

# Contemporary Issues in Tourism Management in the Philippines



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**Abstract** The Philippines is an emerging tourism destination in Asia. In the last decade, the country's tourism industry has experienced significant growth in terms of international tourist arrivals and visitor receipts. While sustainable tourism has been institutionalised as a motor for national development, several issues challenging the sustainability and inclusivity of Philippine tourism exist in many destinations in the country today. This introductory chapter provides an overview of the contemporary management issues in Philippine tourism development. The discussion of these issues then articulates the intention and position of this volume. This chapter ends by outlining the intention, parts, and contributions in this volume.

**Keywords** Contemporary issues · Tourism development · Tourism policy · Tourism management · Philippines

## 1 Introduction

The Philippines is a Southeast Asian country composed of 7641 islands. Geographically, the Philippine archipelago is divided into three main groups of islands Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. Politically, it is composed of 18 regions, 81 provinces, 145 cities, 1489 municipalities, and 42,029 barangays.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the archipelago there are diverse economic, environmental, and socio-cultural characteristics.

As an archipelagic nation, the Philippines is popularly known for its tropical beaches and island destinations. Travel guidebooks and websites commonly highlight the country's beach resorts, world-class diving sites, and marine-based tourism

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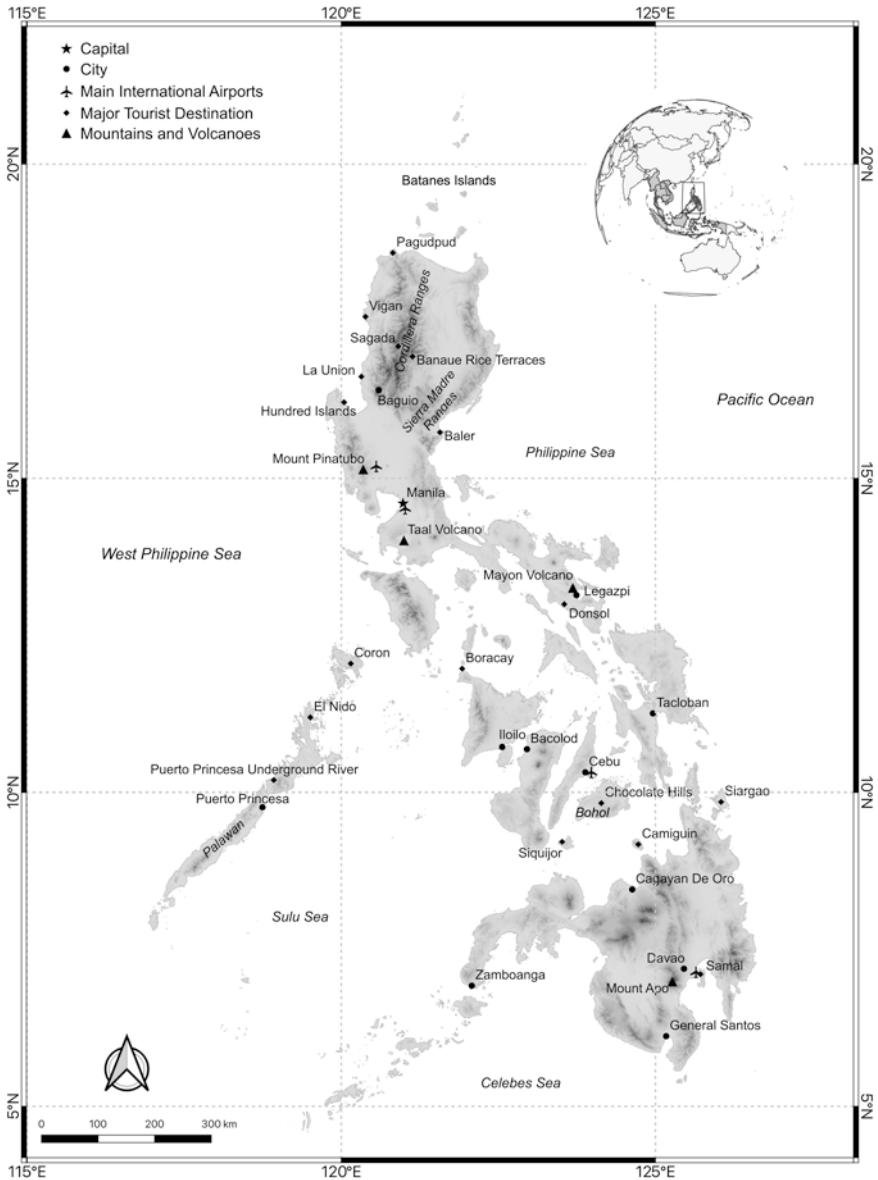
<sup>1</sup>Barangay or village is the smallest political unit in the country.

