

# A Study of Tourism Development in Sihanoukville, Cambodia

<sup>1</sup> Thach Phe, <sup>2</sup> Dr. Vijit Supinit

<sup>1,2</sup>MBA, Siam University

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**Abstract:** Sihanoukville is Cambodia's most popular coastal and marine tourism destination and scuba diving tourism has been gradually increasing. Although the tourism sector has been increasing, research has paid very little attention to this phenomenon. This study is the first empirical research focusing on the experiences and levels of satisfaction of scuba dive tourists in Sihanoukville. Mixed methods, using both quantitative and qualitative techniques, were employed in this study by distributing self-reply questionnaires and conducting semi-structured interviews. The results reveal a profile of scuba divers who predominantly came from Western countries with relatively high incomes, ranging from young to middle age groups and mostly travelling alone. There were more males than females. Most scuba divers to Sihanoukville were motivated to see life under the sea and several attributes contributed to their satisfactory experience: taking photos underwater, socialization, watching marine life and seeing rare things which they had never seen before. However, results show other factors that can lead to negative diving experiences such as overfishing, dynamite fishing, and waste disposal. The findings also indicated that scuba divers wish to see future changes such as artificial reefs and wrecks and the outlawing of illegal fishing. This first study on scuba diving in Cambodia offers recommendations for key stakeholders to take into account so that the dive experience can be improved and scuba diving tourism sustained in Sihanoukville.

In recent years the overseas direct investment (ODI) from China's textiles industry to the lease developed countries has increased obviously. Under the global economic crisis environment the Chinese textile & garment industry has confronted a very big challenge never met before, and China's government encourages the ODI of the textiles industry further. On the basis of the ODI cases from Jiangsu textiles industry, this paper mainly discussed the effect of the Jiangsu Hongdou Group's ODI in Sihanoukville on the structure adjustment of Jiangsu textiles industry.

For a century or so Cambodia was part of the French Indochinese Empire. With growing demands for greater self determination France reluctantly granted a measure of autonomy after WWII to Cambodia and full independence in 1953. In the capital of Phnom Penh there is a large memorial celebrating this independence, and there are versions of this memorial in other towns of Cambodia.

There is one such in Sihanoukville, a coastal resort town, 250kms south of Phnom Penh. This memorial was constructed in 1985 and is located in Independence Square. Ceremonies are held there on every January 7th.

The authors have studied 68 children admitted with malaria in Sihanoukville Hospital (Cambodia) from December 1992 to April 1993. Sihanoukville is located on coast of the country, in a hypoendemic area with seasonal transmission occurring during this study. The patients lived in urban (1/3) or in rural areas (2/3). Plasmodium (P.) vivax alone was found in 15 cases.

Among them, two patients presented with severe malaria, but chloroquine was efficient in all cases. P. falciparum with or without P. vivax, was predominant (53 cases). Most of these cases were severe, according to WHO criteria (n = 43), from which 11 deaths occurred (25%). There were 26 cases of cerebral malaria, with a death rate of 34.6%. A severe course was observed with the following criteria: prostration or coma (p = 0.029), severe anaemia (p = 0.037) and hyperparasitaemia (p = 0.00078). A significant longer delay for treatment and admission was noted among rural patients (p = 0.023 and p = 0.011 respectively). In those children, hyperparasitaemia, poor clinical status on admission and lethality were more frequent. The clinical course was not clearly improved with the addition of erythromycin in the quinine regimen. No quinine resistance was observed in this data.

**Keywords:** Scuba diving tourism; Experience; Satisfaction; Sihanoukville; Cambodia.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Kompong Som, Sihanoukville, Cambodia. Was first founded in the '50s as a deep-sea port. The town itself is a mess of dusty concrete and grubby shop fronts. The main beach areas are where the action is, particularly around Ochheuteal Beach. This beach and the district behind it are now replete with any number of hotels, guesthouses, restaurants, and nightlife venues. It is a pleasant place, though the beach at the north end can get pretty crowded. The other side of town around Victory Beach is developing in an entirely incongruous fashion. The beach itself has seen an influx of Russian money which has led to some bizarre venues, including a disco with a real airplane in it and a restaurant you share with snakes and crocodiles. Behind the beach around Victory Hill is a small district that has a couple of fine restaurants. The area is blighted by an increasing amount of sleaze, so you may want to keep your distance.

