



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**PERCEPTION OF THE IMPACTS OF NATURE TOURISM
DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING IN DONG HUA SAO
PROTECTED AREA, LAOS**

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**PERCEPTION OF THE IMPACTS OF NATURE TOURISM
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PROTECTED AREA, LAOS**

By

SENGDEUANE WAYAKONE

**Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Science in the Faculty of Forestry,
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May 1996



*DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED
FATHER AND MOTHER*



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DHS	Dong Hua Sao
DOF	Department of Forestry
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
NTAL	National Tourism Authority of Laos
R.A	Research Assistance
SEARCA	The Southeast Asian Regional Centre for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture
SIDA	The Sweden International Development Agency
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UPM	Universiti Pertanian Malaysia



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**SENGDEUANE WAYAKONE
May 1996**

Chairman: Dr. Wan Sabri Wan Mansor

Faculty : Forestry

The study is concerned with an assessment of the opportunities for outdoor recreation development in the Dong Hua Sao protected area, located at the southern part of Laos (Champasak province). The study involves the assessment of the natural resources, the perception of residents towards socio-cultural, economic and physical impacts, and visitors' opinion towards activities and facilities preferred.

The study reveals that the perception of the residents in Dong Hua Sao protected area is quite similar to results of other studies. The residents of DHS protected area believe that tourism will bring several changes to the social, economic and physical environments of the area. They feel 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 culture practices for tourism, since these will lead to employment benefits. They also feel 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.

The analysis of the visitors' opinions reveals that visitors are attracted to the protected area or park for its sight-seeing, bird and wildlife watching and nature education resources. Visitors are concerned with the level of development and have suggested that development be confined to nature tourism with traditional houses and nature resort that blends well with the natural environment. It can be implied from the analysis of the visitors opinion that tourism be developed without causing damages to the natural and cultural resources of the area.

A recreation development plan is proposed based on the assessment of the resources and analysis of residents' attitude around the DHS protected area and visitors' opinion within the recreation areas in Champasak. Three areas are selected and 12 potential recreation sites within. It is recommended that the concept of development of the DHS recreation forests is the Forest Water Aesthetics and Adventure Touring. For each of the three areas, the development concept has also been formulated.

**Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Pertanian
Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan Ijazah Master Sains**

**PERSEPSI IMPAK PEMBANGUNAN DAN PERANCANGAN
PELANCONGAN ALAM SEMULAJADI DI KAWASAN
PERLINDUNGAN DONG HUA SAO, LAOS**

Oleh

SENGDEUANE WAYAKONE

MEI 1996

Pengerusi : Dr. Wan Sabri Wan Mansor

Fakulti : Perhutanan.

Kajian ini dijalankan untuk menilai peluang dari pembangunan rekreasi luar di kawasan perlindungan Dong Hua Sao yang terletak di bahagian selatan Laos (Wilayah Champasak). Kajian ini meliputi penilaian sumber asli, pandangan penduduk tempatan terhadap impak ke atas kebudayaan dan sosial, ekonomi dan fizikal, dan pandangan pelawat terhadap aktiviti dan kemudahan yang diutamakan.

Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa pandangan penduduk tempatan di kawasan perlindungan Dong Hua Sao adalah hampir sama dengan keputusan kajian lain. Penduduk tempatan kawasan perlindungan Dong Hua Sao percaya bahawa pelancongan akan membawa beberapa perubahan kepada keadaan sosial, suasana ekonomi dan fizikal kawasan tersebut. Mereka menganggap yang kebanyakan perubahan tersebut akan menguntungkan komuniti mereka. Tambahan pula, penduduk memberi lebih keutamaan kepada isu-isu yang berkaitan dengan pekerjaan dan penglibatan di dalam aktiviti kebudayaan untuk pelancongan

memandangkan perkembangan ini akan menambah peluang pekerjaan. Mereka juga merasa bahawa aktiviti sosial yang mendatangkan kemudharatan perlu dijadikan sebagai salah satu kriteria penting dalam menilai impak pelancongan. Keputusan juga menunjukkan bahawa penduduk sangat sensitif terhadap impak masa hadapan dari pembangunan pelancongan dan percaya mereka berupaya menilai jenis impak yang berkaitan dengan kehendak dan keperluan mereka.

Daya tarikan kawasan perlindungan ini dikaitkan dengan pemandangan yang cantik dan kekayaan sumber semulajadi untuk pemerhatian burung dan hidupan liar, dan untuk pendidikan. Pelawat memberi perhatian khusus terhadap tahap pembangunan dan telah mencadangkan supaya pembangunan diasaskan kepada jenis pelancongan semulajadi dengan rumah-rumah tradisional dan kemudahan peranginan semulajadi yang bersesuaian dengan suasana alam persekitaran. Berdasarkan analisis pandangan pelawat, boleh dirumuskan yang pelawat lebih mengharapkan supaya pelancongan dibangunkan tanpa mengakibatkan kerosakan kepada sumber asli dan kebudayaan kawasan tersebut.

