LECTURE: BEST PRACTICES OF ECOTOURISM AND LOCAL PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
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Outline of Presentation

Video clip teaser of Ecotourism:
Tubbataha, Coron (Kayangan), El Nido, Puerto Princesa (Firefly-Iwahig, Underground River)

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Video Clip: Palawan (NPD’s video clip)
I. ECOTOURISM: WHAT THE PRACTITIONERS SAY

Definitions

1. Ecotourism originated in the late 1970s when the negative impact of tourism started becoming obvious and is gradually damaging the wetlands of Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico. It was coined by Mexican architect and environmentalist Hector Ceballos-Lascurain whose conservation group worked to protect these wetlands. Mr. Ceballos originally defined ecotourism as:

"Travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as many existing cultural manifestations found in these areas."

2. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) define ecotourism as "Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people". This concept combines ecology with tourism. Ecotourism has the potential to save some of the most endangered ecosystems in the world.

3. Basically, ecotourism has six characteristics:
   i) ecotourism involves travel to relatively undisturbed natural areas and/or archaeological sites;
   ii) it focuses on learning and the quality of experience,
   iii) it maximizes economic benefit for the host or local community;
   iv) ecotourists seek to view rare species or spectacular landscapes;
   v) ecotourists do not deplete resources but even sustain the environment; and
   vi) ecotourists appreciate and respect local culture and traditions.

Ecotourism Activities and Impacts

4. Typical eco-tourism activities can include biking, hiking, camping, cultural activities, swimming, surfing, snorkelling, rafting and boating. The categories of eco-tourism include adventure travel, such as white water rafting or jungle treks, and nature based eco-tourism, such as wilderness camping trips or responsible use of the land.
5. For local people, ecotourism provides a means of earning money from tourism; it helps in the preservation of cultural heritage. It can provide an economic boost to regions that are normally not tourist destinations.

II. ECOTOURISM AND LOCAL PRODUCTS DEVELOPMENT

6. An ecotourism product is an experience intentionally put together for the satisfaction and enjoyment of visitors. It is composed of both tangible and intangible elements found on site which collectively contribute to the quality and value of the experience.

7. An attraction alone is not a tourism product that can already be sold. It is a base product which needs other elements in order for it to be marketable to a specific market segment. Being an experience, the tourism product is perceived by the five senses - sight, feeling, taste, hearing and smell.

8. The study of Denman, one of 4 experts appointed by WTO and UNEP for the World Ecotourism Summit a few years ago, identified the key components of ecotourism products, as follow:

- **1st: Address quality, authenticity and security.** Quality gives attention to detail and understanding customer needs; authenticity is about meeting a visitor aspiration of ‘seeing the real thing’ while respecting the sensitivities of local communities and environments; and security is about visitor safety.

- **2nd: Give top priority to the interpretation of nature and culture.** The most essential component of an ecotourism product is the inherent quality of the landscape and wildlife. Ecotourism is distinguished by providing an experience that is both educational and enjoyable.

- **3rd: Design and manage service facilities to maximise sustainability.** Although not the driving force in an ecotourism offer, accommodation, catering, and opportunities to make purchases are essential components of the product. Good practices in this area include: eco-lodge design and management; village based accommodation, home stay programs; use of local produce and traditional dishes; and handicraft production.

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7 ibid
10 ibid
11 Denman, R. http://bsc.smebg.net/ecotourguide/best_practices/articles/files/Product_development.pdf
4th: Address destination as well as individual product issues. Successful and sustainable product development in ecotourism also needs to take account of infrastructure, environmental management and visitor services in the destination as a whole.

5th: Relate ecotourism to sustainable activity tourism, where appropriate. Although ecotourism is clearly distinguished from activity tourism, it is apparent that some ecotourists are looking for activities such as hiking to complement the product offer in mountain areas; while in maritime locations such as small island states, activities like diving and yachting are more environmentally sustainable.