Cambodia is situated on the southern part of the Indochina Peninsula of Southeast Asia, bounded by Vietnam in east, Laos in north and Thailand in west, and close to Gulf of Thailand, which has a 460 kilometers of coastline. The central and south of Cambodia is plain, east, north and west of Cambodia is surrounded by mountains and highlands, and most of these area is covered by forests. Part of Mekong River flow through the east of Cambodia, is about 500 kilometers. Lake Tonle Sap is the biggest natural fresh water lake in Southeast Asia, famous as its name—fish lake.

There is no earthquake, Tsunami and such natural disasters in Cambodia, it is suited for living. The national population of Cambodia is over 14 million with about 20 nations, the major nation is Khmer which is 80 percentages of all, also has other nations such as Cham, PuNong. There is about 600 thousand ethnic Chinese in Cambodia. The official language is Khmer. The state religion is Buddhism; about 90% of people are Buddhists.

Sihanoukville is located in the south of Cambodia and also one of the opened windows to the outside. It owned the good condition of infrastructure and convenient communication. Here has the sole international port and national airport—the Sihanoukville airport. The Prime Minister, Hun Sen has appointed the Sihanoukville province as the leader of Cambodia economic lifeline.

### ***Objectives***

- a) To study the tourism development plan and coastal strategic management in Sihanoukville.
- b) To investigate the current situation of community- based tourism development in Sihanoukville.
- c) To make recommendations for the community- based tourism development to achieve sustainable tourism in Sihanoukville.

## **2. METHOD**

Research was conducted on the population in Sihanoukville, which can be classified into 3 groups of respondents as shown in the following lists. Group I: The Local Community (representatives of the local community aged over 18 years). Group II: The Tourism Businesses including hotels, travel agencies, restaurants, etc. Group III: The Government Officials, from the central government (Ministry of Tourism in Phnom Penh), and from Sihanoukville Officials (Tourism Office, Sihanoukville City Hall and offers stakeholders) as shown in Table.

## **3. RESULTS**

The chapter presented the results using qualitative to quantitative methods. The primary data was collected by observation, from interviews with government officials and tourism business, and from questionnaires amongst the local people. The questionnaires and interviews were developed and translated into the local language to collect primary quantitative data from surrounding community. The results from the research of “community-based tourism development in Sihanoukville, Cambodia” were presented by using various descriptions and tables. SPSS 16.0 windows facilitated data analysis. The results were divided into several specific sections concerning with the site opinion of people who answered, plus the observations. Significant results and discussions were as follows:

1. Personal Information
2. Local Community’s opinion towards CBT development in the Coastal area in Sihanoukville
3. Local Participation in CBT development in Sihanoukville

4. Local Community's suggestions.
5. Interviews with government officials in Sihanoukville.
6. Interviews with tourism businesses in Sihanoukville

### ***Personal Information***

The personal information of respondents was analyzed individually into frequency and percentage. There were gender, age, marital status, religion, household monthly income, and members who work in hospitality industry. The personal information could be described as follows:

#### **1. Gender**

Female respondents were 51.6% or 206 total persons, and the rest of 48.4%, or 193 persons were male. This result was in line with the general information of the Sihanoukville area in Cambodia, which stated that the majority of local residents were female.

#### **2. Age group**

Most respondents' age was in the age range of 26-40 years old, 157 persons or 39.3%, followed by 110 persons or 27.6% of respondents whose ages were 41-45 years old, 96 persons or 24.1% were 18-25 years old, and the last 36 persons or 9.0% of respondents were over 55 years old. In this case the result viewed that most of the local residents tried to answer all parts of the questionnaires that the researcher divided amongst them because they were interested to participate in CBT development in Sihanoukville.

#### **3. Education level**

The majority of the respondents had reached secondary school, 155 persons or 39.3%, high school, bachelor's degree and master's degree, 212 persons or 53.1%, primary school, 27 persons or 6.8%, the smallest group of non-education, 5 persons or 1.3% of total respondents. The majority of respondents had basic education in secondary and high school, reading and writing, and they thought it was sufficient for their occupation in tourism business or agriculture and fishermen.

#### **4. Marital status**

The majority of respondents were married- this comprised of 197 persons or 49.4%, followed by single, 157 persons or 39.3%, widowed, 33 persons or 8.3%, and divorced, 12 persons or 3.0%, single respondents, which proved that this society is modernizing.

