

ABSTRACT

Project Code: RDG48O0036

Project Title: Socio-Cultural Impacts of Tourism Development
in Chiangrai Province, Thailand

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Project Duration: 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006

This study aimed to investigate socio-cultural impacts of tourism development in Chiangrai province, Thailand. To achieve the objective of the study, the related issues were examined including the current situation of tourism, roles of stakeholders, visitors' opinions on tourism management and local communities' views toward socio-cultural impacts of tourism development. The methodologies adopted for data collection were: semi-structured interviews, participatory rural appraisal and focus groups with local residents and other stakeholders; participant observation; and self-completion visitor surveys. Descriptive statistics was used for content analysis and Statistic Package of Social Science (SPSS) was employed for data analysis of visitor survey.

Three case studies were selected based on visitors' numbers per year from high, medium and low levels as follow: Ban Hard Krai in Chiang Khong District; Ban Santakiri in Mae Fah Luang District and; Ban Raj-Pakdee in Thueng District.

The findings revealed that tourism had caused both positive and negative impacts on the host communities. It was on one hand perceived as a contributor to the locals' income generation and distribution and indirectly helped to increase more

education opportunities for the locals. But on the other hand, it caused negative impacts on socio-culture of the host communities, which in the locals' views was not important in comparison with the economic benefit gains.

Tourism situation in Chiangrai province was determined as the tourism that responds to the visitor's demand and being operated based on the natural and cultural resources in the destinations. The study also revealed a lack of local participation in all stages of tourism development as well as cooperation amongst stakeholders in tourism development processes. In addition, tourism potentials seemed to be decreased due to the deterioration of tourism resources, lack of budget and uncontinuously policy of involved stakeholders and its implementation.

From visitor's point of view, in addition to an improvement in quality of destinations, tourist's recreation opportunities and tourist activities should be created to attract more visitors. The study also indicated that social and cultural aspects of the host communities were the most interesting attractions that need to be conserved. Most visitors were unsatisfied with the situation that they were taken economically advantages and dishonest behavior of the people in service sector.

The study suggested that due to the socio-economic development plans of the country, tourism may not be concluded as an agent of socio-cultural changes in the host destinations. Promotion of people participation in tourism development process, education on sustainable tourism management, development with recognition of local context, fair income distribution among stakeholders and empowerment of local communities were essential issues that need to be concentrated in development of tourism in order to mitigate or prevent negative impacts of tourism development.

Keywords: Socio-cultural Impacts, Tourism in Chiangrai Province, Sustainable Tourism Management