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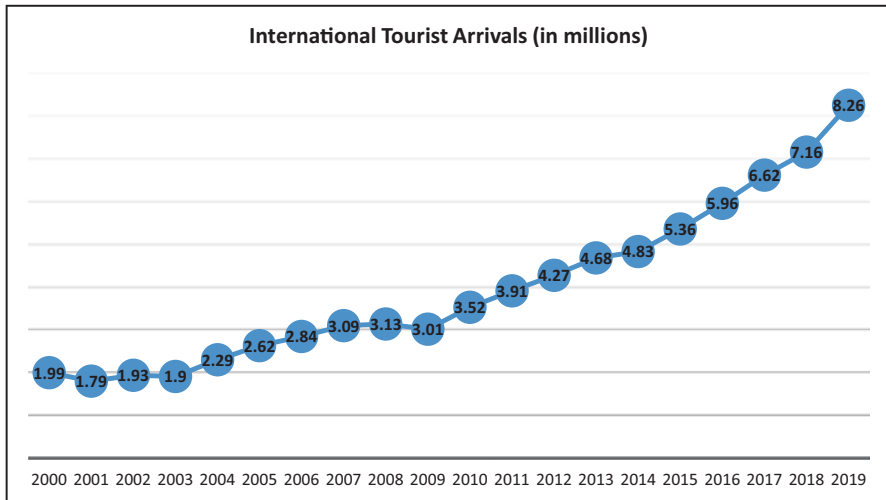
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attractions (e.g., Lonely Planet, 2021). Some of its flagship destinations, such as Boracay, Cebu, and Palawan, are consistently recognized in the lists of world's best islands (e.g., Condé Nast traveller, 2020; Travel and Leisure, 2020). Located in the coral triangle, the Philippines is also known as one of the world's biodiversity hotspots housing endemic and endangered animal species, making wildlife a key tourism resource of the country (Fig. 1). Although the country is widely known as a '3S' or



**Fig. 1** Tourism map of the Philippines. (Map created by Daniel Marc dela Torre. Reprinted with permission)

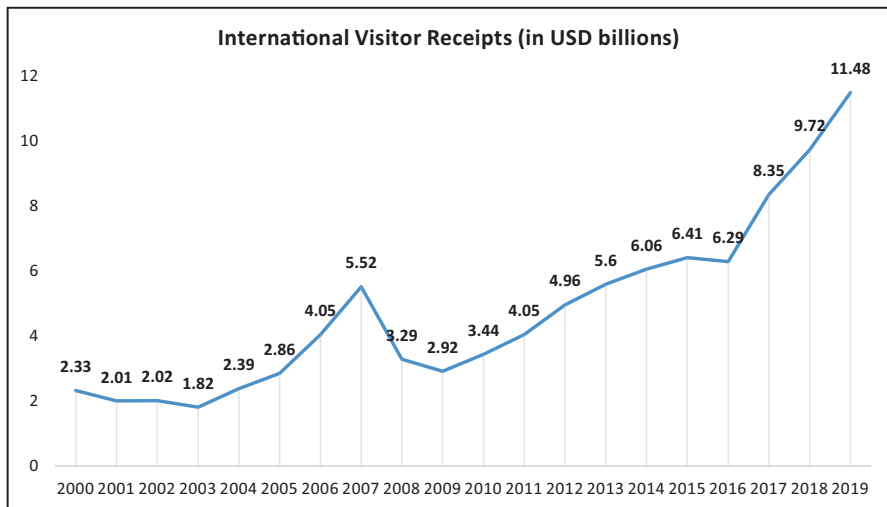


**Fig. 2** The increasing international tourist arrivals to the Philippines from 2000 to 2019. (Adapted from Department of Tourism (2020))