9. An important component in any ecotourism project is the development of micro enterprises that supports the local tourism industry. In order for communities to have an active role in ecotourism, they can be trained as guides, caterers, producers of souvenirs or camp managers12.

10. The following examples of enterprises can provide economic incentive for communities to be actively involved in the management of coral reefs, forest and river with mangroves: trekking and hiking experiences with interpretations to visitors; introducing people to the marine environment through snorkelling; riverine paddling or boating experience within mangrove areas13.

11. In order to highlight the strengths and lessons to be learned from some of the best international ecotourism practices, the “Mediterranean Experience of Ecotourism Network” Project partnership carried out a detailed, worldwide analysis of existing ecotourism strategies and approaches. The study has documented ecotourism best practices, which were categorized as to: 1) management, 2) facilities, services & infrastructure, 3) conservation, 4) local communities, 5) cultural heritage, 6) monitoring, and 7) marketing14. I have also included some examples from my country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>1) Management</td>
<td>It is understood as plans and programs that affect natural areas or parts of them, as well as specific standards and regulations.</td>
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Example in the MEET:

1. **Alpine Pearls – Alpine Umbrella Brand for Soft Mobility in Tourism** (Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Switzerland). This promotes and communicates sustainable tourism with environmentally-friendly mobility. The association’s 20 members profit from the joint market activities and form a strong European tourism brand. Guests benefit from clearly defined quality standards that have to be met by the communities.

2. **5 Lochs Visitor Management Plan** (United Kingdom). Plans have been drawn up to transform five sites within the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park into world-class tourist destinations. New campsites, parking bays and toilets will be among the improvements. The plan identifies current issues which impact the visitor experience at the National Park and on the environment - including problems like litter, toilets, damage to sites and parking - and how these issues will be addressed over the next five years.

2) Facilities, services and infrastructures

It is understood as all the services and the infrastructures available for the visit of the tourists, to facilitate their enjoyment: transport infrastructure and mobility services, information services, guide services to visitors, and services related to catering and accommodation. This component is connected to economic theme.

Example in the MEET:

1. **Tawlet Ammiq Eco-restaurant** (Lebanon) was developed, designed and built in harmony with, and respect for, the land and its people. It is housed in one of the greenest buildings in Lebanon. Among its green features are: a unique insulation system – solar chimneys, a green roof, and a solar energy system. The building uses 80-percent less energy to operate than a conventional construction. Through Tawlet Ammiq, local producers are now able to showcase their traditions, crops and techniques.

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2 Liguria – cycleways and cycle routes (Italy), offers local and regional cycling routes\textsuperscript{17}. This route passes by the “Cycling Riviera”, along quiet roads following the arc of the Alps down to the Adriatic seas. It also crosses the Swiss-Italian and French borders\textsuperscript{18}.

3 In the Philippines, it is Mangrove Paddle Tours in Puerto Princesa Underground River National Park, which I shall explain in more detail later in this presentation.

3) Conservation

It is understood as activities that bring benefits in terms of nature conservation, for example: environmental education or volunteer programs. This component is connected to environmental theme.

Example in the MEET:

1 Fattorie del Panda, Network of holiday farms (Italy) which are situated within or close to a national or regional park in many Italian regions. Within this network, a holiday farm becomes a centre of knowledge while promoting the natural surroundings and environment, history, culture and traditions of the local territory. Fattorie del Panda adheres to strict list of minimum standards which includes: position of the farm, accessibility, recycling & waste management, energy use, air quality, and a lot more\textsuperscript{19}.

2 Sustainable Tourism through Energy Efficiency with Adaptation and Mitigation Measures (STREAM) in Indonesia.

The project STREAM serves as a model of innovative climate change mitigation and adaptation measures – adopting an energy efficiency approach, while strengthening local structures for the sustainability of this tourism destination\textsuperscript{20}.

