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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **Proposed Sustainable Voluntourism Guidelines for Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines**

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**| ABSTRACT**

The study conducted on Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines, aimed to assess the impact of voluntourism on socio-cultural, environmental, and economic aspects. The researcher used a descriptive survey form, collecting data from 347 purposively chosen respondents. Here are the key findings from the study: 1) Before Typhoon Yolanda, many tourists went to Bantayan Island, and the local people benefited from them; however, after the typhoon, fewer tourists went to the Island, which directly affected the life of the local people; 2) All the respondents perceived that voluntourism helped the socio-cultural, economics and environment of the local people in Bantayan Island; 3) There is no significant difference in the perceptions of the respondents on the impact of voluntourism to the socio-cultural and economics dimensions in Bantayan Island; however, there is a significant difference in their perceptions towards the impact of voluntourism to the environment; 4) The tourists and the local people have a different perception about the impact of voluntourism to the environment with a p-value .003 which is significant; 5) There is a significant. The study concludes that voluntourism significantly contributes to the socio-economic, economic, and environmental well-being of Bantayan Island. However, its sustainability hinges on addressing all relevant elements and recognizing their interconnectedness. **Collaboration Among Stakeholders:** All tourism stakeholders in Bantayan Island should unite as a team, sharing a common vision and strategies. **Capacity Building:** The public and private sectors of Bantayan Island's tourism industry should organize seminars and training programs. **Local Ordinances:** Bantayan Island's local government units should craft and approve local ordinances. These regulations will safeguard the socio-cultural, economic, and environmental aspects, guiding the activities of both foreign and local tourists. **Community Involvement:** The local people of Bantayan Island should actively participate in the planning and development of voluntourism programs. **Regular Evaluation:** Continuous assessment of the voluntourism program by all stakeholders is essential to ensure its long-term sustainability. **Reference for Future Research:** Future researchers can utilize the findings of this study as a valuable reference to gain an in-depth understanding of the topic.

**| KEYWORDS**

Voluntourism, socio-cultural impact, environment impact, economic impact, proposed guidelines

**| ARTICLE INFORMATION**

**ACCEPTED:** 01 March 2024

**PUBLISHED:** 18 March 2024

**DOI:** 10.32996/jths.2024.2.1.2

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### **1. Introduction**

The study Proposed Sustainable Voluntourism Guidelines for Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines, aimed to assess the impact of voluntourism on socio-cultural, environmental, and economic aspects. Researchers used a descriptive survey form, collecting data from 347 purposively chosen respondents. Volunteerism and tourism are the two concepts that comprise voluntourism. Voluntourism in the Philippines operates as follows: local tourists devote at least one day to organizing an outreach or charity program in a designated school or barangay within a province. As usual, they spent the remaining days of the vacation exploring and visiting tourist attractions.

## 2. Literature Review

The collective lifestyles that voluntourism brings increase the supply of basic amenities, attractions and recreational facilities for the local people as well as the voluntourists (Houston, 2013). Voluntourism is the practice of individuals going on a working holiday, volunteering their labor for worthy causes such as aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain specific environments or research into aspects of society or the environment, in an organized way alongside touristic activity. Visitors whose work is remunerated at a destination are excluded from tourism (UNWTO, 1998); thus, paid working holidays or international development volunteering differ from voluntourism.

According to the UNWTO definition (1995), voluntourism can be domestic or international from any originating market and can last for one consecutive year (WordPress, 2013). VolunTourism.org defines the term voluntourism as “the consciousness, seamlessly integrated combination of voluntary services to a destination and the best traditional elements of travel, arts, culture, geography, history and recreation in that destination”. Voluntourism is a unique method that combines travel and service. Voluntourism allows a voluntourist to interact with the host communities.

The study on the impact of voluntourism on Bantayan Island is a difficult subject because the process that leads to a specific impact many times is not solely dependent on one variable but on other variables, too. This is confirmed by McGehee, as cited by Ho (2009) in his article written for Pamplin College of Business, where she said that voluntourism is far more complex than it appears. Many of the volunteer tourism organizations that she worked with were community-run and resident-driven. In other words, those who run the organizations are also often those who volunteer. A study on the positive economic impact of voluntourism is conducted by Loiseau, B. Sibald, R. Raman, S. Benedict, D. Dimaras, H. Loh, L. (2015). They found out that the economic impact is increasing because volunteers are introducing new local jobs to decrease employment rates. It also has indirect and direct impacts, such as intended evangelism, unintended cultural colonialism or education over service. However, in Latin America, they also observed that most voluntourists are not yet skilled in working with local organizations in marginalized residential areas.

The effect can be positive or negative on the local people. The local people might adopt the voluntourist background. Some of the positive effects of voluntourism on the social and cultural life of the local people are the improvement in local life through better local facilities and infrastructure. This could lead to better education, health care, employment opportunities, and income for the local community. Are things beginning to improve? In the last decade, heightened media attention, research by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and campaigns have brought attention to the problematic aspects of voluntourism. These include the exploitation and traumatization of children via orphanage tourism, the perpetuation of a stereotype associated with the “poor but happy” Global South, white saviourism, and the presence of colonialism. However, notwithstanding the exposure of these conspicuous ethical gaps, voluntourism continues to be a lucrative sector in 2022.