‘sun-sea-sand’ tourism destination, the Philippines also offers an array of cultural attractions, festivities, and event offerings (Alejandria-Gonzalez, 2016), with influences from its diverse indigenous cultures and past colonizers, Spain and the USA.

While the Philippines has been regarded as a minor destination compared to its Southeast Asian neighbors (Boquet, 2017), the country has been steadily transitioning into an emerging international tourist hub, at least prior to the onslaught of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in early 2020. The country has experienced a significant increase in international tourist arrivals in the last decade (Fig. 2). In 2019, the Philippines received a record-breaking 8,260,913 visitor arrivals, boasting 15.24% increase from the previous year (Department of Tourism, 2020). These arrivals accounted for USD 11.4 billion visitor receipts in the same year, recording an 18.80% improvement from 2018 (World Bank, 2021; Fig. 3). These figures reflect the power of tourism as a major economic contributor, especially for developing countries like the Philippines. Indeed, tourism has become one of the pillars of the Philippine economy accounting for USD\$ 90 billion (22.5%) of its GDP in 2019 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2020). While these numbers seem promising for the country’s tourism industry and local destinations, several management issues arising from this recent growth should be given attention.

For example, in early 2018, the Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte announced the six months-long closure of Boracay, that aimed to rehabilitate the island from the negative environmental impacts of tourism. The mass and overdevelopment of tourism in the island exposed violations of environmental and building guidelines which were predominantly spurred by the popularity of the destination (Cruz & Legaspi, 2019) and the “lack of governing policies” (Capistrano & Notorio, 2021, p. 139). This move from the National Government left many private businesses, workers, and communities dependent on tourism on the island outraged (Cruz &



**Fig. 3** International visitor receipts to the Philippines showing significant increase from the year 2000. (Adapted from World Bank (2021))

Legaspi, 2019), and many tourism administrators worried that their localities would receive the same fate as Boracay's (Aquino, 2020). Arguably, the Boracay closure was a landmark decision urging the national Government and local government units (LGUs) to promote better initiatives for making tourism more sustainable and inclusive in the Philippines (Department of Tourism, 2019a; Philippine Information Agency, 2019).

While sustainability seems to be a relatively recent narrative in Philippine tourism and media, especially with a hyperfocus on the Boracay closure, sustainable tourism directions have been present in Philippine tourism policy since the 1980s (Dela Santa, 2015). The Philippines has long been involved in global initiatives with aims to make tourism more socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable (i.e., the Manila Declaration on World Tourism in 1980 and 6th International Conference on Tourism Statistics, Manila in 2017). Similarly, the scholarly discourse on sustainable tourism in the country has been present since the start of the new millennium (see Alampay, 2005). Likewise, the sustainable development of tourism in the country has been institutionalized through the ratification of the Tourism Act of 2009 (i.e., Republic Act 9593) for more than a decade ago (Dela Santa, 2015; Dela Santa & Saporantos, 2016; Maguigad, 2013). Although sustainable tourism initiatives are strongly present in the Philippines, issues such as compliance and enforcement remain a challenge throughout the county. The causes of the recent Boracay closure are a reflection of the pressing issues in Philippine tourism destinations including, but not limited to: mass 3S tourism development, environmental degradation, un-coordinated (and lack of) planning, resource-use conflicts, weak governance, and political uncertainties (e.g., Dela Santa, 2013; Henderson, 2011; Maguigad, 2012; Majanen, 2007; Smith et al., 2011). To effectively resolve these

issues, critical investigations and research-informed strategies are necessary if key stakeholders are committed to making Philippine tourism more sustainable and beneficial for all.

