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STATUS OF SELECTED ECOTOURISM DESTINATIONS IN PALAWAN: BASIS FOR PROPOSED RESPONSIBLE ECOTOURISM GUIDELINES

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Abstract

Tourism is the largest industry in the world. It comprises multiple sectors and comes in various forms. One of these forms is Ecotourism. As defined by the Pacific Asia Travel Association (2008), one of the known associations in the Tourism Industry, ecotourism is a form of tourism inspired primarily by the natural history of an area, including its indigenous cultures.

Keywords: ECOTOURISM DESTINATIONS IN PALAWAN

1. Introduction: The Problem and Its Background

Tourism is the largest industry in the world. It comprises multiple sectors and comes in various forms. One of these forms is Ecotourism. As defined by the Pacific Asia Travel Association (2008), one of the known associations in the Tourism Industry, ecotourism is a form of tourism inspired primarily by the natural history of an area, including its indigenous cultures. It implies a managed approach by the host country or region which commits itself to establishing and maintaining the site with the participation of local residents, marketing them appropriately, enforcing regulations, and using the proceeds of the enterprise to fund the area's land management as well as community development. For the local adaptation of its meaning, The Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCARRD), Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau (PAWB) and the Department of Tourism (DOT), believe that it is an environmentally sound tourism activity sustainably implemented in a given ecosystem yielding socio-economic benefits and enhancing natural and cultural diversity conservation that generates positive results for the community.

Lastly, in the international context, it is a responsible travel that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people. (The International Ecotourism Society, 1990)

With the mentioned statements, ecotourism contributes a lot of positive features for both locals and the rest of the tourism stakeholders. It is based to protect natural resources to which it depends and aims to minimize impact, build ecological and cultural awareness and respect for the environment. The sustainability of ecotourism is formally recognized by the stakeholders who are the tourists, host community, businessmen and the local government. It provides positive experiences for both visitors, local residents and host suppliers, who, are benefited for its conservation and protection; hence the government is seriously focusing on its protection and preservation. Further, ecotourism gives empowerment and strength for the local community and raise a strong understanding to its political, environmental and social aspects.

The above statements are the reason that this study is focused to assess one of the main ecotourism destinations in the Philippines which is Palawan. The island deserves to be preserved and protected. This is because of the fact that it is blessed with rich flora and fauna resources, which is geographically located south of Manila. Palawan is a perfect getaway for a greater number of major ecotourism activities, like spelunking, scuba diving, bird watching etc. The Island of Palawan is a true haven and paradise province and has been enlisted and acknowledge by the National Geographic Magazine's top 20 destinations in the world because of its natural beauty. Hence, the provincial government spearheads ecotourism programs and development. This includes seminars and trainings of the local community to further conserve, improve and develop the ecotourism destinations that could bring about benefits to the natives. According to the local government of Palawan thru their official website (2013), there were fifty-two percent (52 %) increase of the tourist arrivals for the year 2010 alone. The local government then aimed to target a fifteen percent (15 %) yearly increase in its tourist arrivals and eventually hit the one (1) million mark in its local tourist arrivals by the year 2015 and onwards.

With the outstanding growth of tourists and other tourism stakeholders that visit the place, there should be a proper study to assess the factors that surrounds the ecotourism destinations in Palawan. This will further protect and preserve the natural beauty of the place. Hence, it is just and rightful to establish certain rules and responsible guidelines to further conserve and develop ecotourism destinations that will set the policy for its stakeholders. The said proposed guideline is a set of information and rules which may be imposed on all active tourism participants. This includes the tourists, the host community, other tourism businessmen and the local government officials concerned. The guideline will define and give ample regulation and policy on how to conserve and protect the ecotourism destinations in Palawan.

Background of the Study

Ecotourism helps in sustaining the development of the country as it aims to protect natural resources, on which the ecotourism industry depends. Ecotourism also aims to minimize impact, build environmental and cultural awareness and respect. It also provides positive experiences for both visitors and hosts, supply direct financial benefits for conservation, for the local communities and its people. Hence, ecotourism raises sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climate.

The aim of this study is to assess the knowledge and level of understanding of the respondents about the status of the ecotourism destinations that they have visited or living in Palawan. After the realization of the condition, this study will create a responsible ecotourism guideline, which shall be the basis to be followed by the tourism stakeholders in conducting ecotourism activities and ethics in every destinations of Palawan.

It is, therefore, necessary to study and create a proposed a responsible guideline for ecotourism to further manage the knowledge and awareness of the tourists, host communities, the businessmen of tourism and the local government officials in conserving ecotourism in selected destinations in Palawan.

Setting of the Study

The Philippines is a 300,000 square kilometers or 186,420 sq mi (land area) tropical archipelago of 7,107 islands, nestled in Southeast Asia. It is bordered by Taiwan in its northern part, the West Philippine Sea, Celebes Sea in the south. This independent state has tropical climate which is frequently visited by typhoons. Even though the archipelago belongs to the Pacific Ring of Fire, this country is blessed with rich natural resources and amazing biodiversity in the world.

The setting of the study is the island of Palawan located in southwest portion of Luzon. The island itself is one of the largest land mass of the Philippines. This magnificent destination nestles a great number ecotourism attractions that are inviting to tourists. The study was conducted in the following ecotourism destinations of the island:

The famous Puerto Princesa Underground or Subterranean River National Park was chosen as one of the New 7 Wonders of Nature on 28th of January 2012. It is nestled 50 kilometers north of its capital, Puerto Princesa City. It is also inhabited by a variety of exotic animals like macaque monkeys, monitor lizards and snakes.

Honda Bay is a natural destination that offers a lot of recreational activities to its visitors including scuba diving, snorkeling and beach holidays. The bay area is also utilized for commercial and subsistence of the aquatic resources of Palawan.

Calauit Island, found in the Northern part of Palawan, is a declared game preserve and wildlife sanctuary in Busuanga, the Philippine response to the international community's calling to help preserve the African animal population specifically in Kenya. It includes the preservations of giraffes, zebras and impalas. This co-exists with other endemic Philippine animals like bearcat, mouse deer and peacock pheasant.



Figure 1

Map of the Philippines



Figure 2

Map of Palawan

2. Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

This study was anchored on a chosen theory postulated by a tourism industry practitioner and author. According to Blamey (1997, 2001) and Weaver (2008), there are core of criteria for a destination to be an ecotourism area. Among these criteria, together with the opinion of Blamey (2001) are nature-based element in the attraction, the educational and learning component and the requirement that the place should have been sustained. Weaver (2008), further explained that minimalist ecotourism involves shallow or superficial learning opportunities in conjunction with specific charismatic wildlife and sustainability objectives that are status quo oriented and focused on a particular site. As far as

