

RESIDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN DONG HAU SAO PROTECTED AREA, LAOS

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ABSTRACT

Concerns over the importance of residents' attitudes for tourism development have created significant demands for comprehensive planning, including the assessment of local peoples' support for tourism. The development of nature tourism in Dong Hua Sao (DHS) protected area will bring about many changes to the residents. The study concerns with an assessment of the natural resources and the perception of the residents towards impacts of nature tourism development in DHS protected area. The study reveals that the residents of DHS protected area believe that tourism will bring several changes to the social, economic and physical environments of the area. They fell that most of the changes will be beneficial for their community. Moreover, the residents have given higher priorities to issues related to employment and participation in cultural practices for tourism, since these will lead to employment benefits. They also fell that deviant social activities should be viewed as one of the important criteria in judging the tourism's impacts. The result implies that the residents are sensitive to the future impacts caused by tourism and are able to judge the nature of impacts in relation to their needs and wants.

INTRODUCTION

The development of tourism industry requires proper planning; demand analysis alone is not sufficient to ensure proper planning and development of tourism projects. The host community must also be able to accept the intrusion of tourists and it must benefit from the development. Knowledge of the perception of the residents about the impacts of tourism development can help in identifying the types, qualities and size of tourism projects

(Shuib, 1989). In addition, the development of tourism industry does not depend entirely on the tourists. It depends as much on the willingness of the host community to receive the arrivals of the mass tourists in the area. The host populations' perceptions and attitudes are essential in the development of the industry, as has been noted by Hayward (1975), Heenan (1978) and Hiller (1976). The development of the industry may be interrupted if among the local residents dissatisfaction towards

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tourism become widespread. As Mill and Morrison (1984) explains this situation as : "An acceptance of tourism cannot be built unless the benefits of tourism are made relevant to members of the community".

The attitudes and the perception people hold for anything profoundly influence the way they act or response towards that thing in personal or larger situations. Man having an unfavourable attitude for a thing expresses his dislike of that thing by his behaviours. Therefore, attitudes and perception studies towards something including tourism is important. Most of the studies conducted in the field of tourism have used attitudes and perception interchangeably, so as is done in the present study.

Because of the frequency of interactions between the residents with the tourists, their willingness to serve as gracious hosts is critical to the success of tourism in an area (Pizam, 1978; Allen *et al.*, 1988). Moreover, several studies have indicated that tourism brings about both positive and negative impacts on host environments. If tourism bring about negative effects local people may retaliate by exhibiting resentful behaviours towards the tourists (Pizam, 1978).

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this paper is to determine residents attitudes towards socio-

cultural, economic and physical impacts to tourism development in Dong Hau Sao (DHS) protected area, and to analyse the use of natural resources of the area by the residents in DHS protected area.

METHODOLOGY

The study area

The study is conducted in six villages located in two districts, Pakxong and Pathoumphone districts, in the Champasak province, Laos (Figure 1); these villages are: Ban Nongluang, Phoumako, Phouoy and Ban Lak 38 (Pakxong district), the other two villages are Ban Namphak and Ban Lak 16 (Pathoumphone district).

Among the four villages of Pakxong district only Ban Lak 38 is linked with a major road (No. 23), the other three are linked by seasonal roads which are not accessible by public transportation. All of these villages lie on the Boloven Plateau which rise to over 1,000 metres above sea level. The other two villages in the Pathoumphone district are situated in the lowland area and are linked with a major road (No. 13). The six villages are chosen because they represent areas which are considered the best potential to be developed into nature tourism areas. Furthermore, the inhabitants are major users of the DHS protected area.



Figure 1. Map of the Laos and location of the study area.

• Dong Hua Sao Protected Area

Collection of data

The primary data required for the study are generated through the questionnaire survey was supplemented by reconnaissance survey and informal interviewing of the key informants. Relevant secondary data, such as number of households, socio-economic features are collected from the head of districts, head of villages and several published papers. Personal interview method is used to determine the perception of the residents towards the development of the DHS protected area. Based on the list of households from the village headmen, a random stratified sample of 121 residents in six villages are chosen for the study.

