

Kentaro Akase 2014: Snorkelers' Opinions and Perceptions toward Coral Bleaching Phenomenon Tarutao National Park, Satun Province. Master of Science (Parks, Recreation, and Tourism), Major Field: Parks, Recreation, and Tourism, Department of Conservation. Thesis Advisor: Assistant Professor Dachanee Emphandhu, Ph.D. 100 pages.

The research objectives were to study snorkelers' background, their perceptions and satisfaction toward coral bleaching, and factors related to visitors' opinions on physical appearance of coral bleaching at Tarutao National Park. 322 tourists participated in snorkeling activity at Tarutao National Park were surveyed by questionnaire. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Chi-square and T-test were employed in hypothesis test.

The study results revealed that most of respondents were Thai female, Bachelor's degree, and employed in private company. They traveled in friend group and stayed about 3 nights in the island. The main purpose of the trip was spending holiday with family, friends and lovers. Most snorkelers (56.2%) didn't know before that Tarutao National Park has experienced coral bleaching. 55.9% answered that the closing of snorkeling site didn't affect their decision on coming to the Park and 68.9% didn't see coral reef bleaching during diving. Coral bleaching moderately affected snorkeler satisfaction. Most still wanted to come back to Tarutao National Park. Regarding the level of knowledge and understanding on coral bleaching phenomena, the snorkelers were on average scale ( $\bar{X} = 4.70$ , S.D. = 2.27). The results on hypothesis test revealed that the differences in coral bleaching observation and the snorkelers' perceptions have no statistically affected the level of satisfaction on snorkeling activities. ( $t = 0.145$ ;  $p\text{-value} = 0.885$  and  $t = -1.564$ ;  $p\text{-value} = 0.119$ , respectively). Three factors found significantly related to the opinions of physical appearance of coral bleaching: nationality, information reception on coral bleaching and knowledge and understanding on coral bleaching ( $\chi^2 = 36.075$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $Sig = 0.000$ ;  $\chi^2 = 30.819$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $Sig = 0.000$ ;  $\chi^2 = 15.103$ ;  $df = 2$ ;  $Sig = 0.001$ )

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Student's signature

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Thesis Advisor's signature