

RESOURCE PROTECTION STRATEGIES TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE ECOTOURISM AND PROTECTED AREA CONSERVATION: A VISITORS' EVALUATION IN BULUSAN VOLCANO NATURAL PARK, PHILIPPINES

Niño Rebuya

Program Director, Tourism Management Department, Partido State University – San Jose Campus,
Del Carmen, San Jose, Camarines Sur, Philippines.

Email: ninorebuya@gmail.com

Article History: Received on 22nd June 2020, Revised on 29th July 2020, Published on 15th August 2020

Abstract

Purpose of the study: This study has evaluated the resource protection strategies in Bulusan Volcano Natural Park (BVNP) along with environmental/biophysical conservation, cultural preservation, social conservation, and physical/behavioral conservation in ensuring sustainable ecotourism operation and protected area conservation.

Methodology: It employed a quantitative method of research directed towards presenting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. The selection of respondents was done through the Convenience Sampling Technique where every possible respondent has the same chance of being selected during the administration of the survey questionnaire. Data were analyzed using weighted mean and standard deviation in determining the homogeneity/heterogeneity of the visitors' evaluation.

Main Findings: The strategies on social and environmental conservation are effective and more given emphasis on BVNP. Likewise, with physical or behavioral conservation strategies which also recognized effective mechanisms in managing visitors' use. However, the cultural preservations were evaluated very low as most of the visitors disagreed that the strategies for this aspect are manifested in the actions of the host community.

Applications of this study: Findings of this paper is deemed relevant and useful for natural park administrators and ecotourism destination operators as it provides new insights on the effectiveness of resource protection strategies and suggests future policy actions to ensure sustainability.

Novelty/Originality Of this study: This study is novel in evaluating the resource protection strategies in protected areas (BVNP) and in determining how conservation approaches enhance the visitor experience in natural parks.

Keywords: *Conservation, Ecotourism, Natural Park, Protected Area, Resource Protection.*

INTRODUCTION

The World Tourism Organization (WTO) predicts that international tourism will continue to improve at an annual rate of 3.3 percent by 2030. Thus, tourism supply components such as infrastructure, economic, social, cultural, and environmental, and human resources must be sustainably managed to accommodate the volume of tourists' flows and demands. With this, it is believed that tourism plays a significant role in addressing global challenges through multiple positive impacts. However, tourism, on the other hand, poses threats that can intensify the current problems and challenges of tourism destinations due to its poor management.

In the case of natural parks, globally the role of protected areas is now recognized as solutions to environmental, social, and cultural challenges based on the current 2011-2020 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Strategic Plan. Tourism in protected areas is focused on the interactive relationship of the visitor to natural environments; cultural and heritage resources of the destination which provides experience to enhance personal growth; social understanding and foster a sense of responsibility to conservation issues ([Leung et al., 2018](#)).

In fact, ecotourism development and promotion are becoming more popular among protected areas across the world most particularly in the Philippines. Along with this, tourism in a protected area should recognize the significance of the threefold park and tourism management framework. These are resources (e.g., soils, vegetation, wild plant and animals, water); experiences (e.g., crowding, conflict, littering), and management (e.g., policies, conservation strategies) ([Manning, 2001](#)). The relationship of these components is vital to park managers and administrators considering that poor management in a certain natural park can degrade the natural aesthetic attributes and its value that would also affect visitors' experience. Park management must be guided properly with clear authority to control, plan, manage, and monitor tourism and take immediate action when necessary. This authority should manifest to limit the scale, type and timing of tourism; visitors' use, and other significant measures to ensure conservation and sustainable use. Furthermore, it is important to understand how existing resource protection strategies and policies apply to tourism in protected areas and how it affects the quality of visitors' experience.

