

Research Article

RELEVANCE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE PHILIPPINES: CASE OF BORACAY ISLAND AND PUERTO PRINCESA CITY

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ABSTRACT

Tourism industry serves as one of the top incomes of several countries due to its contribution to the economic development and welfare for its people. However, the tourism industry also has negative impacts to the environment and to the community. In order to address these issues, several nations are shifting to sustainable tourism as an alternative. With the practices of sustainable tourism and its fast growth to many developing countries such as the Philippines which resulted for natural resources preservation and economic development at the same time. Thus, it is in this frame of reference that this paper will provide insights on how sustainable tourism practices, particularly in Boracay and Puerto Princesa as two of the leading tourist destination sites is beneficial to the country. The study was conducted for a period of two months and gathered data coming from the Department of Tourism, City Tourism Offices and Key informants. Policies were also implemented by their local governments to ensure that sustainable tourism practices are maintained. Community based participation is highly recommended because this concept will provide additional employment to the community within the rural areas of the tourist destinations.

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INTRODUCTION

Sustainable tourism is now an emerging factor around the world. Almost, if not, all countries participate in promoting sustainable tourism as an alternative not only to preserve our natural resources but also to conserve and protect the environment at the same time. In the Philippines, the tourism industry is one of the contributing factors for the country's development. This was further enhanced when the Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park (PPSRNP) was declared as one of the New Seven Wonders of Nature in 2012 (Rosero, 2012). The tourism industry in the Philippines suddenly boomed with both tourists from local and international scale. Several experts from different fields of environmental awareness visited the country to share their proposed policies and recommendations in improving sustainable tourism of the Philippines. Sustainable tourism has been defined by Untamed Path (2009) as a "representation of any form of tourism that does not reduce the availability of resources and does not inhibit future travelers from enjoying the same experience.

For example, if the presence of large numbers of tourists disturbs an animal's mating patterns so that there are fewer of that species in the future, then that visit was not sustainable." Another factor is that ecotourism can also be a part of sustainable tourism but it does not mean that it is entitled to be automatically a part of it. In order to promote the policy of the State to ensure the sustainable use, development, management, protection and conservation of the country's environment and natural resources for the enjoyment of the present and future generations, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) enacted the Administrative Order 2013-19 or the "Guidelines on Ecotourism Planning and Management in Protected Areas" (DENR, 2013). The DENR supports the sustainable tourism program of the Philippines because it helps us conserve our natural resources and at the same time contributing to the economic growth of the Philippines.

