Sustainable tourism development plans in Kwan Phayao lake rim communities, Phayao province, upper northern Thailand

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The objectives of this qualitative and quantitative research were to study the capacity for sustainable tourism development, and to recommend some sustainable tourism development plans to the Phayao Lake Rim communities. The scope of this research covered the area of communities adjacent to Wiang sub-district, Mae Toon sub-district, Mae Sai sub-district, Ban Toon sub-district, Ban Sang sub-district, San Pamuang sub-district and Ban Tom sub-district of Mueang district, Phayao province. The population was divided into three groups: (1) 367 household heads or representatives in seven lakeside villages and a questionnaire was used to collect the data; (2) 86 village key informants comprising selected household heads, community leaders and tourism-related entrepreneurs; and (3) 5 key informants from tourism-involving state officials. In-depth interviews, focus group discussions and public forums were used to collect data from the two latter groups. The findings were that the communities had four suitable components - tourism resources, accessibility, security and carrying capacity - while the other two components, namely community participation and amenity, were found in need of improvement. The plans consisted of the stakeholder participation, activities and routes, tourism service capabilities of the communities, sustainable tourism marketing, and sustainable tourism resources and environmental conservation. Community development in tourism should be based on self-help principles leading to sustainable development. The related community should learn to understand itself in various aspects such as the community characteristics and as viewed by the community members themselves. Thus, a promotion made for the people to realise their own identity is very important, particularly to understand the community tourism resources, and to be aware of their values with participation in the development process. There are some needs to help the people in adjusting their attitudes and ways of thinking leading to sustainability. Such help could be conducted practically in forms of training, study tours and demonstrations until the people could run their tourism businesses by themselves, developing tourism with quality and simultaneously conserving the environment, thereby leading to sustainable development.

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