This study on resource protection strategies in Bulusan Volcano Natural Park was conducted as manifested on the aforementioned research findings and contextualized related studies to conservation and sustainability issues. BVNP covers an area of 3,673 hectares and was designated as a National Park under Proclamation No. 811 on June 7, 1935. After many years of its proclamation as a national park, on November 27, 2000, it was reclassified as a Natural Park

under Proclamation No. 421 pursuant R.A. 7586 (NIPAS Act of 1992). It is a lush forest and wildlife sanctuary reserve that features three main peaks namely: Bulusan Volcano (highest), Sharp Peak, and Mt. Jormahan, and lakes such as Black Bird's Lake, Aguingay Lake, and Bulusan Lake.

With its rich biodiversity, it inhabits a diversity of faunal species where 30 percent are composed of bird species that are endemic in Luzon are represented in the park and 26 percent of the threatened birds in Luzon that are cited in the globally threatened bird list is found in the lake's forest, 13 percent are populated by reptiles, and 12 percent comprising of amphibians and mammals. Philippine baboon, Philippine duck, Philippine hawk-eagle, flame breasted fruit-dove, Philippine eagle-owl, monitor lizard, various endemic frogs, snakes, and other reptiles, Philippine brown deer, warty pigs, and rare civets were also spotted in the area in the late '80s. Likewise, this park is a home of various gigantic ferns, wild orchids, trees, and other plant species.

At present, BVNP aside from being a conservation area is also managed for ecotourism where the full control of the operation is taken by the community itself within its destination. The development of ecotourism within the PA has changed the attitude of the community towards biodiversity conservation, and further generated employment, livelihood development through the establishment of social enterprises, and provided additional income among households. The expansion of the BVNP's economic opportunities is recognized through a wide range of nature-based activities such as mountain treks of varying lengths and difficulty, bird watching, vulcanizing, hiking, kayaking, canoeing, aqua-cycling, long boating, and other water and land-based recreation adventures.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Resource protection and conservation strategies in protected areas

Protected area conservation strategies are dependent on the ability of managers to bring together biodiversity management with compliance to the local community's participation and commitment towards conservation goals ([Andrade & Rhodes, 2012](#)). As a matter of fact, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Conservation International (IU), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) are providing about one billion US dollar annually through public support for protected areas conservation ([Ivbijaro, 2012](#)) since national and natural parks are regarded as an effective approach towards protecting natural environment and resources.

Several studies have revealed that other than the initiatives implemented by both government and non-government organizations (NGOs) to save and protect the number of protected areas, undesirable human activities are still growing at an alarming rate and a major problem of most park managers and administrators ([Tayobo et al., 2014](#)). Hence, PA managers have a range of mandates, with a prime duty often being enshrined in legislation that is oriented towards protection and conservation. In consequence, research and programs are now focusing on managing the supply and demand, the resource and the impacts, and the like. Some of the suggested management approaches and strategy tools are: managing the supply of tourism opportunities and demand for visitation, and managing resource capabilities, and reducing the negative impacts.

In relation to this, the IUCN has also suggested resource protection strategies for managing wilderness, natural and protected areas such as: reduce the use of the protected area and use problems; modify the location, timing of use, visitor expectations, increase resistance and rehabilitate resources considering that protected areas are susceptible and is seen to be exposed from various threats to environmental, social, and cultural values in tourism destinations.

Natural park as an ecotourism destination

Generally, national parks are protected areas that are found in destinations with unique ecological and cultural features and values. It provides an opportunity for people to relax and enjoy nature while ensuring biodiversity conservation. Likewise, it is vital in the provision of recreational opportunities for nature experience, yet requires community support and sustainability ([Weiler, Moore & Moyle, 2013](#)).

Public protected areas, both land, and marine-based, and those designated as category I and II of IUCN protected area categories are the most important ecotourism venues by far, given that they do not only preserve outstanding natural environments but also allow for the provision of compatible recreational activities such as ecotourism ([Leung et al., 2018](#)).