The questionnaire is organized into 4 major sections. The socio-demographic questions are placed in the first section, followed by the section on uses of natural resources by residents. The perception of the residents are asked in the third section. Residents are asked to indicate the positive and negative changes. The last section consists of opinions for progressive tourism management statements. The residents are asked to respond to the statements on a four point Likert Scale (1=significantly worsened the condition to 4= significantly improved condition). The decision to use the Likert Scale is based on the effectiveness of such scale in previous studies of tourists and residents attitude and perception (Pizam,

1978; Wan Sabri, 1987; Manmohan, 1990; Suresh, 1993). In addition, the Likert Scale is less complex and costly to construct while its reliability in the past studies has been as high or higher than the more complex technique (Khadka, 1992). Similarly, using the four point scale provides more discriminating judgements than just two or three options and it also does not introduce so many intervals as to invite "hair-splitting" (Hofman, 1988). It is also argued that the use of the five point scale could bias choices towards the middle which is an easy escape to the respondents.

To determine whether or not the contents and forms are valid, reliable and easily understood by the respondents, the questionnaires are pre-tested in the Namphak village. Following the pre-testing, adjustments are made by eliminating or restructuring invalid and poorly structured questions. The reliability test on the data used was carried out using the standard Crombach's Alpha test. The Alpha coefficient is nearly 0.7 or higher for a given scale reflects the scales are reliable measures of the scale variables.

Analysis

Factor Analysis is used to determine the underlying perception associated with tourism development in the future area. As Sheldon and Var (1984) indicated this method has the ability to identify underlying

dimension among data in which there exists little theory or scale development. Based on the assumption that there exists factor relationships within the variable set, the method will enable us to identify those factor relationships. The process of identifying the relationships is done by first determining a covariance matrix of the variables, then comparing the reduced correlations from the analysis with the actual correlations. Using a specified level of eigen value for the sample correlation matrix, the factors are determined, when it is greater than the level of discrepancy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-demographic characteristics

The samples chosen for the study were randomly drawn from residents of six villages around DHS protected area; 30% of the households from each of selected villages were randomly picked. Among the villagers 93.4% are Theravada Buddhist. Of the total sample, 97.5% are married, 94.2% are males and 5.5% are females, respectively (Table 1). The average age of the residents in the sample is 43 years indicating that the respondents are quite capable to judge the impacts caused by tourism, even though tourism development is not occurring in full in the area at the present time.

Agriculture is the main occupation for

the majority of the residents. Most of the residents who live in the Bolovens plateau (located at 1,000 m.a.s.l) are coffee planters, other major occupational activities include trading (small shop), government employment and private sectors employees.

Although more than 80% of the respondents are literate, most of the children only attained the primary school education. Besides the lack of school facilities and teachers, most families who earn lower income prefer their children to help them with household and farm chores. It is noticed that only a few children of the rich families are encouraged to continue for further studies.

In comparison to other rural parts of the country, the economic condition of the DHS residents is relatively better due to the types of agricultural products i.e. rice, coffee, and livestock. Besides, the abundance of natural resources provide the residents with opportunities to earn extra income from harvest of resources in the protected area. Table 2 shows that 29.6% of the total family income come from forest and non-forest products, this is especially significant in the first potential recreation area. The major source of income of DHS is production of coffee (55.2%), especially in the second and third potential recreation area. Respondents in the first potential recreation area depend on rice production (39.6%), followed by forest and non-forest products, livestock,

Table 1. Profile of the respondents (N = 121)

Socio-demographic characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Religion	Theravada Buddhist	114	94.2
	Animist Beliefs	7	5.8
Gender	Male	114	94.2
	Female	7	5.8
Marital status	Married	113	93.4
	Unmarried	3	2.5
Age	Divorced/Separated	5	4.1
	15-24	1	0.8
	25-44	71	58.7
	45-65	39	32.2
	Over 65	10	8.3
	Literacy condition		
	No education	13	10.7
	Adult education	6	5.0
	Education school	102	84.3
Occupation	Agriculture livestock	99	81.8
	Trade (shop)	13	10.7
	Government sector	7	5.8
	Private sectors	2	1.7
Average age		43.8	sd. = 12.34
Average income		821, 412.45	sd. = 1.38

Notes : Average income in Kip (Lao currency)

Table 2. The sources of income of the residents (N = 121)

Income	Potential recreation area			Total	NR
	A	B	C		
Rice	48 (39.6)	-	-	48 (39.6)	73 (60.4)
Coffee	4 (3.3)	22 (18.1)	41 (33.8)	67 (55.2)	53 (43.8)
Forest and non-forest product	33 (27.2)	-	3 (2.4)	36 (29.6)	85 (70.4)
Livestock	35 (28.9)	8 (6.6)	11 (9.0)	54 (44.5)	67 (85.3)
Small shop	7 (5.7)	4 (3.3)	7 (5.7)	18 (1.7)	103 (85.3)
Wages	6 (4.9)	2 (1.6)	4 (3.3)	12 (4.8)	109 (90.2)

Notes : Figures inside parenthesis indicate percentage of No.

