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INVOLVEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY IN PROMOTING MARINE BIODIVERSITY AS TOURIST ATTRACTION

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is a fast growing industry that has become a top priority of the economic agenda of a number of countries. It is believed that tourism can be used as a tool to solve problems like unemployment and poverty in developing countries. The study aimed to know the degree of community participation in promoting marine biodiversity in Anilao, Mabini, Batangas, Philippines. The study employed the descriptive method of research. Respondents of the study were chosen from the community residents using random stratified proportional allocation. Based on the findings, the following are recommended: Information dissemination may be encouraged by both LGUs and coastal communities because increased awareness and access to information will improve participation in coastal resources management, and encourage local communities, barangay groups, and local managers to become effective coastal managers so that it will heightened the level of participation of the community. For tourism development, it is important to see local communities as partners and work with community organizations to develop services and facilities by improving local livelihoods for communities in coastal areas closely linked to building a base for a more sustainable management of coastal and marine resources.

KEYWORDS: Community Involvement, Marine Biodiversity, Anilao, Mabini, Batangas

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a growing market and is showing tremendous growth in this current scenario by spreading its arms all over the world. It is believed that participatory development approach would facilitate implementation of principles of sustainable tourism development by creating better opportunities for local people to gain larger and more balanced benefits from tourism development taking place in

their localities, resulting in more positive attitudes to tourism development and conservation of local resources, and by increasing the limits of local tolerance to tourism. The success of tourism depends on the active support of the local population, without which the sustainability of the industry is threatened. Residents should be the focal point of the tourism decision making process. (Dogra & Gupta, 2012). Ying and Zhou in Dogra, (2012) note that community participation in tourism can be examined from two perspectives; first, the decision making process, allowing residents to become empowered in the preservation of marine biodiversity, expressing their concerns and desires; and secondly the tourism benefits, for example, the increased employment opportunities. Dinham (2012) stated that community participation holds the potential to transform the attitudes of local people from passivity to responsibility and forms a new relationship between individual and destination, based on a sharing power and decision making. Rawlins (2008) stated that over recent years marine protected areas (MPAs) have become a widely-used component of integrated coastal management programmes set up in an attempt to protect, and potentially rehabilitate, coastal ecosystems worldwide.

Mabini, Batangas is only 127 kilometers or a 2 1/2-hour drive from Manila, but it may well be one of the most accessible pieces of paradise on the Philippine archipelago. The municipality of Mabini in the province of Batangas is a place of golden sunsets, green hills and valleys, and calm blue waters embraced by a 32-kilometer stretch of rugged coastline. With its proximity to urban centers, Mabini is a popular destination for beach lovers who can come even for the day to a place that seems far away from the noise and congestion of Luzon's urban centers. Mabini draws visitors for a reason that blooms just beneath the smooth surface of the water: it is the nearest prime scuba-diving destination to Manila. (Honasan, 2007)

The purpose of this study was to explore the role and value of community members in their participation in community tourism development. The study applies the concept of community participation to create an understanding of how a community constructs, perceives and participates in preserving and promoting marine biodiversity. Semi-structured interviews, focus groups and observations were conducted within a qualitative fieldwork. More importantly, the willingness of the community to participate and its ability to develop practical options needs to be implemented.

It is quite interesting to explore the marine biodiversity concept from the point of view as well as the community participation of the residents in Anilao, Mabini Batangas. The researchers perceived that the role of community participation is fundamental. We believe that by assessing the level of community participation of the residents regarding the potential of marine biodiversity as a tourist attraction in Anilao, Mabini Batangas, the residents as well as both public and private sector will be aware in conservation of marine biodiversity.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims to know the degree of community participation in promoting marine biodiversity in Anilao, Mabini, Batangas. More specifically to describe the profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, occupation, civil status and educational attainment, to determine the extent of their participation in preserving and protecting marine biodiversity, to identify the problems encountered by the community members in the preservation and protection of the marine biodiversity in Anilao, Mabini, Batangas and, to know the difference in the extent of their participation in the preservation and protection of marine biodiversity when the respondents are grouped according to their profile variables.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used the descriptive research. Out of the total population of the residents of Anilao of 2,177, 187 were chosen as the respondents of the study using 7 percent margin of error. The respondents were selected at random using stratified proportional allocation. The main instrument used in this study is a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire is divided into three major parts. Part I identifies the profile of the respondents in terms of gender, age, civil status, educational attainment and occupation. Part II focuses on the degree of community participation in preserving and protecting the marine biodiversity using the following scales: 1 - least participated (less than 20%), 2 - moderately participated (40-59%), 3 – Participated (69-79%), 4 – Highly Participated (80-100%). Part III determines the problem encountered by the community members in the Preservation and Protection of Marine Biodiversity.

