CONSTRUCTING ECOTOURISM
THE APPLICATION OF THE TOURISM SYSTEM MODEL
IN THE PHILIPPINE CONTEXT

by

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Abstract

This paper argues that tourism is a social construct and the images projected about it are representations of how actors involved are able to negotiate the relative power they have. Those who have exercised much power corresponding to available opportunities and circumstances have greatly influenced the image of tourism as it underwent the process of transformation from mass tourism to ecotourism or on how it is presently popularized. And the analysis done in this paper supports the arguments of the tourism system model, particularly on the complexity of actors involved in the tourism industry, in contrast to what was traditionally described as the guest-host dichotomy of tourism. These actors include the brokers, locals and tourists whose status and roles also shift or blend as they interact.

The construction of ecotourism as a strategy to promote sustainable resource management and tourism could positively work if brokers, locals and tourists behave to a tolerable level wherein no damage (or maybe minimal and could be mitigated) to the local ecosystem is created. Moreover, the internalization of brokers, locals and tourists of appropriate behaviors corresponding to their respective statuses and roles have to be achieved by modifying the quality of their involvement in the tourism industry. The tourism system model considers that their behaviors could be modified or regulated by any of them by the proper use of power geared toward the realization of the ecotourism image desired as a departure from the tarnished image of mass tourism. In other words, power and the success and failure of tourism are not only the monopoly of tourists as traditionally perceived but by all those involved directly or not in the tourism business.

In order to appreciate the applicability of the tourism system model as a tool in gathering basic information, planning, development and management of ecotourism, the case of Apo Island in the Philippines is presented. The island is internationally recognized for the success of its community-based coastal resource management program and becomes a model for other coastal communities in the country and even outside. It gets the attention and interest not only of scientists but as well as of tourists who have given additional economic significance to the maintenance of marine reserve and fish sanctuary in the island. Unfortunately, the influx of more tourists to the island brings some amount of ecological threats which demand the imposition at present of some regulatory measures to prevent further damage to the island ecosystem.

Furthermore, the case of Apo Island demonstrates the dynamic interaction of brokers (government, academic and non-government organizations), locals (fishing households) and tourists (foreign and domestic) who likewise shift or blend statuses and roles. A few of the pioneering tourists to the island married locals and eventually started the resort business which have also provided employment opportunities to some locals as construction workers, cook and food servers. Other locals sell souvenir and food items to tourists, accommodate them to their homes or ferry them to and from the island by their boats when they are not fishing. Some brokers outside of the island are also economically benefiting from it as destination of their tourists-guests. Meanwhile, the academic institutions with supports from non-government organizations continuously monitor the ecological condition of the island and provides data to public brokers as basis for some mitigating actions. The Protected Area Management Board (PAMB); composed also of representatives from the government, the academe, and the community; illustrates a pooling of powers and plays a dominant role in carving the destiny of ecotourism in Apo Island because it has the legal mandate to impose rules to regulate touristic and other development activities in the island.
Introduction

What we have around us is a constructed reality which is created through human actions and the interpretations of those actions which somehow vary but could be negotiated among actors (Howard and Hollander 2000: 35). Social constructionists do not agree that social reality just happened by chance. There are relationships and situations which are supposedly cultural but appeared to be natural to our mind because society makes us believe them to be such. We see them in terms of how we are conditioned or expected to see them unfold before our very eyes. In fact, how we may react to the unfolding of events is being guided or limited by concepts that are socially constructed. We learn to differentiate relationships and situations and classify them to be positive or negative based on these constructs which eventually also influence how we treat them. And the dominant discourse obviously has more control over our mode of thinking and eventually our behavior in relation to other people, objects or events.

This is the case in tourism discourse. It is not only a product but has also enhanced the social construction of tourism image (Cheong and Miller 2000: 385). For example, traveling or visiting other places for recreation and pleasure but without a plan to live there permanently by people known later as tourists has no significance at first. It only gained social importance when society attached other meaning to it aside from its inherent reason through various forms of discourses. But tourism should not be mistaken with travel made by some people in relation to certain kind of work they have to accomplish. Although there are some people who stop working for a while and go to some places to enjoy the beauty of the site, it was more motivated by the inherent pleasure of looking at what is beautiful and exciting than for the social or economic reward associated with it. Tourism was not yet a big deal and not a multi-million dollar industry. But when a good number of people start to seek pleasure in travel and are willing to pay its price, the industry grows to be an attractive business (Grenier, Kaae, Miller and Mobley 1993: 3) making tourism available to everyone who has money. Eventually, touristic venture becomes much associated with class position beyond its inherent value (i.e. those who travel can afford and, therefore, of a higher social class). Eventually, tourists are hierarchically classified according to the quality of their mode of travel, accommodation, destination, activities and so on.

Moreover, not only how we judge tourists for being good or bad, upper class or middle class as social construction, the industry itself experiences this valuation and has to undergo changes when more unfavorable images are labeled to it. The good image of tourism is tarnished by some negative developments and a segment of tourists who want to maintain their wholesome image no longer wanted to be associated with it although they still travel and visit places (Miller and Auyong 1998). They recreate their image or establish distance with mainstream tourists. In fact, some good tourists blame fellow tourists for tarnishing the image of the industry particularly in developing countries which rely so much on tourism for foreign revenue. The same is true with some locals who developed some antagonistic attitude toward tourists and resisted their presence in the community. But is there an acceptable ground to this accusation? Are tourists solely to be blamed for the negative consequences tourism brings to the local communities? Are they really that powerful to have a control over the destiny of local tourism?

This paper, which uses the tourism system model in the analysis, argues that all those involved directly or not in the tourism business has, in some form or another, contributed to its success and failure. The tourists become easy scapegoats only because they are highly visible in any tourist destination. Power is not fixed to anyone in the tourism business and is relative to a particular situation, event and time that this is exercised. It is not a static quality of a person but a dynamic, shifting property of a relationship that circulates among those interacting actors (Howard and Hollander 2000: 49). Anyone could benefit or be a victim of power which this paper
will elaborate on the process of reviewing what other authors have said about tourism particularly on the projected image of ecotourism as an alternative type of tourism. Meanwhile, the final section that discusses the prospects of ecotourism in Apo Island, Philippines as it is currently promoted and regulated serves to contextualize the arguments forwarded by the tourism system model discussed in this paper.

Guest-Host Dichotomy and Tourism System Discourses

Cheong and Miller (2000: 371) observe that from the perspective of Western society, tourism is often understood as a product of the individual decisions of tourists. And the relationship could be depicted as socioeconomic in character where tourists and locals interact either in a warm social milieu as “guests and hosts” (Smith 1977) or in the economic market as “consumers and producers”. This view of tourism projects the willingness of the host community to design touristic activities for the advantage of the tourists who affordably pay the cost. The kind of deal established, however, has allowed tourists to display material consumerism and the commodification of the local culture by the tourism industry for their enjoyment. This demonstrates the one-sided domination and exploitation of the host community (Cheong and Miller 2000: 372).

