

## **ECOTOURISM IN BORAWAN ISLAND OF QUEZON PROVINCE: INPUTS TO TOURISM DEVELOPMENT**

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### **Abstract**

*This study aimed to explore ecotourism in Borawan Island of Quezon province as an input to tourism development. The researchers intended to specifically: 1) assess the respondents' perception on the potential impact of ecotourism in Borawan Island in terms of economic, socio-cultural, and environmental effects; 2) determine if there is a significant difference on the perception of respondents as to the potential impact of ecotourism among the profile of respondents in terms of gender, age, and frequency of visit to Borawan Island; and 3) propose an action plan for tourism development in Borawan Island. The descriptive method of research was used to gather the needed data with the help of 111 respondents from the tourists of Borawan Island. Standardized questionnaire was adapted and modified from the study of Garcia (2012). The gathered data was tallied, tabulated, encoded, and analyzed through frequency distribution and percent, weighted mean, ranking, and ANOVA. To improve instruments on the perception of the impact of ecotourism, Cronbach Alpha was used to test consistency and reliability. Based on the findings in the gathered data, the respondents agreed on the potential impact of ecotourism in terms of economic, socio-cultural, and environmental effects. The respondents' perception as to the potential impact of ecotourism in Borawan Island among the profile of respondents has no significant difference. Action plan for tourism development in Borawan Island was proposed.*

**Keywords:** Ecotourism, Borawan Island, Quezon province, and tourism development

### **INTRODUCTION**

Garcia (2012) stated that tourism holds the promise of increased employment and income opportunities, particularly for Filipinos living in the coastal and rural areas. Yet, sustainable tourism development is faced by the challenge of an “industry built upon the most fragile of natural and cultural environments,” where the most unintended and innocent of human gestures can harm on-site resources. Both tourist markets and Philippine tourism industry have become more aware of the negative environmental and social costs associated with tourism development; thus, the Philippines began to recognize the need to adapt new development approaches such as “ecotourism” in order to come up with tourist products that are environmentally sensitive and economically viable.

According to TIES (2015), ecotourism is now defined as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education.” Ecotourism is about uniting conservation, communities, and sustainable travel. It also provides effective economic incentives for conserving and enhancing bio-cultural diversity, and helps protect the natural and cultural heritage of our beautiful planet. Ecotourism also has an emphasis on enriching personal experiences and environmental awareness through interpretation; ecotourism promotes greater understanding and appreciation for nature, local society, and culture.

Findings of Almario et al. (2014) says that the government plays an important role in the tourism industry as the source of funds in enhancing infrastructures. The same is true with private institutions who help in enhancing tourism in the country. The tourists who visit the tourist spots in the area also play an important role in the tourism industry because they are the ones who contribute in the protection of the environment or the surroundings of the place they are visiting. It is in their hands how they are going to maintain and enhance the beauty of the environment of the place they are visiting. The community of the area is also part of promoting ecotourism because they act as role models for tourists. These people are the ones who set an example in maintaining and preserving the beauty of the place.

The Philippines, as a country called “Pearl of the Ocean,” is also known for beautiful sceneries and breathtaking coastal spots. Anywhere around the archipelago is unforgettable an experience to anyone who has visited the land. But still, many of our side trips to great beaches are not yet discovered. One of these is a place more affordable, more peaceful, less crowded, but surely worth the time and money. Perhaps, a treasured experience of a lifetime at the most affordable price, yet, extraordinary destination one could imagine in the southmost part of Quezon province.

The province of Quezon is known for virgin mountains, historical churches, lambanog, coconut productions, and colorful festivals. Some of them are well-known by tourists like Mt. Banahaw, Kamay ni Jesus, and Pahiyas Festival. However, not known by many, Quezon province also offers different kinds of beaches that are untouched, undeveloped, and unexploited, just waiting to be discovered. The researchers found an island located at Padre Burgos, Quezon that has the potentiality of a tourist attraction.