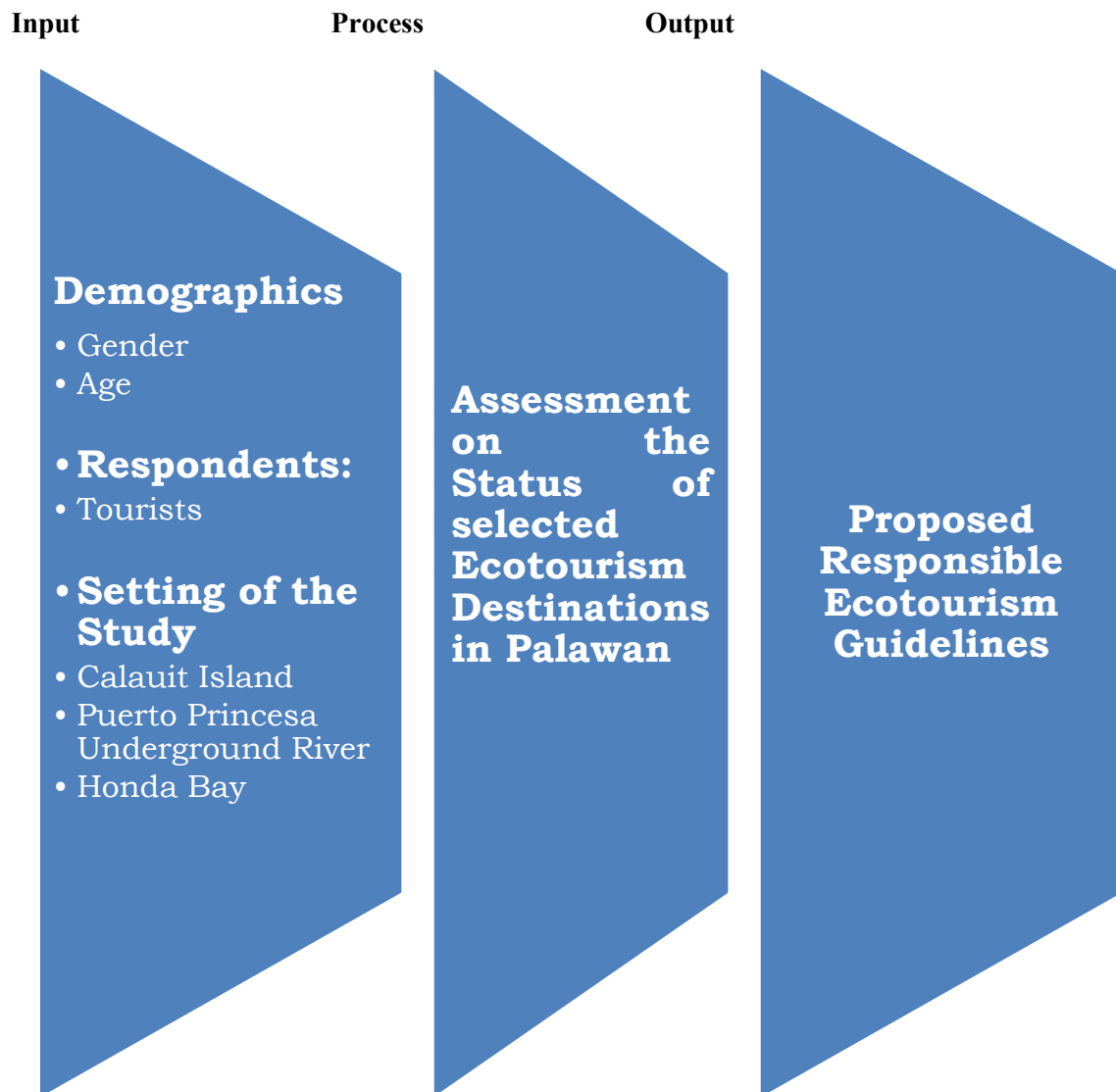
comprehensive ecotourism, it is focused on the entire ecosystems and encourages deep learning opportunities as well as behavior transformation because it fosters understanding as per Ecotourism Association of Australia (2000). This also focused in wildlife tourism according to Blamey (2001), which is a rapidly evolving subset of nature-based tourism. Accordingly, Weiler and Ham (2001), said that in learning ecotourism, there are modes of interpretation that differs in the way the learning experience is conveyed and received, but several basic principle should be borne in mind to increase the livelihood to attain a high levels of learning as well as satisfaction. Hence, ecotourism may help household or the local community as it grows as per Tourism Queensland (2006). The conceptual framework is based from the demographics of the respondents which are composed of their age and gender. Since, this study needs the assessment of matured respondents; the respondents herewith are all of legal age. From the demographics, the survey questionnaire shall be used to assess the status of selected ecotourism destinations in Palawan pertaining to community participation, protection and management of natural resources, cultural and indigenous knowledge, practices, environmental education and ethics, economic benefits which shall be submitted to the respondents possessing such information in order to answer the variable of the problems.

From the answer will rose the rule of the ecotourism destination and the possibility of creating a guideline for its conservation.

Paradigm of an Ecotourism Destination



Conceptual Framework



Statement of the Problem

This study sought to assess the status of selected Ecotourism destinations, in order to propose with a Responsible Ecotourism Guidelines for Palawan. Specifically it aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What was the profile of the respondents, in terms of:
 - 1.1 Gender
 - 1.2 Age
2. What were the assessments of the respondents based on ecotourism criteria on the following destinations:
 - 2.1 Calauit Island
 - 2.2 Puerto Princesa Underground River
 - 2.3 Honda Bay?

3. How did the respondents' assessment compare according to profile?
4. How did the respondents' assessment compare according to destinations?
5. What ecotourism guidelines may be proposed for Palawan Ecotourism Destinations?

Assumptions of the Study

The research was anchored on the assumption that the respondents have answered the questionnaire truthfully.

Hypothesis

In this study, it was hypothesized that there is no significant difference in the assessments of the respondents according to the ecotourism criteria of the destination when they are grouped according to gender, age, civil status, annual income, and occupation.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant to the following:

The Department of Tourism, may use this study in order to deepen their resource information on the benefits of ecotourism and its biodiversity conservation as assessed by the tourists, stakeholders, host community and its local government and to take steps on a Responsible Tourism Guideline which will serve as a guidelines on all key players of local tourism and for its further development and conservation

To future researchers, this will serve as a basis for a more rigid study in developing a better guideline for a Responsible Ecotourism and Biodiversity Conservation.

To the Filipino people, this will serve as a basis for a need for a Responsible Tourism Guideline and Biodiversity Conservation in order to protect and upkeep the environment for a more sustainable Tourism.

To the Local Government, this will serve as a good guideline for its citizen to awareness of the rightful approach to the environment, for protection and maintenance.

To the tourists and businessmen, this will serve as a basis for the tourists and the businessmen, the rightful information on the benefits of the conservation of ecotourism in a rightful manner and conduct, in order for them to keep up and guarantee a longer term of tourism business due to the maintenance of the Ecotourism supply.

Scope and Delimitation

The respondents of the study were the tourists of Palawan, specifically on its ecotourism destinations Calauit Island, Puerto Princesa Underground River, and Honda Bay. It was conducted during the month of November 2012. It aimed to assess the status of the selected ecotourism destinations in Palawan and propose a responsible ecotourism guideline.

3. Review of Related Literature and Studies

This chapter states and identifies related researches and studies connected with the research made. This chapter sets this research to a more relevant, informative and focused within the stated conceptual and theoretical framework.

Local Literature

According to Alejandrino (2012), Ecotourism in the Philippine context was defined on December 1994 when the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCARRD), the Department of Tourism and the Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau (PAWB) jointly sponsored a tourism symposium workshop, solely for this purpose. Ecotourism is then defined as ‘an environmentally sound tourism activity, sustainably implemented in a given ecosystem yielding socio-economic benefits and enhancing natural and cultural diversity conservation.’

The above definition was enhanced by a government circular entitled “Guide Laws for Ecotourism Development” in the Philippines and signed in June 1998. It changed the 1994 definition to “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.”

In 1998, the University of the Philippines, Asian Institute of Tourism Professor, Carlos M. Libosada, Jr. published the book “Ecotourism in the Philippines” which can be considered the most comprehensive study on the subject. In the book, the professor explored the beginnings of ecotourism in the Philippines, factors that need to be considered in its development, the target market, as well as the list of potential and existing ecotourism areas in the Philippines.

To provide the legislative backbone, a Senate Bill was filed to provide for a national ecotourism policy, establishing a framework for its institutionalization and its implementation. However, in June 1997, to fast track the process of evolving a national policy, President Estrada provided a significant boost to the country’s ecotourism program with the issuance of Executive Order No. 111. This Order established the guidelines for ecotourism development in the Philippines, the highlights of which are listed therein.

Guidelines for ecotourism, supports the order, dated on November 1999, the DOT held the 1st National Ecotourism Congress in Tagbilaran, Bohol. At this meeting, various stakeholders agreed to develop a national policy on ecotourism, as well as a strategy to bring more foreign tourists in the country. The meeting called for: (i) dissemination of information on the concepts, strategies, principles, trends and practices with regard to ecotourism; (ii) enhancing awareness on ecotourism planning and development, promotions and marketing, as well as, financing and investment; (iii) promoting partnerships in ecotourism between the public and private sectors, local government units and the community; and (iv) recognizing models and best practices in community-based ecotourism.

The national tourism policy adopted by the Congress stressed that ‘the State shall pursue, promote, manage and develop ecotourism anchored on sustainable development through environmental management and education, community empowerment, cultural enrichment and entrepreneurship to improve the quality of life for present and future generations.’

To have a more effective application of the guideline, there should be a council that serves as the policy-making body for ecotourism and is chaired by DOT and co-chaired by the DENR. Hence, there was the Establishment of the National Ecotourism Steering Committee (NESC) and Regional Ecotourism Committees (REC). The REC will assist the NESC in effectively implementing the programs and activities approved by the Council.

As for the formulation of a National Ecotourism Strategy, there is an integrated management plan to provide a comprehensive direction for ecotourism in the country, recognizing issues and problems for sustainable development and to recommend feasible approaches in addressing these issues.

Pertaining to the Development of National Ecotourism Programs, it involve: development, management and protection of identified ecotourism sites; product enhancement and development; environmental education and information campaigns; and support programs for community stewardship and livelihood development.