Guest-host dichotomy (Fig. 1) only captures the static hierarchical manifestation of the relationship of tourists and the local people in general but fails to appreciate the dynamics how power revolve between them. It is a gross picture of how negative tourists could become because they have the money to pay for their enjoyment at the expense of the local culture and environment. This model perceives the dominance of the tourists in carving the direction of the development of the industry in terms of facilities, services and activities for their increased satisfaction. And the experience of Boracay Island in Panay, Philippines may be considered as an illustration of this by which the tourist themselves were the industry developers and not the local brokers and residents in the island (Smith 1992: 156). This is a reality which is common in most developing countries (McGoodwin 1986, Cater 1993) but this projection of local tourism neglects to consider the dynamics of relationships and power in a tourist destination and their potential by which the local community could over rule the tourists for its advantage.

Meanwhile, when tourism is viewed as a system (Fig. 2), those exploited or victimized vary and become clearly demarcated because the perspective in the analysis of relationships moves throughout all actors involved in the tourism business. In the tourism system model, Miller and Auyong (1998: 3) extend the guest-host dichotomy to differentiate further who are the hosts which include the brokers and the locals. Brokers consist of persons who in one way or another pay professional attention in tourism categorized as private sector brokers or public sector brokers. The private sector brokers are engaged in the business of tourism and provide touristic services and sell touristic products while the public sector brokers, as public officials, are engaged in the governance and management of tourism. All of them maybe classified as on- or off-site brokers relative where they currently reside or work.

There are also variants of private brokers aside those engaged in the tourism business. They include the social movement brokers which are formal entities referred to as non-government organizations, environment organizations and the like which assisted in the planning, development, management and monitoring of tourism activities in particular setting. The academic brokers are those in the academe who examine or research on tourism as part of basic science. The travel media brokers include the reporters and journalists who made comments about tourism through the media like print, broadcast and internet to inform the public of good tourist
destinations or activities available. And the last are the consulting brokers who are tourism analysts, marketers, travel writers and a variety of other independent entrepreneurs who provide consultancy services to government, private enterprise and organizations regarding tourism issues and concerns.

Meanwhile, the locals consist of persons who reside in the general region of tourism routes and destinations, but do not directly derive any income from tourism. Nevertheless, they are affected by it being permanent residents in the community. They may be indigenous locals who have settled in the community before the coming of a large number of migrants. The former have more ancestral claims to the resources in the community compared to the latter. The migrant locals are newly settled residents and have their ancestral roots in other areas and could be classified into established and recently arrived migrants. The established migrants have already formed their families to the third generations and up and even intermarried with the indigenous locals and have secured themselves a good amount of properties in the community. The recently
arrived migrants have at least a year residence in the community and have accumulated less amount of properties. Lastly, the seasonal locals have no permanent residence in the community but are moving on and off because this is the location of the resources they work with like in farm planting and harvesting, fishing for certain seasonal species of fish and so on. Obviously, each of the locals enumerated above demonstrate must have different degree of interests or reactions to the tourism business in the community because of their differential experiences and attachment to local culture and environment.

The tourists as mentioned earlier are strangers to the community but travel here for pleasure and in other tourist destinations for relatively short visits. They ultimately return home when vacation is over or they already run out of money. They may also permanently stay in the destinations they visited that draw their interests, eventually marry and engage in the tourism business or become plain locals who enjoy the life in the community. This dynamics in tourism shows that the tourism system model does not only treat the human elements of the tourism industry as a typology to compare or contrast one from the other. It has regarded the tourism industry as a system composed of interacting actors whose status and roles also vary anytime depending on available opportunities and existing circumstances (Cheong and Miller 2000).

Social Mobility and Interaction

The dynamism of the tourism system illustrated by the shifting or the blending of status and roles of actors (Grenier, Kaae, Miller and Mobley 1993: 13) could be considered as a form of social mobility in terms of occupation and income because of the changes in economic reward and prestige the actors experienced in the process. For example, one person may be both a local and a broker, another, a tourist and a broker and so on. And how one may be viewed as a broker, local or tourist depends on the prevailing or dominant interest, the functions he or she has at the very moment and the corresponding amount of benefits derived. A foreign tourist or a government official may decide later to be a private broker when he or she realizes the inviting tourism potential of a particular community. A local resident who has the necessary capital may soon follow the bandwagon to have a share of the economic opportunity of catering to paying tourists. Consequently, the brokers and locals may decide sometime to travel somewhere for pleasure in which the experience will qualify their classification as tourists for a given period of time (Fig. 3).

Furthermore, how brokers, locals and tourists behave in relation to each other depends so much with whom they are interacting. For example, on-site private brokers who run resorts or travel agencies may be very accommodating to paying tourists and not considerate to the locals who complain because of the closure of their entry to the coastal water or forestal areas where they traditionally fish or hunt, respectively. Or the brokers may maintain good relationships with the locals in order to protect their business interests in the community.
Meanwhile, the locals may also take monetary opportunity of the unfamiliarity of tourists of the vicinity or may be annoyed by the vulgar behavior of tourists who get drunk or who run naked in the beach. They also complain about the environmental damage created by their irresponsible activities. Similarly, tourists may be too demanding thinking that because they pay for their accommodations they have to get back their money’s worth. They may be also friendly because they are strangers in the community and they do not want to be into trouble.

The foregoing description shows that each of the interacting actors in the tourism system holds a relative advantage over the other in some other time but not all the time as implied in the guest-host dichotomy of touristic interaction. And the relative advantage of one over the other may be a source of power which could be manipulated for personal benefit by someone who has it. This is a possibility if the tourism industry is unmanaged, unplanned or unregulated, where each actor in the system who carries differentiated interest will satisfy it to the maximum with the least cost possible, economically speaking. Private brokers may be operating a tourism business more for making profit by catering to the desired activities of tourists even these disadvantaged the local population.

Incidentally, the aim of the government particularly in developing countries to accumulate foreign revenues through tourism may push public brokers to be lenient to the activities of private brokers as long as they pay taxes and provide local employment opportunities. But how the tourism revenue benefits tourist destinations remains unclear in most cases in these countries. And it is also within this sociopolitical context of unregulated tourism industry where tourism benefits members of society in unequal ways that adds to its being controversial.

Images of Tourism

Historically, the concept *tourism* only becomes popular at a later date. The early movement of a group of people to other places in search for new lands to colonize was described as *exploration*. When almost all places on the planet had been “claimed” by European explorers, *travel* became a major activity of wealthy families like the Gran Tours during the mid-eighteenth century (Fussell 1980: 38- 39 in Miller and Auyong 1998: 10). Although the three demonstrate
mobility in space and time, they differ in motives and experiences and the kind of people involved. Exploration shows a movement of a group of people who risked to adventure in places that are not yet in the map compared to travel where the destination is known. Travel retains the excitement of exploration but of a lesser degree because it is fused with pleasure of knowing where one is. Meanwhile, tourism shows movement of people toward security of destination and is much associated with pleasure. It was first a monopoly of those who can afford the costs it entailed until the invention of mass transportation (e.g. locomotive) made travel less costly and paved the increased desire of many to go also to other places (Miller and Auyong 1998: 10).