One of the relaxing towns that is also known for having friendly people in Quezon is Padre Burgos. It is the home of three lovely beaches, namely: Borawan, Dampalitan, and Puting Buhangin. Among them, the researchers chose the first one because of its own spectacular rock formations like the limestone cliffs of Palawan and the crystal clear water and white sand like that in Boracay. It is one of the hidden treasures of the Philippines. The locale of Padre Burgos pride themselves of having Boracay and Palawan in one place thus the name Borawan.

In this study, the researchers conducted further research and deepened factual information about the place’s potentiality as an ecotourism destination that

will bring pride both to the country and to the tourism industry to attract and gain more tourists. Lastly, the researchers proposed an action plan for the formulation of tourism development for Borawan Island.

### **Objectives of the study**

This study aims to explore ecotourism in Borawan Island of Quezon province as an input to tourism development. More specifically, it intends to assess the respondents' perception on the potential impact of ecotourism in Borawan Island in terms of economic, socio-cultural, and environmental effects, to determine if there is a significant difference on the perception of respondents as to the potential impact of ecotourism among the profile of respondents in terms of gender, age, and frequency of visit to Borawan Island, and to propose an action plan for tourism development in Borawan Island.

### **Review of literature**

Shodhnganga (2010) stated that tourism, like many other industries, is often used as a national or regional development tool. In general, tourism development within a host community often has impacts on the community both in positive and negative ways. These impacts have been well documented and are usually classified as economic, social, and cultural impacts. Tourism is a cause for economic development and changes within sociodemographic factors such as age, gender, income, length of stay, education level, and ethnicity. Tourism is a commercial activity; therefore, tourism can create employment opportunities and foreign exchange earnings. It also increases the standard of living of the host people.

According to Charlie Sim (2011), ecotourism is also commonly defined as tourism that conserves the environment while benefiting the local people. It is a type of travel that focuses on education and respect for local customs and behaviors, supporting businesses that are environmentally friendly and locally supported, and having a low impact on the environment because tourism often leaves a negative visitor impacts on local environments, culture, and people; ecotourism seeks to leave positive net visitor impacts.

According to Zhang Zhenjia (2008), the protection of natural sites within ecotourism destinations shows great significance for ecotourism development. First of all, the pollution of natural sites in destination areas of ecotourism has become a serious problem all around the world, and this will prevent the strong future development of ecotourism. Second, local communities in the tourism destination obtain economic benefits from natural sites protection. Third, protection of natural resources is a sustainable method of managing ecotourism at destination areas, which are not only concerned with economic benefits but also social and political elements and even the ecosystem itself in destination areas.

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Ecotourism, as a Philippine government policy, had its roots in 1991, part of the 20-year Tourism Master Plan developed by the Philippine Department of Tourism, the United Nations Development Program, and the World Tourism Organization. Thus, the blueprint on the development of the tourism industry aims to be sensitive, to contribute to livelihood, to minimize the impact of negative factors, and to maximize and generate sustainable growth (DOT, 1991). In 1998, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Department of Tourism issued a joint memorandum, Guide Laws for Ecotourism Development in the Philippines, wherein ecotourism was defined as a low-impact, environmentally sound, and community-participatory tourism activity in a given natural environment that enhances the conservation of biophysical understanding and education, and yields socio-economic benefits to the concerned community.

Sustainable tourism development refers to the management of all resources that meets the needs of tourists and host regions while protecting the opportunities for the future, in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems (Tourism Act of 2010). According to the World Business Council on Sustainable Development, one definition of sustainability that appears to have more resonance with the general public is that sustainable development is about ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come. This focus on improving quality of life is becoming more widely accepted by governments, companies, and civil society organizations.

Some organizations have provided their ecotourism principles and concepts to be practiced. One example of this organization is the United Nation World Trade Organization (UNWTO). This organization has provided three main concepts on what sustainable tourism should be—make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes, and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity; respect the sociocultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter cultural understanding and tolerance; and ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities and contributing to poverty alleviation.