One of the motivations of a visitor to travel is nature as it likewise provides activities for tourism ([Huijbens & Benediktsson, 2013](#)) and the accessibility to wildlife was the most significant antecedent to value ([Thapa & Lee, 2016](#)). Thus, ecotourism was conceptualized and promoted in PA as a form of traveling to conserve natural areas with an intention of research, appreciation, and enjoying the scenery including its wildlife and existing cultural presence in an area ([Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996](#)). Further, it is defined as a form of tourism that involves visiting sensitive natural areas often supporting the conservation of its originality ([Coria & Calfucura, 2012](#)) in which the main objective is the awareness and appreciation of the value of natural and cultural traditions that contributes to the conservation and protection of nature; empowerment of the local human resources, and have an insignificant negative impact on the natural and socio-cultural environment of the place ([Bejinaru & Cozorici, 2016](#)).

Indeed, this type of tourism promotes biodiversity conservation; socio-economic development and emphasizes the importance of empowerment and ownership of local communities to ensure the long-term sustainability of ecotourism operations (Snyman, 2012). In the premise of modern ecotourism, it is necessary to involve the local communities in the introduction to the implementation of a project. It is therefore essential that involved locals understand the cultural, economic, and sustainability of community engagement to ecotourism in protected areas. Tourism and community engagement activities can also help reduce possible threats from visitors (Otuokon, Chai & Beale, 2012). But more than this, it should be emphasized that ecological and environmental protection is the core content of ecotourism development and that each stakeholder must adhere to this notion.

Newsome, Moore, and Dowling (2012) stated the five principles of ecotourism as nature-based; environmentally sustainable and educative; and local participation and empowerment. Knowing that ecotourism and nature-based tourism has similarity in its kind and definition, it is recognized that this type of tourism development is one of the major components of the industry and therefore a studied and researched area today.

In the Philippines, the development of ecotourism was crafted as a viable tool for sustainable development within the recreation zones specified in the protected area management plan. It ensured the full participation and understanding of the involved community and multi-stakeholders about the conservation of natural resources that includes cultural knowledge, environmental practices, and educations, as well as derived socio-economic benefits that will both benefit host communities and visitors satisfaction. The Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (DENR) has approved guidelines on ecotourism development among protected areas towards conservation and natural resource sustainable use. It includes various phases such as planning, management, and assessment of ecotourism management for a particular natural site. It also recognized the strategies as part of the ecotourism management plan such as zoning, visitor site planning, sustainable infra design, and visitor management.

Relationship of tourism in protected areas

Tourism and visitation have been intricately linked and associated with PAs. In the fundamental sense, the existence of tourism in natural areas is recognized as the process of connecting visitors' experience to the site's heritage both natural and cultural. Since tourism is characterized to be a complex phenomenon, its interaction with protected areas occurs based on the geographical contexts that involve multiple values and stakeholders (Leung et al., 2018).

In protected areas, tourism is a critical ecosystem service that has potential to contribute directly to global conservation strategy (Coates, 2016), and a protected area has been an important part of tourism as it is clearly defined by IUCN as:

"Geographical spaces, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values" (Leung et al., 2018, p. 99).

The environment is the core of the tourism product, and the environmental quality is significant for all types and development of tourism (CBD Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development). In a survey conducted by high-volume tourism companies, it was reported that large numbers of their clients take excursions to see wildlife at some point during holidays. Tourists often engage in activities more than viewing, appreciating, learning, and interacting about the natural and cultural resources contained within the protected area (Leung et al., 2018). This indicates that the present tourists are now nature-based activities driven. Hence, environmental quality and biodiversity for tourism must be sustained because natural parks are important systems that link people and nature and contribute to human health and well-being.

Issues of the relationship between protected areas and tourism are significant to biodiversity conservation. A comprehensive understanding of their interrelationship and connectedness allows them to improve their existing conservation strategies while maximizing benefits towards sustainable use (Holmes, 2013). The preservation of nature through tourism is a complementary action to facilitate transmission to future generations of natural resource products (Vartolomei et al., 2012).

