

An Abstract of the Thesis of  
Susan Dunn for the degree of Master of Arts  
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Title: TOWARD EMPOWERMENT: WOMEN AND COMMUNITY-BASED  
TOURISM IN THAILAND

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In recent years, tourism has garnered widespread support as a tool for sustainable development. Alternative forms of tourism have emerged such as ecotourism, pro-poor tourism, volunteer tourism, and in particular, community-based tourism. While sustainable tourism development strongly emphasizes environmental issues, it seems that sociocultural issues have been overshadowed. Gender considerations need to be included in a critical analysis of the sociocultural impacts of these emerging forms of tourism.

This research seeks to determine how a community-based tourism project promotes the empowerment of women, using a case study of one rural Thai community, Leeled. Empowerment is operationalized as a multidimensional process with political, psychological, social, and economic dimensions experienced individually and collectively. While community-based tourism projects have been successful in promoting

women's empowerment, they could be more successful and improve sustainability if development practitioners would incorporate a gender analysis assessment throughout the development process.