

## **Igcabugao: A Potential Tourist Destination in the Southern Part of Iloilo, Philippines**

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**Abstract** - The Philippines is endowed with abundant natural tourist attractions. One of the provinces in the Philippines is Iloilo wherein the town of Igaras can be found. Igaras is considered as one of the leading tourist destinations in the province due to its bountiful hidden attractions. Igcabugao is home to Igaras' several beauty spots such as Igcabugao Cave, Lapusan Cave, with an underground river, and Guiritsan Falls. This study was conducted to determine the potential of Igcabugao as a tourist destination in the southern part of Iloilo. Videos and pictures of Igcabugao were used by the researchers in focused group discussion conducted among tourism students of the different colleges and universities in Iloilo City. Qualitative thematic analysis was used to analyze the findings of the study. Findings revealed that Igcabugao have a lot of natural attractions that it could be developed as a potential tourist destination. It concluded that Igcabugao has the elements of a successful tourist destination. The cooperation of residents, local government and the tourism sector is a key to plan for and develop Igcabugao as a tourist destination. Recommendations, among others, were centered on the drafting of a Sustainable Tourism Development Plan for Igcabugao.

**Keywords** - Tourist destination, tourism management, Guiritsan Falls, Igcabugao Cave, Lapusan Cave

## INTRODUCTION

As human beings, we are innately curious concerning the world in which we live; we yearn to know what other places look like - what the people, their culture, the animals and plant life, and landforms may be elsewhere. Travel can be undertaken for many reasons; the most common are pleasure, business, and study. We think primarily of people who are visiting a particular place for sightseeing, visiting friends and relatives, taking a vacation, and having a good time. They may spend their leisure time engaging in various sports, sunbathing, talking, and singing, taking rides, touring, reading or simply enjoying the environment.

A number of countries in Asia and the Pacific consider tourism as an important vehicle for economic and social development. Over the past decade, tourism has become the largest industry worldwide in terms of employment and share of global gross domestic product. Looking at the international scenario, tourism has been a major source of revenue for countries and through this we had managed to sustain our tourism industry. Philippines rich biodiversity had provided us the opportunity to develop ecotourism. The tourism industry has been growing rapidly as well as changing at a fast pace, as more people are interested in spending leisure time in nature, ecotourism has become one of the fastest-growing segments of the tourism industry. This creates opportunities in areas characterized by natural attractions, wildlife and wilderness habitats.

Local communities may benefit in economic terms as well as create a commitment to conservation and sustainable development. Tourism brings both economic and non economic benefits and costs to host communities. There are additional areas of benefit that have not received much research attention. These relate to the benefits occurring to the traveler, such as the contribution of pleasure travel to rest and relaxation, the educational benefit, the understanding of other people and cultures, and the physical and mental well-being of the traveler.

Philippines is an archipelago abundant in nature, rich in culture, and filled with pleasant discoveries. It is an "archipelago of

wonders” which every explorer enjoys and experiences a diversity of destinations, activities, and events. Vast mountains and volcanoes tell of great legends. Old cities share stories of the past. Caves excite. Shimmering waters and a tropical climate lure travelers all year round. The Philippines has three main islands: Luzon in the north; Visayas, a cluster of smaller islands in the middle; and Mindanao down south, the largest island. The country has 79 provinces grouped into 16 regions. Among its 79 provinces is Iloilo – heart of the Philippines Island, a province of diverse natural, cultural and historical wonders. It is in the center of the Philippines archipelago. Strategically located 283 statute miles from Manila, it is the gateway to the flourishing region of Western Visayas. The province comprises the southeastern of Panay Island. Mountain ranges with peaks as high as 7000 ft., provide natural boundaries between Iloilo and Antique on the west and Capiz on the north. The rest of mainland Iloilo is largely plain with interspersing upland portion.