METHODOLOGY

It employed a quantitative method of research directed towards presenting, analyzing, and interpreting the data on resource protection strategies. Data gathering was through a questionnaire-based survey administered to two hundred (200) respondents consisting of on-site same-day local visitors visiting the park and selected volunteers working within BVNP. It delimited respondents whose age are ranging from below twenty (20) years of age, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, and 61 to above years old, and was conducted during the months of September, October, November, and December 2019 in the entire Bulusan park. Interviews were also performed to the key officials and key informants of BVNP administration particularly to AGAP Bulusan, Inc. and other selected volunteers working for a year within the site.

This study used the Convenience Sampling Technique for the respondents consisting of on-site same-day local visitors. It is a sampling technique in which every possible respondent has the same chance of being selected during the conduct and administration of a survey questionnaire within the BVNP. To ensure randomness, and therefore representativeness, the surveys are operated in stationery and attraction site surveys. In a stationary way, the researcher conducted the

survey at the exit site of the park. While, in the attraction site survey, the researcher scouted visitors to answer the survey at the specific areas within the park while visitors are on the resting sites, cottages, benches, and/or picnic venues.

The data were analyzed through weighted mean and standard deviation in determining the homogeneity/heterogeneity in the ratings of the respondents regarding their evaluation of environmental/biophysical conservation, cultural preservation, social conservation, and physical/behavioral conservation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Resource protection strategies in Bulusan Volcano Natural Park

1. Environmental/biophysical conservation

Results showed that visitors have the highest rating of 3.15 mean interpreted as “Agree” on “The information provided by the park/tour guides to visitors are accurate and significant”. Based on the finding, it indicates that park guides are indeed competent and knowledgeable of the subject matter and his/her commentary being delivered for visitors. In addition to this, their mastery and expertise are also recognized for the number of years they are in service. The annual enhancement training conducted, and the fact that they are the residents themselves of Bulusan.

It was followed by 3.01 mean interpreted as “Agree” that “Information boards designed in local and foreign languages are very helpful and useful”. The result indicates that the established information boards provide further knowledge and education to visitors and likewise in fostering their environmental awareness most particularly towards conservation aspects. These information boards also provide easy access for visitors in locating areas of interest which also enhances the educational experience of visitors.

The “Orientation given to visitors prior to engagement in any activities foster environmental, social, and cultural conservations” were rated “Agree” of 2.98 means. This implies that park guides play a vital role in disseminating information and conservation awareness as well as imposing rules and regulations for visitors. According to the interviewed tour guides, giving orientation to visitors is a part of their standard operating procedure before letting their tourists engage in the different activities and exploring BVNP.

Visitors were “Agreed” at 2.97 means that “Entrance fees are reasonable”. The BVNP management is collecting a certain amount as an entrance fee that is also used for the maintenance of the park which is properly taking care of the AGAP Bulusan organization to ensure its proper utilization.

Another “Agree” response at 2.82 means the environmental conservation was given to “Brochures and other IEC materials disseminated are very helpful and useful”. The finding indicates that visitors are using IEC materials as part of their educational visit at the park which is also a significant tool of BVNP in strengthening awareness not only to residents but to visitors as well. These materials are evident on their posters, tarpaulins, flyers, and brochures available at the entrance gate and reception area of BVNP.

Table 1: Environmental/biophysical conservation

	Mean	S.D.	V.I.
1. Directional signs disperse the visitors to other recreational areas within the park effectively	2.66	0.544	Agree
2. All sensitive natural areas are properly protected by steps, paths, and rails	2.54	0.574	Agree
3. The orientation given to visitors prior to engagement in any activities foster environmental, social, and cultural conservations	2.98	0.407	Agree
4. Brochures and other IEC materials disseminated are very informative and helpful	2.82	0.468	Agree
5. Information boards designed in local and foreign languages are very helpful and useful	3.01	0.301	Agree
6. The activities arranged in the park especially during low season are interesting	2.66	0.581	Agree
7. The information is provided by the park/tour guides to visitors are accurate and significant	3.15	0.398	Agree
8. Architecture and infrastructure development within the park are in harmony with nature	2.59	0.550	Agree
9. Entrance fees are reasonable	2.97	0.424	Agree
10. Impacted sites within the park are effectively protected by prohibiting visitor's use	2.56	0.590	Agree
11. The limited parking areas in the park effectively control the entry of vehicles and visitors	2.58	0.612	Agree