\textsuperscript{17} http://italy-cycling-guide.info/liguria/liguria-cycleways-cycle-routes/
\textsuperscript{18} ibid
\textsuperscript{19} http://data.prismanet.gr/ecolnet-case-studies/view.php?id=61
\textsuperscript{20} http://www.streamindonesia.org/
3. In the Philippines, the **Palawan Wildlife Rescue and Conservation Center** is an example.

The main goal of this tourism destination is to conserve Palawan’s biodiversity through establishment of education, conservation and research institutions in close vicinity to threatened target species and ecosystems, particularly: crocodile, freshwater turtle, cockatoo (cacatua), blue-naped parrot, hill myna and other species\(^{21}\).

4) Local communities

It is understood both as the involvement of them, and at the same time as the beneficiaries of the best practices/actions. This component is connected to social theme.

Example in the MEET:

1. **Payments for wildlife services**, The Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources Programme, CAMPFIRE (Zimbabwe). This is a community-based natural resource management program, where Rural District Councils are granted authority to market access to wildlife in their district to safari operators, who sell hunting and photographic safaris to mostly foreign sport hunters and eco-tourists. The District Councils pay the communities a dividend according to an agreed formula\(^{22}\).

2. **Collaborative Reef Conservation Program of the Wakatobi Protected Area** (Indonesia). It was designed to motivate the people living within the Wakatobi region to realize the intrinsic value of the reefs and to inspire the villages to take an active role in protecting the marine ecosystem. The program provides economic alternatives to fishing and creates real incentives that help protect and manage the reefs. Cooperation is promoted by generating an income from tourism that is channelled directly back into the community\(^{23}\).

3. In the Philippines, the **Tubbataha Reefs** and the **Coron Indigenous Peoples** in Palawan BR also practice the same concept, as we shall later on look more closely.

5) Cultural

It is understood as the preservation and the promotion of  

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\(^{21}\) [http://philippinecockatoo.org/about%20us.htm](http://philippinecockatoo.org/about%20us.htm)

\(^{22}\) [http://www.cerium.ca/IMG/pdf/CampfireArticle.pdf](http://www.cerium.ca/IMG/pdf/CampfireArticle.pdf)

heritage

tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

Example in the MEET:

1 Beds in Bunkers! Transforming communist concrete bunkers into 21st century hostel hotspots (Albania). The country has taken one reminder of its past life behind the Iron Curtain and turned it into something positive – converting an igloo-shaped concrete bunker into a backpacker hostel.

2 KaseStrasse Bregenzerwald Cheese Route (Austria), is a marketing pool in which farmers, dairy farmers, innkeepers, craftspeople and merchants have joined to cultivate and preserve the small-scale landscape and the diversity of local produce. The route is the ideal way to explore this lovingly tended rural landscape and its close ties to cheese making. It also takes in many of the most memorable sights of the region, such as the fine old traditional building, the deeply rooted crafts traditions and its folklore.

3 In the Philippines, the Batak Tribal Village in Palawan, provides an opportunity to get to know one of the indigenous peoples of Palawan. The tribe is believed to have arrived in the Philippines about 50,000 years ago as the first humans to cross the land bridge from mainland Asia to the Philippine archipelago. The tourists are provided a personal encounter with one of the ethno linguistic tribes of the province.

4 And now, the Philippines’ City of Vigan has been named one of the New7 Wonder Cities of the World, 15 years after its inscription in the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites and Monuments. The Historic Town of Vigan, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1999, has been recognized as a model of best practices in World Heritage site management.

6) Monitoring

It is understood as the monitoring of tourism, of the
tourists profile and of the impact of tourist visits on natural areas.