With these three main concepts, ecotourism is not just about promoting and enhancing the environment and the natural resources but also to respect the culture and heritage sites in the place that tourists are visiting. In a way, ecotourism is also promoting the community development. With the tourists/guests following the necessary rules and regulations to be observed in the place they are visiting, the community wherein the attraction/destination sites can be found will be highly respected. With that, the preservation of the culture of the people living in the place will still be practiced. As for the long-term goal of the concepts and principles of

ecotourism, it will help provide more opportunities to the place such as providing jobs to the people, marketing the area to attract more visitors and investors which may result to having a sustainable ecotourism development.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The descriptive method of research was used to gather the needed data with the help of 111 respondents from the tourists of Borawan Island. Standardized questionnaire was adapted and modified from the study of Garcia (2012). The gathered data was tallied tabulated, encoded, and analyzed through frequency distribution and percent, weighted mean, ranking, and ANOVA. To improve instruments on the perception of the impact of ecotourism, Cronbach Alpha was used to test consistency and reliability.

## **Findings**

Based on the findings in the gathered data, the respondents agreed with the potential impact of ecotourism in Borawan Island in terms of environmental, socio-cultural and economic effects. Environmental impact ranks first wherein people care for the protection and preservation of the natural features of Borawan Island. Second rank is socio-cultural impact wherein the people are open to the possibility of easily adapting to other cultures, given the fact that they are already cultured and civilized. Economic impact was ranked last by the respondents, where stakeholders' concern is the growth of tourism towards the upliftment of the economic life in the area. The respondents' perception as to the potential impact of ecotourism in Borawan Island among the profile of respondents has no significant difference. Action plan for tourism development in Borawan Island was proposed.

<b>Key Result Areas</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Persons Responsible</b>	<b>Expected Outcome</b>
<b>Economic</b>	Review and update the economic profile to become a basis of the local development plans and programs including tourism.	Local government officials, Tourism council, and owner	Updated economic profile made basis for tourism programs and activities.
	Provide training of local people, with the necessary skills and tourism knowledge including management of business and local resources/ employing/giving local people opportunities to manage.	Local government officials, Tourism council, and owner	Efficient management of local businesses and resources
	Enhance and improve promotion and marketing tourism services and products.	Local government officials, selected residents, Tourism council, and owner	Increased customer awareness and profit of an area
<b>Socio-Cultural</b>	Strictly implement laws and municipal ordinances to ensure high levels of safety and security for stakeholders.	Local government officials, Tourism council, and owner	High level of safety and security for locals and stakeholders
	Training and orientation of preservation and protection of cultural heritage	Local government officials, selected residents, Tourism council, and owner	Preservation and protection of cultural heritage will strengthen.

<b>Environmental</b>	Implement the proper use of environment and resources, as well as the waste management program.	Local government officials, selected residents, Tourism council, and owner	Proper use of environment and resources as well as waste management program will be strengthened.
	Formulate and implement stricter regulations/laws to protect our environment.	Local government officials, selected residents, Tourism council, and owner	Awareness of environmental protections will be strengthened.
	Training and orientation on the care and preservation of environment and natural wealth	Local government officials, selected residents, Tourism council, and owner	Development of knowledge, attitude, and skills in environmental protection and preservation of environment and natural wealth

## CONCLUSIONS

Respondents agreed on the potential impact of ecotourism in Borawan Island. There is a perceived positive impact of ecotourism on the economic aspect that is, most of the stakeholders look forward for more economic gains and opportunities for the upliftment of the quality of life of the community. In the socio-cultural aspect, development of values and social and cultural exchange matters most despite the possible rise of crime rate, overcrowding of the place, and increased outdoor and nightlife activities.

The potential impact of ecotourism on the island municipality of Borawan in environmental aspect, particularly the beautification of the island's appearance, is given prime importance, but that the local government should be aware of the preservation of the protected areas and use of technology that will damage the natural environment.

The respondents' perception as to the potential impact of ecotourism in Borawan Island among the profile of respondents has no significant difference. Action plan for tourism development in Borawan Island was proposed.

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