According to the Department of Tourism's VisitMyPhilippines.com (2011), Palawan was cited as one of the most frequently visited ecotourism destination. This is because Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park was declared by Proclamation No. 853 on March 26, 1971 and was proclaimed a protected area through Presidential Proclamation No. 212 on July 26, 2000.

It is nestled in the West Coast of Palawan, about 81 km North of its capital Puerto Princesa City. The area is two-thirds covered by lush tropical rainforest from the shoreline to the highest peak, while one-third is thinly vegetated karst limestone. Said tourist destination was adorned as one of UNESCO's Heritage Sites because of its enchanting beauty. As therein stated, it is known as Mother Nature's gift to the world-weary, but it takes time to discover its grandeur.

Because of this nature's wonder, visitors may also visit the following ecotourism destinations in Palawan:

Calauit Island

Calauit Island is a declared game preserve and wildlife sanctuary in Busuanga, the Philippine response to the international community's calling to help preserve the African animal population specifically in Kenya. It includes the preservations of giraffes, zebras and impalas. These co-exist with other endemic Philippine animals like bearcat, mousedeer and peacock pheasant.

Last December 12, 2008, then President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo signed Executive Order No. 722 which transfers to the Provincial Government of Palawan the management of Calauit Game Preserve and Wildlife Sanctuary in Busuanga from Council for Sustainable Development of the said locality.

Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park and World Heritage Site

Known as the World's New Wonders of Nature, it is formerly called the St. Paul Subterranean River National Park is an 8 kilometer underground river flows, which is inhabited by a variety of exotic animals like macaque monkeys, monitor lizards and snakes.

Palawan Wildlife Rescue and Conservation Center

It is a farming institute aimed at conserving endangered species of crocodile and developing a suitable crocodile farming technology. It also maintains rescue center, an ecological park and a training center at the same time.

Honda Bay

Honda Bay is a natural destination that offers a lot of recreational activities to its visitors including scuba diving, snorkeling and beach holidays. The bay area is also utilized for commercial and subsistence of the aquatic resources of Palawan. The bay has abundance of starfish species that invites more tourists to enjoy such experience of nature tripping.

Foreign Literature

According to Weaver (2008), Ecotourism has notable core of criteria. Among those criteria are the following: first, it must have been a nature base destination; second, the destination should provide learning or educational process to the tourists and third, the destination should be a subject of sustainability. Further Martha (2008), defines Ecotourism as a form of tourism involving visiting fragile, pristine, and relatively undisturbed natural areas, intended as a low-impact and often small scale alternative to standard commercial (mass) tourism.

In an article published by ecotourism.com, Ecotourism is defined as one of the fastest growing sub sector of the tourism industry. In an effort to be more ecologically aware and hoping to help save the earth's natural resources, more and more people are participating in ecotourism and travelling to far away destinations. However, the ecotourism industry has major flaws.

Further, the above article states that, there are many countries, hotels, destinations, resorts, and corporations that are making profits off of these unsuspecting tourists. On the surface, the concept of ecotourism seems very beneficial to save the environment but in practice, there were a lot of questions to be answered like the extent of the environment is being saved, the tourist activities that may do more harm to the environment than good, local communities and economies benefit from the ecotourism boom in their local areas, or would the corporations exploit them and use them as cheap labor.

As stated on the Responsible Tourism Manual for South Africa (2002), “Responsible Tourism” is about providing better holiday experiences for their guests and good quality business opportunities for tourism enterprises. According to the said Responsible Tourism Manual, it also enables local communities to enjoy a better quality life through increased socio-economic benefits and improved natural resource management.

In the above Responsible Tourism Manual, mentioned the South Africa’s Tourism White Paper (1996), where “Responsible Tourism” has mentioned the following key elements to which it concerns:

Developing, managing and marketing tourism in ways that create competitive advantage; Assessing and monitoring the environmental, social and economic impacts of tourism developments, and openly disclosing information; Ensuring the active involvement of communities that benefit from tourism, including their participation in planning and decision-making and the establishment of meaningful economic linkages; Maintaining and encouraging natural, economic, social and cultural diversity; Avoiding waste and over-consumption, and promoting the sustainable use of local resources.

In view of the said elements, its National policy specifies that the tourism development in South Africa should be government led, private sector driven, community based, and labor conscious. Further, the said various sectors are committed to partnership with the people of South Africa to develop and market good quality, sustainable tourism experiences that demonstrate the country’s commitment to social, economic, environmental, technical, institutional and financial responsibility.

South Africa’s pioneering “Responsible Tourism Manual” provides the necessary starting point for defining and benchmarking responsible practice in such sub-sectors as accommodation, transport, cultural and natural heritage tours as well as in marketing and other types of associations. This process will ensure that the tourism sector in South

Africa keeps pace with international and national trends towards responsible business practice – trends that are increasingly manifest in South Africa's international originating markets as well as within the country's domestic tourism market.

In summary, Ecotourism is a positive tool of improvement and development of lives; hence, there should be a set of guidelines and guideline which, provide tools where people and organizations in the travel and tourism sector can enhance their business activities while simultaneously expanding the socio-economic benefits of tourism for local stakeholders, including but not limited to employees, suppliers and neighboring communities. These tools also help tourism businesses to respect natural and cultural resources, for the benefit of South African tourism as a whole.

Finally it has noted that there are many factors to consider about ecotourism. In its concept, ecotourism emphasizes in the preservation of the natural environment and typically locally guided by the people especially the host community. The surroundings must be protected.

Local Studies

Tourism creates jobs and due to the proliferating number of tourists who are involved in ecotourism activities. In other local places with similar settings of Palawan like Pagudpud, Camarines Sur and Ifugao, the home-stay facilities are very successful in terms of accommodating guests since the said town is boarded by attractive coastlines of pristine beaches.

For additional benefits, the host community is able to lend additional water sports accessories for a reasonable fee. Just like in Puerto Princesa, activity gears are for rent. These include water sports facilities, hiking, tour guiding, and interaction guiding, ground handling and the like. There are also some income generating establishments like food and beverage establishments, souvenir shops and other accommodations.

In ecotourism destinations like Mayon Volcano, studies are still in progress in order to assess the effectiveness of the National Ecotourism Strategy of Executive Order No. 111 Series of 1999 in promoting the sustainable development in the protected areas in Hundred Islands and Mayon Volcano Natural Park of the Philippines from 2002 to 2011. Interviews and surveys are used as basis for the analysis and formulation of recommendations. This study is headed by: Darwin John Soneja with members: Charles Cardenas, Stacy Mae Dumo, Harold Duane Fajardo, Roman Cyril Panganiban, Loida Ramos.

Palawan is never left behind not only by natural resources but also cultural resources. Its great history entails the cradle of ancient Philippine Civilization thru the discovery of Tribe of 'Taong Tabon' or ancient cave men in the island. The island is also the habitat of 'Taong Bato' or stone men. Their existence has been the focus of study about the beginnings of the first Filipinos. They possess sacred beliefs and practices that are uniquely different in any other places. Hence, there are a lot of sacred ecotourism sites that should be given ample importance and respect.

In an article and case study of Sevilla for Alyansa Tigil Mina and Save Palawan Movement (2011), mining and biodiversity, Palawan has been described as one of the hotspots of biodiversity in the Philippines. The island's forest has abundant natural flora and fauna and is composed of rich cultural heritage. It is the place of protected areas like "Game Refuge and Bird Sanctuary" from the year 1967, "Mangrove Reserve" from 1981 and on 1990, UNESCO declared the whole island as a "Man and Biosphere Reserve". In addition, Tubbataha Reef Marine Park and the Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park are two World Heritage Sites.

The island of Palawan has an outrageous number of nickel and chromites reserves which is abundantly found underneath centuries old trees that attracts the mining investments. The said virgin forests remain to

be one of the natural treasures of the place and the threat of mining industry is very possible to operate and destroy its beauty.

With relation to a research study of Regis (2011), Palawan was an island of minerals. This fact made mining companies to be more interested to hold their mining activities to the place. Accordingly research, mining will definitely create a number of negative impacts of the place. The said activity may produce the toxic elements buried from its soil. Nickel, manganese, chromium and cobalt to name a few were minerals that were known to the place. The said minerals can greatly affect the normal growth of trees in the island. These minerals will clearly affect the island's ecology according to Landers and Gilkes (2007) should there be mining activities from the place. The impacts of these minerals to all plants and animals including humans were dangerous to their existence.