Example in the MEET:

1 Vanuatu: Island Bungalows Private-Public Partnership (Vanuatu Safaris Air Pass) in Vanuatu, Pacific. Although tourism is an important source of foreign exchange for Vanuatu, the benefits are not always felt by communities in the country’s outer islands. This generates tourist interest in more remote locations by creating a tourism industry on the islands, including accommodation in ‘island bungalows’ – small bush cabins built from local materials – and making travel to the outer islands more financially viable for tourists. The programme was developed in partnership with Vanuatu’s regional airline Safaris Air Pass.29

2 Using automatic counters and GPS technology for recreation monitoring: Case of Sonian Forest (Belgium). The visitors to this ecotourism site is monitored through automatic counters, though the distribution of GPS trackers to visitors to analyze their itineraries during their activity, and using of short questionnaire to gather qualitative information on visitors profile.30

3 In the Philippines, the Tubbataha Reefs ecosystem monitoring promotes conservation. Monitoring changes in the benthic and fish community structure of Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park is regularly undertaken in one of the few reefs in the country with spectacular coral reef formations that harbor great diversity of marine life.31

7) Marketing

It is understood as the commercialization methods used to promote and sell eco-tourism activities and products to different targets.

Example in the MEET:

1 The Alqueva Dark Sky Route (Portugal): It is a

29 http://www.commonwealthgovernance.org/countries/pacific/vanuatu/key-projects/
31 http://tubbatahareef.org/research_synopsis/Fish%20and%20Corals%202010.pdf
protected area and internationally certified as a Dark Sky Reserve, or “Starlight Tourism Destination”, whose sky is like a dark velvet cloaked by a huge blanket of stars, which extends over an area of about 3,000 sq.kilometers.

2 In the Philippines, the “Feast of the Forest” or Pista Y Ang Kageban in Puerto Princesa of the Palawan BR is one example. The “Pista” is a festive reforestation activity where the local populace and foreign tourists celebrate by planting thousands of different tree species in the city’s denuded and protective forest areas32. Since its inception, the Pista has resulted in the planting of nearly two million trees, making Puerto Princesa one of the last areas in the Philippines which are covered in green33.

III. ECOTOURISM BEST PRACTICES IN PALAWAN BIOSPHERE RESERVE

Ecotourism in the Philippines and Palawan

12. Ecotourism, as a Philippine government policy, had its roots in the 1991 through the 20-year Tourism Master Plan developed by the government, the United Nations Development Program, and the World Tourism Organization34.

13. Palawan is the largest province in the Philippines, with a total land area of around 16,000 km², comprising more than 1,700 islands. Palawan also has the highest number of protected areas in the country-12 national parks, 3 bird sanctuaries, 24 watershed reserves, and 6 mangrove forest reserves35. UNESCO has classified the island-province as a Man and Biosphere Reserve, while the Tubbataha Reef National Marine Park and the Puerto Princesa Underground River National Park were declared as World Heritage Sites. Palawan is also home to four indigenous tribes; namely, the Tagbanua, the Pala'wan, the Batak and the Tau't-bato36.

14. The 1980s saw a period of intense commercial logging, which left the province ecologically stressed, though the timber license agreements were

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33 http://talesofasia.com/rs-153-pistayang.htm
34 Chen-Ng, Mary Ann. Undated. “Ethics and Attitudes of Ecotourism in the Philippines”, also citing the Department of Tourism reports, in Http://eubios.info/ABC4/abc4313.htm.
cancelled in 1992. An alternative industry had to emerge because of the banning of commercial logging such that in the 1990s, the island of Palawan has been promoted as an ecotourism destination\textsuperscript{37}. In fact last year, Palawan was declared as the World’s No. 1 Island by Travel + Leisure Magazine, and this year 2014, Conde Nast proclaimed it the World’s Top Island.

15. From 1992 to 2012, tourist arrival increased overwhelmingly from 14,600 to 830,000 or 5,600%. This translates to an annual increase of around 60,000 tourist\textsuperscript{38}. The major tourist origin markets are the USA, Japan, Asia and Europe with a total share of almost 90\%\textsuperscript{39}.