## 3. Methodology

The design of the study is a descriptive - survey form to determine the socio-cultural, environmental, and economics of voluntourism in Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines, that will serve as the basis of proposed guidelines in voluntourism. According to Calderon (2008), as cited by Alberto et al. (2011), the descriptive design method is also known as statistical research; it describes the data and characteristics of the population or phenomenon being studied. The descriptive design is a purposive process of gathering, analyzing, and tabulating the gathered data on voluntourism on Bantayan Island. It used both quantitative and qualitative approaches in gathering its data. A qualitative approach is primarily exploratory and research and is used to gain underlying reasons, opinions and motivations.

The quantitative approach is used to quantify the problem by generating numerical data or data that can be transformed into useable statistics (Wyse, S.E. (2011).

The study aimed to determine the socio-cultural, environmental, and economic impact of voluntourism in Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines. The design of the study was descriptive - survey form. The total number of respondents was 347, who were purposively chosen from LGU personnel in Bantayan Island, DOT Regional Officers – Region 7, foreign and local tourists, tourism services and establishments, and the local people in Bantayan Island.

## 4. Results and Findings

Based on the gathered data, the findings of the study were the following: 1) Before Typhoon Yolanda, many tourists went to Bantayan Island, and the local people benefited from them; however, after the typhoon, fewer tourists went to the Island which directly affected the life of the local people as less and less tourists go to the municipalities of Madridejos and Bantayan; Based on documentary analysis, before the typhoon Yolanda, tourism in Bantayan Island gradually increased and the local people benefited economically from it. However, when the Yolanda typhoon hit the island, the tourism industry was also destroyed. The local people were broken down, and all of them stayed at the evacuation center for a while. Esgera, one of the residents of Bantayan Island,

said that before Typhoon Yolanda, it was one of the tourist destinations on the Island because of the marine life sanctuary. After Yolanda, the white beaches and marine sanctuary became a shadow of its old self. The people who welcomed the tourists on their arrival became homeless.

Many tourism establishments, such as the Anika Island Resort, were also affected by Typhoon Yolanda. Despite being the peak season at that time, many tour groups cancelled their trip to the Island.

Based on the information, while the municipalities of Bantayan and Madridejos struggle to bring back domestic tourists to their municipalities, Santa Fe had a high level of tourist arrival. There are many possible reasons for that: 1) Santa Fe is the gateway to the Island; 2) it has more tourism products compared to the municipalities of Bantayan and Madridejos that can serve the needs of the local tourists; and 3) its tourism products have been rehabilitated earlier through the support and cooperation of various organizations and voluntourists compared to the other attractions in other municipalities.

Based on the information, while the municipalities of Bantayan and Madridejos struggle to bring back foreign tourists to their municipalities, Santa Fe already has a high level of tourist arrival. The same possible reasons as that of the domestic tourist arrival can be cited such that: 1) Santa Fe is the gateway to the Island; 2) it has more tourism products compared to the municipalities of Bantayan and Madridejos that can serve the needs of the local tourists; and 3) its tourism products have been rehabilitated earlier through the support and cooperation of various organizations and voluntourists compared to the other attractions. 2) All the respondents perceived that voluntourism helped the socio-cultural, economic and environment of the local people in Bantayan Island; 3) There is no significant difference in the perceptions of the tourism officers of the local government units (LGUs), managers of tourism establishments, Regional Tourism Officers of Region 7-Central Visayas, foreign and local tourists, and the local people of the municipalities of Bantayan Island, Cebu on the impact of voluntourism to the socio-cultural and economics dimensions in Bantayan Island; however, there is a significant difference in the perceptions of the respondents to the impact of voluntourism to the environment in Bantayan Island; the LGU tourism officers agree that voluntourism helps in the socio-cultural, economic, and environmental development of the municipalities in Bantayan Island with a total mean of 3.63, 3.60 and 3.43 respectively.

Specifically, in the socio-cultural dimension, the LGU tourism officers strongly agreed that voluntourism improves the local life of the people in Bantayan Island, Cebu, through better local facilities and infrastructure in education, health care, employment opportunities and income with a mean of 4.25.

However, the LGU tourism officers were undecided on whether voluntourism increases the unwanted lifestyle changes, displacement of residents for tourism development, negative changes in values and customs, family disruption, and exclusion of locals from natural resources with a mean of 2.63.