Comprising Iloilo are one city and 42 municipalities. It has 5 districts. Iloilo is not just the historical and cultural cradle of the Visayan Island but the province of hidden rich biodiversity and attractions. Every municipalities has its own richness in terms of cultural, historical and attractions, and one of this is one of the most exciting and beautiful districts in Iloilo is the district of Igaras – the district of scenic spots, attractions and rich in historical facts and figures. The place you can be proud of. Igaras is located in Southern part of the province of Iloilo and belong to the first district with 46 villages. It is approximately 40 kilometers from Iloilo City bounded by the municipality of Guimbal to the southeast, municipality of Miag-ao to the southwest, municipality of Tubungan to the northeast and the province of Antique to the northwest.

Igaras is another get-away here in the province. It is one of the leading destinations in Southern part of Iloilo. It is an extraordinary pampering and refreshing place to relax and enjoy the home of the most spectacular falls in Iloilo City. This town is not just well-known for its Mount Napulak but also for its hidden treasure – Igcabugao. Igcabugao is a farthest village in Igaras and it takes 14 kilometers from Poblacion. It is bounded by the north and Village Passi by south.

Considering the role of ecotourism in economic and social development, the researchers conducted this study.

## FRAMEWORK

In psychographic research, the push/pull theories explain the combination of push and pull forces in human motivation. According to the push/pull theory by Everett Lee (1966), internal factors lead or “push” people to travel, while external forces “pull” them to certain destinations.

Positive destination images enhance the pull effect. But negative destination images may trigger the basic human motives of avoidance of pain or fear. These motives of avoidance of pain or fear. These motives may cause some people to bypass that destination, choosing another that they perceive as safer. Other people may prefer their homes to places away regardless of image or time or money available for eating out or travel. They may fear flying or suffer motion sickness. Or they may not be comfortable dealing with change or new experiences.

The push/pull theory of traveler motivation is closely related to the concept of hierarchy of needs as described by Abraham Maslow, Maslow claims that there are five levels of human needs: (1) psychological needs for shelter, clothes, and food; (2) safety needs for protection from physical threats and harm; (3) social needs for belonging and association with others; (4) esteem needs for fulfillment of ego and status; and (5) self-actualization needs for realizing maximum potential and emotional well being. Maslow’s levels of needs from basic motives to secondary motives.

Some tourism researchers use Maslow’s theory to evaluate tourist motivation.

People, who travel for rest and relaxation and then return home refreshed, fulfill the psychological need to maintain health. People who travel to visit their ancestor’s land in search of “roots” fulfill their social need for belonging. Travelers returning home with stories of an exotic locale fulfill the esteem need through the recognition and admiration from neighbors, friends and coworkers. Travelers can satisfy the self-actualization need by sailing around the world or seeing the culmination of a long-held dream. Even business travel presents opportunities to satisfy this need. A business traveler’s self-actualization need maybe satisfied when peers show appreciation for his or her seminar presentation or business proposal. Allan Mills, a

tourism researcher, contends that some people on skiing trips have reported a sense of self-actualization during an exhilarating downhill run.

The push and pull of travel and the hierarchy of needs work differently for different people. What is refreshing for one person (white-water rafting) may be stressful to another (who would rather lie on a beach). To study the differences among people, psychologist Stanley Plog developed a tourist typology based on personality profile. The typology ranges from allocentric to psychocentric. The word allocentric has its origin in *allo* (meaning “varied in form”), and refers to someone who enjoys varied activities and gets a thrill from the unexpected. Plog calls a non-adventurous person who is self-inhibited, a psychocentric, from the word *psyche* (meaning “self”).

Lee also outlined the impact that *intervening obstacles* have on the migration process. Lee pointed out that the migration process is selective because differentials such as age, gender, and social class affect how persons respond to push-pull factors, and these conditions also shape their ability to overcome intervening obstacles. Furthermore, personal factors such as a person’s education, knowledge of a potential receiver population, family ties, and the like can facilitate or retard migration.

The movement of people is a result of the degree of connectivity within a given system, no matter what level of spatial interaction is analyzed. Connections and subsequent interactions among centers imply specific complementarities. This relationship between two points (origin and destination) means that the origin is affected by **push factors** and the destination point is affected by **pull factors**, according to Lee’s theory (Lee, 1966).

