

Perception of Key Players' Interest in Establishing Ayoke Island as a Tourist Destination in Promoting Economic Development

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Abstract

Ayoke Island is a small fishing community with over seventy families. Almost half of the island is a marine protected area, making it a perfect tourist destination that can contribute to the economic stability of the residents of Ayoke. The sense of community is the main factor that dictates the conditions of tourism development. The growth of tourism is unsustainable without the interest and participation of key players to act out their roles and responsibilities. The opportunity for Ayoke to become a tourist destination relies on the interest and understanding of key players to perform their functions. The involvement of key players in fostering the growth and development of tourism ushers the protection of the community and hinder abuse of the resources that harms the community and the environment. To capture the perception of key players that include residents and the local government, researchers conducted a descriptive type of study using questionnaires that indicate statements encompassing the roles and responsibilities of key players concerning the tourism development in their level of interest in establishing Ayoke as a tourist destination. The study reveals that interest level in tourism development of key players is highly significant. The local government is extremely interested while the residents are not at all interested.

Keywords: residents perception, level of interest, tourism development

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1.0 Introduction

Surigao del Sur is blessed by nature with lavish bounty. It is comprised of numerous islands, many of which do not only boast of abundant marine resources but also possess great tourism potentials. One of such islands is Ayoke, which is part of Barangay General Island in the Municipality of Cantilan.

Tourism as formal enterprise was non-existent in Ayoke. But recently, several local entrepreneurs and the tourism council of Cantilan expressed their interest in developing Ayoke as a tourist destination. It is not certain though as to what specific form of tourism the LGU thinks at the moment; but with certainty that if established a convenient form of tourism will spawn such as mass tourism.

It is a challenge for most tourists to seek accommodation in Ayoke. Wanderers bring tents and hammocks to provide for their shelter needs. At present, residents rely on solar panels donated by the government of Japan. For its maintenance, each household needs to allocate an amount of two hundred pesos a month. Despite the fact that the presented opportunity seems an affordable amount to the local residents, a great number of houses still use gas lamps because of inadequate funds. The principal sources of income of the people are fishing, farming (copra), and banca-making. During stormy weather, it is difficult to get supplies of rice from the mainland. The residents have to rely on breadfruit for their survival since the staple fruit is abundant in the island.

Spenceley (2008) emphasized that tourism plays an increasingly important role in poverty alleviation, particularly in developing countries. It is an industry that governments and international development agencies promote, not as a remedy, but as one of the potential livelihood options for the poor and marginalized members of society.

The future of tourism contains vital discussions on sustainable development this limits the environmental and socio-cultural negative effects that a typical form of tourism carries. In achieving a much sustainable tourism, there is a constant need of cooperation among key players. It is critical that key

players have dynamics in development, interest and perception. Aref et al., (2010), stressed as part of the community, residents must be given a voice, a choice to participate on issues that can affect their lives. It is necessary to determine the factors whether the residents are interested in tourism development or residents have freedom in the involvement on matters that have an influence on development.

When the Local Government Unit (LGU) starts to disregard the vitality of sense of community and participation of local residents in building strong capacity communities for tourism development, upshots to a fault-finding aspect that key players cannot afford. The importance of residents participation was discussed by Simão & Mósso (2013). It is indicated that public participation is lacking in the decision-making processes. In general, there is support from the residents' to tourism development. However, there are wearing signs that ought into consideration by planners and decision makers. Marzuki (2012), emphasized that local people support tourism development in their society when they are expecting benefits from tourism activities.

According to Min, Xiaoli, and Bihu (2012), young people have a strong perception of positive impacts of the tourism development, but the middle age and old age have a stronger perception of negative impacts of tourism development. Other findings of this study mentioned that the majority of highly educated residents think that tourism leads to price rising and expropriation of house and land. There are also the conflicts between residents. There are no differences in perceptions of the residents with different educational backgrounds, but residents with high levels of education are more sensitive to the issues of tourism development.

The roles and tasks of local communities are vital resources in tourism development. It doesn't limit the activities held within the residents' vicinity. According to Haukeland (2011), Jamal and Stronza (2009); McCool (2009), local communities are not only considered as moral stakeholders in tourism

development but regarded as legitimate stakeholders because the decision of key players is strongly affected by the communities interest.