**Ecotourism Best Practices: Tubbataha Reefs Marine Park**

16. Located in a sprawling 130,000 hectares (1,300 sq.km), the Tubbataha Reef is distinctively positioned within the Coral Triangle in the center of Sulu Sea. The Reef is home to an assortment of marine life including 374 species of corals, 11 species of cetaceans, 11 species of sharks, and approximately 479 species of fish including the iconic and threatened Napoleon wrasse. Besides, the reef and the sea serve as a sanctuary for the highest population densities of white tip sharks, pelagic species like jacks, tuna, barracuda, manta rays, whale sharks, and other different species of sharks. It is also the nesting and resting ground for the endangered green and hawksbill turtles.

17. The two islets in the Marine Park are favorite breeding grounds of the 7 resident and endangered species of seabirds, and host to the critically endangered *Christmas Island Frigate bird*, which frequently makes a visit to the area\textsuperscript{40}.

18. Tourism activities in the area require careful management to ensure the preservation of the entire natural system as well as the safety of visitors. So far, there is only one means to reach Tubbataha, and that is, by live-aboard boats\textsuperscript{41}. Ecotourism diving tours are only possible for 3 months in the months of March to June each year. During these calm months, underwater visibility reaches 40 meters while water temperature ranges from 28 to 30 degree Celsius\textsuperscript{42}. The northeast and southwest monsoon covering 8 months of the year allow the natural ecosystem to rest and recover.

19. One of the salient ecotourism best practices in the Marine Park is the collaborative site management and conservation. This is accomplished in a

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\textsuperscript{37} Chen-Ng, Mary Ann. Undated . “Ethics and Attitudes of Ecotourism in the Philippines”. [Http://eubios.info/ABC4/abc4313.htm].

\textsuperscript{38} PPDO 2012. Palawan Provincial Planning and Development Office.

\textsuperscript{39} Devanadera, Nelson. 1999. [http://www.academia.edu/1376287/Ecotourism_in_Palawan_A_Case_Study_Nelson_Palad Devanadera]

\textsuperscript{40} From: [http://nilaeslit.wordpress.com/tag/tubbataha-reefs/]

\textsuperscript{41} From: [http://nilaeslit.wordpress.com/tag/tubbataha-reefs/]

\textsuperscript{42} Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park. A Primer. 4\textsuperscript{th} Edition. TPAMB. Puerto Princesa City, Palawan, Philippines.
multi-agency management of the Park, through its Protected Area Management Board composed of government agencies, local government units, and non-government organizations. The PAMB of the Park has created a composite law enforcement team since 1995 that guards the Park year round. It is composed of marine park rangers coming from the national government, the military (Philippine Navy and Coast Guard), the local government unit of Cagayancillo and Tubbataha Management Office. They are stationed in Tubbataha for 2 months at a time, 130 kilometers from the nearest inhabited islands.

20. Annual monitoring and surveys are conducted to determine the general health of the reefs and marine habitats, including appraising the condition of corals, fish, seabirds and other marine species as well as in establishing baseline condition and monitoring of water quality. The Park is assisted by government agencies, no-government organizations and academia in which include the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development.

21. An average of 1,500 tourist come and visit Tubbataha every year, bringing in an annual income of around 5 million pesos (or US$ 114,000). The adjacent communities in the municipality of Cagayancillo receive 10% share from the proceeds of ecotourism fees or revenues from Tubbataha, which is able to support sustainable coastal resource management strategies and alternative livelihood projects in the host locality.

22. The share of the local government unit and the communities emanate from a stakeholders’ commitment, where the Park’s conservation strategy was anchored on balancing the costs and benefits of conservation, in a way that all stakeholders were willing to accept the no-take policy. The Park’s user fee system and sharing scheme involves: the local government unit and fishers respects the no-take zone, the divers and dive operators pay the user fees, and a share of the user fees is allocated to the local municipality. The sharing scheme included the compensation payments for local fishers for their lost access to the Park.

