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PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF NAKHON SI THAMMARAT RESIDENTS TOWARDS TOURISM IMPACTS AND DEVELOPMENT

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
UNIVERSITI UTARA MALAYSIA
2016
PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF NAKHON SI THAMMARAT RESIDENTS TOWARDS TOURISM IMPACTS AND DEVELOPMENT

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A Thesis submitted to the Ghazali Shafie Graduate School of Government in fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy
Universiti Utara Malaysia
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Acknowledgement

To my beloved late father Mr. Udom Sumethokul all I did is for you, you are always in my heart and to my mother Mrs. Rotjana Sumethokul, to my sister Mrs. Patcharin Boonsawat and my brothers Mr. Ravee Sumethokul and Mr. Jakravee Sumethokul, to my special friend Mr. William Chong and relatives in Thailand.

Foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Shaharuddin Tahir, who continuously supports my research work, for his patience, motivation, and immense knowledge. His guidance, devotion and assistance rendered in the completion of this thesis and the correction to the writing of this thesis. His guidance helped me in all the time. I could not have imagined having a better advisor and mentor for my PhD study.

My thanks are also given to the CBT Network in Nakhon Si Thammarat province and local residents who participated as respondent in my study. My sincere thanks also go to Dr. Agus Ridwan, Mr. Ataul Karim Patwary and Mr. Yang Huai who assisted me in the statistical analysis part of the thesis.

I am very grateful to my doctoral student peers, especially Ms Fatimah Lili and Ms Napat Ruanganapakul who makes me cheerful during my “down times” and rarely felt lonely in this journey. My special thanks also go to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Basri Rashid, Dr. Abdul Alem Mohammad, Mrs. Nor Fatimah Hashim, Mrs. Yus Aslam Yusoff, Mr. A. Butt s/o Ooi Boon Chai, staff of the college Mrs. Waraporn Khachin, Mr. Pisit Kanjanapangha, Mrs. Kitti Sompan, Miss Pothjanart Homprasitan and Miss Srisuda Meejunkaew.

Last but not least, I would like to thank again my loving family, for supporting me spiritually throughout my life and Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University for giving me the chance to pursue my PhD at Universiti Utara Malaysia.
ABSTRACT

In Thailand, tourism is viewed as a tool for community development, especially in the rural areas, and is often considered as an instrument in revitalizing the local economy, facilitating the improvement of the quality of life and safeguarding the natural and cultural resources. However, studies suggest that tourism development brings environmental, sociocultural and economic impacts to the community. Thus, it is vital that the planners and the stakeholders of tourism understand the local residents' perception of tourism and its impacts and must engage them actively during the planning stage of tourism development. The study examines how the residents of Nakhon Si Thammarat province in Southern Thailand perceive the impacts of tourism and how this relates to their support for future tourism development. This study used mixed methods, combining a survey using questionnaires, in-depth qualitative interviews, and participant observation. A total of 544 usable questionnaires were analyzed and the respondents of the study were divided into two groups; tourism participants and tourism non-participants. While for the in-depth qualitative interview, 12 community leaders were involved. Findings of this study show that the residents recognize several positive impacts of tourism, such as; better standards of roads and other public facilities, preservation of heritage attraction and cultural festivals. While the negative impacts of tourism are; poor air quality, crowded areas during the cultural festival, construction of large hotels, resorts and tourists’ attractions has destroyed the natural environment. There are eight research hypotheses in this study. Results of the hypothesis testing found some significant differences in perception between residents grouped by their participation in tourism, their employment, and length of residency; towards the positive and negative impacts of tourism. The study also found that the residents who perceived positive impacts of tourism will support for additional tourism development while those who perceived negative impacts will support for restricted tourism development. This study thus contributes to the theoretical advancement in the field of residents’ attitudes studies. Specifically, the study findings demonstrate that residents’ perceptions on the impacts of tourism can serve as a valuable concept in evaluating residents’ support for future tourism development.

Key Words: Residents’ Perception, Tourism Impacts, Residents’ Support, Tourism Development, Southern Thailand.
ABSTRAK


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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In many developing nations, including Thailand, the role of tourism in socioeconomic development is well-established. Tourism is such industry which is able to generate significant income for the country and, for many years, tourism had been the largest source of income for Thailand in relations to other economic sectors. In 2012, tourists’ arrivals to Thailand had for the first time exceeded the 20 million mark. This was made possible through Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)’s various tourism promotional activities and its slogan: “Amazing Thailand: It begins with People”.

The use of tourism for regional development has become a popular strategy for many communities. Scholarly literature tracing the evolution of tourism planning offers a widening view of tourism as a resource-based industry, with the host community at the nucleus of the product. Thailand has 77 provinces and Nakhon Si Thammarat is one of the provinces in Southern Thailand. It is known for its historical, cultural and natural tourist attractions scattered all over its 23 districts. This study aims to explore how the general residents of Nakhon Si Thammarat province in Southern Thailand perceived the impacts of tourism in their province and their support for future tourism development. It is at this level of the destination community that the impacts of tourism are most intense.
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