

Chapter Twenty-one

Ecotourism in Palawan: A Case Study

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Introduction

The province of Palawan is blessed with rich resources (as described below) and with its historical and cultural attractions offers ample opportunities for varied activities. The pristine environment setting is excellent for sightseeing, beach holidays, marine sports, adventures etc. The province has a number of world-class spots, such as the underground river in St Paul National Park, karst terrain and lakes in Coron, Tabon Caves, Quezon, Ursula Island, Bataraza, Tubattacha Reef, Cagayancillo, Calauit Island, Busuanga Island, Honda Bay, Puerto Princesa City, beaches, islands lagoons and dive sites in El Nido, Taytay and Fin Bay, and Cuyo Island.

The Resources

Palawan, the largest province in the Philippines, is composed of 1769 islands and islets. It has a total land area of 1 489 655 hectares and occupies 5% of the national territory. Stretching 650 km from tip to tip, it reclines between Mindora Island and North Borneo and is approximately 240 km southwest of Manila. Palawan is bounded by the South China Sea to the northwest and by the Sulu Seas to the east. Its provincial limits commence with Busuanga Island in the north, the Cuyo Group of islands in the northeast, Cagayancillo in the east and Spratley Islands in the west. It ends with Balabac farthest south. The southernmost tip of Balabac (Mangsee Island) is 48.8 nautical miles from Sabah (North Borneo).

Located west of the main Philippine chain of islands, Palawan is the country's southwest frontier with Malaysia. It forms a link between the Philippines and the East Indies. It lies between 7°47' and 12°22' north latitude and 117°00' and 119°51' east longitude.

The province is subdivided into 23 municipalities, one city and 431 barangays. Eleven municipalities are located on the mainland. The other 12

with a panoramic view of Jawili Beach and the Sibuyan Sea. It is a stone's throw away from the seven basin Jawili Falls. The project is envisioned to serve as a mini-research facility where small farmer-producers can observe and consult on the latest information on piña cloth production techniques. A display and retail centre for finished piña cloth and other local handcrafted products will be constructed. Implementation will be in partnership with local NGOs who will provide the project's supervision.

This project is within the overall objective of transforming the whole province of Aklan into a destination of its own, anchored on agri- and ecotourism. This is contained in the Aklan Tourism Master Plan that the Task Force drafted and printed in March 2000. Titled "Hala Bira! A Reawakening, Tourism Strategic Development Plan," it offers three planning horizons: the short-term agenda (1-5 years); the medium-term agenda (10 years); and the long-term agenda (15 years). The short-term agenda recommends seven key programs aimed primarily towards the renewal, rehabilitation and redevelopment of Boracay Island. The plan considers Boracay Island as the anchor product that will serve as a platform for mainland Aklan's economic diversification. The medium-term agenda focuses on the development directions for mainland Aklan by prescribing cultural, agri- and ecotourism as key product categories. The concepts of agri- and ecotourism are directed towards countryside development, fuelled by an agricultural economy, in support of the tourism industry. The long-term agenda seeks to recreate the entire province into a destination in itself in the reshaping of its urban panorama in a way that is distinctly its own. The success of the medium and long-term agenda is anchored on the sustainable development of Boracay Island and its magnetic attraction as a tourist destination.

Conclusion

Although ecotourism may be considered the most sustainable form of tourism, it exposes natural ecosystems to risks due to human intrusion. The following are just some of the negative impacts of ecotourism activities: (i) mountaineering or trekking causes trail erosion and garbage accumulation, and spelunking can damage limestone cave formations; (ii) wildlife in its natural habitat is disturbed and plants can be damaged during ecotourism activities (for example, human feeding of fish tends to encourage dependence on visitors, to the point that the animals no longer hunt on their own, and reckless scuba diving can disturb marine life and destroy corals); (iii) frequent contact of mountaineers and trekkers with natives can cause culture-shock and changes in the indigenous culture of the area; and (iv) local communities are deprived of rightful economic benefits when food, beverages, and souvenir items and products are produced elsewhere but sold in their area, and when outside investors repatriate their revenue back to their home bases.