Overall	2.78	0.298	Agree
----------------	-------------	--------------	--------------

While the least two resource protection strategies with low rating interpreted as “Agree” were accounted to “Impacted sites within the park are effectively protected by prohibiting visitor’s use” of 2.56 mean and “All sensitive natural areas are properly protected by steps, paths, and rails” with 2.54 mean. Results indicate that BVNP management is implementing actions to prevent the possible destruction of natural resources. These conservation initiatives are noted in regulating the number of visitors, dispersing the visitors’ use, and re-directing them to other areas of low contact with sensitive areas and/or resources. In the same way with the hardening of paths and steps to avoid the creation of other trails as well as the establishment of rails and viewing sites to avoid close contact with wildlife species.

The resource protection strategies in BVNP along with environmental/biophysical conservation were generally rated 2.78 means interpreted as “Agree” (see Table 1).

2. Cultural preservation

It was found that “Informing visitors about local customs and practices promote cultural respect and appreciation” which earned the highest mean of 2.92 interpreted as “Agree”. This positive finding can be credited to competent and committed volunteers and park guides who usually have direct contact and give orientation to visitors upon arrival and during the performance of tours.

Table 2: Cultural preservation

	Mean	S.D.	V.I.
1. Informing visitors about local customs and practices promotes cultural respect and appreciation	2.92	0.448	Agree
2. Live performances in the park portray local cultural practices	1.95	0.509	Disagree
3. The local crafts reflect the cultural heritage of the community	2.42	0.644	Disagree
4. A serving of local cuisine served in a traditional way is emphasized within the park	2.31	0.666	Disagree
5. There is an ample visitor interaction during local activities/performance	2.33	0.541	Disagree
Overall	2.39	0.391	Disagree

On the other hand, respondents were “Disagreed” on the cultural preservation strategies along with, “The local crafts reflect the cultural heritage of the community” earned 2.42 mean; “There is an ample visitor interaction during local activities/performance” rated 2.33 mean; “Serving of local cuisine served in a traditional way is emphasized within the park” gained 2.31 mean; and “Live cultural performances in the park portray local cultural practices” which received a total of 1.95 mean.

The result indicates that tourism is slowly transforming the local’s traditions and culture into a commodity that is commonly termed as *commodification* or *trivialization*. These findings are manifested in modified cultural performances, not locally manufactured or handcrafted products, and serving foods that have adapted to western cultures instead of preparing/patronizing local cuisines served in a traditional way. In other words, it is observed within the park that cultural conservation was not given so much attention rather than environmental and social aspects which is the focus of the conservation efforts.

Generally, the cultural conservation of BVNP has gained a total of 2.39 which is interpreted as “Disagree” (see Table 2).

3. Social conservation

Among the five (5) indicators used as resource protection strategies for this aspect, it was revealed that the respondents were “Agree” at 3.11 mean “Visitors are treated with care and empathy”. Similarly, “The park visitors are motivated to re-visit because of the hospitality of the local people” which earned a mean of 3.10 which given the same interpretation. Their friendly and hospitable attitudes are part of their core values in the park as also promoted by the AGAP Bulusan organization. Moreover, local residents were educated through seminars on personality development, public relations, and customer service.

Another strategy that earned an “Agree” interpretation of 2.96 mean was “The community residents show enthusiasm when working within the natural park”. This result is very obvious for the people in Bulusan because locals are working as volunteers and they demonstrated a sense of commitment and initiative in performing their voluntary services such as tour guiding and park guards. As a matter of fact, Bulusan Ecotourism Success Story has featured in the United Nations World Tourism Organization’s (WTO) Tourism for Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs).