NR : Non response

small shops and wages, respectively for their livelihood (Table 3).

Use of natural resources of DHS

The DHS residents have been using the natural resources for their livelihood for a long time. As shown in Table 3, 100% of fuel wood are obtained from natural areas while 66% depend on the natural resources for fishing, this is evident in the first and third potential recreation area compared to the second. Also 49.5% of the residents collect bamboo and rattan for various sources and 35.4% collect honey from the

natural area.

It is observed that dried *Sterculia lychnophorum* are being collected by 26.9% of the residents of the first potential recreation area. This species is collected for its medicinal used and it is only found in this part of the country; a large proportion of the species collected are exported. Other activities in the natural area include hunting, damar collection, herb and timber harvest. The protected area is an important source for the DHS residents to support their livelihood.

Tabel 3. The use of natural resources by residents (N = 121)

Income	Potential recreation area			Total	NR		
	A	B	C				
Hunting	6 (4.9)	-	10 (8.2)	16 (13.1)	105 (86.9)		
Fishing	34 (28.1)	16 (13.2)	30 (24.7)	80 (66.0)	41 (34.0)		
Timber	1 (0.8)	-	-	1 (0.8)	120 (99.2)		
Fuel Wood	53 (43.8)	24 (19.8)	44 (36.4)	121 (100.0)	0 (0.0)		
Bamboo/rattan	15 (12.3)	17 (14.0)	28 (23.1)	60 (49.5)	61 (50.5)		
Honey	7 (5.7)	13 (10.7)	23 (19.0)	43 (35.4)	78 (64.6)		
Herb	-	3 (2.4)	6 (4.9)	9 (7.3)	112 (92.7)		
Damar	10 (8.3)	-	-	10 (8.3)	111 (91.7)		
Dried <i>Sterculia lychnophorum</i>	3 (26.9)	-	-	32 (26.9)	87 (73.1)		
Joint activities	Family members		Friends		Alone		
	75 (62.0)		18 (14.9)		28 (23.1)		
Percentage of selling	29.8%						
Percentage of consumption	70.2%						

Notes : Figures inside parenthesis indicate percentage of No.

NR : Non response

It is also noted that 29.8% of the harvest from the DHS protected area are sold in the local market, while 70.2 % are consumed by the residents. Generally, 62% of the respondents carry out these activities with family members; children who are no longer in school help the parents to perform these activities.

Factor analysis of the perception of residents towards impacts of nature tourism development

Table 4 shows the results of the factor analysis. Based on the pattern of responses, the statements representing attitude towards tourism's impacts are grouped into different factors. Using the principle component with varimax rotation method the variables are grouped into 5 factors that have eigen values greater than 1.0. Of the total 27 statements, 14 are loaded in the 5 factors explain 75.3% of the variation in the data set when factor loading of 0.5 is used as criteria for selection. Essentially they reflect the following constructs.

Factor 1 : Employment and cultural practices

The factor explains 31.6% of the variation in the data. Variables in the factor reflect the attitudes of residents towards the cultural practices and employment opportunities. It implies that the residents believe that their involvement and participation in cultural practices for tourism purposes will lead to employment benefits. Loading

patterns of the statements in this factor reflect the perception of the residents that conservation and promotion of local culture like traditional dressing, arts, music, dances and festivals are important elements to help in increasing employment opportunities for local residents. This is highly consequential since production of traditional materials and execution of traditional and cultural activities require knowledge and commitment of local residents.

Factor 2 : Economic impacts

Variables in this factor indicate positive aspect of tourism as perceived by the residents. The factor explains 15.4% of the variance in the data, it may be viewed as complementary to Factor 1. Given that the residents of DHS protected area place more emphasis on the economic benefits of tourism development derived through employment opportunities related to cultural practices, the variables in Factor 1 seem to support this inclination. The residents of DHS believe that the development of nature tourism would become a major economic resource and would help in increasing their standard of living.