Kim et al., (2014), observed that local communities rarely take part in tourism development activities, and they either show very limited participation or in every way exclude themselves from the decision-making process. He mentioned further that this situation is true in developing countries. Third world country development centers in the economic value of tourism. As a result, the government often isolates the residents out of the development picture. Socio-cultural and environmental values are dispensable to the growth of tourism. He added that such isolation cause resentment and antagonism from the local community.

Lacy et al., (2002) also contended that the interest of the community in its involvement in the growth of tourism contributes to the preservation of the local ethos, culture, tradition, and skills consequently instill the pride of the heritage of communities. Bopp et al., (2000), similarly denotes that the community participation means the involvement of residents with the government. The absence of community participation and senses outcome a negative effect in the total development process. The key player's collaboration is vital in achieving a sustainable form of tourism. The association of the community in the development process affects the forward movement of tourism. The continuous unfavorable out-turn of the community's way of life justifies the need for their participation.

Kim et al., (2014) stated that implications of the local communities are an indispensable pace towards sustainability. The cultural restriction of the participation of community members in remote areas of the third world countries is the inadequate awareness on the vitality of community involvement that frequently outcomes to a low level of education and lack of information available about tourism development. Furthermore, the complexity of tourism planning and development methodology and challenges are instrumental to the full capacity of the members of the community, reluctant inclusion in any decision-making process is the after effect.

Timothy and Tosun (2003) contend the significance of education in empowering a range of tourism information to the residents not interested and not willing to participate on matters that are important to their society such as tourism development and all other important issues that concern them. Theron (2005) also contend that this usually happens because the community members do not trust each other.

According to Kim et al., (2014), the disparity of power and doubt in the local government is an obstacle that affects the involvement of communities in the planning and development of tourism from both organizational and operational limitations. Resident's trust is vital for gaining the development process support from communities and a prerequisite for effectual participation between key players. They further states that the lack of trust in tourism authorities make resident reluctant to accept tourism development activities and corresponding changes. Empowered residents are engaged in tourism management, decision-making, and consultation. The residents are more satisfied with the community and more sympathetic of tourism activities than those who are less influential in which transpired in Langkawi Islands in Malaysia.

There are several undesired outcomes that do a lot of socio-cultural, environmental and even economic damages that are very difficult to mend. This situation is common in third world and developing countries. Exploitation by those who are in power is usual in such countries. The influence of politicians and greed of corporation are trumping over the ethic of nature and the importance of the socio-cultural and well-being of the community. When ideally there should be the presence of the economic, socio-cultural and environmental values of tourism such as creating opportunities for local residents in discovering innovative possibilities of sustainability thus results to the provision of economic sovereignty of the local people while enacting conservational tourism activities.

2.0 Research Methodology

In this study, the key players were divided into two categories; the residents of Ayoke and the local government of Cantilan that includes the Politicians and the members of the Municipal Tourism Council.

The study employed a descriptive research method using a survey instrument and Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Employing the translated questionnaires from English to Cantilangnon dialect ensures the respondents could easily understand the questions stated.

Due to the differences between residents and local government regarding their responsibilities and roles in tourism development, two versions of the questionnaire has been developed to best fit the research purpose of the study. The purpose of the questions was to capture the inherent differences between the levels of interest between two groups and ensure a more appropriate basis for the comparison between residents and local government.

Permission was procured from the Local Government Unit and the Barangay Captain of Ayoke for the formal conduct of the study. Before the distribution of the questionnaires, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was done. Respondents were given ample time to answer the questionnaire. The statement is based on the roles and responsibilities of the key players in tourism development.

A Likert scale response anchor was used to determine the level of interest. The following designates five (5) as extremely interested, four (4) as very interested, three (3) as moderately interested, two (2) as slightly interested; one (1) as not at all interested.

Data gathered were tabulated and analyzed. Weighted mean were used in the study and test statistics such as Mann-Whitney to obtain significant differences between key players responses.