For many tourists, the tropical countries which are economically and politically categorized as the developing countries are attractive destinations. The images pictured in many tourism brochures and other advertisement materials show these places as having the last havens of unspoiled nature which tourists, particularly in western temperate countries, will enjoy exploring and gazing. The warm climate, diverse forestal and marine life, highest mountains, spectacular waterfalls, secluded beaches fringed by coral reefs and others of these countries are what captivate tourists most (McGoodwin 1986: 144, Cater 1993: 85). They have untainted hospitality and a culture believed to be less contaminated by modernity and therefore more close to nature. And these nature of desire to go to these places imply that tourists are not bad after all when what they want is simply to become close to nature and traditional life in order to appreciate their beauty and simplicity. In fact, they have contributed to the flourishing tourism industry of most developing countries not to mention, however, the unacceptable cultural and ecological costs it brings when not properly managed.

The sad side, however, is that some tourists have other reasons to travel which deviated from the wholesome pleasure view of tourism. They resorted to behaviors that ruined the sanctity of the trip to certain tourist destination. These contentions are evident on what Fussell (1980: 42 in Miller and Auyong 1998: 10) observed to be the other motivations of tourists to travel which include realization of fantasies of erotic freedom, of imagined position to a superior social class and of the ability to exercise power to spend for what one wants. Some developing countries found economic value on these motives and catered to them which consequently jeopardized the industry and brought more long term damaged to a tourist destination than good (i.e. morally, socially and ecologically) beyond the short term benefits they enjoyed (e.g. McGoodwin 1986, Cater 1993, Odzer 1994).

But how could tourism cause the damage? One or two tourists in different places and times will surely not cause harm to the destination relative to the activities they are engaged with. It is only when tourists in great number converge in one place and at the same time that a great impact is observable which may be causing problems to the local people. This phenomenon is described as mass tourism in tourism discourse which Miller and Auyong (1998: 11-12) consider to be subjectively and negatively characterized by materialism, ignorance, style and insensitivity. Furthermore, it is viewed as problematic because of the number of tourists involved which requires the production of more technological and infrastructural supports needed and services. Along all these, there are also social relation problems that emerged on the process of handling mass tourists.

More specifically, as a population problem, mass tourism creates congestion that damaged the carrying capacity of a given ecosystem. The large number of people who travel caused transportation and accommodation problems which demand capital to provide them which may be unfortunately drawn from public funds intended to serve the needs of the local population. Furthermore, the construction of tourist facilities in massive scale means disfigurement of the natural landscape and pollution. Not only that local population become
resentful of tourists because they are deprived of what are due to them for the sake of making profit from tourism, tourists themselves attacked each other in what Miller and Auyong (1998: 11) described as tourist angst reflecting elitism in the industry. The upper class tourists do not want to be associated with the middle class tourists whom they held responsible for making tourism travel cheap and stigmatized.

**Negative Developments and Impacts of Tourism**

The preceding description of the images of tourism suggests that tourism is dynamic and causes changes in a tourist destination as well as in responding to changes which is sometime overlooked by people who manage it (Butler 1992: 33). They failed to foresee that the influx of more tourists who are excited to experience certain tourist destination will result to the proliferation of tourism-related businesses that eventually encourage the upsurge of tourists beyond the carrying capacity of a particular area. Butler (1992: 33) further laments that this manifests the ignorance of people involved in the tourism business about its dimension, nature and power. They are very much overwhelmed by the desire of making profit out of the increasing degree of touristic demands. This ignorance ultimately incapacitates them to determine what level of justifiable development is necessary and how to manage and control its operation in terms of activities and number of tourist landing. The worst is that this inability is a reflection of their shortsightedness of the impact of tourism to local culture and environment which could not easily be reversed.

The locals being permanent residents of tourist destinations suffer most when tourism becomes uncontrollable and has reached its climax. As a response, they manifest dissenting attitudes toward the tourists in particular and the industry in general. Doxey (1975 cited in Kay and Alder 1999: 177) demonstrates the succession of community attitude towards tourism in five levels with corresponding description of the degree of feelings people have from being pro- to anti-tourist. In the first level, described as euphoria, there is enthusiasm for tourist development reflected in mutual feelings of satisfaction for those involved, with the projected opportunities for local participation and the sure flow of capital and interesting contacts. But when the industry expands, there is the development of apathy where tourists are taken for granted and the interest is more for profit making. Personal contact also becomes more formal and the hospitality of the locals diminished. When the industry nears its saturation point, attitude turns to irritation because of the massive expansion of tourist facilities and the encroachment of the industry to the local way of life. At the point of antagonism, the irritations of local people become more overt and the tourists are seen to be source of all that is bad. Mutual politeness disappeared. The final stage is reached with a condition where the environment has changed irreversibly including the resource base which is the source of tourist attractions and the livelihood of the locals. The tourists who came also changed. It could be the end of the tourism business if there is no more space large enough to cope with mass tourists.

The tourists may come and go, including the off-site brokers, but the negative impacts of mass tourism are already imprinted in the consciousness of the locals, their culture and the physical environment. McGoodwin (1986: 132) best described the damage caused by the tourism business, particularly in developing coastal communities, as tourism-impact syndrome. The symptoms include some forms of sociocultural stresses and strains in the local community like loss of political and economic autonomy, loss of folklore and important institutions of traditional folk culture, social disorganization, and hostility toward tourists. Social disorganization particularly reflects radical changes in value orientations and in norms regarding social relations; heightened desires for material objects, changes in norms regarding work, sexual behavior and
drug use; promotion of illusory life aspirations; feelings of alienation, the demise of charitable institution; loss of parental control and of respect for elders. And these are the images created by tourism as an industry which is perceived to have turned bad along the way.

Ecotourism as a Social Construct

The growing awareness of local communities regarding ecological degeneration and their sensitivity to the corruption of traditional way of life because of tourism made them more conscious of weighing the trade-offs with what economic gains it brings. Because of this, the tourism industry and even the tourists have also come to a stage that they have to recreate their images to be identifiable with environmental protection and cultural preservation. The industry particularly has to get rid of the negative consequences brought about by mass tourism. It has to promote what might be an alternative to it that suits to the acceptable constructs of tourism people forged. Miller (1993: 189) describes the processes of recreating tourism image or the social construction of ecotourism as restoration and enhancement. The first means to repair a damaged identity or image while the second refers more to complete transformation.

For example, there is a subgroup of tourists described as “backpackers” who deviates from the typical tourist image probably as a way of getting away from the ugly pictures of conventional tourists. These are tourists who usually carry cameras, travel in guided and packaged tours, look good and sophisticated compared to the locals, eat expensive food and live in furnished hotel or resort. For contrast, backpackers only carry with them their backpacks, by which their name is associated, which contain what they practically need when they move from different sites in various countries on their list in search for unspoiled sites. They travel in pairs or cliches but not in bigger groups and outside of the usual advertised tourist routes and destinations but those introduced by other backpackers. They only have maps to guide their way. Because of these characteristics, backpackers are considered as low-budgeted travelers who departed from mass tourism. However, the nature of their travel and expenditure may not sustain a viable travel industry and, therefore, may disappoint the local brokers in terms of short term cash benefits (Smith 1992: 157).