4) The tourists and the local people on Bantayan Island have different perceptions about the impact of voluntourism on the environment on the Island, with a p-value of .003, which is significant;

Statements	Mean	Interpretation
<b>Socio-Cultural Impact</b>		
1. Voluntourism improves the local life of the people through better local facilities and infrastructure in education, health care, employment opportunities and income.	4.39	Strongly Agree
2. Voluntourism helps revive the local cultural heritage because jobs are available on Bantayan island.	4.27	Strongly Agree
3. Voluntourism promotes cross cultural understanding.	4.09	Agree
4. The local people imitate the way of life of the voluntourists.	3.63	Agree
5. Voluntourism increases unwanted lifestyle changes, displacement of residents for tourism development, negative changes in values and customs, family disruption, and exclusion of locals from natural resources.	3.20	Undecided
<b>Total Mean</b>	<b>3.92</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>Economic Impact</b>		
1. Voluntourists are a valuable source of foreign currency.	4.27	Strongly Agree
2. Voluntourism provides an opportunity for job creation for the local people.	4.14	Agree
3. Voluntourism creates revenue	4.25	Strongly Agree
4. The amount of voluntourist expenditures remains on Bantayan Island after taxes, profits, and wages are paid.	4.04	Agree

5. The seasonal character of the tourism industry creates economic problems because it does not guarantee employment of the local people from one season to the next.	3.88	Agree
<b>Total Mean</b>	<b>4.12</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>Environment Impact</b>		
1. Voluntourism helps generate the funds to maintain the animals and preserve the marine parks through charges from the entrance and guide fees.	4.30	Strongly Agree
2. Voluntourism helps restore certain specific environments.	4.21	Strongly Agree
3. Voluntourism helps create awareness among the local people about environmental conservation and protection.	4.24	Strongly Agree
4. Voluntourism helps construct new tourism facilities and recreation, which has a direct negative impact on natural resources such as air pollution, solid waste and littering, and sewage construction that damages coral reefs and other marine life.	3.64	Agree
5. Voluntourism depletes natural resources like water because it is overused.	3.66	Agree
<b>Total Mean</b>	<b>4.01</b>	<b>Agree</b>
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>4.02</b>	<b>Agree</b>

5) There is a significant relationship among the socio-cultural, economics and environmental dimensions on the impact of voluntourism in Bantayan Island; and 6) Based on the findings of the study, proposed guidelines were crafted that encompass the socio-cultural, economics and environmental dimensions of a voluntourism program to make it sustainable.

## 5. Conclusion

The study aimed to determine the socio-cultural, environmental, and economic impact of voluntourism in Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines, to form a basis for a proposed guideline for voluntourism. Specifically, it attempted to answer the following questions: The study examined the following hypotheses at a significance level of 0.05. The perspectives of tourism stakeholders regarding the effects of voluntourism on Bantayan Island, Cebu, vary considerably. The sociocultural, economic, and environmental aspects of the influence of voluntourism on Bantayan Island, Cebu, are interconnected in a significant way.

The study arrived at the following conclusions, drawing from the collected data: 1) Locals benefited from the influx of visitors to Bantayan Island prior to Typhoon Yolanda; however, since the typhoon, fewer tourists have visited the island. Island, which had a direct impact on the local population as fewer and fewer travelers visited the municipalities of Madridejos and Bantayan; 2) Voluntourism was viewed favorably by all respondents in terms of its socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental contributions, pertaining to the inhabitants of Bantayan Island; 3) The perspectives of tourism officers affiliated with local government units (LGUs), administrators of tourism establishments, and regional tourism officers of Region 7-Central Visayas do not differ significantly. The respondents' perceptions of foreign and local tourists, as well as the local residents of the municipalities of Bantayan Island, Cebu, regarding the socio-cultural and economic aspects of voluntourism on Bantayan Island, differ significantly with regard to its environmental impact. 4) Tourists and residents of Bantayan Island hold divergent views regarding the environmental impact of voluntourism.

The study's purview encompassed an examination of the socio-cultural, economic, and environmental ramifications of voluntourism on the indigenous inhabitants of Bantayan Island. In particular, the socio-cultural aspect pertaining to the communal way of life of the indigenous inhabitants of Bantayan Island; the economic aspect concerned the generation of employment opportunities and revenue; and the environmental aspect concerned the financial resources required for the preservation and conservation of Bantayan Island's environment. The study's data was restricted to the period from 2013 to 2016, as no information was accessible prior to that time.

Additionally, the scope of the study was limited to the three municipalities of Bantayan Island, namely Bantayan, Madridejos, and Santa Fe, which were frequented by most visitors during their visit to the island. The remaining regions were not encompassed due to their proximity to the three municipalities. Furthermore, visitors rarely visit those islets since their tourism industry is still in its infancy.

The study suggests the subsequent courses of action:

1. It is imperative that all parties involved in the tourism sector on Bantayan Island collaborate harmoniously and adopt a unified vision and set of strategies to optimize the advantages of voluntourism.

2. It is recommended that seminars and trainings be organized by the public and private sectors of the tourism industry in Bantayan Island to equip the local populace with the necessary knowledge and abilities to safeguard and preserve the socio-cultural, economic, and environmental aspects of the island.
3. It is recommended that local government units formulate and authorize local ordinances that safeguard the socio-cultural, economic, and environmental aspects of Bantayan Island. These ordinances should serve as a guide for both domestic and international tourists.
4. Active participation of the local populace in the planning and development of a voluntourism initiative would furnish the program's direction with essential input.
5. Regular monitoring of all tourism-related activities should be conducted by all stakeholders.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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