If these downsides are successfully addressed in the planning of ecotourism, it can be an extremely useful tool to make progress towards sustainable development.

are island municipalities. The provincial capital, the City of Puerto Princesa, is the chief seaport on the east coast and the centre of trade, commerce and education. Tall mountain ranges run through the entire central length bisecting the province into two areas, the east and west coast. The mountain ranges have an average elevation of approximately 1100 m. Coral reefs along the shoreline of Palawan, especially along its western coast and northwestern coastline, make inshore navigation very risky. Palawan's 1959 km of irregular coastline afford excellent harbours.

The province has two types of climate. One is six months dry and six months wet and occurs in the extreme north and south sections and on the entire northwest coast. The other type of weather prevails in the rest of the province and is characterised by a short dry season of one to three months and no pronounced rainy period during the rest of the year.

The flora and fauna of Palawan are predominantly Bornean in composition. This can be explained by the fact that geologically the island province is part of the stable Sunda shelf which comprises Borneo and other parts of the western Malaysian floral geographic region. This uniqueness of Palawan has created many indigenous flora and fauna, such as the Palawan tree shrew (*Tupaia palawanensis*), the Calamian deer (*Cervus calamianensis*), the Palawan porcupine (*Thecurus pumilis*) and the Palawan peacock (*Polyplectron emphanum*).

The seas around Palawan are a rich fishing ground for commercial and deep-sea fishing. The irregular coastline, resulting in numerous coves and bays, is also a rich fishing ground for municipal or coastal fishing. The best sources of fish are Malampaya Sound, Sulu Sea, Honda Bay and Bacuit Bay. The varieties of fish caught in commercial quantities are sardines, mackerel, albacore, bonito, anchovy, slipmouth, round scad, squid and chud.

The province is a rich source of mineral deposits: chromite, nickel, copper, silica, marble, mercury, manganese, limestones, barite, feldspar, sand, gravel, washed pebbles and guano. Only a few of these mineral resources are mined in commercial quantities. The province's nickel reserve of 330 000 metric tons is reportedly the highest among the Luzon provinces.

Tourism

At present the province has a total of 146 tourism related establishments offering different levels of accommodation. As of June 1999 there were six hotels, 69 inns/lodges/pension (most of these are located in Puerto Princesa City), 49 beach resorts/cottages (the majority are operating in the City of Puerto Princesa), 18 island resorts and four special interest resorts operating in Northern Palawan where most marine resources are. There is a total of 1800 rooms with a capacity of two to four person/room. The average length of stay is approximately four days and average expenditure per day is estimated

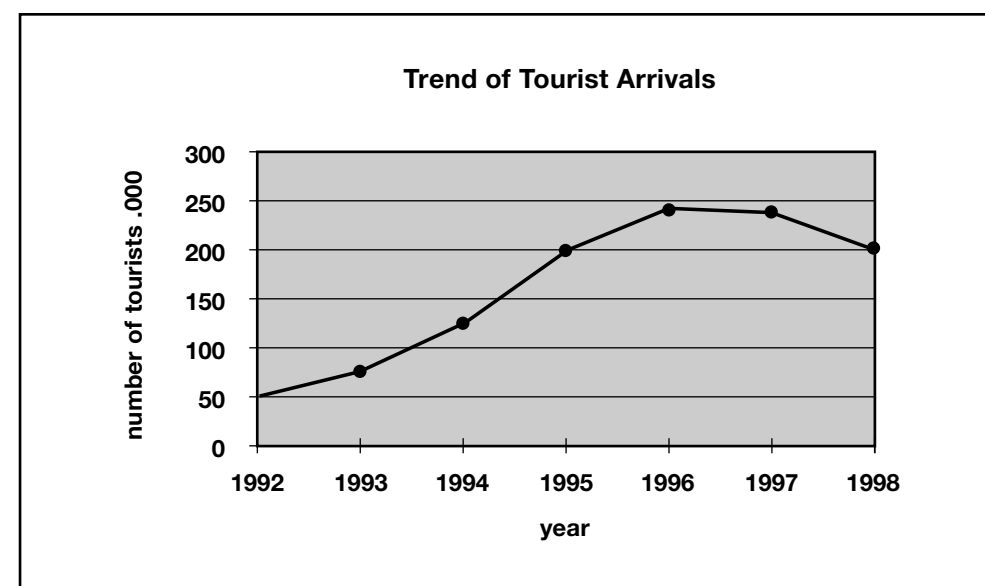
to be P 1816.00. In 1998 the income derived from tourists was estimated to P 606 282 246.00.