Ecotourism Best Practices: Coron, Its Indigenous Peoples, and the Lake

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44 ibid
45 ibid
23. **The island of Coron** in northern Palawan was touted as “the last frontier” by explorer Jacques Costeau. It is part of the Calamian Archipelago in northern Palawan that separates the South China Sea from the Sulu Sea. The aquatic views of a dozen sunken Japanese warships and wrecks off Coron Island are making Coron and its neighboring municipalities a popular diving destination, listed in Forbes Traveller Magazine’s top 10 best scuba diving sites in the world. Coron is blessed with pristine white beaches, limestone cliffs, volcanic lakes, natural hot springs, caves and a thriving marine ecosystem.  

24. The local indigenous people called “Tagbanua” manage some of Coron’s top destinations. Ecotourism has changed the Tagbanua ancestral domain and their culture which is reinforced by their rights and claims over the ancestral domains covering some of Coron’s best ecotourism sites, like the Kayangan Lake, the Twin Lagoons and surrounding beaches and islets. The indigenous people have been stewards of these sanctuaries since the time their first ancestors lived. Back then, these sites were sacred. Not even tribe members could go there unless they have permission from the “guardian”. The Tagbanua believe that each of these places was guarded by a spiritual being.  

25. In 2001, the Tagbanua tribal council decided to open up the sites for tourism. To do this, they had to perform complex rituals in which they asked permission from the guardians to allow outsiders into the sacred places. The signs were favourable, the result was life-changing. From only a few tourists then, the sites' visitors reached 75,000 last year, leading to an unprecedented economic benefits for the tribe. Last year, the tribe was able to collect around 7 million pesos (US$ 161,000) from entrance fees alone, which is deposited into the bank account of the tribe’s foundation. This fund is shared with the community through development projects which are implemented by the tribe's various committees. In the same way, the money from ecotourism pays for scholarship and education of Tagbanua youths, construction of health care centers, and for the maintenance and upkeep of the natural attractions.  

26. The tribal elders are very strict in keeping the tourist sites clean and free from illegal fishing activities. The tribe also imposes rules on tour guides and tour boats, prohibiting them from improperly disposing of trash within
the ancestral domain. It was through their efforts that Kayangan Lake has been recognized twice as one of the cleanest lakes in the country.  

**Ecotourism Best Practices: Puerto Princesa Underground River**

27. Last year, some of you may have gone to Palawan BR’s flagship protected area, the PPUR. The visit to the site is well documented in the 7th SEABR Network Minutes of Meeting.

28. The PPSRNP World Heritage Site, declared as one of the New 7 Wonders of Nature, is among the country’s premier eco-tourism destination. It is known for its intact old growth forest, interesting wildlife, beautiful white sand beaches, impressive caves systems and unspoiled natural beauty. Through a sustainable tourism program, it provides visitors a genuine wilderness experience. It contains a full mountain to the sea ecosystem and protected forests, which are among the most magnificent in Asia. It represents significant habitat that are important for biodiversity conservation. In recognition of the Park’s globally significant natural value, it was inscribed to the UNESCO’s World Heritage List in 1999.

29. Last year, 1 in every 5 visitors of the park is a foreign tourist. The average annual tourist arrival in the Park in 2012-2013 is 284,000, bringing in an income of about 50 million pesos or US$1.2 million. This is significantly higher than 2 decades ago when tourist visit is only about 10,000 per year. The 30 fold increase (or 3,000%) is attributed to the aggressive marketing and product development, especially when the Park was nominated to and conferred one of the new seven wonders of nature.

30. The Park is managed by the City Government of Puerto Princesa through a Protected Area Management Board (PAMB), a multi-sectoral body that provides policy direction and other oversight functions. It has the distinction of being the first national park devolved by the national government and successfully managed by a local government unit.

31. The Park has the following features:

   > **Wonder of Nature.** It is one of the few such caves which the public can easily experience and enjoy, with its 4.3 km. navigable underground river, out of the more than 8 kilometers total length, the longest in the world.