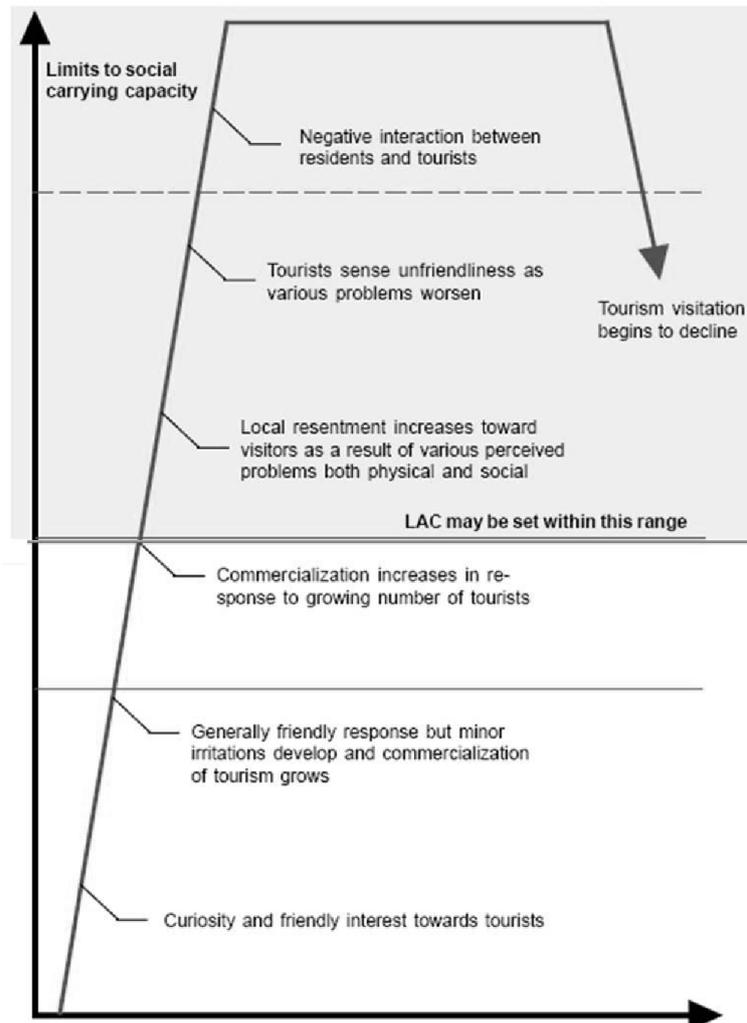
Status in the Philippines

The declaration of the PPSRNP as a world heritage site by the UNESCO proved that there is a big chance for the country to shift from the traditional practices of the tourism industry to sustainable tourism. In the Island of Boracay, the tourism industry began in the early years from 1980's due to its rich biodiversity in its ocean floor.

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Marine life consisting of fishes, coral reefs and other sea creatures served as a catalyst in promoting Boracay as a tourist attraction (Anonymous, 2011). Besides the marine resources, Boracay is also known for its white sand beaches that attracts both foreign and local tourists especially its view during sunrise and sunset. The characteristics of Boracay seems to be an ideal model of ecotourism as an integration of conservation and development, in which entrepreneurs, government and tourists create sustainable development while improving the welfare of local people (Barna, Epure and Vsilescu, 2011). The government provides priority to both environmental and cultural spaces that has the potential to become a sustainable tourism site. They provide technical and financial necessities that will help them progress into an attractive tourist site for future sources of economic livelihood. In order to obtain these needs, a framework for tourism demonstration and programs in the field of international cooperation are being held which also gives crafts an introductory process of managing environmental systems (Hutche, White and Flores, 2002). According to the Sustainable Tourism Framework of the Philippines, sustainable tourism was drawn from the country's folklore about *Malakas and Maganda*, popularly known as Adam and Eve in the Bible. It is through this idea that the concept of partnership and equality is already a part of the Filipino Culture which acts as a catalyst for the utilization of sustainable tourism in the Philippines.

Boracay is in need of active authorities in order to take over the development standards as a major tourism area in the Philippines. Due to the fact that there is a complete consensus within its residents as well as tourists, this results to a big number of control varied freedom of actions in the area such as the rules and regulations in it. According to Hutche et. al. (2002), there has been an excessive stress with regards to infrastructure that sums up to exceeding the carrying capacity of the tourism area. However it is different in Boracay, as it has been considered as a coastal tourism site due to its access and transportation infrastructures. This makes is its main difference in the province of Palawan wherein the main focus is to promote sustainable tourism, but coastal resources can also be considered as a part of sustainable tourism due to its marine resources such as corals, different species of fishes where some are rare and has a high status of conservation. Palawan has a different case because the province has been focusing to promote sustainable tourism for almost 20 years. Most of the sustainable areas that are developed for tourism are located at the capital of the province which is the city of Puerto Princesa. Common practices such as the use of green technologies, in cooperation with different non-government organizations give the city a big savings in terms of tourism infrastructure maintenance. The Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park (PPSRNP) is located in the northern part of the city



Source: Murphy, P. (1983)

Figure 1. Impact of carrying capacity to tourists

It is the major destination not only in Puerto Princesa, but also in the whole country because it has been proclaimed as one of the New Seven Wonders of Nature last January 2012. In order for the country to ensure the protection of country's natural resources, sustainable use and conservation management, the Executive Order 111 was implemented to provide the country's Ecotourism Development guidelines. Figure 1 provides the interaction between the people (both tourists and residents) and its tourism carrying capacity as cited from Murphy (1983). It gives an insight on the effects of mismanagement of tourism carrying capacity which could lead to dispersion of tourist arrivals.