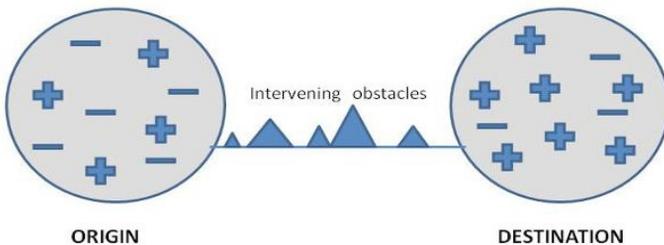


Figure 1. Lee's push-pull theory shows possible migration between

a place of origin and a place of destination. Positive and negative signs signify pull and push factors, respectively. Flows take place between two places but there are intervening obstacles to these spatial movements. In the context of labor migration, such push factors are often characterized by the lack of job opportunities in sending areas/countries, and pull factors are opportunities presented in receiving areas/countries.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study aims to present relevant information regarding the features and potential benefit of Igcabugao as a potential tourist destination. The research was conducted to feature the benefit and impact of the place, which can be the source of additional income to the community, will not be maximized.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The conceptualization, design and the conduct of the study covered the period of January to September 2010. Using the qualitative research design, the researcher visited the place for several times to take pictures and to gather information about the place. The researcher prepared for the video and pictures of Village Igcabugao. For the other half of the study, the organized video and pictures were shown to the selected tourism students in the province of Iloilo students who participated in the focus group discussion. A structured interview schedule was used during the discussion and qualitative thematic analysis was used to analyze the results of the discussion. Some of the pictures presented were the following:

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The study presented the different tourist attractions in Igcabugao, Igbaras. The results of the focus group discussion revealed that Igcabugao has a high potential as a natural beauty spot due to its flora and fauna, the scenic view and verdant landscape of the mountain, the attractive caves, the unique falls with clear water and mountain range which would appeal to mountaineers and hikers.

However, before the development of Igcabugao can be brought about, there are challenges which should be addressed. Among these are the six A's of tourist destination which are the attractions, access, amenities, ancillary services, accommodation and activities.

Of these six A's, the only available in Igcabugao are its attractions. The place is not accessible to everyone. Motorcycles are utilized to visit the place. There is also lack of accommodations with amenities and ancillary services. As of the moment, there is also no organized activity for tourists.

It would take the cooperation of residents, local government and the tourism sector to plan and develop Igcabugao as a tourist destination. The respondents of the study opined that the residents and the local government must be involved in the implementation of the plan for Igcabugao while serving as tourist guides. They must also commit themselves to the maintenance of the cleanliness and sanitation of the place, environmental protection and safety and security of tourists.

On the part of tourism students and the tourism sector, they can contribute to the development of Igcabugao by going to the place, take pictures and use the different media to disseminate the beauty of the place. The tourism sector could also help in providing technical knowledge in terms of tourism development to be focused in the Igcabugao Sustainable Tourism Development Plan.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that an analysis of the physical characteristics Igcabugao be made to ascertain the number of caves, falls and its other natural features. Second, it is recommended that accommodation, access, amenities and ancillary services needs of Igcabugao be made. Roads going to Igaras in general and to Igcabugao in particular must be improved to enhance accessibility. Infrastructures such as accommodation facilities equipped with utilities such as water and electricity should be the first priority to accommodate tourists who wish to stay longer. Food services such as canteens should be established to cater to the nourishment needs of the tourists. Ancillary services such as clinics, transportation services and the like should be provided for the needs of the tourists. A budget should be made with the respective

sources of funds. Third, based on the assessments, it is suggested that a committee be formed by the local government to create the Igcabugao Sustainable Tourism Development Plan. Fourth, since tour guides play significant roles in tourists' destinations (Balena, et.al, 2009), training of local residents to act as tour guides should be undertaken as well as the identification of local households as host families for tourist who arrive before development of Igcabugao is finalized. Fifth, the Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council must be strengthened to address possible environmental hazards. Sixth, an Igcabugao Development Committee composed of local officials, residents and the tourism sector should be organized to strategically plan for the sustainable development of Igcabugao as a tourist destination. Lastly, the Sustainable Tourism Development Plan for Igcabugao should have quantifiable standards to have a mechanism in monitoring the development of the place.

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