

COMMUNITY'S PERCEPTION ON THE IMPACT OF TOURISM IN CANTILAN, SURIGAO DEL SUR

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ABSTRACT: *The perception of local residents is very important in assessing and managing the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental aspects of tourism development in the locality. This paper was carried out to identify the perception of the community towards the impact of tourism in terms of socio-cultural, environmental, and economic aspects. Thus, the perception of residents in emerging tourist destinations in Cantilan, Surigao del Sur was analyzed to enhance tourism development programs and to ensure long term sustainability of the industry. A survey was conducted using a semi-structured researcher-made questionnaire with 130 respondents from the local community. Besides, in-depth focus group discussion with selected residents was also conducted for clarification and further understanding of the data gathered. The findings indicate that the ongoing tourism development activities have offered more benefits to the area such as an increase in employment opportunities. However, other residents are not able to acquire these opportunities due to lack of capacity, damage to the environment, and seasonal tourism activities in the area. Therefore, the authorities should give more attention to providing proper information-education campaign and financial aid programs to the local community so that they could also participate in any tourism development activities.*

Keywords: Perception, Community, Tourism Impact, Tourism Development

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is perceived as an economic development tool for the local community. Whether it is a large or small scale tourism industry, it surely affects the host community and may improve the quality of life of the residents. It can help in the development of social, cultural, economic, and environmental aspects of the locality. According to Simao, J. and Mosso, A., tourism could also help improve employment status, investment opportunities, tax revenues, restaurant, accommodation service, and natural and cultural attractions. It can also make an important contribution to poverty alleviation, and the development of rural areas. Tourism will help preserve the local culture, cultural identity and a greater possibility of cultural exchange between tourists and locals [1]. There are also social benefits associated with tourism, which include more parks and recreational areas and chances of improved roads and public facilities. Therefore, the positive effect of tourism is undeniable, especially in rural communities. It will improve the standard way of living. However, tourism activities also have negative effects such as increasing crime rates, pollution, and traffic congestions. Moreover, the impacts of tourism on development vary from one country to another. In developing countries, for instance, tourism doesn't always lead to an increase in economic development due to their typical economic, social, and environmental fragilities [2].

Tourism is an important sector for the Philippine economy. In 2015, the travel and tourism industry contributed 10.6% to the country's GDP. In the 2017 Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report of the World Economic Forum, the Philippines ranked 79th out of 136 countries overall. The country's best-rated features were price competitiveness and natural resources [3].

The Municipality of Cantilan is located in a coastal area on the eastern part of Mindanao. As it is facing the Pacific Ocean, it is endowed with many beaches and other tangible and intangible heritage. Grayish to white sand and beautiful reefs and cliffs are evident. What is nice in this place is the charm of the town and its people living a simple life. It

doesn't have high buildings nor malls rather Cantilangnons who are charming and warm. It is the feeling of relaxation away from the crowded areas of the cities and living a simple life which makes Cantilan very attractive to tourists. It is a place where busy people could de-stress and enjoy the wonderful scenery.

According to different researches, the majority of residents see tourism as an economic development tool [4-6]. This is supported by different researches in which residents have positive attitudes towards tourism while only a few studies reported a negative attitude towards tourism. This is also supported by the Social Exchange Theory, which states that residents are willing to participate in any tourism activities in the sense that they will gain benefits without incurring unacceptable costs. However, the Theory of Reasoned Action also suggests that individuals are rational and they are more likely to process information before engaging or coming with a decision. This means that the locals will assess information and will evaluate the costs and benefits of their actions. With these theories and findings from different studies, it suggests that there are different attitudes and perceptions towards tourism development [4-6]. Therefore, the importance of knowing the impacts of tourism must be prioritized. However, there are only some researches conducted on assessing the impact of tourism in Cantilan, Surigao del Sur. It is for this reason that this research is conducted to assess the residents' perception of the impact of tourism development in Cantilan, Surigao del Sur.

2. METHODS

The primary objective of this study was to determine the residents' perceptions of the impacts of tourism development in Cantilan, Surigao del Sur. Specifically, it sought to know the perception of the Cantilangnons towards Environmental Impacts, Socio-cultural Impacts, and Economic Impacts. With this, an intervention program could be proposed based on the findings. Thus, this study follows this flow to complete the research.