Khalid and Tinsley (1980) said that nickel, for example, plays a vital role in composing the sturdiness of plants. Carlson (1991) even confirmed thru his study that nickel causes reductions in root elongation of plants like cabbage, lettuce, millet, radish and other crops.

Mining may also produce the presence iron ore leach ate in Palawan. This will poison fishes according to the study made by Hamoutene et.al (2000). The greater negative impact may happen when there were naturally occurring combinations of the above metals. According to Mumthas et al. (2010), the combination of the above stated minerals could cause the inability to produce food of the rich flora of the place. Hence, local community, tourist and other stakeholders oppose mining in Palawan.

Foreign Studies

According to the World Tourism Organization, 24 million tourist arrivals are expected for the region which includes Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam in 2007. Asia Pacific region has been overtaking North America as the second most visited region after Europe. It registered 153.3 million arrivals where said number comprises over 20 % of the total world tourism arrivals. This is considered as a historic turning point in the flow of international visitors arrivals throughout the globe. In the Pacific and South Asia region alone, Pacific Asia Travel Association stated last 2006, that there was a 4 % increase on tourist arrivals in the region.

A study conducted by the United Nation called Collaborative Partnership on Forests, was founded on the belief that ecotourism sites can improve the local economy and the ecosystems at the same time. Under the said program, regional workshops includes the implementation of the said instrument in Ghana, Liberia, Nicaragua and the Philippines.

For the environmental assessment, ecotourism is said to have the greatest impact on the environment. Benchmarking is regularly used to determine the status and develop a certain ecotourism site. The habitual monitoring and evaluation of the place needs to have constant indicators in the study of the place.

Partnership with stakeholders is one big factor that boosts development in the ecotourism destinations. These stakeholders possess a lot of responsibilities in conducting processes like planning, developing, facilitating and proper management of the protected area. Said processes are well thought-out strengths in the further progress of the ecotourism objective.

The success of the development of the place will also depend upon the collective agreement and active participation of all stakeholders. The formation of this agreement requires a long term contract to ensure the adjustments and success of the program. It is also then requires the partners to build up and put into practice sustainable financial mechanism and certain guidelines for cost and benefits of every one. Working with the communities in order to integrate tourism sector planning is extremely recommended.

The local Department of Tourism is the direct agency for all tourism improvement in the province. It plays a vital role in advising, managing and monitoring of tourism activities.

For other concerned organization, the World Wildlife Fund or WWF is tagged as the initiator of ecotourism development. The organization is also tasked to develop certain procedures, guidelines, policies and regulations for tourism operations involving development with the stakeholders for the implementation by the local or national government. It is responsible also for the evaluation and monitoring of all ecotourism ventures and activities. World Wildlife Fund also manages and maintains relevant tourism infrastructures with the coordination of government and other private sector entities. This also includes the management decisions over activities involving ecotourism activities.

Communities also have vital role in ecotourism development of a place. It is the source of human and natural richness. Its role and responsibilities may include but not limited to actively participate in the progress and enactment of a sustainable financial mechanism that may affect Tourism community funds. Community members are also mandated to take direct and indirect participation in tourism activities such as planning, implementing and monitoring of all tourism development in the area. Hence, communities were encouraged to enter into agreements or legal contracts between them and tourism investors to support tourism development or operations.

To conclude with all the stated data gathered from the studies and literatures herein, ecotourism is an important industry and at the same time an activity. Palawan possesses the character to which such actions may be made possible. The criteria set forth by the above luminaries may further assess and evaluate the ecotourism destinations of Palawan for its further protection and conservation thru a responsible ecotourism guideline.

4. Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data gathered from the survey on the status of selected ecotourism destinations in Palawan which may serve as basis for a proposed guideline for ecotourism conservation.

In order for the study to determine the benefits of selected Ecotourism destinations, and to come up with a Proposed Ecotourism Guideline for Palawan, it aimed to answer the following questions:

Specifically it aimed to answer the following questions:

1. The profile of the respondents, in terms of:

1.1 Gender

Table1 shows that twenty-six (26) of the respondents are male and twenty-four (24) are female in Calauit Island. In Puerto Princesa Underground River, twenty (20) of the total respondents are male and thirty (30) are female. In Honda Bay, there are twenty-four (24) male and twenty-six (26) female. Therefore shows that the female gender dominates the number of respondents of the study.

Table 1
Respondents' Gender

Gender	Destination					
	Calauit Island		Puerto Princesa Underground River		Honda Bay	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Male	26	52	20	40	24	48
Female	24	48	30	60	26	52
Total	50	100	50	100	50	100

Table 2
Respondents' Ages

Age	Destination					
	Calauit Island		Puerto Princesa Underground River		Honda Bay	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
18-25	38	76	36	72	21	42
26-35	5	10	10	20	29	58
36-45	5	10	1	2	-	-
46-65	2	4	1	2	-	-
65 above	-	-	2	4	-	-

1.2 Age

It can be seen from Table 2, that most of the respondents belong to the age group of 18-25 with a frequency of thirty-eight (38) or seventy-six (76 %) for Calauit Island, respondents in Calauit Island tourists, and thirty-six (36) or seventy-two (72 %) for Puerto Princesa Underground River tourists. On the other hand, '26-35' age group comprises most of the respondents from among the Honda Bay Tourists.

Meanwhile, '46-65' age group comprises the smallest number of respondents from Calauit Island with 2 or 4 %, '36-45' and '46-65' age groups are the smallest number of respondents for Puerto Princesa with one (1) or two percent (2 %) respondents while '18-25' age group for Honda Bay.

Based from the tabular result, it is manifested that more tourists are visiting Palawan on active and younger ages between 18 to 35 years. This is in connection that Ecotourism activities involve more nature adventure actions which the younger generation would be more appreciative.

3. The assessment of the respondents based on ecotourism criteria on the following destination:

Table 3 indicates the assessment of the respondents on Ecotourism Criteria 'Nature Base Element' of Puerto Princesa Underground River. It can be gleaned from the table that the respondents agree with each particulars on 'Nature Base Element' to be present at Puerto Princesa Underground River.

The highest Mean of 4.28 is given to the variable stating that ‘The destination provides nature based activities like trekking, camping, bird watching and other similar activities’ and Verbal Interpretation of Agree. While the lowest is the Mean of 3.94 which states that ‘The destination is an undisturbed natural environment’.

Meanwhile the Standard Deviation shows that the assessments of the respondents are quite heterogeneous especially on the particulars regarding the nature-based activities with Standard Deviation of 1.13.

Table 3

Assessment of the Respondents based on Ecotourism Criteria ‘Nature Base Element’ of Puerto Princesa Underground River

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. The destination provides nature based activities like trekking, camping, bird watching and other similar activities.	4.28	1.13	Agree
2. The destination has an interesting species of flora and fauna.	4.08	.85	Agree
3. The destination is an undisturbed natural environment.	3.94	.86	Agree
4. The destination provides natural attractions.	4.22	.95	Agree
5. The wildlife in the destination is observed in its natural habitat.	4.20	.93	Agree
Over all Mean			

In the nature base component of the Puerto Princesa Underground River, the responses are all Agree with an Overall Mean 4.14. These responses denote that the said destinations should provide further nature friendly activities aside from the usual caving.

It is also evident that the respondents have a normal reaction on the flora and fauna of the destination. It is also agreeable that the place is undisturbed but the respondents are that alarmed to the large number of tourists that visit the destination.

The destination really provides a natural attraction, however the respondents have apprehensions on the tourist facilities that are being constructed or to be constructed on the area. This may totally affect the natural ambiance of the destination.

Table 4, stated the variable ‘The destination gives opportunities to interact with the natural environment’ has a Mean of 4.18, and a Verbal Interpretation of Agree. The variable ‘The destination

develops the tourists' environmental awareness' has a Mean of 4.08, with a Verbal Interpretation of Agree.

It is agreed that the destination gives opportunities to interact with the natural environment; however the respondents have minimal interaction with its fauna since there are already a large number of visitors going to the underground river.

Table 4
Assessment of the Respondents in Puerto Princesa Underground based on Ecotourism
Criteria
'Educational or Learning Component'

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. The destination gives opportunities to interact with the natural environment.	4.18	.94	Agree
2. The destination provides the visitor with nature exposure and information.	4.16	.93	Agree
3. The destination fosters understanding about nature.	4.16	.95	Agree
4. The destination becomes a subject for research or study.	4.16	.87	Agree
5. The destination develops the tourists' environmental awareness.	4.08	.85	Agree

The destination provides the visitor with nature exposure and information but the information sites are that limited to the area itself. It also has the same responses that the destination fosters understanding about nature. Since, there is limited visible information available to the area; locals must provide a wider and intensive way of informing their guests about the destination. The underground river has been known from the early times, but there were no extensive number of researches that are known to the public.