This edited volume serves as the first instalment of a two-part series that provides an academic exploration of tourism in the Philippines. Having a strong geographical focus and drawn from a range of inter/multi-disciplinary approaches, this volume illuminates some of the contemporary management issues in Philippine tourism development through a largely Filipino lens. The chapters probe into ‘supply-side’ issues, investigating current challenges in the country’s tourism development. Each contribution proposes applied strategies, drawn from the perspectives of local academic experts in the field. In doing so, this volume creates a platform for bridging academic voices, industry practitioners, and tourism policy-makers.

## **2 Overview of Contemporary Issues in Tourism Management**

Tourism management is an inter/multi-disciplinary area of study that entails all aspects of managing and developing tourism destinations, such as planning, marketing, operations, policy-making, and governance (Hall, 2008; Wang et al., 2018). As an applied discipline, tourism management research provides insights that can be used by destination managers, marketers, entrepreneurs, and policy-makers, for making tourism better for individuals, communities, society, and most importantly, the natural environment (e.g., Buhalis, 2022). This section presents an overview of the contemporary issues in Philippine tourism management. Taking mostly macro (national) and some meso (regional) level issues, current challenges are broadly categorised through a narrative review of the academic literature on Philippine tourism published in from the year 2000 until 2020. In particular, it categorises broader issues and positions the contributions of this volume in their respective categories.

### ***2.1 Tourism Policy and Planning***

Tourism policies are integral in tourism development as they frame the visions, strategic imperatives, regulations, and guidelines that shape the development and management of destinations (Sayeda et al., 2020; Scott, 2011). At a national level, tourism policies capture how a government views the role of tourism in a country’s development (e.g., economic and/or socio-cultural development), the governments’ role and position in tourism development, and the tourism development initiatives set forth by governments (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007; Hall, 2008). Tourism policy and planning are strongly related, in the sense that planning informs the policies enacted by governments (Hall, 2008; Scott, 2011).

Tourism policy development in the Philippines has gone through a series of transformation. Like in most countries post-World War II, tourism in the Philippines was initially private sector-driven; the government formally intervened through the creation of the Board of Travel and Tourist Industry in 1956 (Rodolfo, 2005). Tourism policy interventions became more active only upon the establishment of the Department of Tourism (DOT), which was then a ‘Ministry’, in 1973 during the Ferdinand Marcos administration. The creation of this department also marked this dictator’s government’s priority for tourism as a tool for economic development as well as a platform for political agendas (Dela Santa, 2015). Despite several initiatives being implemented during the Marcos regime, (i.e., Four-year Philippine Development Plan [1974–1977] and Ten-Year Tourism Plan [1978–1987]), there was no unified tourism masterplan for the country, (Rodolfo, 2005).

Following this authoritarian rule, tourism planning became more open to civil participation (1986–1999), and “technical and conceptual learning” (Dela Santa, 2015, p. 156). During this period, the first national tourism plan for the Philippines was formulated with the assistance from the World Tourism Organization and the United Nations Development Programme. Launched in 1991, this 20-year period national tourism plan aimed at diffusing tourism development and benefits outside of Metro Manila, through the formation of tourism destination clusters in the Visayas and Mindanao regions (Maguigad, 2013). In the same year, tourism planning and development was decentralized as stipulated in the Local Government Code of 1991. This law promotes more participation and control of local government units (LGUs), at the municipal/city levels, towards tourism planning, policy-making and implementation, and regulations (e.g., business licensing; Rodolfo, 2005).

