

An Analysis of Wang-An Island Eco-tourism and Its Sustainable Management

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ABSTRACT

With the expansion of public transport, car ownership, outbound travel, nature-based eco-tourism, and the adoption of the five-day work week, marine and island eco-tourism are expected to have a promising future; however fundamental preparation and management planning is needed to ensure this. This study examines the feasibility of developing Wang-An Island of the Pescadores archipelago as an eco-tourism site. Surveys of both on-site travelers and local residents were carried out in years of 2002 and 2003. Contingent valuation a travel cost methods were used to estimate the recreational value, analyze tourist behavior and residents' willingness-to-pay for preserving Wang-An Island. The SWOT method was used to identify positive and negative crucial factors related to the development, operation and management of eco-tourism on the Island. Finally, a community-based eco-tourism model was developed to provide a decision support mechanism for a sustainable island eco-tourism industry. Results of this research provide insights on policies and management for developing eco-tourism on other ocean islands.

Key words: *Contingent valuation, Community integration, Island eco-tourism, SWOT, Travel cost.*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism industry is one of the world's largest employers, accounting for about 11% of the global labor force in 2002 (World Tourism Organization, WTO). In Taiwan, it accounts for 650,000 workers or 6.9% of the labor force. According to WTO, international tourism population increased from 429 million in 1989 to 625 million people in 1998, an increase of 45.7% in decade. Annual receipts increased from US\$ 211 billion in 1989 to US\$ 445 billion in 1998, a 101.4% increase over the same period (Mbaiwa, 2003). Currently, global annual tourist receipts amount to more than US\$ 640 million and business benefits are more than US\$ 454.5

billion. In general, tourism has been growing by 4-5% annually, but eco-tourism growing even more dramatically by 14% (WTO). According to WTO estimates, the global number of tourist will grow to 1.602 million by 2020, and business revenues are expected to reach two trillion dollars. The WTO also predicts that tourists from East Asia and the Pacific area will become the second most important source of tourists in the world. Taiwan has shown particularly strong tourism growth in the recent past, and marine eco-tourism is expected to play a major role in the rapidly growing nature-based travel industry.

Marine eco-tourism resources of Taiwan have been underutilized due to both insufficient tourism infrastructure, and the fact that visitors have not been allowed access many

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