In Table 5, the variable 'The natural beauty of the place is well sustained' has a Mean of 3.96, and Verbal Interpretation of Agree.

The variable 'There are visible ecotourism projects in the protected area' has a Mean of 4.04, and Verbal Interpretation of Agree.

Table 5
Assessment of the Respondents in Puerto Princesa Underground River based on
Ecotourism Criteria
‘Sustainability’

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. The natural beauty of the place is well sustained.	3.96	.90	Agree
2. There are environmental programs visible to the site.	4.00	.86	Agree
3. There are visible enhancements on the natural condition of the place through tree planting and other similar activities.	4.02	.87	Agree
4. There are visible ecotourism projects in the protected area.	4.04	.83	Agree
5. There are noticeable signage regarding the preservation and conservation of the protected area.	4.00	1.10	Agree

For the assessment of the respondents on the Underground River of Palawan, it is all agreeable on the variable ‘The natural beauty of the place is well sustained’ however there is clamor to project more sustainable programs for its conservation and protection. Also, there should be visible environmental programs to the site, for the visitors to know on how to maintain and safeguard the destination. There should also visible enhancements on the natural condition of the place through tree planting and other similar activities.

The respondents wanted to see more of the environmental projects for the Underground River of Palawan. For the respondents, the overall mean is 4.00 with Standard Deviation of .81 and Verbal Interpretation of Agree.

Hence, there should also visible ecotourism projects being proposed for the conservation and protection of the place. This will let the stakeholders that there are serious move for the up keeping of the destination. In addition, the respondents wanted to increase the number of noticeable signage regarding the preservation and conservation of the protected area.

Table 6, the variable ‘The destination provides nature based activities like trekking, camping, bird watching and other similar activities’ has a Mean 2.78, a Standard Deviation of 1.33 and Verbal Interpretation of Minimally Agree.

The variable ‘The wildlife in the destination is observed in its natural habitat’ has the highest Mean of 3.62, which means Agree.

Table 6
Assessment of the Respondents in Honda Bay based on Ecotourism Criteria
‘Nature Base Element’

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. The destination provides nature based activities like trekking, camping, bird watching and other similar activities.	2.78	1.33	Minimally Agree
2. The destination has an interesting species of flora and fauna.	3.18	1.16	Minimally Agree
3. The destination is an undisturbed natural environment.	3.36	1.21	Minimally Agree
4. The destination provides natural attractions.	3.46	1.28	Minimally Agree
5. The wildlife in the destination is observed in its natural habitat.	3.62	1.24	Agree

For the respondents, Table 2.2.1, the variable ‘The destination provides nature based activities like trekking, camping, bird watching and other similar activities’ has a Mean 2.78, a Standard Deviation of 1.33 and Verbal Interpretation of Minimally Agree. The variable ‘The destination has an interesting species of flora and fauna’ has a Mean of 3.18, and interpreted as Minimally Agree. The variable ‘The destination is an undisturbed natural environment’ has a Mean of 3.36, a Standard Deviation of 1.21 and Verbal Interpretation of Minimally Agree. The variable ‘The destination provides natural attractions’ has a Mean of 3.46, a Standard Deviation of 1.28, and Verbal Interpretation of Minimally Agree. The variable ‘The wildlife in the destination is observed in its natural habitat’ has a Mean of 3.62, a Standard Deviation of 1.24 and Verbal Interpretation of Agree.

In Honda Bay, the respondents minimally agreed that it provides nature based activities like trekking, camping, bird watching and other similar activities, this is because that the place is solely visited for purposes of beach holiday and scuba diving only. Also, the respondents minimally agreed that destination has an interesting species of flora and fauna, because it is not more of a land base. There are only limited numbers of corals and fishes to see in the place because the visitors were able to do their scuba diving activity on a rainy day of November and there is only a limited place or area for the tourists to do the said activity. The respondents minimally agree to the fact that Honda Bay is an undisturbed natural environment because the island in Honda Bay has tourist facilities on it. Cottages and other sturdy constructions are abundant to the place itself. The respondents also minimally agree that Honda Bay provides natural attractions. The fact is based from the limited natural sceneries of the place. Some of the islands are already developed and owned as per the locals. The respondents Agree to the fact that the wildlife in the destination is observed in its natural habitat. Though, there are limited animals roaming the islands, still, starfish, for example, are very abundant and seen in the place.

On Table 7, the variable ‘The destination gives opportunities to interact with the natural environment’ has a Mean of 3.28 which means Minimally Agree.

Table 7

**Assessment of the Respondents in Honda Bay based on Ecotourism Criteria
'Educational or Learning Component'**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. The destination gives opportunities to interact with the natural environment.	3.28	1.03	Minimally Agree
2. The destination provides the visitor with nature exposure and information.	3.46	.99	Minimally Agree
3. The destination fosters understanding about nature.	3.52	1.07	Agree
4. The destination becomes a subject for research or study.	3.53	1.23	Agree
5. The destination develops the tourists' environmental awareness.	3.86	1.14	Agree

The variable 'The destination develops the tourists' environmental awareness' has a Mean of 3.86, a Standard Deviation of 1.14 and a Verbal Interpretation of Agree. On the other hand, the entire table has an Overall Mean of 3.53 interpreted as agree and a Standard Deviation of .77

The respondents minimally agree in the variable 'The destination gives opportunities to interact with the natural environment'; this is to the fact that there are only limited sites to do limited activities like scuba diving. Only the local communities living nearby the place are doing their part to provide tourist the activities in Honda Bay. The respondents minimally agreed also to the fact that the Honda Bay provides the visitor with nature exposure and information. The fact is based the experience of the tourist respondents that they were only transported from one island to another without any information of conservation and protection of the place. Even though, the local guides are only escorting the guests from one island to another in Honda Bay, the respondents agree that the destination fosters understanding about nature. The variable 'The destination becomes a subject for research or study' is agreeable because the place is possibly subject to studies due to number of tourist facilities in the area. The respondents agree that the destination develops the tourists' environmental awareness due to the abundance of starfish and other marine animals seen in the area.

In Table 8, the variable 'The natural beauty of the place is well sustained', has a Mean of 3.32, a Standard Deviation of 1.10 and Verbal Interpretation of Minimally Agree. The variable 'There are environmental programs visible to the site', has a Mean of 3.56, a Standard Deviation of .93 and Verbal Interpretation of Agree. The variable 'There are visible enhancements on the natural condition of the place through tree planting and other similar activities' has a Mean of 3.48, Standard Deviation of 1.03 and Verbal Interpretation of Minimally Agree.

The variable 'There are visible ecotourism projects in the protected area' has a Mean of 3.52, Standard Deviation of 1.07 and Verbal Interpretation of Agree. The variable 'There are noticeable signage regarding the preservation and conservation of the protected area' has a Mean of 3.82, Standard Deviation of 1.27 and Verbal Interpretation of Agree.

The respondents minimally agree that the natural beauty of the place is well sustained; this is to the fact that there are tourist facilities that are proliferating in the place. Respondents agree that there are environmental programs visible to the site.

Table 8
Assessment of the Respondents in Honda Bay based on Ecotourism Criteria
'Sustainability'

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. The natural beauty of the place is well sustained.	3.32	1.10	Minimally Agree
2. There are environmental programs visible to the site.	3.56	.93	Agree
3. There are visible enhancements on the natural condition of the place through tree planting and other similar activities.	3.48	1.03	Minimally Agree
4. There are visible ecotourism projects in the protected area.	3.52	1.07	Agree
5. There are noticeable signage regarding the preservation and conservation of the protected area	3.82	1.27	Agree

This is due to the initiatives of the local communities living within the area like the construction of man-made docking area for scuba divers. The respondents minimally agree that there are visible enhancements on the natural condition of the place through tree planting and other similar activities. The locals of the place are more active or focused on the tourist island hopping activities instead of planting trees and other conservation practices at the same time. Due to the number of tourist facilities available in Honda Bay, respondents agree to the variable 'There are visible ecotourism projects in the protected area'. In some part of Honda Bay, especially in the main docking point, there are noticeable signage regarding the preservation and conservation of the protected area.

Table 9 stated that the variable 'The destination provides nature based activities like trekking, camping, bird watching and other similar activities' has a Mean 2.44, a Standard Deviation of 1.59 and Verbal Interpretation of Disagree. The variable 'The destination has an interesting species of flora and fauna' has a Mean of 2.62, a Standard Deviation of 1.32 and Verbal Interpretation of Minimally Agree.