Pelan pembangunan rekreasi dicadangkan berdasarkan kepada penilaian sumber-sumber tersebut dan analisis sikap penduduk di sekitar kawasan perlindungan Dong Hua Sao dan pandangan pelawat di dalam kawasan rekreasi di Chompasak. Tiga kawasan yang dipilih mengandungi 12 kawasan rekreasi yang berpotensi. Konsep pembangunan hutan rekreasi Dong Hua Sao yang dicadangkan berimejkan Estetik Air Hutan dan Pelancongan Pengembaraan. Bagi ketiga-tiga kawasan tersebut, konsep pembangunan telah juga diusulkan.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

General Background

Tourism in Context of Laos

Tourism in Laos is entering a new phase. Economic and social changes in the different geographic market segments have caused some major shifts in the tourist markets of Laos. In the past few years, the greatest change has been the growth in arrivals from the Western European countries, Americas and Asia, especially when the Mitaphap Bridge between Laos and Thailand was opened in 1994. Moreover, the natural resources in Laos are unspoilt, there are many different colourful hilltribes, also Lao people are friendly and amiable. However, more efforts on the part of the Lao government and especially, the National Tourism Authority of Laos, have to undertake to improve existing conditions. Laos is a less developed and landlocked country of 4.2 million people with limited international and national communication and transport facilities (poor roads, no railways, few air connections and high cost of travelling). There is also lack of finances to support the planning, implementation and inadequate personnel and professional services. These are among the more common obstacles to the development of nature tourism in Laos.



The geographic fact of life that Laos is a land-locked country precludes seaside holidays. The consequence of this situation is that tourism has to devise for itself a more diversified and dispersed resources, on two identifiable themes: natural and cultural resources.

The government of Laos has chosen not to develop mass tourism, but to aim at small scale tourism of the socio-cultural and ecological type, and look for up-market tourists interested in religion, history, nature and culture coming to the Laos on small guided group tours. The OPS/UNDP plan uses the designation “ top-of-the range clientele ”(National Tourism Authority of Laos, 1990).

Nature tourism in Laos is a new activity, as is the existence of protected areas. It is also a highly debated issue in policy planning and implementation.

Some years from now, such unspoiled attractions will be the subject of regular tours. Lao authorities are planning to develop a tourism industry virtually from scratch, combining eco-tourism with the appeal of the country's colourful hill tribe culture. With the support of UN advisors, Lao officials have declared their commitment to sustainable development of tourism industry. However, the issue for eco-tourism or nature tourism, is how to set up a network of national parks and protected areas so that tourism revenues will support the maintenance of the whole parks system, with a substantial portion of revenues flowing back into community development (Laird, 1993).

The major objective is to preserve the wildlife and how not to cut the forest, before allowing for eco-tourism. Seventeen areas containing big blocks of forest have already been approved to become protected areas by the Lao Council of Ministers. The most urgent step that needs to be done is to get conservation and tourism officials to work together. At present the country is facing continuing environmental problems from deforestation caused by slash and burn cultivation. The resulting soil erosion has caused sedimentation in the Mekong River, making it unnavigable upstream from the old capital of Luang Phabang in the dry season. Deforestation has also led to reduced levels of the water in other rivers and reservoirs causing difficulties in hydroelectric power generation and flash flooding (Berkmuler *et al.*, 1993).

Protected Area In Laos

The establishment of protected areas in Lao PDR is supported by SIDA with expressed objectives for contribution aiming at the preservation of the environment. The first report on the protected areas system planning and management in Lao PDR was issued in mid 1991. The planning process entailed an assessment of habitat conditions and presence of key wildlife species conducted in areas previously recommended and in other promising sites. This systematic search for the largest contiguous and least disturbed forest areas is about 80% complete. All of the 17 recommended sites have been formally declared by a decree so that conservation management of Lao PDR's forest resources stands on a firm base.

However, progress is constrained by insufficient funding and reasonably skilled staff. For the purpose of long term planning by Lao Government as well as to highlight funding needs for the benefit of potential donors, comprehensive budget and manpower requirements have been estimated to the year 2000. At present the human resource base for protected area administration and management is thin. Only a few trained staff are available with none truly experienced . It is necessary that field staff recruited from the provinces to have an extended period of learning on the job to participate in consultant led activities and to gradually, with advisors guidance, develop the ability to acquire data, analyze the situation, and propose well reasoned and practical solutions to discrete problems (Berkmuller *et al.*,1993).

Statement of the Problems

Outdoor recreation and tourism is one of the largest growth industries in the world. Therefore, the demand for utilizing natural and cultural resources is increasing with tourism, and much of this demand focuses on the tropical rain forest.