Factor 3 : Deviant behaviours and morality

Factor 3 loads two statements that represent the attitudes of the residents towards socially deviant behaviours. This factor explains 10.8% of variance which may be viewed as negative impacts. The

items included in this factor show that among the DHS residents, concern for deviant social activities is also one of the prime criteria for judging tourism's impacts. Loading patterns indicate that "cause of moral deterioration" and "increase in prostitution" are the two essential considerations for future development of tourism in these areas.

Factor 4 : Social impacts

The variables included here are related to the influence of foreign cultures. The residents of DHS protected area realize that the development of tourism will bring about changes in their lifestyles, especially among the younger residents, the impacts have actually been felt with the younger residents

imitating the styles of western behaviours. On the other hand, they believe that tourism will encourage friendships with tourists.

Factor 5 : Expenditure

The last factor which plays some roles (variance explaining 8%) in determining the residents' attitudes towards tourism's impacts include issues related to expenditure and effects on alcohol and drug consumption of the residents. This attitude seem to be influenced by the present situation because of drinking of alcohol beverages has become a part of village culture of the country. Increases in number of tourist arrivals and the liberal attitudes of foreign tourists towards alcoholic beverages may bring about negative influences to the locals.

Table 4. Factor analysis of perception of tourism impacts by residents of DHS Protected Area

Variables	Factor loading on factors					
	1	2	3	4	5	h^2
Promote traditional dressing	0.96					0.98
Promote performing arts	0.95					0.99
Promote traditional music, dance	0.95					0.99
Promote festival presentation	0.95					0.98
Increase employment opportunities	0.53					0.58
Increase income on villager's family		0.71				0.76
Become a major economic resource		0.73				0.77
Help in increasing the standard of living		0.72				0.65
Cause of moral deterioration			0.76			0.78
Increase in prostitution			0.80			0.74
Promote negative foreign culture				0.54		0.61
Encourage friendship on villager's behaviours with tourists				0.66		0.53
Increase expenditures for the local residents					0.60	0.54
Cause of alcohol and drug abuse					0.56	0.63
Eigen value	4.42	2.15	1.51	1.34	1.11	
% of variance	31.6	15.4	10.8	9.6	8.0	
Cumulative % of variance	31.6	47.0	57.8	67.3	75.3	

Notes : Only loading greater than 0.5 are reported.

h^2 = Communalities

Opinions for progressive tourism management statements

Table 5 highlights the respondents opinions for the statements related to progressive tourism management. It shows that the respondents in general are in favour of these management statements (mean for total items 3.37). A detailed examination of the table reveals that among the 9 items, the respondents disagree with only one. The highest level of agreement is noted for the "number of facilities for outdoor recreation should be improved". This implies that residents of DHS strongly prefer that the development of DHS as a protected area should be undertaken as soon as possible.

The results also indicate that statements in relation to economic benefits of the local people from tourism are highly received as indicated by 60 percent of the residents who think that tourism ought to bring more benefits to locals at the expanse of environmental conservation. This unawareness of some residents towards their environment may be due to lack of extension from the government since no permanent forest rangers are placed in the DHS Protected Area. As a result, the residents' knowledge of environmental conservation has been limited. However, 94.2% of the residents agree to the statement in relation to conservation, even though they are concerned with economic benefits from tourism, they are

more concerned with conservation. They agree that between economic benefits to local people from tourism and environmental conservation both should be given equal emphasis (mean 3.82).

Similarly, the aspects of local communities' involvement including "locals must be trained in tourism related professions", "financial aids must be provided to locals to increase their involvement in tourism businesses", and "locals must be involved in tourism development planning" are highly supported. For each of the above items the mean is above 3.5. Increased involvement of local communities on tourism related activities extends the opportunity for local people to gain more benefits from tourism. The levels of support on the issues above implied that residents are in favour of aggressive tourism development given that they receive more benefits from it. Moreover, the residents feel that it would have been more advantageous for them if the tourists present throughout the year.

With respect to some sensitive areas, the residents acknowledge that tourists should not be allowed to visit freely throughout the whole protected area (mean 2.44). They suggest that local guides should be used by tourists who visit the area for their own protection; at the same time using local guides creates employment benefit to the local residents.

