

Marine Eco-tourism and Its Socio-economic Assessment for Hsiao-Liu-Chiu Island

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the potential and value of developing sustainable eco-tourism for Hsiao-Liu-Chiu Island. Questionnaires and on-site surveys were used to analyze the different challenges and issues facing the development of sustainable eco-tourism. Suggestions based on the results of this survey provide a guide for planners and managers. This study based on non-market evaluation, the Travel Cost Method (TCM) and the Contingent Valuation Method (CVM), to evaluate the benefits of developing leisure and recreation on Hsiao-Liu-Chiu. The empirical results indicated that, each tourist's recreation benefits are NT\$1,900.63 measured by TCM method, and NT\$1,700.79 measured by CVM method. The overall benefits are NT\$2.54 hundred million (TCM) and NT\$ 2.78 hundred million (CVM) in 2003. Finally, this study provided suggestions for the development, planning and management of leisure and recreational activities on Hsiao-Liu-Chiu Island.

Key words: Hsiao-Liu-Chiu Island, Ecotourism, TCM, CVM.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past several decades, the tourism industry has begun to market, and some tourists have come to favor, the concept of ecotourism, especially in coastal and marine locations (Miller, 1991; Miller & Auyong, 1991b; Grenier *et al.*). The origins of ecotourism and its sociological significance merit discussion. Ecotourism dates to 1965 when Hetzer called for a rethinking of cultural education, and tourism, and promoted ecological tourism (eco-tourism). Today, eco-tourism has international appeal as a concept grounded in the ideals of preservation-conservation and sustainable development. As the term has come to be employed, it evokes a host of near-synonyms. Valentine

(1991) reports that ecotourism is recast in the literature as 'adventure tourism,' 'nature-oriented tourism,' 'alternative tourism,' 'appropriate tourism,' 'soft tourism,' 'responsible tourism,' 'ethical tourism,' 'environment-friendly travel,' 'green tourism,' 'sustainable tourism,' and 'nature tourism.' One could extend this list by citing or manufacturing other alternatives or special cases such as 'equality tourism,' 'ethnic tourism,' 'cultural tourism,' 'socio-ecological tourism,' 'photo-safari tourism,' 'dive tourism,' or 'surfing tourism'. Ecotourism has been technically defined in many ways: as an activity of tourists, as a private enterprise or government service, and as a guide for ethical conduct. For Hetzer (1965), responsible 'eco-tourism' is measured against four standards:

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