



Sustainable Tourism Practices: The Case of Hundred Islands National Park

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Abstract – This study aimed at identifying the sustainable tourism practices at the Hundred Islands National Park at Alaminos City, Pangasinan. In so doing, the researcher classified these practices along three dimensions: economic, environmental and social. These three dimensions represent the 3Ps of the Sustainable Development Goals of the international community, to wit: people, planet and prosperity. By using a single case study method, the researcher identified the various sustainable tourism practices in the Hundred Islands National Park in the tripod sustainable development analytical framework---economic, environmental and social. This study revealed that the stakeholders of the Hundred Islands National Park manifested sustainable development practices that support the idea of sustainable development espoused by the government. Further, the findings bare out that if properly and consistently sustained long-term, these sustainable development practices can be replicated in other tourism destinations in the country. The researcher concluded that The Hundred Islands National Park's sustainable tourism practices can be a good policy tool to integrate local development with tourism as the leveraging device. With that said, the researcher recommended that The Hundred Islands National Park sustains its sustainable tourism practices and even improve and amplify their functionalities in their operations.

Keywords – sustainable tourism, sustainable development, sustainability, tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is regarded as among the fastest growing industries in the world and a primary generator of livelihood for a great number of people in a given country (UNESCO, 2015). As a form of industry dedicated to people's needs, tourism is undoubtedly an additional source of income for the local communities.

As the industry is dependent on earth's limited and finite resources, a balance should be a stricken between usage and limits. This is where sustainable tourism comes into the picture.

Sustainable tourism embraces the very idea of sustainability. The term sustainability encompasses the three dimensions---economic, socio-cultural and environmental. By economic sustainability, tourism ventures should not only generate profit for the owner of the establishments that benefit from the operations of the tourism activities but that the money generated contribute to the local and national economy. It means that for tourism to be truly economically sustainable, it must contribute to the development of the locality or community where it operates. The term socio-cultural sustainability denotes the fact that tourism activities promote cultural exchange between and among peoples, encourage respect on differences culturally and religiously speaking, and help preserve cultural and

historical heritage of the country. Finally, by environmental sustainability, the phrase simply means that resources are efficiently and effectively utilized to the extent that the rights of the next generations for a healthful ecology are not prejudiced.

The Hundred Islands National Park in Alaminos City is a protected area in the Philippines covering around 16.76 square kilometers. Created by virtue of Presidential Proclamation No. 667, the islands covered by this national park is believed to have been in existence for around two million years already. Executive Order No. 436 gives the power of administration, management, maintenance and operation of the Hundred Islands National Park to the city government of Alaminos.

Considered as among the main tourist destinations not only in Region 1 but in the entire country, The Hundred Islands National Park is likewise known for its improved sustainable tourism operations in the last three years. Hence, this study focused on finding out these sustainable tourism practices in the Hundred Islands National Park to serve as a future analytical framework for similar ecotourism destinations in the country.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed at determining the various sustainable tourism practices in the Hundred Islands



National Park at Alaminos, Pangasinan. Specifically, it analyzed these sustainable tourism practices in light of economic, environmental and socio-cultural aspects of sustainability bearing in mind that sustainability is multi-dimensional in character. These sustainable tourism practices are then juxtaposed to the Tourism Act of 2009 whether they are relevant to the thrusts of the national government.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study made use of qualitative research. In particular, it made use of the case study method. The method was complemented by documentary analysis of the Tourism Development Plan of Alaminos City as well as semi-structured interview from tourists who visited the area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Over-all, the sustainable tourism practices in The Hundred Islands National Park resulted to improved economic conditions of Alaminos, enhanced awareness and appreciation of socio-cultural tradition of the city and better environmental practices.

Sustainable Tourism Practices along Economic Aspect.

In the main, sustainable tourism practices in The Hundred Islands National Park redounded to economic benefit of the community where it is situated. Among the sustainable tourism practices along this area include integration of local labor in their operations, inclusion of the private/business sector in the tourism-related operations of the park and the generation of revenue out of the operations of the park which redound to the benefits of the community.

The Hundred Islands National Park is locally managed by the city government of Alaminos, Pangasinan. Site visit and interview with the locals reveal that the improvement of the facilities in the park has spillover effect in the creation of job opportunities for the local and the city. In particular, a number of food business, service establishments in the form of hostels and accommodation and other tourism-related business spawned along the areas. Moreover, it can also be noted that local products are sold to tourists and local labor is also utilized to ensure that the local development along the area is tied up to its sustainable tourism efforts. The bangkeros (boat operators) operate not in isolation with the local government unit but in partnership with them to ensure that safety standards and acceptable service are

delivered to tourists who wish to make a tour along the area. All in all, the Hundred Islands contribute to the development of the community in particular and to the local government unit where it is situated in general.

Sustainable Tourism Practices Along Socio-Cultural Aspect.

In its operations, the Hundred Islands National Park contribute to enrich of socio-cultural welfare of the community. Among the socio-cultural benefits reaped in the implementation of sustainable tourism practices include improved standard of living among the poor locals brought about by job generation from the operations of the park, the celebration of local culture and history such as the conduct of “Longganisa Festival” and “Hundred Islands Paraw Festival,” participation of the local community in the operation of the park, and preserving the rural lifestyle and culinary tradition of the city of Alaminos.

The Hundred Islands National Park significantly improve the level of awareness of both locals and non-locals on the socio-cultural significance of the operations of The Hundred Islands National Park. With the improved facilities of the park, the people of Alaminos started to be creative on how to celebrate culture alongside its promotion of ecotourism. Undeniably, to promote the park to tourists, marketing strategy in the form of festivals was introduced. These festivals enabled Alaminians to appreciate their own local culture even better.

Sustainable Tourism Practices along Environmental Aspect.

Among the sustainable tourism practices in The Hundred Islands National Park which have impact to the environment include the use of efficient and non-carbon energy source in the islands (solar-powered facilities), implementation of reuse, reduce and recycle activities, enforcement of “garbage in, garbage out policy,” and payment of refundable environmental fee.

It can be deduced that the various eco-friendly practices implemented in the park contributed to better natural resource management in the area. Interview with the local bangkeros disclosed that upon the implementation of the foregoing practices, the islands have become more manageable in terms of waste management. One noticeable practice is for tourists to pay refundable fee of around Php 200.00 as environmental fee. Tourists are given black plastic garbage bag where they could place their waste or refuse



materials. Upon docking back to Lucap Wharf, they return the same black plastic bag to redeem the environmental fee they have previously paid. This “Basura Mo, luwi Mo,” program reinforces the “garbage in, garbage out” policy of the City of Alaminos in the operation of the islands.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

On the basis of the analysis of the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. The sustainable tourism practices of The Hundred Islands National Park along economic aspect contribute to both the local and the national economy.
2. In terms of socio-cultural aspect, the sustainable tourism practices of The Hundred Islands National Park help preserve historical, cultural and local traditions and heritage of Alaminos.
3. In the environmental aspect, the sustainable tourism practices in The Hundred Islands National Park result to better environmental and natural resource management.

Based on the foregoing conclusions, the researcher advanced the following recommendations:

1. The city government of Alaminos should strengthen its sustainable tourism practices by introducing more creative and resourceful means.
2. The stakeholders of the Hundred Islands National Park should actively take part in protecting the park from degradation and exploitation.
3. The Tourism Development Plan should incorporate sustainable tourism practices as among its primary motivational strategies in promoting the Hundred Islands National Park.
4. Further similar studies should be conducted along this area.

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