In order to deal with the interests of the tourism industry, there are at present four associations and six councils actively supporting the industry. These include the Association of Travel and Tours Operation in Puerto Princesa City and Palawan (ATTOP), Hotel and Restaurant Association of Palawan (HARAP), Hoteliers Association of Puerto Princesa City Inc., Palawan Tourguide Association (PATGA), Calamianes Association of Tourism Establishments (CATE), City Tourism Council, Palawan Tourism Council and four Municipal Tourism Councils for the municipalities of Taytay, El Nido, Narra and Quezon.

The major tourist origin markets are the USA, Japan, Asia and Europe with a total share of almost 90%. The percentage of female tourists to Palawan is relatively high compared with those to the Philippines in general. The main age group of travellers is young to middle-aged, with a relatively high educational level and income. The purpose of travel is mostly for pleasure and for a vacation. Domestic tourists are significantly different from foreign tourists in terms of purpose of travel and group size. They provide a relatively high percentage of business/convention trips and a larger group size.

As Figure 1 illustrates, there has been a very significant increase in tourism from 1992 to 1998, from 50 000 to 120 000. Domestic tourists contributed nearly 69% of the total.

Figure 1: Tourist Arrivals in Palawan (1992–1998)



Of foreign tourists the US market contributed 4655 visitors or 5.52% of the total. The Japanese market registered at 3311 or 3.93%; Taiwan with 1161 or 1.4%; Western Europe accounted for 12 196 or 14.47%; Australia and New Zealand contributed 1079 or 1.28%; Africa managed to contribute 38 or .05%; other foreign markets registered at 5172 or 6.13% of the total. Domestic tourists totalled to 57 857 (68.62%).

The markets for Northern and Southern Palawan differ greatly primarily due to differences in product offerings. North Palawan caters mainly to the holiday segment while South Palawan is known for its culture. Puerto Princesa City, with an airport and seaport, is considered the gateway to Palawan and understandably has the largest number of tourist arrivals.

Major Issues

The following are the issues affecting the tourism industry in the province. Different stakeholders face different issues. The views expressed are generalisations emanating from the stakeholder groups and obviously are biased due to the particular special interest being represented.

For tourists there are: (i) delays in the development of transportation infrastructure and facilities; (ii) delays in commercialisation of tourism products; (iii) an inadequate tourism information distribution system; (iv) inadequate communication facilities especially outside Puerto Princesa City; and (v) lack of banking services.

For investors there are that: (i) delays in development of transportation infrastructure and facilities; (ii) delays in providing other regional infrastructure; (iii) cost of environmental protection; (iv) time consuming environmental impact assessment processes; (v) the high cost of operation.

For the administrators the issues are: (i) although development fees may be collected, they are on tourist expenditures and the amount of tax revenues is therefore limited; and (ii) there is insufficient and/or inconsistent tourism data.

For local communities there are yet other issues: (i) insufficient education and training opportunities; (ii) inadequate technical knowledge on the development of tourism potential in their area; and (iii) insufficient financial resources to allow the communities to develop tourism products.

Notwithstanding these views, the tourism sector has articulated a vision for its future. If followed through, the negative attitudes would be countered. The vision is "towards a socially environmentally responsible tourism that is globally competitive and contributes to both people's development and conservation of the natural resources". The general objective of the sector is to develop and promote sustainable ecological, agricultural and cultural tourism to become a primary industry in the province.

Green Productivity as the Foundation for Ecotourism

Green productivity (GP) is a strategy for enhancing productivity and environmental performance to provide for overall socio-economic development. It is the application of appropriate techniques, technologies and management systems to produce environmentally compatible goods and services. It recognises that a new balance is required between environmental protection and economic activities. It is simply stupid to lose both the environment and profits for the lack of maintenance of the environment and rehabilitation of what has been degraded. At its extreme, the environment can be irreparably damaged. It is now recognised that tourism is dependent on GP practices, as well as the culture and the peace and tranquillity of the province.