The interest of the current adventure and exotic seeking tourists who are usually young professionals, like the backpackers, is to renew intimacy with unspoiled nature. This type of touristic venture is a kind of tourism which is gaining support for development as the alternative to mass tourism (Butler 1992: 31) but not necessarily that kind of travel which backpackers preferred because it gives less benefits to local brokers and tourist destinations. Ecotourism has to be regulated by local brokers to ensure economic benefits and to minimize environmental destruction. As popularized by people in the industry and academe, it is a transformation from mass tourism to a small or medium-scale industry that allows tourists to enjoy natural beauty as well as educate them of the need to protect the environment for the sake of the future generations.

Ecotourism is known in literatures in varied names that glitter with images of being environmentally-friendly, nature oriented, appropriate, soft, sustainable, green, responsible, ethical, and other related terms (Valentine 1991: 476). It is also promoted as a strategy in coastal resource management program by which the income from ecotourism prevent local fishers, for example, from destructive fishing activities and make them appreciate the economic and aesthetic value of the marine environment (Flores 1999; White, Ross and Flores 2000). Because of this, it requires the active participation of the local community in the planning in order to get popular support particularly that ecotourism development comes along with the declaration of protected areas, marine or landscape, that deprived local people access to their traditional source of
livelihood. It is through the economic benefits of ecotourism venture and other alternative enterprises, not directly related to traditional resources, that local people are motivated to support it.

But the development of any ecotourism program has also gained criticisms from other sectors of the academe and society like the hardcore environmentalists and policy analysts for its being another type of mass tourism in the making (Butler 1992: 37). This contention maybe results from observations of how certain tourist destination which was originally developed for nature-seekers had soon become so devastated. They said that any site that started by the “discovery” of a few tourists who conveyed the information to others eventually become a popular tourist destination even though there are no amenities yet in place until local entrepreneurs provided facilities to accommodate the arrival of a growing number of tourists. Moreover, the pioneering tourists, particularly foreigners, became interested also to invest money in developing the site to accommodate more influx of tourists despite the absence of any development plan. This is the kind of situation which later created problem in the management of the ecotourism industry of Boracay Island which started supposedly as a backyard industry of on-site brokers. It is now overtaken by mushrooms of resorts, diving shops and restaurants owned by foreigners with their local business partners because it failed to produce a master development plan to regulate the building of more structures in the island (Smith 1992).

The above situation exemplifies a fact that when the further development of some facilities for the use of tourists tends to come under the control of agencies, public or private, the institutionalization of tourism or emergence of mass tourism is inevitable. Local brokers are overtaken by large-scale brokers whom Naronha (1977 cited in de Kadt 1979: 5) observes to be usually rooted outside the local community and often outside of the country (also Cater 1993: 86) and this is true to Boracay Island. Foreigners successfully established local social networks through marriage, friendship and other social means in order for them to engage in the tourism business. The local people in the peripheries of tourist destinations obviously are negatively affected by tourism development in one way or another but not benefiting much from it.

The way for ecotourism development proponents to erase the pessimism about its being another mass tourism, is for it to be true to its objectives. Its being a real alternative and a responsible solution to the environmental problems brought about by mass tourism relies so much in its being a planned, organized, and integrated program with the consensual participation of the brokers, locals and tourists (Grenier, Kaae, Miller and Mobley 1993). The ecotourism concept must be well understood by the local community and the brokers of the program which requires social preparation for its introduction (Crawford, Balgos and Pagdilao 2000: 22). This will enable them to manage appropriately the tourists and negotiate with their desire for satisfaction without compromising the state of the environment and culture of people. And to guide its development, Cater (1993: 86) enumerates some criteria to be met to make ecotourism truly sustainable and away from the bad images and results created by mass tourism. First, it must meet the needs of the host population in terms of improved living standards, both the short and long term. Second, it must satisfy the demands of a growing number of tourists and continue to attract them in order to meet the first aim. And third, it must safeguard the natural environment in order to achieve both of the preceding criteria.

The above criteria proposed require that ecotourism development must have a long-term and comprehensive plan which is integrated to whatever land use or coastal management plan the local community has in order to foresee its feasibility and impact to the other components of the ecosystem like the marine areas, forest, mangroves and others (Fig. 4). The plan must project the possible negative impacts of the tourism system to the ecosystem in order for them to be
mitigated or the plan to be modified. Similarly, the constraints and opportunities present in the immediate ecosystem are to be taken as considerations in the process of planning, development and management of ecotourism destinations and activities.

How the two systems interact has to be regularly monitored to mitigate whatever symptoms of mass tourism character are emerging in order to ensure its sustainability (White, Ross and Flores 2000: 226). Carter (1993: 85) and McKercher (1993: 133) emphasize that it has to adopt sustainability as an ideology in the strictest sense and protect its environment for obvious self-interest. It must always be understood that ecotourism is a resource-dependent industry (McKercher 1993: 131) and its future relies so much on the high quality of the natural resources that lure tourists. The permanent restructuring of the environment because of indiscriminate development activities related to tourism and other industries will also mean their displacement in the future which has to be prevented.

![Fig. 4. Tourism System- Ecosystem Interaction in Ecotourism Development (after Miller and Auyong 1998)](image)

**Modifying Involvement in Ecotourism**

Ecotourism as a strategy to promote sustainable resource management could positively work if the brokers, locals and tourists behave to a tolerable level wherein no damage (or maybe minimal and could be mitigated) to the local ecosystem is created. And the major requisite to this is the internalization of brokers, locals and individual tourists of their respective roles, considered appropriate, as they interact in pursuit for satisfaction in certain touristic setting. The theoretical basis of this contention is derived from the implications of the typology of involvement model relative to leisure and work. This model was introduced by Marc L. Miller (2001), anthropologist of the School of Marine Affairs, University of Washington, who combined the concepts of *sacred* by sociologist Emile Durkheim and *serious leisure* of sociologist Roht Stebbins with his concept of *expressive work* to form the typology. He argues that although two individuals may be engaged in identical activity which may be categorized as leisure or work, the quality of their respective experiences may vary because of the subjective meaning they attached to this particular activity (Fig. 5).
The kind of experiences derived from leisure and work are expected to differ because they require different modes of expertise and types of reward. Any activity that gives pleasure is leisure while that which provides money reward is work. To some, however, a single activity could also be a source of pleasure and money reward at the same time. But for the purpose of this paper, the travels and activities of tourists are obviously seen as geared toward the realization of leisure while the brokers perform their work along with their expected role of making tourists achieve the maximum satisfaction they expect from their travel. The same is true with the locals who work for a living in the community that incidentally serves as a tourist destination.

Tourists who consider their travel as a sacred activity will be able to internalize what behaviors are expected of them in a particular tourist destination in order to maximize the appropriate kind of pleasure associated with it. Cater (1993: 88), however, warns that not all ecotourists are automatically environmentally sensitive breed. They may consider a touristic activity casually and are not concerned of whatever its outcome. They do not manifest conscious effort to demonstrate appropriate behavior and become indiscriminately destructive in the end. And is as much as they had spent much money for such experience, they will assume that it is their right to use whatever resources available for their satisfaction. Besides, they are only visiting a destination for a few days without any plan of returning. In effect, they demonstrate destructive leisure and not serious leisure in its real sense.