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50 ibid
51 http://www.puerto-undergroundriver.com/
53 http://www.puerto-undergroundriver.com/
54 http://www.puerto-undergroundriver.com/
> **Wildlife Watching.** The Park is designated an Important Bird Area (IBA) and Endemic Bird Area (EBA) by Birdlife International (BI), while the macaque monkeys and monitor lizards also abound in the Park.

> **Ethnography.** The Park is a natural museum showcasing the culture of the Batak and Tagbanua, two of the indigenous cultural groups inhabiting the Park.

> **Carrying Capacity.** To conserve the outstanding universal values of the Park, a study was conducted recommending a maximum carrying capacity of 1,400 persons per day in order not to diminish the visitor satisfaction and disturb the ecosystem. As of March this year, 1,200 visitors per day are allowed entry in the PPUR, well within the Park’s carrying capacity.

> **Ecosystem Monitoring and Conservation.** The water quality of the Underground River and vicinities of the Park are being regularly monitored to ensure that the natural environment is not adversely impacted by the tourism activities. The Palawan Council for Sustainable Development assists the City Government of Puerto Princesa and the Park Management in undertaking the water quality monitoring.

32. The other notable ecotourism practices within the Park are “Jungle Trekking” and “Mangrove Forest Paddle Tour”.

33. **Jungle trekking.** The new *Jungle Trail*, which just opened a few months ago, is roughly a 3.5-kilometer trail starting in Sabang Beach, passing through a lowland forest in the shadow of Mt. St. Paul, and ends where the Puerto Princesa Underground River tour begins. The forest is typical of Philippine lowland forest, and limestone cliffs. As in many national parks around the world, wooden planks and stairs have been installed to protect both the hikers and the rocks. Monkeys and other faunal species, as well as water monitor lizard (*Varanus palawanensis*), an endemic species of monitor lizards, dwell in the karst forests of the Park.

34. **Patronizing the “Jungle Trail” route provides jobs to around 20 Tagbanua indigenous community members, serving as tour guides under the Community-Based Sustainable Tourism (CBST) program. They are designated as park wardens, having been duly trained by the Park Management on tour guiding and jungle survival. These indigenous peoples, organized into the “Community Park Warden Association”, are in-charge of

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taking care of the jungle trail under the CBST, giving them the right to co-
manage the site and earn income for their families. For this 6-month period, the association earned more than 140 thousand pesos ($3,000) from the 525 foreign and domestic tourist who did the Jungle Train trekking\textsuperscript{56}.

35. Mangrove Forest Paddle Tour. This tour of the mangrove swamp is undertaken from the beach in Sabang Pier (or jump-off point of the Park) upriver in the vicinity of the Park. This tour of the Park’s mangrove forest on board paddle boats allows one to conveniently observe the mangrove forest and appreciate what an ecosystem free of human intervention looks like\textsuperscript{57}. The NGOs Palawan Conservation Corp Environmental Legal Assistance Center, with a fund grant from UNDP a few years back, assisted the local people in organizing themselves into a cooperative which now handles the mangrove paddle tour. The management of the PPUR assists in marketing, brochures production and in “synergizing the community-based sustainable tourism within the Park”\textsuperscript{58}.

36. The tourism industry in the PPUR area has been the source of income for most of the households. The development of the ecotourism industry in the Park periphery led to the change of livelihood among local people due to higher gains derived from the tourism industry\textsuperscript{59}.

IV. CHALLENGES AND CONCLUSION

Challenges
37. The following are some of the issues that need to be further looked into in ecotourism product development and marketing\textsuperscript{60}:

\begin{itemize}
    \item involvement of local and indigenous communities in product development.
    \item Generating more conservation benefits from ecotourism product development and marketing.
    \item Helping protected areas support and gain benefit from, the development and marketing of ecotourism products associated with them.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{56} Unpublished PPUR report, 2014.
\textsuperscript{58} Pers comm
\textsuperscript{59} http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042812046447
\textsuperscript{60} Denman, Richard. http://bsc.smebg.net/ecotourguide/best_practices/articles/files/Product_development.pdf
37. Ecotourism can suffer from "greenwashing," where facilities or trips are advertised as being "green" without actually taking steps to be environmentally friendly. Ecotourism also may cost more than regular tourism\(^{61}\).

