

Revisiting Ecotourism Development Strategy of Cuc Phuong National Park in Vietnam: Considering Residents' Perception and Attitudes

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Abstract : Ecotourism in national parks seemed to be one of the options in the conservation of the natural resources and to improve the living condition of local communities. However, ecotourism development will be useless if it lacks the perception and support of local communities and appropriate ecotourism strategies. The aims of this study were to measure residents' perception and satisfaction towards ecotourism impacts and their attitudes for ecotourism development in Cuc Phuong National Park; to assess the current ecotourism strategies based on ecotourism criteria and then to provide recommendations on ecotourism development strategies. The primary data were collected through personal observations, in-depth interviews with residents and national park staffs, and from surveys on households in all of the five communes in the Cuc Phuong National Park. The results depicted that local communities were aware of ecotourism impacts and had positive attitudes toward ecotourism development, and were satisfied of ecotourism development. However, higher perception rate was found on specific groups such as the young, the high income and educated, and those with jobs related to ecotourism. The study revealed the issues of concerns about the current ecotourism development strategies in Cuc Phuong National Park. The major hindrances for ecotourism development were lack of local participation and unattractive ecotourism services. It was also suggested that Cuc Phuong National Park should use ecotourism criteria to implement ecotourism activities sustainably and to harmonize the sharing of benefits amongst the stakeholders. The approaches proposed were to: create local employment through reengineering, improve the ecotourism quality, appropriate tourism benefits to the stakeholders, and carry out education and training programs. Furthermore, the results of the study helped tour operators and tourism promoters aware the real concerns, issues on current ecotourism activities in Cuc Phuong National Park.

Keywords : ecotourism, ecotourism impact, local community, national park

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