Meanwhile, brokers who considered their work as sacred express it in a manner that they exercise equal efforts to satisfy the craving of tourists for excitement but without being destructive to the local culture and environment which they are bound to protect and preserve as one major ethical consideration of an ecotourism program. They consider it an achievement if they are able to realize the ideals of their work which they highly value. In contrast, brokers who consider their work as an instrument for more material gain may sacrifice the integrity of the local culture and environment for their selfish interest to maximize material reward. Similarly, locals who consider their work as sacred find achievement in producing food for their respective families as well as the market from the immediate environment and at the same time are able to sustain its productivity. And not only that they keep the resource base for its inherent value as their source of livelihood but also for tourists to enjoy its beauty and bounty. It is a contrast to the locals who exploit their resource base to the maximum up to the point of exhausting and destroying it. For example, local fishers who exploit the marine environment by using blast and poison (e.g. cyanide) as methods of extracting fish, considered the sea as only an instrument for
economic gain in terms of bountiful catch. They do not appreciate the fact that the kind of work they have depends so much on the diversity and sustainability of the marine environment. But those who consider fishing as sacred likewise treat the sea as sacred that has life itself which has to be protected and nurtured. They consider their lives as connected to that of the sea.

The preceding discussion shows that leisure activities and works demonstrated by two or more individuals in any tourist destination could well complement each other as long as they consider what preoccupied them as sacred. The two activities have to be exercised within the principle of sustainability which suggests that the use and benefits derived in a particular resource setting should be within its carrying capacity relative to present needs and those of the future generation. Ecotourism program, as emphasized earlier, depends so much on the natural characteristics of a tourist destination. If this is damaged by the exploitative feature of touristic activities permitted or promoted by brokers and the technology used by the locals to extract food resources, all of them will experience the same loss but the worst will always be experienced by the locals. The private brokers could bring out their capital and engage business in other tourist destinations which is also true to tourists who would be spending their money and time somewhere. But these are unethical conducts of opportunistic people that have to be discouraged.

It is, therefore, the role of the public brokers, represented by the government and environmental non-government organizations, to coordinate their efforts and resources to develop mechanisms that may modify the behaviors of private brokers, locals and tourists to prioritize environmental welfare above material or psychological gains. However, this does not exempt them to demonstrate first their expressive relationship with their work and its ideals.

**Power Dynamics for Sustainable Ecotourism**

The ability to regulate or modify human behavior in a particular context demonstrates the degree of influence exerted and the quality of change desired to take place. This also illustrates how successful power is exercised by its agents which could be persons or organizations having the authority or superior physical qualities and resources compared to that of the target. The effects of power may be due to coercion, persuasion or voluntary submission. And within the tourism system, Cheong and Miller (2000) theoretically demonstrate how tourists could be targets of power and the brokers and locals as the agents of power. Their analysis contradicts the traditional notion that tourists could dictate so much the tourism industry and are responsible for tarnishing its image.

Under the tourism system model, power is seen to be circulating and this dynamics could be of use to design a sustainable ecotourism program. This is anchored on the assumption that, in as much as all the elements of the tourism system has relative power, each could be mobilized toward a negotiated goal that satisfies their corresponding interest. The Foucauldian analysis on power dynamics on tourism introduced by Cheong and Miller (2000) points out specific instances by which the behavior among the actors of the tourism system can be influenced by each other relative to certain condition. The insights derived here could be used in realizing the objectives of ecotourism as an alternative to mass tourism in its truest nature.

While it is recognized that tourists make decisions what to experience during travel, brokers could also create demand in which tourists base their choices. Miller and Auyong (1998: 11, 13) explain that this will be the case because the effective presentation of a touristic product actually generates preferences. Tourists could be directed what they should want through various marketing strategies and media before they even reach certain destination. Meanwhile, tourists
become helpless because they are already physically detached from their usual social networks when they travel. And in order to survive in a relatively strange social construct, they are compelled to adjust in a way that is acceptable to those in command of the destination and culture theoretically controlled by on-site brokers and locals (Cheong and Miller 2000: 380). This is particularly the case in packaged and guided tours. But even those tourists in self-guided tours, like the backpackers, have movements limited and structured by the guidebook, the map or the signpost that are still creation of brokers and locals.

Obviously, when tourists are in strange places, they are vulnerable to be compelled by brokers, both private and public, to behave and function in certain way for self-protection. The brokers will also try to make the impression that they are in good hands. For example, the recent political turmoil in the Philippines, which is actually common in developing countries, that led to the ouster of the former male president and the installation of a female president, may had sent alarming signals to foreign tourists to cancel their trips to the country. The kidnappings also of foreign tourists and attacks on tourists destinations in the south of the Philippines could further intensify such apprehension about their safety. As a reaction, the tourism officials of the country had to issue an advisory to other countries that travel to the Philippines continues to be safe and orderly, tourism activities are on normal operations (Filipino-American Bulletin, May 1-31, 2001, p. 6) and that tourist kidnappings and attacks in southern Philippines are just isolated incidents. Public and private brokers have to create an imagery that everything is under control and “embarked on an aggressive media and promotion blitz to preserve the confidence of international and domestic tourists and deflect the negative image of the country” (Nawal 2001, www.inq7.net/nat/may/26, underscoring mine).

The above observations further show that brokers know better and have the advantage over the tourists on the condition of a tourist destination. Because of this reason, the dominance of brokers should never be compromised just to accommodate the unacceptable behaviors and demands of tourists which may imperil the operation of the ecotourism ventures they manage. However, brokers have also the responsibility to ensure the security of tourists by giving them the impression of real danger and not compromise it also for making money. Meanwhile, in order to demonstrate the extent of control that brokers could exercise over tourist, Cheong and Miller (2000: 381) describe the enormous discretion they have in dealing with tourists to maintain the integrity of tourist destinations. They particularly relate the fact that:

Because of their proximity, park guards watch over tourists to see if they litter; guides protect, oversee and educate them about how to act properly, and offer them interpretations of historic sites, cultures, and customs; restaurant employees instruct them in what and how to eat. Subsequently, brokers as agents in a variety of guises constrain their movements, behaviors, and even thoughts, and act as a powerful force in the system….off-site brokers- those who are not in direct contact with tourists- also manage tours and contribute to tourism plans and strategies.

On the other hand, although the locals are not directly involved in catering to tourists they could still express how they feel about them during their brief and occasional encounters through displaying gaze in their actions, gestures, insinuations, and other communications (Cheong and Miller 2000: 385). This becomes more intense when they are in groups by which they could manifest collectively their attitudes of disfavor or liking toward tourists through the gaze. The tourists and their attending guides may be able to catch the message of the gaze which can lead them to quickly understand where they might go and what they might do. This is an illustration of an informal mechanism by which locals could control tourists to display behaviors that are not
detrimental to local culture and the environment. They could go also to the extent of forming organized coalitions to prohibit certain touristic activities in the community if they found them having negative consequences.

