

3837106 SHEV/M : MAJOR : ENVIRONMENT : M.A.(ENVIRONMENT)

KEY WORD : OPINIONS / LOCAL COMMUNITIES / PARTICIPATION / ECOTOURISM

NAKOM TEERASUWANNAJUCK : LOCAL COMMUNITIES' OPINIONS ABOUT THEIR PARTICIPATION IN ECOTOURISM : A CASE STUDY IN SUANPUENG DISTRICT RATCHABURI PROVINCE. THESIS ADVISOR: PANNIPA BURAPHACHEEP,LL.M. JIRAPORN CHUCKPAIWONG,M.A. (ENVIRONMENT) PRAKAIRAT SUKUMALCHART,M.S.197 p. ISBN 974-589-709-4

The purposes of this research are to study the levels of communities' opinions about their participation in ecotourism, the factors which effect communities' opinions about their participation in ecotourism and the problems and recommendations concerning their participation. The sample group consisted of 377 heads of households living in Suanpueng district, Ratchaburi province and questionnaires were used as a tool for data collection. The results of this research can be summarized as follow. The majority of local communities have an intermediate level of agreement with their participation in ecotourism. The One - Way Analysis of Variance reveals that age and length of residency in the sample area are factors which effect participation in ecotourism at the 0.05 significance level. Knowledge of ecotourism and the value placed on natural resources effect participation at the 0.001 significance level.

The problems concerning participation in ecotourism are defined as follow. Firstly, a number of tourism places are not of interest to local people. Secondly, there is lack of knowledge and understanding about ecotourism. Next, there is no budget and manpower for environmental management. Furthermore, local communities have no opportunity to provide opinions about planning, managing and developing a tourism place. Besides these, there is a lack of coordination between local communities and government officers. Finally, there is no organization which can promote ecotourism seriously. Recommendations based on this research are as follow. The concerned organizations should provide education about ecotourism by using simple media which are easy to understand and perceive, such as television. There should be more efficient development coordination between associated organizations for developing tourism places. An appropriate budget for officer recruitment should be considered. Finally, more opportunities for people to give their opinions about ecotourism development should be provided.