Partner Institutions

Sustainable tourism in the Philippines teams up with different government, non-government and private institutions to promote sustainability in terms of development and practices of ecotourism. Since these areas are considered to be facilitated by communities, it is a must to engage local communities in the ecotourism industry in order to have their own share in its benefits (Bagadion and Del Fierro-Juan, 2013). An article written by Emery, Fey and Flora (2006) suits this area because there is an asset development in communities that can be found when investing in the existing assets in projects and strategies that are built across the community. The exercises in this community Capitals Framework together with tourism development plans by the DENR will provide a guide progress regarding the effect of framework and accomplishments as well as the community's interests and objectives for their tourism infrastructures. The developments of these areas are in also affected by sustainable tourism practices as one of their sources of economic income.

Brief History

The Asian Development Bank (2007) stated an improved financial space will empower the Government to contribute more in foundation, human capital and social programs. Since the Philippines has been under the improvement of governance since 1986, it has been conferred to have supported development of employment and business, stable costs, neediness elimination and made strides dispersion of income and wealth in an open economy setting. Sustainable tourism developed from the early 19th century when it was just called as nature tourism, these nature journeys are not that popular and were poorly developed (Naturefriends International, 2011). During the early 1990's the sustainable tourism institution is not that popular in the Philippines yet.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study has been conducted for a period of two months from October to November 2015. Data has been gathered through online publications and regional office of the Department of Tourism as well as review of online articles and reports from the Philippine International Bureau. Key informant, through correspondence and phone interview, provided valuable information about the tourism industry in the province of Palawan. On the other hand, since the Island of Boracay is another famous destination, the data were gathered through review of articles from different institutions and scholarly journals especially from the Department of Tourism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The local governments of these two ecotourism areas (Puerto Princesa and Boracay) cooperate with the Department of Tourism (DOT) and the DENR. Both the DOT and the DENR helps provide ecotourism framework plans to improve its services and facilities with regards to buffer zones. For example, the birth of Puerto Princesa's ecotourism started in 1992 with the decentralization of parks management due to the Local Government Code of 1991 (Dressler, Kull and Meredith, 2006).

Table 1. Levels, numbers and prices of tourism facilities in Boracay

Levels of Tourisms authorized by the Bureau	Number of Hotels	Number of Rooms	Price (Peso)
AAA	23	1656	12,000-120,000
AA	12	415	4,000-6,000
A	3	40	2,000-5,000
Under A	5	94	2,000-3,500
Not Permitted	292	5155	1,500-6,500
Total	334	7360	-

Source: Philippines International Bureau and Department of Tourism

Furthermore, the DENR tested the quality of marine waters in the island of Boracay to see if the water quality had met the standards for safe swimming waters. Palawan became a famous tourism destination after the proclamation of the Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park (PPSRNP) as one of the New Seven Wonders of Nature on January 28, 2012. Since these areas are part of the Protected Areas in the Philippines, several stakeholders agree that they are also facing challenges along its performance. The tourism sector in Boracay Island was built in the late 1970's with the Philippine Tourism Authority (under the Department of Tourism). The tourism project in the Island specifically began in 1977, to which the PTA evaluated areas that are seen to be potentially suitable for tourism development. After passing the evaluation, the Boracay Island built a few "Nipa" huts as an early tourist accommodation. Regarding to hotel accommodations, bamboo houses were found in built which has an catering services and can house approximately twenty to thirty people (Takashi et. al., 2011).

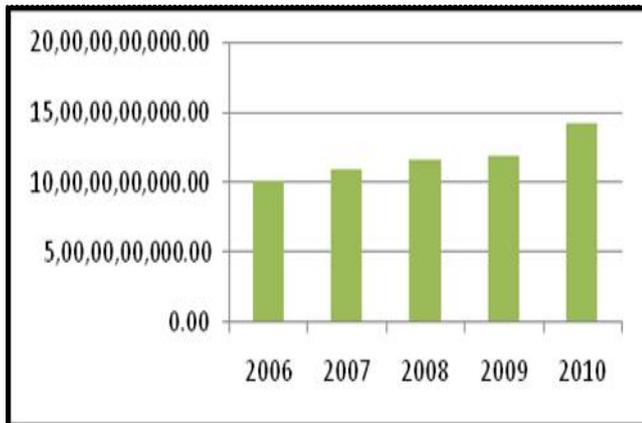
Over the years, the island was able to develop and increase its facilities into what it is now today. Together with the cooperation of the Local Government and different private sector, the Island was able to give different facilities and a consistent supply of electricity and water which replaced the traditional gas lamps of the Island. Takashi et. al. (2011) concluded that the tourism sector in Boracay greatly affected the lifestyle of its people. The table below shows the level of tourism facilities and its numbers as well as the price from the Philippines International Bureau. Table 1 shows the prices of tourism infrastructures in Boracay, out of the 334, 292 are considered to have no permit wherein it also has the highest number of rooms as well as the cheapest. The types of services that the tourists can have in the Island are the following:

Considerably, Boracay had an increase of tourist arrivals in both domestic and foreign tourists. The tourism receipts or income of the island in the island can be seen in the graph below.

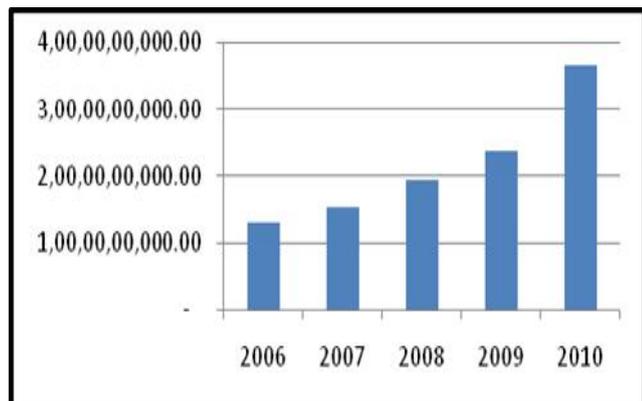
Table 2. Services offered

Service Type	Total
Restaurant and Bar	107
Coffee shops and Internet Café	34
Massage Parlor	83
Motor Boat Rental Shop	47
Diving Shop	40
Souvenir Shop	104
Pump Boat Rental Shop	88

Source: Philippines International Bureau and Department of Tourism



Source: Philippine International Bureau and Department of Tourism

Figure 2. The tourism receipts of the Boracay Island

Source: Philippine International Bureau and Department of Tourism

Figure 3. Tourism Receipts of Puerto Princesa City

It provides a steady increase of income for the island from the year 2006-2010. In Palawan, the main tourist attractions are located in the city of Puerto Princesa, according to Mr. Rene Baylon from the City Tourism Office (2015). The growth of the tourism industry increased from time to time with an average rate of 10% annually. Puerto Princesa alone was also able to provide appropriate income for economic development of the city. Even before the proclamation of the Puerto Princesa Underground River National Park (PPSRNP) as a world heritage site, the city was able to continuously increase its tourist receipts from both domestic and foreign guests from 2006 up to 2010. Furthermore, a study conducted by Manalo (2017) states that several ecotourism activities also exist in the city as part of their community based sustainable tourism (CBST) practices.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The ecotourism sector of the Philippines, with the Boracay and Palawan as a basis were able to provide benefit and economic income not only for the development of the community around it but also to the country as a whole. The Philippines were able to experience a big factor of development in terms of attracting foreign and domestic tourists. Several stakeholders coming from both the public and private sector invest in these tourism areas to ensure business opportunities and creation of employment to the indigenous community around it. Both Boracay and the City of Puerto Princesa, were able to provide more than enough income contribution to the development of the country. Continued promotion of the ecotourism destination and unearthing more potential destinations are paving its way for wealth distribution in rural areas. Results showed that with the continuous and proper maintenance of ecotourism industry coupled with strong good governance initiatives will lead to growth of development in the country. Huttch et al. (2002) recommended that the following should be done in order to prevent pollution of these development areas:

- Hotel operators and LGUs need to be proactive and use the quality standards to monitor and control the performance of their treatment systems;
- Regular water testing at the outlet of the system should be recorded and kept for reference or corrective actions;
- LGUs or NGOs with access to laboratory facilities or water testing kits can conduct independent control of water quality along beaches to detect potential sources of environmental pollution in the interest of the general public;
- DENR or LGU should do more regular monitoring of water parameters, especially during seasons of high tourist visitation in prime tourism areas; and
- Hotel operators should seek cooperation with experts and the LGU to improve treatment capacities and qualities for wastewater and sewage

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