#### **5. Religion**

The majority of respondents were Buddhist- this totaled 357 persons or 89.5% and there were 27 persons or 6.8% Christian respondents, followed by 15 persons or 3.8% Islamic peoples. It is shown that very few of Christian and Islam religious group's people live in the surrounding village of Sihanoukville.

#### **6. Personal monthly income**

The majority of respondent's personal incomes were 30,000 - 50,000 Riels (75-125USD) per month, 142 persons or 35.6%. This was compatible with the majority of occupations that were fishermen and tourism business. The second largest range income was 200,001-300,000 Riels (50-75USD), which earned by 104 persons or 26.1%, and 82 persons or 20.6%, earned 500,001-1,000,000 Riels (125-250USD) per month. The personal monthly income was less than 200,000 Riels (50USD) per month, 27 persons or 6.8%. Only, 44 persons or 11.0% earned over 1,000,000 Riels (250USD) and most of them were self-business groups and working in the Sihanoukville port. This indicates that people depend largely on fishery, tourism business, and agriculture.

#### **7. Working in Hospitality**

The majority of residents were working in the hotel industry. There are 239 persons or 59.9% of the local respondent population, and 160 persons or 40.1% of the residents were not working hospitality and tourism. From the total of 399 respondents in Sihanoukville, the majority of respondents were in restaurant and guesthouses, accounted for 54 persons or 13.5% and 47 persons or 11.8%. However, there were 64 persons or 16.4% of the total respondents who work for other

kinds of jobs, such as, hotels and massage. Likewise, 30 persons or 7.5% taxi boat, 25 persons or 6.3% souvenir shops, 12 persons or 3.0% local tour guide, and 7 persons or 1.8% water sports.

**Table 3.1 Personal Information of Community**

Personal Information	Frequency	Percentage
<b>1. Gender</b>		
Male	193	48.4
Female	206	51.6
<b>Total</b>	399	100.0
<b>2. Age group</b>		
18-25 years	96	24.1
26-40 years	157	39.3
41-55 years	110	27.6
Over 55 years	36	9.0
<b>Total</b>	399	100.0
<b>3. Education</b>		
Non-education	5	1.3
Primary school	27	6.8
Secondary School	155	38.8
Others (high school, Bachelor, master, doctor)	212	53.1
<b>Total</b>	399	100.0
<b>4. Marital status</b>		
Single	157	39.3
Married	197	49.4
Widowed	33	8.3
Divorced	12	3.00
<b>Total</b>	399	100.0
<b>5. Religious</b>		
Buddhism	359	89.5
Islam	15	3.8
Christian	27	6.8
<b>Total</b>	399	100.0
<b>6. Personal monthly income</b>		
<200,000 Riels	27	6.8
200,001-300,000 Riels	104	26.1
300,001-500,000 Riels	142	35.6
500,001-1,000,000 Riels	82	20.6
>1,000,000 Riels	44	11.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>399</b>	100.0
<b>7. Working in Hospital</b>		
No	160	40.1
Yes	239	59.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>7.1 Water Sport</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1.8</b>
<b>7.2 Guesthouse</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>11.8</b>
<b>7.3 Restaurant</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>13.5</b>
<b>7.4 Local tour guide</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3.0</b>
<b>7.5 Souvenir shop</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>6.3</b>
<b>7.6 Taxi boat</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>7.5</b>
<b>7.7 Others</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>16.0</b>

*Local Community's opinion towards Community-Based Tourism development in the Coastal area in Sihanoukville*

Analyzing the opinion of the local community towards a community-based tourism development project in Sihanoukville, the questionnaires were divided into seventeen questions.

The issues were mainly about environmental and socio-cultural benefits from tourism, economic benefits, environmental benefits, participation level within the tourism activities, and adverse effects from tourism. They ranged into 5 levels from strongly agree to strongly disagree. In the Table 3.2 showed that 197 persons or 49.4% of the respondents strongly agreed, and 146 persons or 36.60% agreed that tourism is good for their community (mean = 4.35). Only 56 people or 14.0% of the respondents neutrally trusted that the tourism would be good for their community.