3.0 Results and Discussion

Of the seventy-nine (79) survey participants, sixty-eight (68) are residents while eleven (11) are employed by the local government, There are four age intervals before data analysis is created to provide a clearer understanding of the distribution of respondents across various age brackets, four major age intervals were established as categories. The minimum age sample is eighteen (18) years old. Table 1 revealed that the respondents' ages are well distributed. The majority of key players belong to the age category of forty-four (44) above. The result is similar to

Table 1. Distribution of respondents' profile

Key Players		Respondents' Profile											
		Age (years)					Educational Attainment				Employment Status		
		Total	18-26	27-35	36-43	44 above	Elementary Level	Elementary Graduate	High Sch. Graduate	College Graduate	Employed	Unemployed	Self-Employed
Local Government	Frequency	11	0	2	3	6	0	0	1	10	11	0	0
	Percentage	100	0	18	27	55	0	0	9	91	100	0	0
Local Residents	Frequency	68	12	17	18	21	20	23	20	5	5	45	18
	Percentage	100	18	25	26	31	29	34	29	8	8	66	26

the study of Min et al., (2012) that young people under the age of forty-four (44) have a strong perception of the tourism development, but the middle age and old age have a stronger negative perception of tourism development. The respondents forty-four (44) and above are not interested in any form of tourism at all. The lack of trust is an issue of the respondents in Ayoke. This situation is common in islands with poor residents. According to Theron (2005), once residents lack trust in the local government and other stakeholders, They fear that tourism may cause more harm than good, it may be that older residents tend to be more socially aware of the issues about local government and investors plans on tourism development.

Eight percent (8%) of the residents attained college education while a majority of those connected to the local government finished college. Most residents are elementary graduates at thirty-four (34%). This result is in contrast to the study of Min et al., (2012) where residents with high levels of education are more sensitive to the issues of tourism development. However the residents in Ayoke mostly attained the highest educational qualification at elementary are not at all interested in tourism development, they place more concern to the socio-cultural, environmental impacts and the political influence of investors which might be the cause of their relocation and the lose of their home and other properties. The local government respondents tend to focus only on the economic value of tourism development. The sensitive issues of the residents are not of their concern.

The divided three major groups of the key players occupation are employed, unemployed and self-employed. The majority of the residents fall into the two categories unemployed at sixty-six (66%) and employed at eight (8%). The remaining respondents fall into the self-employed category at two (2%). In opposition to the findings of other researchers Williamson and Lawson (2001); Johnson et al., (1994); Lankford (1994); McCool and Martin (1994); Simmons (1994); King et al., (1993); Murphy (1985), counsel further analysis on the field of the perceptions of residents, considering that the findings manifest many diverse indications of host communities willingness to participate and quality of life. Table 2 revealed the interest level of the residents produced a weighted mean of 1.67 aforementioned implies that residents are not at all interested in establishing Ayoke as a tourist destination. "Liaise with Government rules and regulations in tourism development" attain the lowest mean of 1.39 whereas "Aid the Government in establishing local community-based policies" attain the highest mean of 2.27 consequently indicates that residents are slightly interested.

The outcomes based on the accumulated data are in contrast to the findings of Muganda et al., (2013) the study implied that the residents strongly support the involvement of the locals in creating tourism policies. The above precepts give voice to the residents in the cumulative decision-making process of tourism development. The Locals rejected their participation in every viewpoint related to tourism. Most residents prefer in putting their business skills to good use whereas others prefer engagement in livelihood activities like agriculture and fishing. Leading roles in tourism are exclusive for small-scale business, therefore, undersized competition and creativity.

Table 2. Itemized category on the level of interest of residents in establishing Ayoke Island as tourist destination

Statement	Mean	Description
Participate with local government on creating tourism policies	1.48	Not at all interested
Desire for recreational facilities development for local residents	1.77	Not at all interested
Decision making process voiced by the local residents	2.04	Slightly interested
Provision of leading roles as workers to local residents	1.70	Not at all interested
Support local tax levies for tourism development	1.50	Not at all interested
Participate in every industry related trainings	1.61	Not at all interested
Engage and acquire awareness of the impacts of tourism on their local economy, environment and culture that could be positive or negative	1.50	Not at all interested
Lease with Government in establishing local community based policies	1.39	Not at all interested
Aid the Government in establishing local community based policies	2.27	Slightly interested
Create local organization that supports and help resident's implications of the negative effects of tourism	1.51	Not at all interested
Weighted Mean	1.67	Not at all interested