In Laos, outdoor recreation/nature tourism planning and development is relatively a new activity, as is the existence of protected areas. It is also a highly debated issue in policy planning and implementation.

Laos has just adopted an “open door” policy, consequently among many others, investment in tourism and recreation development is increasing. The Lao

Government is making efforts to manage and protect the natural resources, but due to the lack of human and financial resources in particular, it is not yet fully capable of protecting and managing natural resources. There is also a lack of strategic planning for recreation/tourism and limited knowledge about global recreation/tourism conditions.

Meanwhile, many countries, in the attempts to optimize economic benefits have placed little regard for two of the most important communities who play critical roles in the tourism development: they are, the resident community and the tourist community.

If the tourist based economy is to be sustainable, it is important that the residents be willing partners in the process (Pizam, 1978; Rothman, 1978; Mathieson and Wall, 1982; Allan, 1988). To achieve this, the residents must be involved in the tourism planning, they must be informed and consulted about the scope of the development and their attitudes towards tourism must be assessed.

On the other hand, the entire picture of tourism is made up of those individuals who are motivated to travel, hence the perception of tourists play key roles in the marketing and development of the tourist area. A positive perception of tourists towards an area indicates that the demand of that area would increase (Chubb and Chubb, 1981; Mathieson and Wall, 1988; Wan Sabri, 1987; Allan, 1988; Manmohan, 1990). A thorough tourism planning then must attempt to optimize not only the economic but also the social and environmental benefits of

tourism while minimizing its deleterious effects. Most important, it must be able to satisfy the tourists' needs and the residents' needs as well.

In order to make nature tourism development sustainable and keep its impacts at a desired level for future development, it is important that the present trend of use of visiting areas be evaluated and the attitudes of residents towards tourism development and perception of visitors for visiting areas be assessed.

This is the first study in Laos which attempts to examine the attitudes of residents for tourism development and perception of visitors towards visiting areas in Champasak province. Further, the development concept for the Dong Hua Sao (DHS) protected area will be formulated since the area is a good example of a location in Laos which has middle to high tourism potential. It is hoped that a carefully planned outdoor recreation/tourism development in conjunction with environmental protection will emerge from the study.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the research are to assess the potential of recreation/tourism development in DHS protected area, assess the perception of the local residents towards development of nature tourism, and to find out the recreational activities and facilities preferred by the visitors. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To identify the opportunities for outdoor recreation planning.
2. To analyze the use of natural resources of the area by the residents in DHS protected area.
3. To determine residents attitudes towards economic, socio-cultural and physical impacts to tourism development in DHS protected area.
4. To identify the variables which influence the perception of the local residents toward tourism development. Some of the variables are age, education status, occupation and family income.
5. To identify the uses of the area by visitors and determine the types of activities, and facilities preferred of the visitors.
6. To identify variables which influence the perception of visitors toward tourism development.

Significance of the Study

This study being the first research 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, policy makers and managers to become familiar with some aspects related to nature tourism development. The study may also be helpful in understanding the wants and needs of residents and visitors which

can help in formulating future strategy for sustainable development of nature tourism, specifically in the DHS protected area and Laos in general.

Limitations of the Study

One of the limitation of the study lies in the methodology itself. Although to support the findings of the study supplementary evidences are provided by direct observation and interviewing, the study depends primarily on questionnaire survey. While the data gathered from this method are readily applicable to any sophisticated analytical procedures, they do not generate a deep understanding of a given situation being measured (Khadka, 1992).

Since the situation in each visiting area in Laos, even within Champasak , vary considerably, the findings of the study may not be generalized for all visitor areas in Laos.

Depending on season and climatic condition, the pattern of visiting use changes in the Champasak. Moreover, the rainy season during the survey might also have influenced visitation pattern. Therefore, the outcomes of the study may not be applicable to those visitors who visit Champasak in different time and seasons.

Similarly, the inventory to assess the natural resources is based on the researcher's knowledge of the area, it might be different from other people. The study was conducted on the selected sites because of time limitation and financial constraint.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

The development of tourism industry requires proper planning, however 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 must benefit from the development (Ahmad Shuib, 1992).

The aggregate attraction of tourist destination is composed of its natural environment, man-made facilities available and accessibility. Levels and type of development and management of the destination will influence its appeal to potential visitors. Since many visitors expect the destination to fulfil the expectation, the level of satisfaction can be gauged by the analysis of visitors perception.

The attitudes and perception people hold towards anything can profoundly affect their behaviour towards that thing including tourism development. Hence, if a tourism industry is to be sustainable, the tourists should have a positive perception of the tourist area and the resident's must have a favourable attitude towards tourists and tourism industry (Peterson, 1974; Hunt, 1975; Goodrich, 1978; Pizam, 1978; Chubb and Chubb, 1981; Mathieson and Wall, 1982).