The variable ‘The destination is an undisturbed natural environment’ has a Mean of 2.52, a Standard Deviation of 1.46 and Verbal Interpretation of Minimally Agree.

The variable ‘The destination provides natural attractions’ has a Mean of 2.90, a Standard Deviation of 1.61, and Verbal Interpretation of Minimally Agree. The table has an Overall Mean of 2.64, Standard Deviation of 1.41 and a Verbal Interpretation of Minimally Agree.

In Calauit Island, the respondents disagreed with the presence to the variable ‘The nature based activities like trekking, camping, bird watching and other similar activities’ this is to the fact that the island has least limited activities in Palawan, aside from the normal site seeing in the place.

Table 9
Assessment of the Respondents in Calauit Island based on Ecotourism Criteria ‘Nature Base Element’

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. The destination provides nature based activities like trekking, camping, bird watching and other similar activities.	2.44	1.59	Disagree
2. The destination has an interesting species of flora and fauna.	2.62	1.32	Minimally Agree
3. The destination is an undisturbed natural environment.	2.52	1.46	Minimally Agree
4. The destination provides natural attractions.	2.90	1.61	Minimally Agree
5. The wildlife in the destination is observed in its natural habitat.	2.72	1.67	Minimally Agree

The respondents minimally agreed that the destination has an interesting species of flora and fauna. This is because of the fact that the animals or wildlife therein are also similar to those which are captivated in zoos in the metropolis. The respondents minimally agreed that the destination is an undisturbed natural environment because of the fact that visitors are visiting the place and at the same time feeding the animals themselves. This concludes that the wildlife were trained to be dependent with the visiting tourists. Also, the fact that there are also some constructions found within the island that may diminish the natural beauty of the place, the reason the variable ‘The destination provides natural attractions’ has a Minimally Agree remark. Based from the above interaction of the visitors with the wildlife, it is minimally agreed that the wildlife in the destination is observed in its natural habitat. Further, there are no more existing wild from the original species left in Calauit Island, because they are just transported from Kenya and they had a hard time in living there.

On Table 10, the variable ‘The destination gives opportunities to interact with the natural environment’ has a Mean of 3.22, a Standard Deviation of 1.36 and a Verbal Interpretation of Minimally

Agree. The variable ‘The destination provides the visitor with nature exposure and information’ has Mean of 3.50, a Standard Deviation of 1.25 and a Verbal Interpretation of Agree.

The variable ‘The destination fosters understanding about nature’ has a Mean of 3.24, a Standard Deviation of 1.41 and a Verbal Interpretation of Minimally Agree. The variable ‘The destination becomes a subject for research or study’ has a Mean of 3.28, a Standard Deviation of 1.25 and Verbal Interpretation of Minimally Agree.

Table 10
Assessment of the Respondents in Calautit Island based on Ecotourism Criteria ‘Educational or Learning Component’

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. The destination gives opportunities to interact with the natural environment.	3.22	1.36	Minimally Agree
2. The destination provides the visitor with nature exposure and information.	3.50	1.25	Agree
3. The destination fosters understanding about nature.	3.24	1.41	Minimally Agree
4. The destination becomes a subject for research or study.	3.28	1.25	Minimally Agree
5. The destination develops the tourists’ environmental awareness.	3.33	1.34	Minimally Agree

The variable ‘The destination develops the tourists’ environmental awareness’ has a Mean of 3.33, a Standard Deviation of 1.34 and a Verbal Interpretation of Minimally Agree.

From the variable, that ‘The destination gives opportunities to interact with the natural environment’ has a Verbal Interpretation of Minimally Agree because of the minimal number of wild interactions or activities available to in area. For the respondents, it is agreeable that the destination provides the visitor with nature exposure and information because of the wild interaction activity of the place. The respondents minimally agree that the destination fosters an extensive understanding about nature. The variable that ‘The destination becomes a subject for research or study’, the respondent Minimally Agree. This is because of the reason that the tourists were not able to hear more studies conducted to Calautit Island. The respondents wanted to know more on some data about the place which would be the subject environmental studies of Calautit. The respondents also minimally agree that the destination develops the tourists’ environmental awareness. This is because of the minimal tourists’ environmental activities in the island.

On Table 11, the variable ‘The natural beauty of the place is well sustained’, has a Mean of 2.62, a Standard Deviation of 1.72 and Verbal Interpretation of Minimally Agree. The variable ‘There are environmental programs visible to the site’, has a Mean of 2.80, a Standard Deviation of 1.40 and Verbal Interpretation of Minimally Agree. The variable ‘There are visible enhancements on the natural condition of the place through tree planting and other similar activities’ has a Mean of 2.58, Standard Deviation of 1.55 and Verbal Interpretation of Minimally Agree.

The variable ‘There are visible ecotourism projects in the protected area’ has a Mean of 2.76, Standard Deviation of 1.48 and Verbal Interpretation of Minimally Agree.

Table 11

Assessment of the Respondents in Calautit Island based on Ecotourism Criteria ‘Sustainability’

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Verbal Interpretation
1. The natural beauty of the place is well sustained.	2.62	1.72	Minimally Agree
2. There are environmental programs visible to the site.	2.80	1.40	Minimally Agree
3. There are visible enhancements on the natural condition of the place through tree planting and other similar activities.	2.58	1.55	Minimally Agree
4. There are visible ecotourism projects in the protected area.	2.76	1.48	Minimally Agree
5. There are noticeable signage regarding the preservation and conservation of the protected area	2.55	1.60	Minimally Agree

The variable ‘There are noticeable signage regarding the preservation and conservation of the protected area’ has a Mean of 2.55, Standard Deviation of 1.60 and Verbal Interpretation of 56 Minimally Agree.

The respondents minimally agree that the natural beauty of the place is well sustained. This is because of the settlers who were thrown out of the island is back. There are reports of unlawful hunting and eating of the animals’ meat. There are also minimal environmental programs visible to the site. It is known to public the lack of funds for the sustenance of the place. The respondents minimally agree that there are visible enhancements on the natural condition of the place through tree planting and other similar activities also, the visibility of ecotourism projects in the protected area. Respondents are aware that even the tractors of the island are not working, which resulted from the non-maintenance or non enhancement of the place. Due to the fact that the program has lack of sufficient fund, respondents find Calautit Island to have poor or lack of noticeable signage regarding the preservation and conservation of the protected area.

3. Comparison of the Respondents’ Assessment when Grouped According to their profile

Table 12 presents the comparison of the assessment of the respondents on the ecotourism destination when grouped according to gender.

It can be seen from the table that only the assessment of the male and female tourists from Calauit Island were found to have a very significant difference as shown by the P-Value which are less than .01 significance level. Tabular results show that the female respondents from this tourist destination have higher assessment than the male. This implies that the female group has statistically higher evaluation as to the criteria of ecotourism for the Calauit Island.

On the other hand, the male and female respondent tourists of Puerto Princesa Underground and those in Honda Bay have statistically the same assessment as shown by the P-Value which are all less than the .01 significance level.

The next table indicates the comparison of the assessment of the respondents on the ecotourism destination of Calauit Island when grouped according to age.

It can be viewed from the table that only the assessment of the respondents on learning component is found to have a very significant difference. This implies that the respondents belonging to different age groups statistically differ on how they evaluate the particular referring to learning component. The tabular values show that those who belong to 18-25 age range gave the highest evaluation of 3.72 which means that they observed the particulars on learning component while those whose age is 36-45 gave the lowest evaluation of 1.68.

Meanwhile, respondents have statistically the same assessment as to the particulars pertaining to the nature base element and sustainability as shown by the P-Value which are all greater than .05 level of significance.

All variables have no significant difference from each other. Generally stated, the variables are comparable with each other, meaning that respondents are all in the same position to have the same reaction on the assessment of the Ecotourism Criteria in Calauit Island compared when grouped according to age.

On Table 14, shows the variable according to the assessment of the respondents of Puerto Princesa Underground River when grouped according to age, 'Nature Base Element' has those respondents aged '46-65', has the highest mean of 4.60, Standard Deviation of .00, F-Value of 1.61 while the respondents with age 'Above 65' lowest Mean is 2.90; Standard Deviation of .14 and Verbal Interpretation of Not Significant.

