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THE KNOWLEDGE AND BEHAVIORS OF THAI PEOPLE TOWARDS MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION

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ABSTRACT

Microplastics contamination to marine life and coastal environment is a significant global issue. Countries that promote tourism will face more problems with extreme garbage accumulation, especially the coastal sites. The waste size is due to density in population and the quality of waste management systems of the country. As Thailand is ranked the world's sixth largest country as a contributor of plastic marine debris, to date still have no concrete national action plan to reduce this problem. The clear public policy and the measures to control the waste disposal behaviors of local Thais and tourists are unknown. This study aims to survey the knowledge, concern about microplastic effects on marine and human life and plastic waste disposal behaviors of Thai people who are local tourists to coastal areas. There are 1016 participants from all regions responding to online questionnaires. The majority of participants were from the central (36%), Bangkok (31%), and Southern (11.4%). The popular beaches are Pattaya, Hua Hin, and Bangsan. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. The results show that Thai people have a knowledge mean score of 11.29 out of 15 (SD 2.85), and behavior mean score of 34.77 out of 45 (SD 3.15). There is a significant relationship between knowledge of microplastics and plastic waste disposal behavior of Thai people ($p < .001$). The knowledge about law and responsibility of plastic waste disposal including the route to get microplastics via drinking and breathing is moderate to low. Thai people show minimal interest in marine environmental preservation activities, especially actively participating in reducing plastic waste on the beach. The Thai government needs to provide public education regarding the related laws and microplastics pollution knowledge to people including supporting the local government especially near the coastal sites to find the strategies and initiate campaign on proper plastic waste disposal behaviors among Thais and tourists.

Keywords: microplastics, pollution, plastic waste disposal, plastic debris, marine environmental preservation