Moreover, “Agree” ratings were also attributed to “The performance of community service providers depict cultural values” at 2.92 mean and “The community is effective in managing the local enterprise” of 2.83 mean. Their effectiveness in managing social enterprises in Bulusan is also reflected in their enthusiasm and positive attitudes

towards ecotourism development in the place. The establishment of AGAP Bulusan which is envisioned to be a community of empowered people living harmoniously in a sustainable environment just heightened notable community participation. In fact, these communities were layered according to their functions. The first layer communities shall be directly involved in biodiversity conservation works on the denuded and damaged portions inside the natural park. They are basically involved in regular monitoring and patrol operations, and even in the apprehension and confiscation of illegally cut and gathered forest products.

Table 3: Social conservation

	Mean	S.D.	V.I.
1. The community is effective in managing the local enterprise	2.83	0.643	Agree
2. The community residents show enthusiasm when working within the natural park	2.96	0.648	Agree
3. The performance of community service providers depicts cultural values	2.92	0.556	Agree
4. Visitors are treated with care and empathy	3.11	0.483	Agree
5. The park visitors are motivated to re-visit because of the hospitality of the local people	3.10	0.425	Agree
Overall	2.98	0.405	Agree

The second layer of communities is composed of rainfed-lowland communities. These communities are given orientations and seminars, IEC materials, and other interventions that will enhance their awareness and concern over the protection and conservation of the park's biodiversity. The third sub-component of capacity building/development is the strengthening of Mt. Bulusan Vanguard and Forest Rangers.

The overall rating of resource protection strategies in BVNP was 2.98 that "Agree" on social conservation (see Table 3).

4. Physical/behavioral conservation

An indicator that "Resting sites/areas are suitable for visitors' relaxation and comfort" has earned the highest mean of 2.97 interpreted as "Agree" by the respondents. This result is relevant with a good escapist experience of visitors since the architectural design of these structures is complemented with its natural setting and established within the strategic places.

This result is followed by 2.77 mean where respondents were "Agreed" that "Visitors use are effectively dispersed to varied recreational areas within the park". This indicates that the visitors are not concentrated in a single area due to the presence of several choices of recreational activities and attraction sites as well as a number of tour guides that disperse visitors according to their interest and purpose of visit in BVNP. This dispersion can also be credited to installed directional signs and interpretations in the entire Bulusanpark.

Furthermore, respondents were "Agreed" at 2.73 mean that "Visitors to the park assured of interesting activities even during the low season". The park encouraged research and scientific studies to be conducted during the low season although nature-based activities are still open to visitors.

Table 4: Physical/behavioral conservation

	Mean	S.D.	V.I.
1. Visitors use are effectively dispersed to varied recreational areas within the park	2.77	0.540	Agree
2. The training and equipment given at the park for visitors before engaging in any activity are proper and adequate	2.63	0.551	Agree
3. Resting sites/area are suitable for visitor's relaxation and comfort	2.97	0.354	Agree
4. Visitors to the park assured of interesting activities even during the low season	2.73	0.558	Agree
5. The park management requires all visitors to have appropriate education about wilderness protected areas uses at least one week before the visit	2.55	0.670	Agree
6. Park guidelines, rules, and regulations are well-understood and strictly enforced through signages, tour guides, and park rangers	2.70	0.578	Agree
Overall	2.73	0.351	Agree

The respondents were also "Agreed" at an average of 2.70 mean indicating that "Park guidelines, rules, and regulations are well-understood and strictly enforced through signages, tour guides, and park rangers". Similarly, on "The training

and equipment given at the park for visitors before engaging in any activity are proper and adequate” received a 2.63 mean as “Agree”. These indicate that the tourists are well-oriented and educated about the park’s regulations as well as equipped with proper training and equipment before participation in any adventure activities.

While the lowest mean of 2.55 with the same interpretation “Agree” was attributed to “The park management requires all visitors to have appropriate education about wilderness protected areas used at least one week before the visit”. This finding implies that prior education and knowledge are also important to avoid cultural shock and as part of the travel preparation before the actual participation and immersion at the site.