The case in some developed countries is more difficult for ecotourism to prosper. There are conservation movements that have adopted a more bio-centric approach in environmental preservation which threatens the sustainability of any type of tourism activities (McKercher 1993). To compensate for the poor prospects of ecotourism in some developed countries in favor of environmental protection and preservation without any human interference, developing countries is believed to have been encouraged to pursue ecotourism ventures. It now depends upon these countries to balance the cost and benefits between environmental protection and development ventures, like in ecotourism, in order to maintain the quality of their natural resources as well as economically benefit from them. Anyway, observations already show that people in developing countries, like the Filipinos who already staged two non-violent revolutions, are no longer passive and they express their resentment against issues and conditions which are either political or ecological that affect their lives compared decades ago. And they could manage to handle whatever negative impacts ecotourism brings which incidentally becomes possible with the institutionalization of environmental non-government and people’s organizations in the country.

Ecotourism Prospects in Apo Island, Philippines: A Case

In order to put in proper context the preceding discussion, the case of Apo Island is analyzed here using the tourism system model to appreciate its applicability in the gathering of basic information, planning, development and management of ecotourism in order to deconstruct the prevailing biased guest-host image of the tourism industry. Ecotourism activities in Apo Island is believed to have become popular along with the success of its community-based coastal resource management (CB-CRM) program. Although ecotourism is not its immediate objective (Alan T. White, pers. comm. May 28, 2001), its significant contribution to the tourism economy in the regional level as well as to the revenue of the local government could not be undermined. It is now getting attention to be planned and regulated to ensure sustainability and to minimize its impact to the ecological integrity of the island. The tourism system model has provided some conceptual tools to appreciate the process.

Marine attractions. Apo Island which measures only about 74 hectares is located south of Negros Island in the Central Visayas region, Philippines, about 25 kilometers from the mainland. It is of volcanic origin, has five sandy white beaches, two lagoons, patches of mangroves, steep cliffs immediately overlooking the sea and extensive fringing reefs of biodiverse marine species. It is accessible by motorized outrigger operated by local fishers or resort owners in the mainland and other nearby island provinces of Negros. Apo Island is inhabited by 129 households or a total population of 684 (as of May 2000 census by NCSO) with an annual growth rate of 7.17 percent since 1970. The major source of livelihood of more than 95 percent of the households is fishing because of the unfavorable soil condition and limited arable space of the island discourage agriculture. Other households and individuals are into small business of selling household needs to island residents known locally as sari-sari store; fish trading to the mainland; vending of souvenir items to tourist; and employment at the local resorts as carpenters, cook or food servers and in other menial jobs in order to earn.

Overfishing and destructive fishing with the use of blast and poison were common practice in the island before the 1980s. Nevertheless, the concerted efforts of the local
government unit and the barangay government of Apo Island, the local academic community (Silliman University) and the island residents during the next two decades with regards to the protection and conservation of the island environment already show positive results. Local fishers do not only enjoy abundant and sustained fish catch at present but they also start to realize the benefits from ecotourism when tourists began to visit the island. This is a development that was beyond the plan when scientists from Silliman University introduced to the community the need to develop the marine areas surrounding the island as a reserve and to establish a fish sanctuary therein. According to the barangay captain (i.e. the local elected political leader) during a recent interview, that the purpose originally was more for the sustainability of fish catch among the subsistence fishing households of Apo Island. Nonetheless, Apo Island residents were encouraged to collect some donations from tourists who came to the island to dive and snorkel (Alan T. White, pers. comm., May 28, 2001) which could have further reinforced the economic value of their conservation efforts.

At first, the marine conservation program in the island drew resistance from fishing households because the creation of a reserve will limit their access to their favored fishing grounds. It was negotiated finally that only a portion of the reserve where no fishing and any other activities will be imposed which they designated as a fish sanctuary. The barangay council passed a resolution to this effect and consequently an ordinance in the municipal level was approved to provide the legal basis of the establishment of the marine reserve and the fish sanctuary. Outside of the sanctuary fishing is permitted but regulated to include only the use of approved fishing gears like hook and line, spear fishing with out scuba, fish traps and related others.

Institutional recognition and protection. Today, Apo Island serves as a model and a learning site for community-based coastal resource management program in the Philippines. And the economic gains the residents derived from sustainable fishing activities and ecotourism are enough evidence to convince other islands and coastal communities to duplicate this in their respective areas. It is a learning site where community leaders with coastal resource management project were brought in order for them to interact with local leaders and residents to learn practical lessons on how they did it direct from their mouth. More so in 1997, the island residents received a national recognition and cash award for having the best community-managed coral reefs from a scientific organization in the country.

Apo Island experience is also taught in some local and international universities, for example, Silliman University in the Philippines and the School of Marine Affairs of the University of Washington and the University of Rhode Island in the United States, respectively. The lesson it particularly imparts is on the importance of a community network and empowerment in the success and sustainability of a coastal resource management program. In fact, the textbook authored by Kay and Alder (1999) entitled Coastal Planning and Management used in the Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) course at the University of Washington contains a section that features Apo Island. Other international journals on coastal management and websites dealing with environmental issues and concerns have also facilitated the popularity of the island not only to the scientific community but to tourists as well.

To further protect the ecological integrity of the island and its sustainability, an eight-membered Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) was organized in 1996 for these purpose. It is particularly responsible to tailor policies and regulations and examine any development activities in the island. Its membership includes three representatives from the island aside from those coming from the national, regional and provincial government and the academe (i.e. Silliman University). The creation of the board was a result of the declaration of Apo Island in
1994 under Presidential Proclamation No. 438 as a nationally recognized protected landscape and seascape and is placed within the the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) which covers a total area of 691.45 hectares.

**Economic opportunities.** Earlier, Vogt (1997) has already discussed the economic benefits of tourism in the marine reserve of Apo Island but the study of Cadiz and Calumpong (2000) of the Marine Laboratory of Silliman University gives a more recent and detailed analysis of these economic benefits. Their study shows that a total of 14,361 tourists came to Apo Island from April 1999 to March 2000 or an average of 1,196.75 per month. The number daily ranged from 26 to 54 during the study period with April as the peak month and September has the lowest number. April coincides with the hot summer months while September is within the rainy months in the Philippines. Majority (62 per cent) of the tourists are foreigners while only 38 per cent are Filipinos. Among the foreigners, the Japanese dominate followed by the Germans, Americans and others. Pleasure diving was reported as the major activity engaged with by the tourists followed by snorkeling, diving lessons and having ordinary picnic. It was also reported that doing research and having educational fieldtrip were significant activities of others who came to the island that may not be considered as tourists.

According to the previous observation of Murphy, Ablong and White (1999: 7), the growing number of tourists visiting Apo Island brought over three times the benefits attributed to improved fishing. However, this remark must had been based on gross calculation of tourism income and did not consider the social distribution of such income. But nonetheless, the coming of tourists, both local and foreign, to Apo Island becomes an opportunity for women to peddle souvenir items like T-shirts, locally woven mats, *malongs* and *sarongs*. Not only that the women earn, the designs about the beauty of the island printed on the T-shirts and mats further advertised it to other tourists to come to the island. In the past, they used to sell also exotic shells but this was later prohibited by fishery laws. There are also local residents who earn as employees of the resorts in the island.

