

5.1 Conclusion

From the research findings, the result could not be completely explained or founded every reason or motivation behind the increase of the number of Thai people on SCUBA diving industry, but some has been found from the research. There are not many people who enter the industry mainly because the activity itself or its characteristics attract them. Most of the people were attracted to the industry by friends' or peers' invitation and recommendation, so the sense of belonging could be the main motivation that drawn people to SCUBA diving, but the other motivations and factors also support the main motivation and kept people coming back to the activity. Moreover, there are a lot more motivations and factors than those that has been hypothesized earlier on the research which came out from the findings; for example, the barriers that kept people away from the activity and the sources of the traffic. The barriers that kept people from entering and coming back to the industry could be the cost of participating on the activity, the time consumption, and the negative perception towards the activity. The sources of traffic are coming mainly through the word of mouth, and people are expose to SCUBA diving industry via the social media. Not many people get to choose the

diving school by themselves, they would just follow those they trust or those who influenced them. Most of the time, Thai people did not research about the SCUBA diving agencies; they just use the agency that the diving school provide for them without questioning.

5.2 Recommendations

For SCUBA diving school in Thailand, word of mouth and friends' recommendations, and social media are quite powerful for Thai people; therefore, diving school who targeted Thai customer should utilize these elements and tools more frequently and more wisely to be able to attract more customer while maintaining the customer retention, and customer satisfaction. For instance, the school could enhance the quality of the instructors' ability to make the lesson more enjoyable to increase the customer satisfaction; in order to, attract more customer to the school. While eliminating or reducing the barriers that might be blocking new or return customers from entering or coming back to the activity could also enhance or encourage them for making purchase.

5.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

As mentioned earlier, there could be a lot more motivations and factors than those that stated or founded on this research. The result of this research was limited by the number of the participants which is just 18 individuals, and the number could be increase; in order to enhance the result of the findings and improve the research quality.

For the future research, one of the interesting factors that came out of this study is that how impactful word of mouth could be on SCUBA diving activity. For example, on the fact that most of the people joined the industry because of their friends, the future research could be the finding of the multiplier effect on peer to peer that could draw people to the industry; by conducting the research by asking an individual that joined the industry via friend's invitation or recommendation about how many people they had successfully drag to the industry and who are they. Then follow the trail of

those followers and ask them the same thing and keep track of the results to find and come up with the multiplier equations or explanations.



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