Generally, visitors were “Agreed” of the resource protection strategies for the physical/behavioral conservation in BVNP at 2.73 overall means (see Table 4).

5. Summary of the resource protection strategies in Bulusan Volcano Natural Park

Among the four variables rated, it was clearly noted that “Social conservation” received the highest mean of 2.98, followed by the “Environmental/biophysical conservation” with 2.78 mean, and “Physical/behavioral conservation” which received an average of 2.73 mean all were interpreted as “Agree”. While the lowest rating of “Disagree” at 2.39 mean was attributed to “Cultural preservation” (see Table 5).

Table 5: Summary of the resource protection strategies

	Mean	S.D.	V.I.
1. Environmental/Biophysical Conservation	2.78	.298	Agree
2. Cultural Preservation	2.39	.391	Disagree
3. Social Preservation	2.98	.405	Agree
4. Physical/Behavioural Conservation	2.73	.351	Agree
Overall	2.72	0.283	Agree

It is clearly recognized that social conservation earned the highest average mean. This is due to active organizations, collaborations and partnerships, and sound projects and programs which are currently implemented in the Bulusan. Similarly, with environmental/biophysical conservation which is more given emphasis as a conservation area. It can be noted that these two areas of resource protection strategies are prioritized as it adheres to AGAP Bulusan’s mission to protect and conserve the environment while at the same time fostering social and economic development.

The physical/behavioral conservation strategies of the park are also recognized as an effective mechanism in managing visitors’ use. However, on the other hand, findings of the study showed that the cultural preservation was evaluated very low as most of the respondents disagreed that the strategies for this area are manifested in the actions and activities of the host community specifically in the live cultural performances, serving of local cuisine, selling of local crafts which do not reflects the traditional fabric of the community.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The BVNP as a local conservation area is committed to conserving the environment and fostering the socio-economic development of people in Bulusan Park through the active presence and sound leadership of civil society organizations called AGAP Bulusan, Inc. The evaluation of BVNP’s resource protection strategies by the visitors was also agreed to have an association with the positive visitors’ experience within the park. However, the monitoring of the implemented resource protection strategies should be scheduled and conducted regularly by setting-up parameters and/or indicators to measure developmental impacts most especially in the areas with high contact to visitors aside from the research studies conducted by outsiders. Conservation efforts should also give more attention to cultural preservation as one of the dimensions of sustainable ecotourism development. Moreover, reduction of the use of impacted sites may be implemented by making access more difficult for visitors, maintaining/rehabilitating affected locations, and encouraging use outside peak seasons. An establishment of additional resource protective structures and mitigating measures to areas with visitors’ high contact should be given attention through limiting the length of stay, encouraging the use of other areas, and locating facilities on durable sites. Furthermore, the modification of visitor expectation can be also done by informing visitors about wilderness uses prior to visiting and informing them about potential conditions in protected areas.

In this way, protected area administrators and managers need to establish strategies that would ensure the conservation strategies (Whakatane Mechanisms, 2012) for the following reasons: 1.) Economic Value, wildlife-based tourism brings in foreign exchange in every country, offers employment and also produces products that provide alternative livelihood for communities; 2.) Recreational Value, people derive a lot of pleasure from viewing games in their natural habitat; 3.) Educational Value, educational tours to wildlife parks enable individuals to see some biological phenomena different from their home environment; 4.) Scientific and Research Value, scientist researchers use wildlife in their experiments; 5.) Aesthetic and Heritage Value, wild flora and fauna add to the natural beauty that provides relaxation and relief from the stress of modern society; 6.) Source of Food, most of the locals are sometimes dependent on the natural resources derived from the wild, and 7.) Survival Value, where every species plays a role in helping and maintaining ecological balance on earth.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

Knowing that natural parks are recognized as significant venues for ecotourism development, this study only focused on the visitors' evaluation of resource protection strategies in ensuring the conservation of the resources. Future studies can be conducted on the relationship of these strategies to the visitor experience and assessment of visitor impact management.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author acknowledges the management of Bulusan Volcano Natural Park through its AGAP Bulusan Inc. for allowing this study to be conducted in their protected area.