Income data from the study of Cadiz and Calumpong (2000) point out that businesses catering to tourists in Apo Island earned PhP 11,565,021 (US$ 289,125 at $1 to PhP40) in 1999. Of this amount, as much as 53 percent went directly to the island brokers. Boat operators, who also include fishers, earned a total of PhP 4,106,600 (US$ 102,665) for that year in ferrying tourists to and from the island. Twenty-five (25) percent of these boat owners are from the island while the rest were from the neighboring islands of Negros, Cebu, Bohol, Siquijor and northern Mindanao. Meanwhile, the diving business also grossed PhP 5,755,000 (US$ 143,871) from tanks and gear rental and the diving shops located right in Apo Island cornered 76 percent of the market. Brokers of this type of business presumably earned that much because 45 percent of the tourists of the island were divers according to the study.

Meanwhile, when the PAMB increased the rates for tourist entry fees to Apo Island, the Marine Management Committee (MMC) of the island, composed of local residents, had increased the revenue it collected. The study of Cadiz and Calumpong (2000) shows that after only four months of the existence of PAMB, the committee was able to collect more than PhP 509,573 (US$ 12,739) in contrast to only about PhP 29,916 (US$ 748) in eight months before its operation. The presence of PAMB has legalized what fixed amount the island collects from tourists compared in the past when they were contented only with donations because they have no legal basis yet for collecting fees. Seventy-five (75) percent of the amount collected is retained in Apo Island for the development and maintenance of the Protected Landscape and Seascape projects in the island. The remaining 25 percent goes to the National Integrated Protected Area Fund. Meanwhile, out of what is left of the revenues in the island from tourist fees, 15 percent is
set aside by the MMC for livelihood projects of island residents. This is financially helpful for the island development and environmental projects because it only gets a total of PhP 380,000 (US$ 9,500) in Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) during that same period from the local government (Pal 2001).

**Democratizing the benefits.** The thousands of dollars derived from ecotourism in Apo Island suggests its profitability to brokers and has a significant contribution to the revenues of the government. However, it could not be denied that brokers, either off- or on-site, who invest more capital raked more of the income compared to the local women, boat-operators, small store owners and households providing accommodations to tourists in the island. And it is only but appropriate for those who invest more capital to profit in the ecotourism business in the island. However, it should also be recognized as a fact that the locals are responsible for attracting the tourists because of the beautiful marine reserve and fish sanctuary they maintained. They have the inherent right to indirectly claim part of the profit from tourism in the island probably through livelihood and infrastructure projects and funds for the maintenance and monitoring of the island’s fragile marine environment that might improve the quality of their life.

Unfortunately, up to this date (March 2001) Apo Island has still to receive its share from what PAMB collected because all the money earned by the island from tourist fees was submitted to the national office. Bureaucratic structures and protocols had delayed the process of getting the money which the barangay captain presumed to be the case because this would be the first time that funds will be released to them. He hopes that after the initial release, the succeeding releases will be easily facilitated and on time. According to the barangay captain, they need the money at present very badly to pay the honorarium of the bantay dagat (sea watch or guard) members, garbage collectors and those in charge of the Apo Protected Landscape and Seascape (APLS) assistance center who collect entry fees and provide instructions to tourists while they are in the island.

They have not also started yet any livelihood projects for Apo Island residents and some infrastructure projects in the island because of the absence of necessary funds. If realized, these are how the social benefits of ecotourism may be felt by the locals of Apo Island not directly doing business with tourists. It should be noted that tourism income report showed to be greatly favorable only to private brokers and not the locals which are fishing households. Meanwhile, there are already locals who clamored for the delay of fund release from tourist fees which was not the case in the past when they used to keep and spend what they earned from tourist donations to the island. They were immediately able to finance and implement whatever development projects they envisioned and agreed locally.

**Ecological threats.** The barangay captain, who was one of those adolescents who cooperated during the introduction of the conservation project in the island many years ago (Alan T. White, pers. comm., May 28, 2001), has apprehensions now that mass tourism may soon characterize Apo Island which could somehow bring adverse effects like what is happening in Boracay Island (Lujan 1998: 11). Boracay, which was mentioned earlier, is another internationally known tourist destination in the Philippines but is now suffering from problems of water pollution and overcrowding not to mention some sociocultural stresses and strains the local people also experienced (Smith 1992). In Apo Island, tourist divers especially the amateurs, have caused harm to the reefs through trampling of fragile corals, according to the barangay captain who is a master diver himself. The locals also noticed that there are those who love to touch and even prick some corals and bring home as souvenirs. They suspected that those who wear gloves in diving are responsible for such destructive behavior. They have labeled most Japanese to have committed these acts among other foreign tourists probably because they are also of the greatest
number. Furthermore, the continuous and unregulated number of divers in the reserve area at the same time are also believed to scare fish away and they fear that there will be no more fish to catch if this continues, the wives particularly said (Oracion 1998: 49).

Garbage also starts to pose an ecological threat in the island and compounded the problem of their own garbage especially the non-biodegradable kind not only in the terrestrial areas but as well as in the marine areas especially the coral reefs. Common garbage noticed are plastic containers of mineral water and food items which are indiscriminately thrown by careless tourists. The barangay captain lamented that the local residents have noticed a worsening garbage problem even in places which are not inhabited (Pal 2001). Graduate students of Environmental Science and Coastal Resource Management of Silliman University who did a study on the sociocultural impact of the marine reserve in the island considered garbage to be a serious problem on the advent of more tourist landing. And the absence of a solid waste management system in the island will further aggravate the matter, the students claimed. Meanwhile, oil spill and irresponsible anchoring and the vibrating sounds of pumpboat engine within the marine reserve are also considered to have disturbed the fragile marine organisms in the area.

**Regulatory measures.** Off-site business brokers and tourists may find their movements in Apo Island more controlled now compared in the past when the PAMB was not yet organized. Pursuant to Board Resolution No. 1, series of 1999 of PAMB, tourist landing and activities in Apo Island are regulated in order to prevent further damage to its fragile ecosystem. The collection of entry fee is also a necessary mechanism as resource user fee to raise funds to mitigate or off-set any ecological damage that may take place in the island. The amount of tourist entry fee was increased (PhP 20.00 or 50 cents for foreign tourists and PhP 10.00 or 25 cents for Filipino tourists) compared to the any amount of donation collected before. Meanwhile, the number of divers and snorkelers to the island is limited. The board resolution specifically indicates that only a maximum of 15 divers are allowed each day and no more than 8 snorkelers are permitted at any one time in order to minimize the cumulative impact of human activities in the reserve area. Fees are also to be charged to specific tourist activities like scuba diving, snorkeling, camping, filming, lodging at cottages, using the picnic shed, mooring and anchoring. The amount varies in terms of the types and the extent of the exercise of these activities.