From the three statements which are “I personally benefit from the tourism industry”, “create jobs for local residents”, and “employs local youth”, first, they rated at the agree levels of the first two statements making up 225 persons or 56.4% with (mean = 4.12 and 3.92), and 203 persons or 50.9% agreed with the last statement (mean = 3.83). Secondly, 111 persons or 27.8% strongly agreed that they got benefits from the tourism industry. 96 persons or 24.1% strongly agreed that CBT employs the local youth and creates jobs for local residents. Thirdly, they rated the neutral levels of three statements as follows: 63 persons or 15.8%, 43 persons or 10.8%, and 52 persons or 13.0%.

Finally, for disagree and strongly disagree levels they had only the last two statements that answered. Disagree levels by 20 persons or 5.0% and 34 persons or 8.5%, and strongly disagree levels by 15 persons or 3.8% and 14 persons or 3.5%. The opinion from respondents, 185 persons or 46.4% (mean = 3.46%) said that the community could obtain service which rated at the neutral level, while the other 131 persons or 32.8% rated at the agree level, only 45 persons or 11.3% rated at ‘strongly agree’.

There are only 38 persons or 9.5% rated at disagree level expected that community could obtain service. The majority of respondents, 186 persons or 46.6%, believed that tourism helps revitalize local natural and craft (mean = 3.93), for 105 persons or 26.3% who strongly agreed with this benefit, and 83 persons or 20.8% in the neutral levels, only 25 persons or 6.3% disagree with this part.

The importance of respondents, 182 persons or 45.6%, rated at the neutral level, and also showed that the community has power to take control over tourism (mean = 3.36), while the others 132 persons or 33.1% rated at the agree level, and then 39 persons or 9.8% rated at strongly agree. There are only 27 persons or 6.8% rated at disagree level, and the last 19 persons or 4.8% rated at strongly disagree level. So, the majority of respondents, 151 persons or 37.8%, rated at the neutral level, and also trusted that the money spent by visitors remains in the community (mean = 3.37), and other 122 persons or 30.6% rated at the agree level, only 57 persons or 14.3% rated at strongly agree level. After this, 49 persons or 12.3% disagree, but 20 persons or 5.0% of the respondents rated at strongly disagree level.

The level of local community satisfy with tourism development in Sihanoukville, the special respondents, were 194 persons or 48.6% (mean = 3.83) rated at the agree level, while the others 105 persons or 26.3% rated at the neutral level, and 79 persons or 19.8% rated at strongly agree. There are only 21 persons or 5.3% rated at disagree level. Lastly, the majority of the respondents, 228 persons or 57.1% rated at the agree level, and were interested in overall community-based tourism development in Sihanoukville, which brings benefits to the local people (mean = 3.88). The others, 86 persons or 21.6% rated at the neutral level, and 70 persons or 17.5% rated at strongly agree. An exception: 15 persons or 3.8% had the disagree level about community-based tourism development in Sihanoukville brings benefits to the local people.

On the contrary, the main distribution of respondents' opinion with tourism raising the prices for goods rated at the agree level which accounted for 174 persons or 43.6% (mean = 3.43), 162 persons or 40.6% have been given the neutral level, and 26 persons or 6.5% rated at strongly agree level. But, 19 persons or 9.8% rated at the disagree level, only 18 persons or 4.5% who do strongly disagree level expected that tourism raise price for goods. The majority of respondents, 217 persons or 54.4% who rated at the neutral level expected that tourism will cause rise in crime rate (mean = 3.28), while the other 92 persons or 23.1% rated at agree level, and 43 persons or 10.8% rated at strongly agree level.

There are only 28 persons or 7.0%, who rated at the disagree level, and another 19 persons or 4.8% who were at the strongly disagree level on tourism, which causes a rise in crime rate. The main distribution of respondents, 182 persons or 45.6% rated at the neutral level and thought that tourism stops locals from park access (mean = 3.24), while the other 103 persons or 25.8% rated at agree level, but 56 persons or 14.0% rated at the disagree level, only 41 persons or 10.3% rated at strongly agree level. Another 17 persons or 4.3% expressed strongly disagreed level tourism stops local from park

access. Besides, the majority of respondents, 188 persons or 47.1% rated at the neutral level that tourism harms the environment (mean = 3.17), then 126 persons or 31.6% rated at the agree level, while the other 55 persons or 13.8% rated at the disagree level, only 14 persons or 3.8% rated at the strongly agree level. The next, 16 persons or 4.0% rated at the strongly disagree level that tourism harms the environment.