39. The negative environmental impact of tourism on ecosystems creates a need for more enlightened tourism models. Advantages and disadvantages still remain. According to some practitioners, ecotourism is minimizing the negative effects of tourism on local communities and the environment. If not properly monitored, the ecotourism industry may not conduct itself any better than traditional tourism\(^ {62}\).

40. As increasing numbers of people started travelling to remote, pristine areas around the world in search of the beauty of nature, there were serious repercussions for the fragile ecosystems such as rainforests, mountains and coastal areas. To prevent further damage to these ecosystems from tourism, the environmental organizations and conservationists believed that ecotourism rather than plain tourism could be effective\(^ {63}\). Ecotourism brings more people, and thus more traffic and consumption, to previously remote and isolated areas. No matter how hard a traveller may try to minimize his impact, it's impossible not to have some effect on the environment and culture\(^ {64}\).

**Issues on Ecotourism in Palawan**

41. The following are the issues affecting the ecotourism industry in Palawan BR\(^ {65}\):

**For tourists:**
(i) delays in the development of transportation, communities and banking facilities and infrastructures; and  
(ii) inadequate tourism information distribution system;

**For the administrators:**
(i) although development fees may be collected, they are on tourist expenditures and the amount of tax revenues is therefore limited; and 
(ii) there is insufficient and/or inconsistent tourism data.

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\(^{62}\) ibid  
\(^{64}\) Rae, Kara. 2014. Http://www.ehow.com/facts_5641960_impacts-ecotourism.html  
For local communities:
(i) insufficient education and training opportunities and technical knowledge on development of tourism potential in their area; and
(ii) insufficient financial resources to allow the communities to develop tourism products.

Conclusion
42. In summary, the presented ecotourism sites and national parks in Palawan Biosphere Reserve have developed ecotourism products and best ecotourism practices, with these ‘common denominators’:

i) **Multi-stakeholder partnership and/or community empowerment in ecotourism site operation and management.** We saw that various stakeholders are either involved in multi-agency management of the Park (through its PAMB) where the local communities get to participate and derive benefit, or the local people themselves, like the indigenous people of Coron, have developed and sustained the ecotourism product which empowered them. In this manner, the “human-and-ecosystem” components of ecotourism develop sustainably, where economic sustainability is gradually being attained. In here, the society is able to absorb increasing tourist arrivals without adversely affecting or damaging indigenous culture, and that the economic growth of affected stakeholders is sustained in the promotion of ecotourism\(^66\). The limits on tourist acceptance within the site’s carrying capacity, or the geographic limitation itself, promote greater flexibility in meeting tourist satisfaction and conserve biological diversity.

ii) **Collaborative ecosystem monitoring and conservation**, where the status of the natural environment and ecotourism site is taken cared of. In the presentations, it was shown that baseline condition of the coastal-marine resource was established and being monitored, which enhances science-based decisions on the conservation of the site. This promotes environmental sustainability, since the natural and built environment is being resilient and capable of handling tourism without damage\(^67\).

To close, let me share these quotations:


67 ibid
“You have to know your product proposition and have a full tourism menu so you can stay ahead of the curve. The sign of a successful tourist destination is repeat visits.”

- Jose Ma. Lorenzo Tan, WWF-Philippines Vice-chair and CEO68

“That which we allow to exist, to flourish freely according to its own rhythms, is superior to anything our little hands create.”

- William Powers, Whispering in the Giant's Ear: A Frontline Chronicle from Bolivia's War on Globalization69

Thank you.

69 http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/eco-tourism