The more recent period (1999 to present) has been regarded as intensified “social learning” (Dela Santa, 2015, p. 156), where government institutions have deepened their tourism knowledge marking the transition to sustainable forms of tourism development predominantly through ‘ecotourism’ (see chapter “[Implementing an Effective Ecotourism Strategy for the Philippines](#)”). This shift was evident at the start of the new millennium upon the prioritization of the National Ecotourism Strategy (Executive Order 111) which serves as an integrated framework for protecting the natural environment and creating socio-economic benefits for local communities through tourism (see chapter “[Perception and Participation of Local Residents in the Tourism Development Program for the Sampaloc Lake in San Pablo City, Laguna](#)”). This intensified social learning period continued up to the ratification of the Tourism Act of 2009 – a law that recognizes sustainable tourism development as integral to the national economy and improvement of Filipino’s quality of life (Dela Santa, 2015; Dela Santa & Saporsantos, 2016). Together with aggressive international and domestic promotional campaigns, this law is evident in current tourism plans, such as the National Tourism Development Plan for 2016–2022 (Alampay et al., 2018). This plan has two strategic directions, namely, (1) “improving competitiveness and enhancing growth,” and (2) “pursuing sustainability and inclusive growth” (Department of Tourism, 2016, p. 15). In achieving the latter, there is an emphasis on supporting the creation of tourism-related micro,

small, and medium enterprises in local communities and towns. Consequently, more localities are exploring and implementing tourism as a development activity.

While the national government's visions are aligned with sustainability goals and aim to promote locally-engaged tourism development, challenges in implementation impede the achievement of these objectives. As scholars suggest, the Philippines is rich in tourism policies, yet, has weak implementation strategies (Capistrano & Notorio, 2021; Rodolfo, 2005). The above overview of tourism policy development in the Philippines shows how tourism is prioritized by the government and in the country at large.

Scholarly research on Philippine tourism has largely focused on national to local-level tourism policy and planning issues, with a particular emphasis on understanding the evolution of frameworks and issues in tourism policy implementation (e.g., Aquino, 2019). Perhaps, the academic interest on this topic is driven by the active involvement (and failures) of the government since the 1950s, and the criticisms that the public sector receives in terms of tourism development (e.g., politics and lack of program continuity). Politicizing still is a persistent problem in tourism policy implementation in the Philippines. Tourism policy imperatives change when there is a change in administration or a new tourism secretary (Dela Santa, 2013, 2015), largely drawn from the country's political instability (Henderson, 2011). This lack of continuity results in inconsistencies in implementation, and financial costs associated with tourism governance transitions. There is also the issue of decentralization. While this empowers LGUs in implementing their own initiatives delegating more local control, these units often lack the necessary human capital and skills for tourism planning, development, and management (Maguigad, 2013). Most of the contributions in this volume anchor their practical rationale in the Tourism Act of 2009. Several chapters in this volume tackle potential unification of industry accreditation and standards (see chapters "Tourism Accreditation in the Philippines: Government and Private Sector Perspectives", "The Philippines Tourism Officers' Competencies Based on Tourism Act of 2009 and Local Government Code of 1991", "Perception of Stakeholders on the Adoption of 4th Industrial Revolution Technologies in the Hospitality Industry in the Philippines", and "Challenges in Implementing the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement for Tourism Professionals in the Philippines"). Together, these chapters implicitly aim to make implementation of tourism policy consistent at all levels (national, regional, and local).

## ***2.2 Destination Image and Branding***

In the international tourism context, a destination brand should portray the uniqueness of a country's destination image and have the capacity to differentiate a country with its competitors (Qu et al., 2011). A country (as a destination) is often depicted in a destination brand consisting of a logo, name, and slogan that aims to create brand awareness and destination image (Pan, 2019). Likewise, an effective tourism

slogan not only promotes, but also enables tourists to remember a destination (Huang & Lin, 2017). Therefore, destination marketers must strive to create a competitive destination brand that could effectively position a country in an ever increasingly competitive tourism marketplace (Morgan et al., 2003).

The Philippines has always struggled in building a positive country image and destination brand. It certainly does not help building a positive image when the country is known as a disaster hotspot (both natural and man-made). Just the last 20 years, the Philippines has experienced an array of disasters and crises, such as political instabilities (e.g., people power revolution and military coups), warfare with insurgent rebels, terrorist attacks, super typhoons (e.g., Haiyan in 2013), destructive earthquakes (e.g., Bohol earthquake in 2013), and volcanic eruptions (e.g., Taal Volcano in early 2020); all of which have negative implications for Philippine destination branding (e.g., Beirman, 2003; Henderson, 2011). As Boquet (2017) reflects:

One of the biggest problems facing tourism in the Philippines may be the incessantly negative portrayals of the country used by foreign media which have damaged the country's image, detracting many would-be tourists from even coming to the Philippines, in preference of the traditional Southeast Asian destinations (Bali, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam). (Boquet, 2017, p. 746)

There is also inconsistency in the branding of the Philippines that stems from changes in governance and politics, which was perfectly expounded by Dela Santa (2015) in stating, "When a new secretary of tourism is installed, it is almost *de rigueur* to replace the ongoing marketing program with a new one, notwithstanding the huge costs involved." From 2002 up to the present, the DOT has used six different logos and tourism slogans under five secretaries within two Presidential administrations" (Villegas, 2017, p. 76). This lack of continuing and consistent campaigns creates an ambiguous image of the Philippines as a tourist destination.

These challenges in destination branding and positive image creation have been argued to be addressed by the country's current tourism slogan, *It's More Fun in the Philippines*. Following the flak received by its predecessor – *Pilipinas Kay Ganda*<sup>2</sup> (How Beautiful, the Philippines) – from the Filipino people in 2010, the present tourism slogan was deemed a highly successful campaign given the boost in international tourist arrivals since it was launched in 2012 (Bosangit, 2014; Valdez et al., 2017). The mastermind of this campaign, former tourism secretary Ramon Jimenez, Jr. and his team, utilized the power of social media by inviting Filipinos to create and share their own advertisements or memes featuring the country's tourist attractions. This democratic and grassroots strategy was successful, as the campaign became trending in Twitter in its first 30 min and has generated about 12,000 user-created advertisements in weeks after its launch (Bosangit, 2014). This crowd-sourced campaign was dubbed as a form of people power, showcased the humour of

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<sup>2</sup>This unpopular tourism slogan was highly criticized, allegedly plagiarized from a previous Polish campaign, short-lived (Bosangit, 2014).





**Fig. 4** The re-vamped *It's More Fun in the Philippines* logo and font style launched in 2019. (Downloaded free from source: Department of Tourism (2019b))

the Filipinos, and bridged the desire for an exotic destination and happiness in the Philippines (De Chavez, 2017; Valdez et al., 2017).

Yet even the popular ‘more fun’ campaign was almost replaced when former secretary Jimenez was replaced in 2016, drawing strong criticism from the public. The then tourism secretary Wanda Teo planned to replace *It's More Fun in the Philippines* with the slogan, *Experience the Philippines* by 2017. Fortunately for the Philippines, and in the principle of best destination branding practice, this plan did not push through as the current tourism secretary, Bernadette Romulo-Puyat, re-launched the ‘more fun’ campaign with re-vamped logo and custom-made font in 2019 (see <https://www.itsmorefuninthephilippines.com/>; Fig. 4). Given the previous success of the tourism slogan and brand, the need for a logo and font change was questionable and may have simply been an attempt for the new administration to ‘put their mark’ on the re-introduced campaign.

However, the new developments aim to portray a more solid and consistent national tourism brand for the Philippines with the lettering inspired by font commonly used on Jeepneys and the logo representative of locally woven textiles (Rey, 2019). This branding consistency, together with aggressive international tourism promotions in key markets (i.e., countries), has seen visitor numbers growing and surpassing targets at least prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (see Fig. 2). More recently, the concept of sustainable tourism in the image of being a fun destination has also been incorporated in this brand (Rey, 2019). One of the current challenges is how this national brand can be incorporated in sub-national tourism planning (e.g., Alampay et al., 2018) and branding Philippine regions (see chapter “*Cagayan Valley: Your Islands and Valley of Fun – A Case of Regional Branding in the Philippines*”), given the decentralized nature of tourism planning and development in the country and the often lack of relevant human capital in regional/local destination management organizations (e.g., Maguigad, 2013). Another aspect that needs to be prioritized is the creation of new tourism products, especially those featuring Filipino heritage and culture (Alejandria-Gonzalez, 2016). Compared to its Southeast Asian neighbors such as Thailand, Vietnam, and Malaysia, the Philippines is criticised for its lack of cultural identity that can be manifested in elements such as food (see chapter “*Culinary Tourism as an Avenue for Tourism Development: Mapping the Flavors of the Philippines*”). Some contributions in this volume offer insights on how such challenges can be tackled, serving as points of embarkation for destination managers, as the country aims to strengthen its brand identity as a fun, sustainable, and ‘safe’ destination (in the ‘new normal’ and post-pandemic).