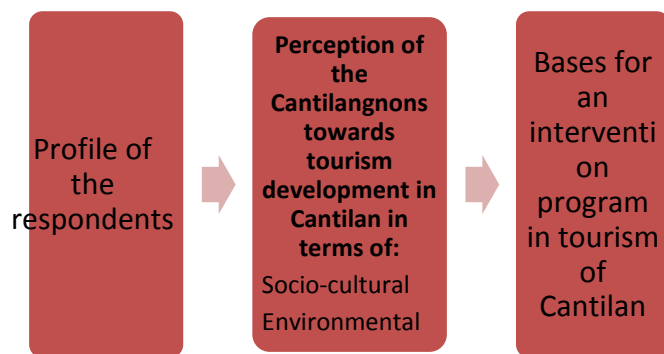


Figure 1. Schematic Diagram of the Study

A descriptive survey method of research was used in this study. The data was collected mainly by interviewing the residents in selected tourist destinations of Cantilan, Surigao del Sur. A survey questionnaire served as a guide in assessing the perception of the 130 respondents towards the impacts of tourism in their community. The questionnaire consists of five points Likert Scale Types and Open-Ended Questions mainly focused on the demographic characteristics of the respondents and tourism development impacts. A semi-structured interview question was also used for focus group discussion. The coverage of this study were the different tourist destinations of Cantilan, Surigao del Sur such as Ayoke Beach, Libtong Cove, Cantilan Town Plaza, Malinawa Cool Spring, and Beach Resorts of Cantilan.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The sample consists of 63.85% males and 36.15% female respondents. Among the 130 respondents, 68 percent were from ages 15-30 while others belong in the 31 – 45 and 46 – 50 brackets. The majority of the respondents were students and employed and that most of them have reached the college level. However, the study has also identified that 4 of them have not finished elementary. In terms of the main source of income of the respondents, most of them mainly depend on agriculture and doing business that targets tourists. Lastly, the majority of them are living below the poverty line.

Economic Impact of Tourism

Tourism provides several benefits in terms of economic impacts as perceived by the respondents. With a mean score of 4.056, most of the respondents agree that tourism increases investments, development, and infrastructures. Most of the respondents from General Island, an islet of Cantilan, Surigao del Sur, strongly agree that tourism helps them improve their way of living. As such, because of tourism, some of their electricity is run by solar panels. Some of the residents of General Island are also boat operators who organize island tours in Cantilan to see corals, fishes, and other scenery that is why they have positive attitudes towards tourism. Aside from this, tourism as perceived by the respondents (3.9) also increases employment opportunities,

which is consistent with other studies [4, 7]. Respondents from General Island strongly agree with this impact brought by tourism. Most of the tourists are interested in island tours and even the fishing activity of the local community. Some tourists will buy their products, thus this will give new employment and business opportunities to the local community. There are also more inns, hotels, and restaurants in Cantilan to serve and accommodate tourists. Through this, graduates in tourism and hospitality management at the local University can work right away. The majority of the respondents agree that tourism is one of their main sources of income and it could improve their standards of living.

However, there are also negative impacts as perceived by the respondents in terms of economic development. Respondents from Barangay Ayoke, another island of Cantilan are dissatisfied with tourism. They agree that there are positive impacts of tourism but for them, the benefits are not enough for them to live. One of the reasons for this is that tourism activity for this place is seasonal because of the weather. Small scale enterprises operated by the local community are undermined by large scale enterprises. There is also an increase in the price of products and services which is expensive for the part of the local community who also want to avail those services. Although tourism could help their way of living, they still have to focus more and depend on the fishing industry as another source of income.

Socio-Cultural Impact of Tourism

Socio-cultural impacts are also coined as human impacts of the tourism industry. This involves changes in the quality of life of the residents and the cultural impacts concerning the locals' values, norms, and identities. According to Hashimoto (2000), these socio-cultural impacts are difficult to determine and quantify because the change is gradual, especially when we talk about values, beliefs, and cultural practices [8-9]. The table below shows the socio-cultural impacts as perceived by Cantilangnons.

As shown in the table I below, respondents strongly agree that tourism gives a positive feeling towards the residents. This means that residents are proud of the different tourism activities, tourist spots, and the services they offer to tourists. Through observation and interaction of the residents with the tourists, residents can accept and adapt to the cultural beliefs, attitudes, and behavior of the tourists. However, during the focus group discussion, it was revealed that it took some time for the locals to accept the attitudes and behavior of the tourists especially since Cantilangnons are conservative. Attitudes and behaviour of the tourists in terms of dress code, religious beliefs, and drinking rituals are sometimes unconventional for them. Respondents also agree that tourism improves local facilities and infrastructure, recreational activities, and the quality of life. This is supported by the study of Musa, that tourism doesn't only ameliorate regional image and infrastructure, but also the construction of recreational activities and improvement of quality of life among natives [8].