Upon the approval of the questionnaire, validation was conducted. It was submitted to the tourism officers of Anilao for critiquing and to the tourism department chair for comments. Afterwards, the administration among the respondents was done. The generated results were then tallied, interpreted and analyzed. Such data served as the studies bases for conclusions and recommendation. The data was tallied, interpreted and analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, weighted mean and Analysis of variance (ANOVA). The data was analysed using 0.05 level of significance and was computed using SPSS version 18.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' Profile

In terms of sex, most of them are male with 100 or 53.50 percent while female got 46.50 percent. This implies that female was dominated by male. In terms of age it was found out that among the 187 respondents, aged 21 to 30 years old are more than compared to 41 to 50 years old. These make 28.30 percent of the total respondents; most of the respondents are aged 21 to 30 years old. Most of the respondents was also married and belongs to the age bracket of 21 to 30 years old. The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents are male. The dominating number of males and the bigger number of respondents belonging to the age bracket of 21 to 30 years old shows that Anilao has a potent and able populace fit for community participation in promoting marine biodiversity. An effective tourism planning requires involvement of able residents to overcome the negative impacts and to channelize the benefits associated with tourism development. It is important to involve local community in tourism development processes specifically in promoting and preserving marine biodiversity.

With regards to their highest educational qualification, high school graduate obtained the highest frequency of 62 followed by college graduate (46). As to their occupation, most of them are fisherman with 41 or 21.90 percent. Therefore, majority of the respondents in Anilao are fisherman and according to Salao, 2007 as a coastal community with a rich coral reef ecosystem at their doorstep, Anilao was originally a fishing community, where fish was caught as a staple food as well as a means of livelihood and sold to outside markets and the main source of income of the people of Mabini today is neither natural resources nor tourism.

Degree of Community Participation in Promoting and Preserving Marine Biodiversity as Tourist Attraction in Anilao

Among the items enumerated, forming group to set safety standard for tourists particularly the divers, propose new management tools including use of habitat restoration and marine reserves to maintain biodiversity and sustain fisheries, conserving marine life by implementing coastal clean-up, setting tourism services for preserving marine biodiversity, identify areas of important biological diversity and productivity, habitats for endangered species and commercial and recreational fisheries species, and coastal and marine areas that provide key ecosystem function and forming group for setting marine protected areas service measures topped on the ranked with 2.87, 2.86 and 2.84 respectively.

This proves that the community of Anilao, Mabini, Batangas have been taking steps for the protection, preservation and promotion of their marine biodiversity with the top three items as top priority or most actively engaged on. Furthermore, this shows that the community is undergoing a significant social transformation in order to improve economically and be more self-sufficient.

Even though all items were interpreted participated, building Partnerships in the community in preserving marine biodiversity (2.70), raising awareness on marine conservation issues in relevant coastal communities (2.69), applying new technologies to ensure the environmental sustainability of marine aquaculture (2.65) and a strategy incorporating impacts on habitat, and the biological, social and economic factors of overfishing (2.64) were rated the least and need more attention so that the community will continue to participate on the said activities. This only confirms that Anilao at some point struggles to put the community into participation in promoting marine biodiversity as a tourist attraction. Being knowledgeable about the destination, its predicament and needs which are first priority should not be left behind even though other steps and strategies are being rendered already. Some of the main reasons why individuals and/or community may be reluctant to take part in community participation; an unfair distribution of work or benefits amongst members of the community, a highly individualistic society where there is little or no sense of community, the feeling that the government or agency should provide the facilities and agency treatment of community members – if people are treated as being helpless they are more likely to act as if they are. (UNCHS, 2006)

