

Evaluation of Recreational Benefit for Natural Tourism Quality Improvement in Mae Wang District, Chiang Mai, Thailand

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Abstract: The study aims to determine factors affecting visitor's decision in travelling to natural tourism sites and evaluating the recreational benefit value of the natural tourism sites in Mae Wang district, Chiang Mai, Thailand. The accidental sampling technique is utilized to collect 400 questionnaires. The recreational benefit value was analysed with Individual Travel Cost Method (ITCM). The research reveals that factors affecting visitor's decision are visitors' income, visitors' attitudes, frequency of travelling to natural tourism sites, travel cost to Mae Wang tourism sites, and travel cost to alternative tourism sites. The estimated recreational benefit value of the natural tourism sites in Mae Wang district in 2015 is 181,194,840 Baht (5,019,247 USD). The recreational demand in Mae Wang district would also increase as a result of the natural tourism quality improvement. Additionally, the average consumer surplus per time would be 17.88% increased and the recreational benefit value of tourism sites would be 70.75% increased. The result suggests local community should focus on improving facilitating services, building positive attitudes, tourist activities, tourism sites maintenance, and income planning gained from consumer surplus.

Key words: *Recreational benefit, Consumer surplus, Individual Travel Cost Method (ITCM), Mae Wang District, Thailand.*

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