### ***2.3 Natural Environment and Nature-Based Tourism***

The Philippines is rich in natural resources and, thus, has significant opportunities for the further development of nature-based tourism. With the upward trend in the tourism economy, there is also the great potential for expanding the role of cultural and heritage tourism within nature-based tourism offerings. What remains a challenge is the management and conservation of the existing natural resources that nature-based tourism activities are dependent upon. In many locations throughout the Philippines, communities directly depend on the natural resources for sustenance. The lack of long-term environmental planning and management has resulted in the migration of rural populations searching for more plentiful resources; it has created a situation throughout the country of ecological refugees (see Goldoftas, 2006). In addition, lack of exposure to, familiarity with and participation in tourism activities increase the challenges for transitioning into non-extractive resource use economies such as tourism (Porter & Orams, 2014). Modifying current and often convenient human behaviours is problematic making a transition away from resource overexploitation challenging.

While nature-based resources are subject to environmental disasters such as typhoons, volcanoes and changes in climate, environmental resources can also be degraded as a result of tourism (e.g., Boracay). A well known example of tourism activities impacting natural resources in the Philippines is the provisioning of whale sharks. Oslob is one of many now popular destinations for whale shark tourism in the Philippines. With unregulated growth of the industry, the potential costs have seen attention in the academic literature (e.g., Ziegler et al., 2018, 2019) as well as in popular media (e.g., Warne, 2018). The whalesharks are just one example of tourism development where short-term benefits have been prioritised over long-term sustainability of the industry and the resources. The importance of prioritizing conservation in national ecotourism development should be stressed and investigated (see chapter “[Implementing an Effective Ecotourism Strategy for the Philippines](#)”). Incorporating ideas that sustainability is a continuous process, rather than an attainable end goal (see Farrell & Twining-Ward, 2005), chapter “[Implementing an Effective Ecotourism Strategy for the Philippines](#)” emphasizes the need for improved networks and planning for tourism development in the Philippines. Chapter “[Perception and Participation of Local Residents in the Tourism Development Program for the Sampaloc Lake in San Pablo City, Laguna](#)” then illustrates the need for resilience among communities as well as such socio-ecological issues when they explore differences in perceptions between community members and tourism officers. This chapter further indicates the importance of understanding areas of resource use overlap and its potential impact on the effective implementation of community-based ecotourism (CBET). Together, these two chapters tackle both macro- and micro-perspectives associated with the development of nature-based tourism and a micro-perspective on involving communities in this process.

## 2.4 *Human Capital*

The development of competent human capital has always been a priority for the Philippine tourism industry and educational institutions. Corresponding with the emergence of policy-oriented tourism planning and the early rise of tourism in the Philippines, the first bachelor's degree program in tourism in the country was offered by the University of the Philippines in 1977 (Bosangit & Mena, 2005). This tertiary qualification in tourism is also recognised as the first offering of its kind in Asia (Julia, 2015). Since then, tourism (including hospitality management) certifications and qualifications have been offered in numerous Philippine universities, colleges, and vocational training institutes. While the exact number of tourism and hospitality management certificate and degree offerings is unavailable to date, the Commission on Higher Education (2020) reports that tourism and hospitality management are in the top 10 most enrolled programs in the country.

One reason why tourism and hospitality management programs are popular in the Philippines could be the potential of these degrees to be recognized in other countries, because of their international nature (e.g., Aquino et al., 2017). These programs are attractive given the opportunity for Filipino students to potentially gain 'overseas experience' while studying through international tourism internships, for example in the USA, Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia (Arroyo, 2011; Torres & Nagal, 2015). The skills gleaned from tourism and hospitality management degrees, together with relevant industry experience, may further enable graduates to get employment overseas, which is a popular pathway for Filipinos seeking better opportunities. The Philippines continues to be one of the top pools of migrant workers and remittances from overseas Filipino workers or OFWs are one of the pillars of the national economy (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development & Scalabrini Migration Center, 2017).