Table 12

Comparison of the Assessment of the Respondents on the Ecotourism Destination compared when grouped According to Gender

Variable	Male		Female		T-Value	Significance
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Assessment on the Criteria of Ecotourism of the Respondents in Calauit Island						
Nature Base Element	2.06	1.06	3.67	1.49	-3.314	Very Significant P=.002<.01
Educational or Learning Component	2.88	1.07	3.26	1.48	-2.702	Very Significant P=.009<.01
Sustainability	2.09	1.16	3.29	1.50	-3.167	Very Significant P=.003<.01
Assessment on the Criteria of Ecotourism of the Respondents in Puerto Princesa Underground River						
Nature Base Element	4.28	.68	4.05	.90	.953	Not Significant P.35<.05
Educational or Learning Component	4.33	.65	4.02	.92	1.334	Not Significant P.19>.05
Sustainability	4.07	.66	3.96	.91	.445	Not Significant P=.66>.05
Assessment on the Criteria of Ecotourism of the Respondents in Honda Bay						
Nature Base Element	3.27	.98	3.29	.95	-0.94	Very Significant P=.93>.05
Educational or Learning Component	3.44	.73	3.61	.80	-.801	Very Significant P=.43>.05
Sustainability	3.51	.66	3.56	.71	-23	Very Significant P=.82>.05

Table 13**Comparison of the Assessment of Respondents on the Ecotourism Destination of Calauit Island when Grouped According to Age**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	F-Value	Significant
Calauit Island				
Nature Base Element				
18-25	2.86	1.46	1.61	Not Significant P=.20>.05
26-35	1.76	.62		
36-45	1.80	1.02		
46-65	2.80	1.98		
Educational or Learning Component				
18-25	3.72	1.00	9.88	Very Significant P=.00<.05
26-35	1.99	.47		
36-45	1.68	.87		
46-65	2.80	1.98		
Sustainability				
18-25	2.80	1.54	.82	Not Significant P=.49>.05
26-35	2.36	1.03		
36-45	1.80	.71		
46-65	3.10	2.12		

For variable 'Educational or Learning Component', the respondents who have the age '46-65' have the highest Mean 5.00, Standard Deviation of .92, F-Value of .93. The lowest is age 'Above 65' with Mean 3.20 and Standard Deviation .28 and Over-all Verbal Interpretation of Not Significant. The variable 'Sustainability', the respondents with age 'Above 65' has the lowest Mean of 3.00, Standard Deviation of .28, F-Value of 1.13 and Verbal Interpretation of Not Significant.

Table 14**Assessment of the respondents on the Ecotourism Destination Puerto Princesa Underground River compared when grouped according Age**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	F-Value	Significant
Puerto Princesa Underground River				
Nature Base Element				
18-25	4.16	.89	1.35	Not Significant P=.27>.05
26-35	4.28	.42		
36-45	4.40	.00		
46-65	4.60	.00		
Above 65	2.90	.14		
Educational or Learning Component				
18-25	4.16	.92	.93	Not Significant P=.46>.05
26-35	4.20	.40		
36-45	4.00	.00		
46-65	5.00	.00		
Above 65	3.20	.28		
Sustainability				
18-25	4.01	.89	1.13	Not Significant P=.36>.05
26-35	4.24	.36		
36-45	4.00	.00		
46-65	3.40	.00		
Above 65	3.00	.28		

Based from the tabular findings, all respondents' assessment on the criteria for ecotourism destinations are Not Significant and is therefore comparable with each other. The variables are similar with each other. This means that respondents are all in the same position or have the same reaction on the assessment of the Ecotourism Criteria in Puerto Princesa Underground River compared when grouped according to age.

Table 15 shows the variables according to the assessment of the respondents of Honda Bay when grouped according to age, 'Nature Base Element' has those respondents aged '18-25', has the highest mean of 2.86, Standard Deviation of 1.46, F-Value of 1.61 while the lowest Mean is 1.76; Standard Deviation of .62 and Verbal Interpretation of Not Significant.

Table 15**Assessment of the respondents on the Ecotourism Destination Honda Bay compared when grouped according Age**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	F-Value	Significant
Honda Bay				
Nature Base Element				
18-25	3.42	1.31	1.36	Not Significant P= .54>.05
26-35	3.38	1.03		
36-45	2.23	1.40		
46-65	3.40	1.74		
Educational or Learning Component				
18-25	3.85	.94	5.53	Very Significant P= .79>.05
26-35	3.49	.92		
36-45	2.07	1.22		
46-65	3.53	1.89		
Sustainability				
18-25	3.41	1.28	2.11	Not Significant P= .58>.05
26-35	3.60	.80		
36-45	2.17	1.10		
46-65	3.20	1.51		

For variable 'Educational or Learning Component', the respondents who have the age '18-25' have the highest Mean 3.72, Standard Deviation of 1.00, F-Value of 9.88. The lowest is age '36-45' with Mean 1.68 and Standard Deviation .87 and Over-all Verbal Interpretation of Not Significant. The variable 'Sustainability' '45-65' has a Mean of 3.10, Standard Deviation of 2.12, F-Value of .82 and Verbal Interpretation of Not Significant.

Based from the tabular findings on the assessment of the respondents on the Ecotourism Criteria when grouped according to age, the variable 'Nature Base' and 'Sustainability' have the remark Not Significant. This is because that the responses are comparable with each other except the variable 'Educational and Learning Component' which has the remark Very Significant. Accordingly, the respondents, whose age are '18-25' has a better Mean to consider, together with the two (2) other variables '26-35' and '46-65' are comparable with each other.

4. The respondents' assessment compare according to destinations

As assessed on Table 16, the variable for 'Nature Base Element', Puerto Princesa Underground River the highest Mean followed by Honda Bay and Calauit Island as the destinations that have nature base elements. For 'Educational or Learning Component' and 'Sustainability', the destinations have the same rankings as to the Mean of its educational or learning components and sustainability. Puerto Princesa Underground River emerges to best Honda Bay and Calauit Island according to data.

Table 16

Assessment of the respondents on the Ecotourism Destination compared when grouped according to Ecotourism Criteria

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	F-Value	Significant
Nature Base Element				
Calauit Island	2.64	1.41	23.92	Very Significant P=.000<.05
Puerto Princesa Underground River	4.14	.82		
Honda Bay	3.28	.95		
Educational or Learning Component				
Calauit Island	3.31	1.23	10.22	Very Significant P=.000<.05
Puerto Princesa Underground River	4.15	.83		
Honda Bay	3.53	.77		
Sustainability				
Calauit Island	2.67	1.46	21.20	Very Significant P=.000<.05
Puerto Princesa Underground River	4.00	.81		
Honda Bay	3.54	.68		

Table 16 showed that the responses are Very Significant with each other's Ecotourism destination. This is for the fact that each destination has their distinct character and nature. The reason the responses are different when respondents are grouped according to destination. Calauit Island in general has island base activities with animal interaction, Puerto Princesa Underground River is more on spelunking activity and Honda Bay involves more on a beach holiday activities.

5. Proposed Responsible Ecotourism Guideline for Palawan Ecotourism Destinations

The following are the findings and proposed guideline for Palawan Ecotourism Destination:

Table 17

Findings According to the Criteria and Proposed Guidelines on the Selected Ecotourism Destinations in Palawan

Variable	Findings	Proposed Ecotourism Guidelines	Persons Involve
Criterion for Nature Base			
The destination provides nature based activities like trekking, camping, bird watching and other similar activities.	1. Calauit Island has a very limited nature based activity 2. Puerto Princesa Underground River has exceeding number of carrying capacity for a day 3. Honda Bay has beach holiday activities; however the area for snorkeling is limited for exploration.	1. The destination should provide nature based activities like trekking, camping, bird watching and other similar activities without sacrificing the carrying capacity of the ecotourism site.	Local Officials, Tour Suppliers and Host Community
The destination has an interesting species of flora and fauna.	1. The three (3) destinations in Palawan have numerous number of flora and fauna	1. The destination should have more interesting species of flora and fauna. Further study may help to conserve and preserve indigenous flora and fauna in the destination.	Local Officials
The destination is an undisturbed natural environment.	1. The destinations in Palawan are generally undisturbed natural environment, however due to the increasing number of tourists visiting especially in Puerto Princesa Underground River; its carrying capacity may be sacrificed.	1. The destination should be an undisturbed natural environment. There should be control to limit the number of carrying capacity that would visit the place. 2. Animals in protected areas like in Calauit Island must be left independent. Avoid activities	Local Officials, Tourists, Businessmen and Host Community