Tourists are also advised to use the designated entry and exit points in the fish sanctuary area. Similarly, bathing and swimming are strictly prohibited, much so with sports spear fishing with scuba and the wearing of gloves during diving to prevent them from touching or pricking the corals. The designated sea watch monitor the activities of the tourists and even the resort tour guides that bring them to the island. In fact, all tourists including their carriers or boats are required to register at the APLS assistance center where they are to be assigned guides and watchers. Furthermore, in order that the fishing activity of island fishers will not be disturbed, the divers are not allowed to dive or approach within 100 meters the traditional fishing area in the island or where the fishers are stationed. Anchoring is likewise regulated corresponding to the weight of the boats and the areas in the marine reserve where these boats are situated. In fact, certain areas are designated with buoys for anchoring and mooring to guide boat operators when they dock. Any violation to these could easily be reported by the sea watch and even the local fishers to the barangay captain for appropriate actions.

Finally, in order to prevent further congestion, no more resorts are encouraged in addition to the present two given the limited space in the island for infrastructure development. These two resorts are owned by foreigners who were formerly tourists to the island but later married locals and eventually engaged in the tourism business. Meanwhile, one finds the mushrooming of resorts along the coastline in the mainland facing directly Apo Island because of the above
condition. These are mostly owned by foreigners in partnership with some Filipinos. Even new migrants are discouraged to move into the island except those who marry somebody from Apo Island. These particular regulations, however, must have no legal basis yet because these are not included in PAMB regulations but become norms which are mutually recognized considering the limited space in the island and the significant population growth by marriage and natural process over the past two decades.

**Tasks ahead.** The state of ecotourism in Apo Island perfectly shows the dynamic interaction of public brokers (local government and PAMB) and private brokers (resort and dive operators, travel agencies, boat operators, small business operators, academe, environmental organizations and so on), either off- or on-site, the foreign and local tourists and the local fishing households. They respectively play important roles in making ecotourism in Apo Island work and eventually maintaining its sustainability. But the present condition of the island is critically threatened by possible indiscriminate productive and touristic abuse if not monitored and no mitigating actions are made. It is clear that the present threats originated more from the outside because pro-environment attitude is presumed to be already well internalized by the locals in the island.

Moreover, changing the environmental consciousness and behavior of the Apo Island brokers, locals and tourists must be extended outside of the island. There is a need to re-educate the non-Apo based users of the island about its fragile coral reefs and its people in order that they will become more responsible as well in maintaining the island’s present improved environmental status. They should realize that the beauty of Apo Island is what their businesses need and any abuse of the privilege given to tourists to enjoy it will mean a major drawback to them. Resort owners should also echo what they learned about environmentally friendly practices that must be observed by their guests when they visit the island. In fact, it is more effective if PAMB regulations for Apo Island tourists and other users be printed in beautifully illustrated brochures which could be distributed to their guests to study before going to the island.

Meanwhile, the MMC officials and residents of Apo Island should always remind island tourists and visitors to help protect their environment particularly upon arrival when they register and pay the required fees. They have to be more vigilant to monitor and apprehend anyone who violates any environmental regulations while in the island. The women organization in the island could very well take greater responsibility of this task as some of their members go peddling their wares to the tourists. It does not have to be a formal lecture but could be done in a conversational and personalized mode. Their ability to speak the English language will make the task easier except when they are dealing with non-English speaking tourists like some of the Japanese. More so, the MMC could develop an interpretive center that shows the relief map of the island landscape and seascape where restricted and accessible areas are shown. It should emphasize the value of protecting the whole island ecosystem not only for tourism purposes but for its survival where the future of local people also depends on. Therefore, ecotourism in Apo Island should be a venue to educate tourists, brokers as well as the locals for them to appreciate the aesthetic and productive values of healthy coral reefs.

**Research agenda.** The following data have to be generated in order to see the holistic impact of ecotourism in the island. Foremost, how the growth of urban based touristic activities positively or negatively influenced Apo Island’s ecotourism has to be examined (Marc L. Miller, pers. comm., May 31, 2001). This is not only in relation to those in the mainland of southern Negros but as well as those in other parts of the region that bring tourists to the island. And in as much as ecotourism brings alternative economic opportunities to the island, how this has helped
the women become more economically productive and influenced gender relationships in the household are worthy of investigation.

Furthermore, the sociopsychological and cultural changes the local fishing households experienced because of their interaction with foreigners, like increased social awareness, improved self-esteem, increased aspirations for their children and the replacement of traditional knowledge and tools have to be measured. How also the informal educational attempts work to modify the environmental attitudes and awareness of off-site business brokers and tourists to the island have to be monitored and evaluated for future improvement. This is aside from the fact that the biophysical conditions of the coral reefs, fish quantity, water quality and level of garbage pollution in the island have to be regularly monitored for purposes of mitigation.

Conclusions

The phenomenon of tourism is a social construction and its ups and downs are results of how the actors involved interact with each other and the natural environment. The social and economic values attached to it are negotiated which have tremendously affected its development and present status particularly the growing recognition of ecotourism as a sustainable alternative to mass tourism. It was shown that the development of tourism as an activity and as an industry is very much a chaotic display of colorful and ugly images that represent its good and bad times, respectively. And the present tourism discourse has more or less successfully constructed in our minds that ecotourism is good while mass tourism is bad. But the battle continues because the other side of the discourse is skeptical that ecotourism may end up as another type of mass tourism in the end.

It is a fact that ecotourism as an introduced human activity if abused has some considerable impacts to the environment which may become worst if not regulated and mitigated. This would explain why bio-centric environmental movements resist any type of tourism development in protected areas. However, this paper tries to argue that the future of ecotourism to be true to its nature as constructed depends on how the actors (i.e. brokers, locals and tourists) involved in the industry work for it. Ecotourism has to be developed and managed according to how it is perceived to appear and work and not that it is only taken for its face value to give a new flavor to a stigmatized industry. And this requires the goal directed exercise of control or power over the actors who contributed resources and expected benefits for their involvement, either directly or indirectly, from the ecotourism venture.

Meanwhile, this paper finds the applicability of the tourism system model to fully understand how the industry works over the static and structured guest-host dichotomy model. It was clearly demonstrated in the case of Apo Island that actors in tourism interact but whose status and roles also shift or blend relative to available opportunities. This is also accompanied by the circulation of power among them that is, however, situational but could be negotiated in pursuit of a particular goal the actors have. This relative exercise of power suggests the capacity of the agents of power to regulate or modify the behaviors of the targets necessary to realize the vision and mission of ecotourism development.

For example, the presence of PAMB to check the increasing threats to the ecological integrity of Apo Island demonstrates the dominant role of a public broker because of its legal mandate. The PAMB has become as well a pool of powers of different sorts of brokers from the national, provincial and local government, community organizations, academic organizations and the local residents. This is a favorable development and has institutionalized the mechanism of resource management in the island. It has further strengthen the capacity of the community to
enforce any management measures developed in order to sustain the ecological and economic viability of the island’s fishing and ecotourism as interlocking industries. And it is more appropriate now for all those involved in the environmental, tourism and development programs in Apo Island to sit down again and formally draw a schema how the tourism system and the marine ecosystem should behave and interact which is lacking to date (Alan T. White, pers. comm., May 28, 2001) in order to achieve these. This activity has to be guided as well by the vision and mission of development Apo Island has that is anchored on the ideology of environmental and social (i.e. cultural and gender) sensitivity and sustainability.

Notes

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