To foster ecotourism, a sustainable development plan has been prepared for Northern Palawan (Department of Tourism and Local Government, Jica Study 1997). The study area, with a total of 8400 km². of land and a 351 000 population in 1995, is characterised by high population growth and a high incidence of poverty. The former is attributed to high in-migration, while the latter to low agricultural productivity and lack of employment opportunities. Infrastructure development in the study area is far behind what is needed. Transportation infrastructure has not been properly developed. Municipal centres are not connected by reliable roads and often, during the rainy season, are totally cut-off making movement within the area very difficult. Common problems perceived by people in the area are their relatively poor livelihood and inadequate basic services.

Biologically, Northern Palawan is considered rich and diversified and there are numerous endemic species unique to the island. Key ecosystems to be preserved include mossy forest and old growth forest, unique ecosystems with biological significance, including forest over limestone, mangrove forest and corals. There are also the endangered species such as the Calamine Deer, the Philippine cockatoo, the Palawan peacock, the Palawan porcupine, sea turtles, and dugongs.

The results of comprehensive environmental surveys conducted in the study area indicate that the natural environment in Northern Palawan has deteriorated much more than had been anticipated. Activities and factors which adversely affect the environment include the following: (i) increasing population pressure in ecologically fragile areas; (ii) illegal activities, such as kaingin (slash and burn agriculture), logging, dynamite and cyanide fishing; (iii) lack of alternative employment and economic opportunities to curb illegal economic activities; (iv) inadequate infrastructure development, e.g. road development, without any workable safeguard against environmental damage; (v) inadequate environmental control and management systems and practices; and (vi) limited resources for environmental conservation.

The process of environmental degradation involves many interactive factors, not only in terms of the environment but also of a socio-economic

kind. This is the reason why the study looked into the environmental issues in an integrated manner.

Environmental administration in Palawan is at two levels; one is the national level led by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the other, the provincial level, by the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD), which oversees the implementation of the Strategic Environmental Plan (SEP) for Palawan. Among the goals of SEP, there are two key areas: one is to establish an Environmentally Critical Area Network (ECAN) for ensuring protection of vulnerable areas and to implement positive development planning by intensified use of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA), and the other is to provide for control of development activities harmful to the environment.

Northern Palawan is the ideal setting for environmentally sustainable tourism development. Its rich terrestrial, marine and cultural endowments can provide limitless and exciting tourism possibilities and opportunities. However, the environment, which is the key resource both for providing incomes and tourism in the area, has been deteriorating quickly. It is for this reason that the following goals have been identified for tourism development in Northern Palawan: (i) tourism should become a strategic means of promoting sustainable development, with its effective integration of the environment and the local economy; (ii) it should also become a primary industry for Northern Palawan; and (iii) tourism should contribute to the enhancement of the overall image of Philippine tourism, thus inducing more tourist arrivals to the country.

Strategies

In order to achieve these tourism development goals, the following strategic measures must be considered and undertaken: (i) a diversity of high quality destinations with clear appealing images must be developed: focus should be placed on high-quality marine resorts, complemented with tourism resources and activities; (ii) an integrated transport system must be put in place, as accessibility at international, inter-regional and intra-regional levels is a key to the success of tourism development in the Northern Palawan area, and its archipelagic nature also requires an effective multi-modal system of air, land and sea transportation; (iii) tourism should shoulder environmental costs equitably through direct and indirect contributions, fees, and charges; (iv) tourism should be integrated with the local economy as much as possible, and participation of communities from the planning to implementation and management stages is important; and (v) role-sharing between public and private sectors and the effective introduction of external investment are necessary.

Environmental management is the sole basis for sustainable tourism development and socio-economic development in Northern Palawan.

