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COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM: PERSPECTIVES AND FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

Thesis submitted by
Pimrawee Rocharungsat
BA, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand
MS in Hospitality and Tourism, University of Wisconsin-Stout, USA
in February, 2005

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the School of Business, Tourism Program at
James Cook University

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STATEMENT ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF OTHERS

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The person who has given much contribution to this thesis is my supervisor, Prof. Philip Pearce. Without his encouragement, effort and editorial skills, it may take longer to write this thesis.

DECLARATION ON ETHICS

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted within the guidelines for research ethics outlined in the *National Statement on Ethics Conduct in Research Involving Human (*1999*),* the *Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (1997)*,* the *James Cook University Policy on Experimentation Ethics*. *Standard Practices and Guidelines* (2001), and the *James Cook University Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (2001)*.* The proposed research methodology received clearance from the James Cook University Experimentation Ethics Review Committee (approval number: H1438 and H1562).

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(Signature) (Date)

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ABSTRACT

The concept of community involvement in tourism has been significant for over 20 years. The concept has also been given a priority status at every level of the tourism research agenda, as it is believed that involving the community can make tourism sustainable. The term "community-based tourism" integrates many agendas and approaches. Nevertheless, several scholars have questioned the practice of community-based tourism. They have raised a concern that community-driven tourism planning may be an unachievable ideal. The problems and limitations include such issues as conflicts within a community or with outsiders. The clarification of the community-based tourism concept is needed for the better and successful practice of future community tourism development. The primary aim of this thesis addresses the need to define and fully explore the views of multiple stakeholders concerning community- based tourism. The studies seek to establish empirical generalisations about community-based tourism and are shaped by stakeholder theory and a social representations approach as well as the considerable existing literature in this field.

Four studies specifically within a South East Asia context explored the overall topic area. **Study one** (Chapter 3), *Community-based Tourism: The perspectives of professionals*, examines professionals' perspectives towards the community-based tourism concept. The professionals were chosen because of their executive positions and their writing on the topic. The survey explored overall attitude towards CBT, definitions of community and development, factors used to evaluate successful CBT, and expectations for future CBT development. Respondents mostly held mixed views about CBT with eleven positive themes and ten negative themes being identified. The term community was most frequently seen as a specific boundary and the web of individuals' interactions while development was most often viewed as socio-economic transformation. Being community centred was seen as the major characteristic of CBT. Respondents cited 30 examples of successful CBT and reported six key criteria to guide development. Nine initial steps were also recommended for developing community tourism. The questionnaires in the subsequent studies were designed based in part on the results of Study one.

Study two (Chapter 4), *CBT: The perspectives of three stakeholders groups*, focused on the perspectives of diverse participants based on the stakeholder theory. The

research examined the groups of decision-maker, operator, and visitor using a self-administered questionnaire. Respondents were mainly from Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia. The results demonstrated that the decision maker and visitor groups prefer to have highly regulated small scale tourism forms whereas operators prefer to have controlled carrying capacity but high intensity forms. All groups suggested that the best and most successful CBT should involve the community and maintain the community's benefits and life style. The visitor group emphasised cultural exchange and friendly communities. The shared management form was the most preferred although it was generally considered that the community group should take the most responsibility for CBT. Each group identifies a different first step to develop CBT. Factors that most influenced the decision makers and the visitors were their aesthetic and moral values while the operators' were more driven by moral and economic values.

Study three (Chapter 5), *CBT: The perspectives of communities*, attempted to complete the multiple stakeholder perspectives by focusing on the communities' views. The aims in this study were concerned with the communities' overall attitude and future expectation towards community-based tourism, the factors which influence their perspectives and the similarities and differences among the communities. The four communities were Desa Wirun, Indonesia and Koh Pratong, Thailand with low tourism development; and Seloliman, Indonesia and Ma Kampong, Thailand with medium levels of tourism development. The research methodology was based on the same research questionnaire as in Study two but some questions were edited and added to serve the aims of exploring the communities' understanding or social representations. The results illustrated the differences between communities of different countries especially in the best scenario for community-based tourism destinations. Therefore, the specific community's characteristics are an important influence, and shape their overall attitudes. The positive characteristics of community-based tourism that gained the highest agreement from every community were that CBT brings more money to the community' and CBT develops an opportunity for community involvement.' These dimensions were also confirmed by measuring the communities' expectations and the factors influences their perspectives. Community benefits were the main reasons for community acceptance and remain a focus of their concerns. In the negative attitudes, a consensus was achieved that community-based

tourism still has its limitations and practical problems. The communities highlighted moral and aesthetic values whereas economic value was of secondary significance.

Study 4 (Chapter 6), *Consensus of CBT and future possibilities*, establishes the consensus among all the stakeholders and portrayed community-based tourism in full for its optimal development. The study synthesised the core findings of the previous studies and employed thematic coding. The concept of social representations was also used in this study to help summarise stakeholders' perspectives and values. The findings showed the stakeholders' preference for Planned Alternative Tourism and Controlled Mass Tourism form in CBT. There was a different emphasis for the best CBT from each group but their consensus was also seen. The most influential values towards stakeholders' views were moral, aesthetic and economic values. The first steps ranked in each group were varied but a broad priority was agreed on. Community benefits and involvement was emphasised as the most successful criteria for CBT from every group.

Finally, Chapter 7 reviews the core findings of the previous studies based on the thesis objectives and considers the implementation issues for future community-based tourism development. The highlights were the coherent scenarios reflecting some common representations, a consensus among stakeholders, and the contribution and evolution of the CBT approach. Also, the recommendations for further community tourism research were presented.

It is anticipated that the results from the studies could guide future research on community-based tourism in general and could aid the practice of successful community-based tourism. To benefit community tourism research, some sections of the thesis have been published or are in the process of being published in conference proceedings and refereed journals.