Table 3 shows the interest level of the Local Government Unit in Cantilan in establishing Ayoke as a tourist destination. All the statements presented on table 3 have a verbal

interpretation of extremely interested as opposed to the residents answer which is the complete opposite to the responses of the local government's reaction. The answers of the local government are likened to the study of Javier and Elazigue (2011). It is imperative that the national government body supports the local government unit in planning and law enforcement. Therefore the statement insinuates that tourism development is both a responsibility of national and local government. Under no reservation their responses are extremely interested; the local government bears the responsibility of initiating tourism development to provide a source of income to the municipality thus alleviate poverty.

Table 3. Itemized category on the level of interest of the local government in establishing Ayoke Island as a tourist destination

Statement	Mean	Description
Undertake area and sector specific research into the environment, cultural and economic effects of tourism	4.45	Extremely interested
Promote social, economic, environmental, cultural well-being of the community	4.54	Extremely interested
Include tourism in zoning land-use planning	4.54	Extremely interested
Representation of tourism interest to major Caucus planning meetings that affects environment and the economy	4.63	Extremely interested
Design and implement educational and awareness programmes to sensitize people to sustainable tourism development issues	4.72	Extremely interested
Assist and support the NGO (non-government agency) in developing tourism and conservation strategies	4.72	Extremely interested
Financially supporting local residents to invest tourism development	4.54	Extremely interested
Ensure local tourism development agreement stress policy of sustainable tourism development	4.65	Extremely interested
Investment support services including access to credit financing	4.36	Extremely interested
Provide tourism industry related training prioritizing local residents	4.72	Extremely interested
Weighted Mean	4.59	Extremely interested

To determine the significant difference between residents and local government, data were analyzed using Mann-Whitney U test. Results of the analysis are presented in table 4.

The result in table 4 reveals the independent samples using Mann-Whitney U test exposes that the difference between residents and local government is highly significant. The actual significance value of the test is shown on the table 4 as well as the asymptotic significance (2-tailed) represented as Asymp.Sig 2-tailed .000 On a five-point scale, Local Governments' level is significantly higher than the residents' mean of 1.67 consequently indicates that residents are not at all interested in establishing tourism in Ayoke compared to the local

governments' mean of 4.59 denotes that the local government is extremely interested.

Table 4. Significant difference between the local government and the local resident interest in establishing Ayoke as a tourist destination using Mann-Whitney U test

Test Statistics	
Mann-Whitney (U)	0.000
Wilcoxon (W)	2346.000
Z	-5.305
Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)	0.000
A. Grouping Variable: key player	

During the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) residents revealed that they lack trust in the local government. They have speculated if granted the opportunity for the so-called development of tourism it will stand against their favor. The initiation of tourism could lead to the result of innumerable negative effects on the environment and socio-cultural well-being of Ayoke. The residents added that only the politicians, investors and the Municipal Tourism Council could benefit in this venture.

The residents in Ayoke are protective of their territory against local capitalists and politicians. Residents acknowledged their economic situation and they are interested in any enterprise that can improve their livelihood. Residents also made it clear that they will support tourism if it protects the residents and the natural environment in Ayoke, The community is aware of the negative and positive effects that tourism may bring to them. They also even cited some cases that happened in the Philippines specifically in Siargao, Surigao del Norte that establishing tourism can result in the displacement of the residents.

The Government must develop extensive community education among the residents, nurture the sense and the ability of participation of local communities and improve their positive cognition of ecotourism development, and environmental awareness.

4.0 Conclusion

The difference in the level of interest between local government and residents in establishing Ayoke as a tourist destination is highly significant. Residents of Ayoke are not interested in establishing tourism on the island as opposed to the local government that fancies tourism for the economic growth of Municipality of Cantilan. Residents place distrust in the government. Locals fear that tourism may cause unsettlement as they may be forced to evacuate to pave the way for tourism development.

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