REFERENCES

1. Andrade, G. S. M., & Rhodes, J. R. (2012). Protected areas and local communities: an inevitable partnership toward successful conservation strategies? *Ecology and Society* 17(4), 14. <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-05216-170414>
2. Bejinaru, R., & Cozorici, A. (2016). Challenges for Romanian Ecotourism Destinations. *Revista De Turism - Studii Si Cercetari In Turism*, 0(22).
3. Ceballos – Lascurain, H. (1996). *Tourism, Ecotourism, and Protected Areas: The State of Nature-Based Tourism around the World and Guidelines for its Development*. Gland, Switzerland, and Cambridge UK: IUCN. <https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.1996.7.en>
4. Coates, D. (2016) Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011–2020) and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. In: Finlayson C. et al. (eds) *The Wetland Book*. Springer, Dordrecht. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-6172-8_119-2
5. Coria, J. & Calfucura, E. (2012). Ecotourism and the development of indigenous communities: The good, the bad, and the ugly. *Ecological Economics*, 73, 47-55. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2011.10.024>
6. Huijbens, E. H., & Benediktsson, K. (2013). Inspiring the visitor? Landscapes and horizons of hospitality. *Tourist Studies*, 13(2), 189–208. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468797613490378>
7. Holmes, G. (2013). Exploring the Relationship Between Local Support and the Success of Protected Areas. *Conservation and Society*, 11(1), 72-82. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0972-4923.110940>
8. Ivbijaro, M. F. A. (2012). *Poverty Alleviation from Biodiversity Management*. Ibadan: Book Builders.
9. Leung, Y. F., Spenceley, A., Hvenegaard, G. & Buckley, R. (2018). *Tourism and visitor management in protected areas: Guidelines for sustainability*. Best Practice Protected Area Guidelines Series No. 27, Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. <https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.2018.PAG.27.en>
10. Manning, R. (2001). Visitor Experience and Resource Protection: A Framework for Managing the Carrying Capacity of National Parks. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 19(1), 93-108.
11. Newsome, D., Moore, S., & Dowling, R. (2012). *Nature Area Tourism: Ecology, Impacts, and Management*. (2nd ed). Clevelton: Channel View Publication. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781845413835>
12. Otuokon, S., Chai, S. & Beale, M. (2012). Using tourism to conserve the mist forest and mysterious cultural heritage of the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park, Jamaica. *Parks*, 18(2), 145-155. <https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.2012.PARKS-18-2.SO.en>
13. Snyman, S. (2012). The impact of land management systems on community attitudes towards tourism and conservation in six South African countries. *Parks*, 18(2), 21-32. <https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.2012.PARKS-18-2.SS.en>
14. Tayobo, A., Raheem W., Oyeleye, O. (2014). Conservation Strategies of Wildlife Resources in the Old Oyo National Park, Nigeria. *International Journal of Advanced Scientific and Technical Research*, 4(4), 527-529.
15. Thapa, B., & Lee, J. (2017) Visitor experience in Kafue National Park, Zambia. *Journal of Ecotourism*, 16(2), 112-130. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14724049.2016.1245737>
16. Vartolomei, F., Andrei M. T., Dumitrascu, M., & Dumitrascu, C. (2012). Environment protection measurements in the Prut basin by declaring Natural Protected Areas. In: Lazard, M. et al. (eds) *Recent Advances in Fluid Mechanics and Heat and Mass Transfer*. WSEAS, Athens.
17. Weiler, B., Moore, S., & Moyle, B. (2013). Building and Sustaining Support for National Parks in the 21st Century: Why and How to Save the National Park Experience from Extinction. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 31(2), 115-131.
18. Whakatane Mechanism (2012). 'Whakatane Mechanism'. <<http://whakatane-mechanism.org/about-whakatane>> accessed 22 November 2018.