	2. As far as Calauit Island is concerned, respondents are more concerned on the interaction of the tourists with the animals.	that relates to their survival like directly feeding them.	
The destination provides natural attractions.	1. The constructions of tourism facilities especially in Calauit Island and Honda Bay may spoil the beauty and natural ambiance of the area. 2. There is commercial structure near the Puerto Princesa Underground River	1. The destination should have proper conservation and protection of its natural attractions. 2. Building of tourist facilities must be in accordance with the standard building code that will not affect the beauty and natural habitat of the destination	Local Officials, Businessmen and Host Community
The wildlife in the destination is observed in its natural habitat.	1. In Calauit Island, animals are fed by the visitors; hence they depend on the tourists for their survival. 2. There are minimal animals seen in Puerto Princesa Underground River. 3. There are limited areas in Honda Bay for marine life exploration.	1. The wildlife in the destination may be observed in its natural habitat for protection purposes. 2. Visitors must be prohibited to interact with the fauna of the place, for their survival. 3. There should have more area for animal exploration in the destinations.	Local Officials, Host Community and Tourists
Criterion for Educational or Learning Component			
The destination gives opportunities to interact with the natural environment.	The destinations give opportunities to interact with the natural environment.		Local Officials
The destination provides the visitor with	The destination provides the visitor with limited nature exposure and	In every destination, should provide the visitor with nature exposure activity	Government Officials

nature exposure and information.	information especially the Puerto Princesa Underground River and Calauit Island where local guides are given the opportunity to explain its ecology. However in Honda Bay, there are limited information given to visitors about its protection and conservation	and information.	
The destination fosters understanding about nature.	In the three (3) destinations, Honda Bay has the least number of reminders or information given to the tourists.	1. The destination fosters understanding about nature by disseminating information about the protection and conservation of the place. 2. Information may be given by the local guides or proper authorities to further secure and conserve the ecotourism destination.	Local Officials, Businessmen, Host Community
The destination becomes a subject for research or study.	Puerto Princesa Underground River has been a favorite subject for research or study than the Calauit Island and Honda Bay. This is because that the former became one of the New Wonders of Nature	1. The destination should be a subject for research or study. This will further protect and conserve the destinations. 2. There should have more studies for Calauit Island. The place has been the least visited among the destinations after the Puerto Princesa Underground River became one of the World's Nature's Wonder	Local Officials
The destination	The given destination	1. The destination	Local Officials,

develops the tourists' environmental awareness.	develops the tourists' environmental awareness through their local community and local guides	should develop the tourists' environmental awareness by using all forms of communication like posters, flyers and the like 2. Further education of community knowledge and nature appreciation should be intensified to all stakeholders	Host Community, Businessmen
Criterion for Sustainability			
The natural beauty of the place is well sustained.	1. The three (3) destinations have their own natural beauty to sustain. 2. A greater number of tourists are visiting the Puerto Princesa Underground River and least to Calauit Island.	1. There should be control on the number of tourist that will visit Puerto Princesa Underground River and Honda Bay, this is to control and maintain the carrying capacity of the place 2. There should be a sustainable studies on how Calauit Island will attract more visitors like Honda Bay and Puerto Princesa 3. Honda Bay has been a tagged destination to the Underground River, there should also be further development for sustainable activities	Government Officials, Host Community
There are environmental programs visible to the site.	1. Puerto Princesa Underground River and Calauit Island has minimal environmental programs visible	1. There are environmental programs which shall be visible to the sites. 2. Create awareness to the visitors	Local Officials

	to the site. 2. Calauit Island has least visible sites of environmental program	about sustainability programs for the conservation and protection of the ecotourism destination	
There are visible enhancements on the natural condition of the place through tree planting and other similar activities.	There are visible enhancements on the natural condition of the place through tree planting and other similar activities in Honda Bay and least with Puerto Princesa Underground River and Calauit Island.	There should be more visible enhancements on the natural condition of the place through tree planting and other similar activities in the destinations stated especially Calauit Island because it is the sanctuary of more animals than the two (2) other destinations.	Local officials, Host Community, Businessmen (through their social corporate responsibility)
There are visible ecotourism projects in the protected area.	1. There are visible ecotourism projects in the protected area for Puerto Princesa Underground River alone. This is to further answer the needs of tourism over the ecotourism destination while maintaining the natural and diverse beauty of the destination. 2. There are least visible projects in Honda Bay and Calauit Island	1. There should be visible ecotourism projects in the protected area especially in Calauit Island and Honda Bay. 2. For the Underground River, there should be more sustainable posts, programs and environmental projects, which are exposed to public	Local Officials
There are noticeable signage regarding the preservation and conservation of the protected area	1. There are noticeable signage regarding the preservation and conservation of the protected area especially in Puerto Princesa Underground River and Calauit Island holding area. This is to further prohibit the destruction or damage of any	1. There shall noticeable signage regarding the preservation and conservation of the protected area especially in Honda Bay since it is the tagged destination to Puerto Princesa Underground River.	Local Officials

	natural element of the place.		
	2. There is least similar noticeable signage in Honda Bay		

5. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter summarizes and concludes information and data based on the findings of this study. Recommendations are also stated herein which relate to the summary and conclusion of respondents' answer.

Summary of Findings

The status of selected ecotourism destination in Palawan is assessed by this study. There is clamor for its conservation and preservation of its ecotourism destinations; hence there is a need for a proposed responsible ecotourism guideline for these sites. This ecotourism guideline will further help in the preservation and maintenance of the Palawan destinations. Based on the findings, the following data are stated and summarized:

1. For the profile of the respondents:

As to the demographics, all respondents are of legal age. The female gender forms the majority number of respondents in the study. Majority of the respondents are earning minimum and above minimum wage.

2. The assessments of the respondents based on ecotourism criteria on the following destinations:

Calauit Island's respondents minimally agree that the said ecotourism destination still possess the Nature Base Element, Learning Component and Sustainability for it to be an Ecotourism Destination.

Respondents in Puerto Princesa Underground River agree on all the criteria as an ecotourism destination such as Nature Base Element, Learning Component and Sustainability.

In Honda Bay, respondents agree on the variables on its Nature Base Element, and minimally agree on the other two variables of Learning Component and Sustainability

3. The respondents' assessment compare according to profile

The findings show that when respondents are grouped according to age, all responses for Puerto Princesa Underground River and Calauit Island are comparable. The responses in Honda Bay are generally Significant, except the variable 'Learning Component' where the remark is Very Significant. The variable age '46-65' is the highest Mean to consider for this fact.

When group according to gender, the respondents' assessment in Puerto Princesa Underground River are generally comparable with each other while, for Calauit Island and Honda Bay, have Very Significant remark. With this, the better variable to consider is the better Mean of the destinations. For Calauit Island and Honda Bay, the Female gender has a better Mean over the Male gender.

4. The respondents' assessment compare according to destinations are Very Significant with each other because of the different natural background of the area; Honda Bay for beach holiday, Calauit for island get away and Puerto Princesa Underground River for caving or spelunking.

5. The ecotourism guidelines to be proposed for the stated Palawan Ecotourism Destinations

Conclusions

After the careful assessment on the status on the selected ecotourism destinations in Palawan, the following are hereby concluded:

1. The destination Puerto Princesa Underground River, Honda Bay and Caulit Island provide limited nature based activities like trekking, camping, bird watching and other similar activities, where there is more nature friendly activities that may be develop in the destinations. The destination's species of flora and fauna may be that the same in other areas, however, efforts may exert to find and protect more species of it. There should be caution with Puerto Princesa Underground River, where the visitors are exceeding its carrying capacity.
2. The three (3) destinations give opportunities to interact with the natural environment. It provides the visitor with nature exposure however, with limited information like signage, posters and the like especially in Calauit Island. The destinations foster understanding about nature and becomes a subject for research or study. The three (3) destinations also develop the tourists' environmental awareness.
3. The natural beauty of the place is well sustained. There are environmental programs visible to the site especially in the Underground River and least in Calauit Island. There are also visible enhancements on the natural condition of the place through tree planting and other similar activities in Honda Bay and the least in Calauit Island.

Recommendations

From the assessment on the status of the selected ecotourism destinations in Palawan, the following is hereby recommended:

1. Use/ implementation of the proposed guidelines
2. For Nature Base Component of the destination, all ecotourism areas in Palawan should provide more nature based activities accordingly for tourists.
3. There should be more studies to be conducted to the ecotourism destinations, to widen knowledge and information which is not only focused on the Nature Base Criteria, but also in Educational or Learning Component and Sustainability of every destination.
4. For Sustainability, the stakeholders should take their part on conserving and preserving the Ecotourism destinations for future generations.

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