

Md. Kabir Hossain Patwary 2006: Ecotourism Development at Khao Phaeng Ma, Nakhorn Ratchasima Province, Northeast of Thailand. Master of Science (Tropical Forestry), Major Field: Tropical Forestry, Interdisciplinary Graduate Program. Thesis Advisor: Assistant Professor Damrong Pipatwattanakul, D. Sc. 175 pages.
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The study attempts to draw a picture of ecotourism development (ETD) at Khao Phaeng Ma (KPM). Its objectives were: (1) to study the existing characteristics of the area appropriate for ETD at KPM; (2) to document and analyze the constraints and success of ETD at KPM; and (3) to recommend for ETD at KPM. The data were gathered by multiple-methods which combined the qualitative and quantitative methods. Participant observation and group discussion was used for qualitative data, while questionnaire survey was used for quantitative data. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the data analyses.

The study results identified and grouped tourism development problems and issues at KPM as the following: natural resource deterioration, low tourists satisfaction, low environmental awareness of locals and tourists, low locals involvement and weak coordination with other agencies.

ETD is proposed as a sustainable development strategy for future tourism development, leading to management and conservation of all resources at KPM in such a way that both the ecotourists and locals can fulfill educational, recreational, aesthetic and economic needs, while maintaining ecological process and biological diversity. A special concern was applied to community-based tourism development attempting to create sustainable development opportunities for disadvantaged rural communities so that they are not marginalized or criminalized by conservation measures. In a further step, it attempts to study visitor demands and their expectations towards facilities and levels of service provided. Tourists visiting the site should be encouraged to be more responsible tourists (ecotourists), while the site should also be provided better services and satisfactions to the visiting tourists.

The ecotourism potential of KPM was analyzed and proved by using potential analysis matrix, with special respect to natural attractions and the areas ecological importance. The area of KPM has both basic and derived potential. The basic potentials are: natural potential, human and cultural potential, institutional potential and infrastructural potential etc. The derived potentials are: budget allocation, reforestation, bottom-up planning, training, environmental education and recreation etc. The matrix shows total 43 potentials of ecotourism development at KPM which consists of 25 basic potentials and 18 derived potentials.

The study finally attempts to balance all suggestions and to give recommendations for future concerted action i.e. ecotourism development programs and projects at KPM.

Student's signature

Thesis Advisor's signature

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Md. Kabir Hossain Patwary
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