Environmental Management Area classifications have been prepared to provide a basis for formulating the tourism development plans wherein the proposed classification basically corresponds to that of ECAN Zoning. The results indicate that most parts of Northern Palawan will be covered by Preservation Area and Conservation Area zones, with small areas to be left for development.

In order to restore and conserve the environment in Northern Palawan, a number of measures and actions should be taken immediately, they include the following: (i) rehabilitation of inadequately implemented infrastructure, especially roads; (ii) strengthening of control measures against illegal and/ or harmful activities, particularly illegal fishing, illegal felling of trees, and *kaingin*; (iii) restoration of damaged terrestrial environments, including reforestation, closure of inadequately constructed logging roads, prevention of siltation, slope protection etc.; (iv) conservation of identified superior terrestrial ecosystems; (v) conservation of the marine environment with focus on coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangrove forests, and marine wildlife, especially dugongs and sea turtles; and (vi) remedial work for the old mercury mining site.

Structure plans have been prepared for four tourism clusters: the Calamian, Taytay/El Nido, Roxas/San Vicente, and Puerto Princesa clusters. The structure plans aim to delineate the direction of the development in an integrated manner within the Environmental Management Areas and regional development frameworks. Key aspects considered in forming the plan are: (i) Tourism Cluster Development — to encourage integration in each area and distinguish the characteristics of areas from each other; (ii) Integrated Tourism Network — to integrate each area effectively with international, regional, and local networks through strategic, multi-modal transportation network building; and (iii) Strategic Allocation of Accommodation Facilities — to maximise cost effectiveness of investments. Accommodation facilities are to be gradually shifted from “economy” to “de luxe” class and be more concentrated in areas with larger competitive power in the international market.

The administrative framework to implement sustainable tourism development needs to be more clearly established. Sustainable tourism development can only be achieved through joint and coordinated efforts of relevant organisations which are able to cover various aspects, including policy setting, planning, financing, land acquisition, implementation, operation and management, tourism promotion, investment promotion, local industry promotion, human resource development, coordination with environmental management, and so on. For this, key areas to be considered are: (i) coordination among central government agencies and, especially, between central government and local governments; (ii) role sharing between the public and private sectors; and (iii) involvement of local communities.

Conclusion

It is concluded that tourism development in Northern Palawan can provide a good opportunity to promote sustainable development. However, for successful implementation, the following conditions should be met. An Environmental Management System should function effectively. ECAN Zoning (statutory land use planning) must be prepared and enforced. EIA procedures and environmental monitoring must be properly and strictly applied. The public sector needs to take the initiative on development of the basic infrastructure. Local manpower needs to be developed to capture the benefits of tourism development. Local government and communities need to be involved in the process of planning, investment, operation and management. And mobilisation of the private sector for investment and development is required.

Chapter Twenty-two

Ecotourism in the Bohol Province: the Philippines

Rene Lopez Relampagos

Introduction

Based on statistics of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), tourism has become one of the world's largest industries. As early as 1993, it was accounting for about 6% of the world's gross national product. In 1998, the tourist receipts in the Philippines amounted to US\$246.76 million. The country's Senate Commission on tourism has predicted that the tourism industry will generate one of every ten new jobs that will be created in the country by the year 2004 and it is estimated that tourism will contribute 6% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

Tourism is becoming a fast growing industry in Bohol, my province, the tenth largest island in the Philippines, right in the heart of Central Visayas. Bohol has a rich wellspring of ecology, history, culture and natural heritage sites that have earned worldwide interest. We Boholanos envision Bohol to be the prime eco-cultural destination and a strong agro-industrial province in the country. The existing tourism activities on the island and established tourism facilities go to show that Bohol is gaining prestige as a tourist destination in the region.

The roles of business and industry, community and government are changing radically. One clear result of these global changes is that society has increasing expectations that industries, such as tourism, will deliver better and broader value services. This is, essentially, sustainability.

Recognising the challenge of sustainability, the world community adopted AGENDA 21, a program of sustainable development, during the 1992 Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In the Philippines in 1995, the Philippine Agenda 21 (PA 21) was promulgated to define thematic and specific regional priorities for sustainable development. Based on the PA 21, the Department of Tourism (DOT) developed a National Framework on Sustainable Development.