Table 1. Impact of Tourism in terms of Socio-cultural as perceived by the Local Residents

| Socio-cultural impacts | Mean Score | Adjectival Rating |
|--|------------|-------------------|
| 1. Tourism development will improve the standard of living of the local community | 3.9 | Agree |
| 2. Promotes leisure and recreational activities | 4.054 | Agree |
| 3. Tourist cultural beliefs, attitudes and behaviour can have an impact on host culture. | 4.28 | Strongly Agree |
| 4. Positive feeling of the residents as Cantilangnons | 4.414 | Strongly Agree |
| 5. Improves services in restaurants, stores, and hotels | 3.6 | Agree |
| 6. Improves services of police and fire department | 3.96 | Agree |
| 7. Improve protection of historic place, monuments, and natural spaces | 3.934 | Agree |
| 8. Increase in travel accidents | 2.27 | Disagree |
| 9. Tourism may disturb the community's peace and harmony | 2.088 | Disagree |
| 10. Gambling, sexual abuses, prostitution, and alcoholism will be increased. | 2.346 | Disagree |
| TOTAL | 3.4846 | Agree |

Table 2. Impact of Tourism in terms of Environmental Aspects as Perceived by the Local Residents

| Environmental Impacts | Mean Score | Adjectival Rating |
|---|------------|-------------------|
| 1. Improves environmental protection | 4.294 | Strongly Agree |
| 2. Public infrastructures are improved because of tourism development | 4.158 | Agree |
| 3. Additional road networks for easy access to tourist spots | 4.056 | Agree |
| 4. Additional projects for the renovation of historical buildings. | 3.15 | Disagree |
| 5. Damage to natural landscapes | 2.536 | Disagree |
| 6. Tourism developments depreciate the quality and value of the natural environment. | 3.24 | Undecided |
| 7. Increase in pollution and solid waste | 4.1 | Agree |
| 8. Overcrowding | 4.23 | Agree |
| 9. The use of boats and other means of transportation will pollute the environment especially aquatic resources | 3.21 | Undecided |
| 10. Tourism development negatively affects the marine environment. | 3.14 | Undecided |
| TOTAL | 3.6114 | Agree |

Furthermore, as shown in the table 2 above, the respondents disagree that tourism activities brought damage and negative impacts to society. As such, they disagree that tourism disturbs the community's peace and harmony. There are no signs of an increase in travel accidents, gambling, sexual abuses, and other crimes. This means that the social order in Cantilan is maintained.

Environmental Impact of Tourism

The environment is very important to tourism, especially in Cantilan which promotes marine and coastal tourism. There are tourism activities that may have adverse environmental effects. However, residents of Cantilan have varying views on the impact of tourism on the environment.

As shown in the table above, respondents strongly agree that tourism improves environmental protection. Though they rated that tourism could lead to overcrowding and increase pollution and solid waste, residents are still able to manage this. During the focus group discussion, participants said that as boat operators, they also give instructions to the tourists regarding waste disposal. However, respondents, especially those from Barangay Magosilom, disagree that tourism helps in the renovation of historical buildings. They said that the local authority is not doing any preservation and renovation projects to historical buildings. One of these historical buildings, the San Miquel Church in Balwarte, Cantilan which is the oldest church, was damaged by the tsunami before but still has remnants that can be opened to tourists, adding to the tourism activities in Cantilan. Lastly, respondents were still undecided whether tourism activities could negatively affect the marine environment or not. Seminars, training, and lectures can be proposed to educate the residents.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Tourism greatly affects the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental aspects of the Municipality of Cantilan as perceived by the residents. They have different views and perceptions as to what is the impact of tourism, which is supported by the study of Martin and Uysal [10]. They said that carrying capacity of the destination area is different for each life cycle stage of the area [10]. This means that respondents from different barangays do have a different perception compared to other barangays as to the impact of tourism because different tourism activity is conducted in certain barangay. Furthermore, the responses of the respondents are mostly positive in terms of the impacts of tourism because there is lesser. This could also serve as the basis for an intervention program for Cantilan's tourism department to improve tourism activities without undermining the locality's environment, society, and culture. The life cycle stage of tourism or the tourist activities conducted in Cantilan is still manageable and are still few. In addition to this, residents of Cantilan are also vigilant towards the protection and sustainability of their natural environment as it is their source of livelihood.

5. REFERENCES

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