For the main distribution of respondents, 192 persons or 48.1% rated at the neutral level that tourism harms moral standards (mean = 3.21), while the other 124 persons or 31.1% showed their opinions at the agree level, for 51 persons or 12.8% rated at the disagree level, only 19 persons or 4.8% rated at the strongly agree level. 13 persons or 3.3% rated at the strongly disagree level that tourism harms moral standards in their area. To begin with, tourism disrupts local activities.

The opinion from respondents, 191 persons or 47.9% rated at the neutral level (mean = 3.21), while the other 131 persons or 32.8% rated at the agree level, and the respondents 15 persons or 3.8% rated at the strongly agree level, following this 15 persons or 3.8% also rated at the strongly disagree level, because the respondents thought that tourism disrupts local activities in their area.

Moreover, the majority of respondents, 209 persons or 52.4% rated at the neutral level and believed that tourism uses natural resources needed by local residents (e.g. fish, water) (mean = 3.21), after this 95 persons or 23.8% rated at the agree level, and the other 45 persons or 11.3% rated at the disagree level, only 33 persons or 8.3% rated at the strongly agree level. But then, the respondents 17 persons or 4.3% rated at the strongly disagree level, because the residents considered that tourism uses natural resources needed by local residents.

#### **4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The research was to investigate the obstacles impeding the community-based tourism development in Sihanoukville. The obstacles are examined through community survey, interviews of government officials and tourism businesses, and the results are summarized as follows:

##### ***Personal Information***

The main respondents in Sihanoukville are females mostly in the 26-40 years age group with secondary school education. Most of them are married, professed the Buddhist religion, and earn 200,001 -500,000 Riels per month, an income compatible with their jobs. Those involved in hospitality are working in restaurants or hotels and guesthouses. The respondents who are not working in hospitality or tourism industry are self employed, or engaged in the fishery, agriculture, and government jobs. Local Community's opinion towards CBT development in the Coastal area in Sihanoukville. From the results of the survey, the attitudes of the local communities in Sihanoukville towards CBT development in the coastal area are varied. The positive effects include: "Tourism is good for my community"; "I personally benefit from the tourism industry"; "Tourism creates jobs for local residents"; "Tourism employs local youth"; "Tourism helps the community obtain services"; "Tourism helps revitalize local natural and crafts"; "The community has power to control over tourism"; "The money spent by visitors remain in the community"; "I am satisfied with tourism development in Sihanoukville"; and "Community-based tourism development in Sihanoukville brings benefits to the local people". The negative effects include: "Tourism raises price of goods while; "Tourism causes rise in crime rate"; "Tourism stops locals from park access"; "Tourism harms the environment"; "Tourism harms moral standards"; "Tourism disrupts local activities"; and "Tourism uses natural resources needed by local residents (e.g. fish, water)".

In this part, 18 key indicators are used to assess the response to community-based tourism development in the coastal area in Sihanoukville. More than half of the local communities strongly support tourism. Most of them believe that tourism is good for their community and tourism supports their livelihood by creating jobs for the local residents and employing local youths. In addition, tourism helps to keep and conserve the nature and the culture of the local communities in the coastal area. The respondents say that tourism helps to revitalize local natural and crafts and contribute to poverty alleviation through community-based tourism development in the coastal area. However, some of the local communities express their concerns with regards to the negative impacts of tourism in their coastal area. Local Participation in CBT development in Sihanoukville From the results, the respondents from the local communities have keen interest in tourism activities, decision-making, and implementation. They express interest in being involved planning, study of background, evaluation, and problem-solving in community-based tourism development. The interest of respondents differs with regards to each community-based tourism development activities, which tend to correspond to their educational level, age group, and occupation.

Local Community's suggestions the local communities believe that increasing number of tourists would bring them more economic benefits. Besides this, some of respondents feel that local communities have no knowledge about tourism. The local communities suggest that the government should develop the basic infrastructures and services in and around Sihanoukville, including road, electricity, water, school, health center, and tourism information center. There is also recognition of the more importance of human resource development programs, and the need to take action, control and follow up on all plans and policies. Furthermore, the local communities see that increased community participation in CBT development could help to alleviate poverty and bring about equitable distribution of benefits from tourists revenue to the local communities.

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