Table 5. Level of agreement for progressive tourism development statements and distribution of respondents (N=121)

Progressive tourism management	Level of agreement				Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4		
Number of facilities for outdoor recreation should be improved	-	-	9 (7.4)	112 (92.6)	3.9	0.26
Local must be trained related profession	-	-	48 (39.7)	73 (60.3)	3.60	0.49
Financial aids should be provided to locals to increase their involvement in tourism related businesses	-	-	60 (49.6)	61 (50.4)	3.50	0.50
Tourists should be encouraged to visit throughout the year	-	-	52 (43.0)	69 (57.0)	3.57	0.50
Emphasis should be given towards economic benefits of local people from tourism rather than environmental conservation	-	47 (38.8)	68 (56.3)	6 (4.9)	2.66	0.57
Emphasis should be given towards environmental conservation rather than economic benefits of local people from tourism	-	7 (5.80)	100 (82.6)	14 (11.6)	3.06	0.41
Should be together (conservation + local benefits)	-	-	22 (18.2)	99 (81.8)	3.82	0.39
Tourists should be allowed to visit all areas	-	68 (56.2)	53 (43.8)	-	2.44	0.50
Local people must be involved in tourism development planning	-	-	34 (28.1)	87 (71.9)	3.72	0.45
Mean of total items					3.37	0.45

Notes : Figures inside parenthesis indicate percentage of N.

Level of agreement: 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree somewhat, 3-agree somewhat, 4-strongly agree.

CONCLUSION

In order to uplift the socio-economic status of the rural people living within close proximity to the protected areas in Laos, the government should encourage nature tourism development. In the last few years, Laos has seen a substantial increase in the number of tourists from Western Europe, America and Asia, especially when the Mittaphap Bridge that links Laos and Thai was opened since 1993. The growth in nature tourism will result in positive and negative impacts in most popular tourism

areas in Laos including the DHS Protected Area.

Studies on the perception and attitudes of the residents may show discrepancies between “actual” and “perceived” impacts. If the perception impacts of residents are equated as negative impacts, planners may be able to identify particular programmes which will reduce friction between tourists and residents, concomitantly, planner could formulate activities that will be supported by residents.

In general, the residents have positive attitude towards tourism development in the

DHS Protected Area. This reflects a comfortable situation regarding tourism development in the DHS protected area and higher level of support expressed by residents for progressive tourism development statements provides additional backing to this conclusion.

From the results it could be concluded that the residents believe that tourism will bring several changes in the social, economic and physical environments of the DHS. They fell that most of the changes will be beneficial for their community. Further, the residents have given higher priority to the issues related to employment and participation in cultural practices for tourism purposes which will lead to employment benefits.

The arrivals of more tourists have usually been linked to many anti-social activities such as crimes, drug abuse and other immoral activities. Some of these anti-social activities cannot be avoided. Among the DHS residents concern for deviant social activities is one of the prime criteria for judging tourism impacts. This shows that the residents are sensitive to the future impacts of the development and will be able to judge the nature of impacts based on their needs and wants.

The future conservation of the resources and the development of tourism in DHS will be accepted by residents if the majority feel that the impacts of

conservation and tourism are equally shared by all. At the same time, the authorities responsible for the development of tourism must play bigger roles in monitoring the development of the tourism so that a balanced impact can be achieved. For growth of the industry, tourists must keep coming to the destination, but at the same time, the residents must be able to secure benefits from the growth of the industry.

For a sustainable development of tourism/outdoor recreation in the DHS protected area the process must not be carried out in isolation. The development of the villages, in terms of infrastructure and human resources must not be lagged so that the benefits of the development can be felt more evenly. Development of the villages should focused on the sectors indirectly related to tourism. For instance, the development of the agricultural sector, especially of certain marketable cash crops that can supply the future needs of the tourism sector, could help increase the income of the residents. The development of infrastructure, especially transportation and communication that can provide better accessibility to markets can lead to reduce dependence of the residents on poaching of forest produce to supplement their income.

This study being the first conducted in Laos could be used as a guideline to other protected areas for nature tourism development. The outcomes of the research may be

useful for the planners, policies makers and managers to become familiar with some aspect related to nature tourism development. The study may also be helpful in understanding the wants and needs of residents which can help in formulating future strategies for a sustainable development of nature tourism, especially in the DHS Protected Area and Laos in general. However, at present, the attitude of the residents seems to be favourable but that can not be guaranteed if the situation changes because attitude and perception are susceptible to changing situations. Therefore, it is important to keep monitoring the attitudes of the residents, and future research to understand the use pattern of the visitors should be emphasized, at the same time marketing strategies and promotion exercises should be emphasized and conducted to ensure the appropriate use of the future recreation areas.

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