Problems Encountered by the Community Members in the Preservation and Protection of the Marine Biodiversity

The over-all assessment of the respondents' on problems encountered by the community members in the preservation and protection of the marine biodiversity in Anilao is 2.55 and rated agree. Among the items enumerated, the increase of tourist arrivals, the increase of waste generated, there is pollution and climate change, limited financial support from the local government, and the garbage and chemical waste produced by tourism related establishment topped on the rank.

The findings really proved that there are existing problems encountered by the community members and proved that Anilao have a number of challenges ahead when it comes to managing its rich marine and coastal resources. Even though all items were interpreted agree, lack of communication between officials residing in Anilao and the residents or having political interference (2.49), no proper garbage and waste disposal in the area (2.42) and lack of discipline among the residents of Anilao, Mabini Batangas(2.31) were rated least. This proves that aside from promoting marine biodiversity itself, the problem also includes the relationship between the participating members of the community themselves due to conflicts among their members because of their different opinion and preference in promoting marine biodiversity.

Table 1. Difference of Responses on the Degree of Participation in Promoting and Preserving Marine Biodiversity When Grouped According to Profile Variables

Profile Variables	F _c	F _t	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Sex	0.879	3.92	0.350	Accepted	Not Significant
Civil Status	0.132	3.92	0.716	Accepted	Not Significant
Age	0.886	2.29	0.491	Accepted	Not Significant
Highest Educational Qualification	1.534	2.29	0.181	Accepted	Not Significant
Occupation	0.682	2.09	0.688	Accepted	Not Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05

Based from the table, all computed F-value were less than the critical value and the resulted p-value were greater than 0.05 level of significance, thus the hypothesis of no significant difference on the degree of participation in promoting and

preserving marine biodiversity is accepted. This means that there is no significant difference and implies that whatever is their profile the level or degree of their participation is the same. Different members of Anilao community play different significant parts in the promotion and preservation of their marine biodiversity. They do not work as different individuals or groups but as a community.

Most of the scholars supported the importance of community participation in tourism development of a destination and there are many examples where community participation played an important role in the development of a destination but it is also found that many potential coastal tourist destinations instead of having tremendous tourism potentials are still not developed because the community is not taking initiative to participate in tourism related processes like the promotion of preservation of marine biodiversity.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Majority of the correspondents are male, age bracket of 21 to 30 years old, married and fisherman. The respondents participated in promoting and preserving marine biodiversity in Anilao. Respondents agree that the increase of the tourist arrivals increases the volume of waste generated and pollution and climate change are the problem encountered in the preservation and promotion of marine biodiversity. There is no significant difference in the degree of participation when respondents were grouped according to profile variables.

Information dissemination may be encourage by both LGUs and coastal communities because increased awareness and access to information will improve participation in coastal resources management, and encourage local communities, barangay groups, and local managers to become effective coastal managers so that it will heighten the level of participation of the community. For tourism development, it is important to see local communities as partners and work with community organizations to develop services and facilities by improving local livelihoods for communities in coastal areas is closely linked to building a base for a more sustainable management of coastal and marine resources.

LGUs and local enforcement organizations may encourage and continue working at the local level to continue the process of forming and strengthening local organizations to enforce coastal laws, such as the Bantay Dagat Authorities should consider providing more technical assistance and enforcement capacity to overcome

logistical constraints and illegal activity, which are undermining local management initiatives. The tourism developers may categorically state their industry-wide commitment to environmentally compatible growth, targets for improvement should be established and monitored; and they should seek to implement sound environment principles through self-regulation, recognizing that local, national and international regulation may be inevitable and that preparation is vital; environmental improvement programs should be systematic and comprehensive. Similar or related studies maybe conducted in the other colleges of Lyceum of the Philippines University – Batangas to validate the findings of this study. Other variables should be explored to generate more research-based knowledge.

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