The lack of standardization of these program offerings in line with industry needs was one of the persistent issues identified in Philippine tourism education in the early 2000s (Bosangit & Mena, 2005). One relatively recent initiative aimed at unifying qualifications, in addition to the numerous national accreditations, was the implementation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) on Tourism Professionals in the Philippines (ASEAN, 2012, 2018). In line with ASEAN Economic Community envisioning Southeast Asia as one market enabling the free flow of goods and services including human capital, this MRA aims to make tourism qualifications recognizable within the ASEAN member-countries. This initiative allows tertiary educational institutions to offer a set of standardized certifications and competencies, while making tourism graduates more employable and mobile within Southeast Asia (ASEAN, 2018). The MRA on Tourism Professionals was actively promoted and implemented in the Philippine tertiary education since 2012; though has yet to be formally evaluated (see chapter "[Challenges in Implementing the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement for Tourism Professionals in the Philippines](#)"). Given also the increasingly digitalization of the tourism industry, there is also a need to explore how technology is being integrated in tourism-oriented programs and qualifications, and

how stakeholders respond to this industry requirement (see chapter “[Perception of Stakeholders on the Adoption of 4th Industrial Revolution Technologies in the Hospitality Industry in the Philippines](#)”).

The standardization of certifications and competencies highlights the technical/vocational orientation of most tourism programs, at least in the pre-bachelor’s and some bachelor’s-level programs (e.g., ASEAN, 2018). However, postgraduate (master’s and doctoral) programs have only been available since 2009. This development reflects the priority to enhance the research capabilities of tertiary educational institutions in the Philippines (Aquino, 2019), but also improving the competencies of those already working in the industry and holding tourism administrative positions (e.g., tourism officers; see chapter “[The Philippines Tourism Officers’ Competencies Based on Tourism Act of 2009 and Local Government Code of 1991](#)”). Moreover, such a development can be seen as a step forward to making human capital more competent, especially for Philippine tourism governance, research, and development.

### **3 Intention and Structure of the Book**

In the Philippines, challenges with the tourism policies, plans, and governance are continuously evolving with the country’s political climate and government transitions (Dela Santa, 2015; Henderson, 2011). The Philippines has entered a new era of tourism governance, wherein the national government is taking drastic measures in managing local destinations to ensure the promise of sustainable tourism. The impacts of these initiatives on local destinations, and potential applied solutions to address tourism management issues, remain relatively unexplored. This edited book aims to investigate some of the current and developing critical management issues in Philippine tourism, and offers practical insights that can be useful for addressing such challenges moving forwards.

Building a research culture is increasingly becoming a priority among tourism and hospitality management departments in Philippine universities and colleges. Research programs are designed to address the pertinent issues and challenges faced by the industry, demonstrating the evolving nature of local institutions from being providers of vocational training to tourism knowledge producers (Aquino, 2019). This edited book serves as an inclusive platform for Filipino tourism academics (both new and seasoned) to disseminate their research works. However, it is often the case that practical suggestions and knowledge generated from the Philippine academia are not recognised by or communicated to government tourism agencies, especially during previous presidential administrations. It was only in 2018 that research grants were actively offered by the DOT to Filipino tourism academics specifically aiming to research farm and culinary tourism products (e.g., Department of Tourism, 2018). The Philippine tourism governance appears to value tourism knowledge created from the academic perspective and evidence-based tourism management decision-making. This book aims to assist the facilitation of this dialogue between academics, industry practitioners, and tourism policy-makers.

This edited book builds from the scholarly works that explored sustainable tourism challenges in the Philippines published more than a decade ago (i.e., Alampay, 2005). As the first country-focused volume in the series, *Perspectives on Asian Tourism*, this book is composed of chapters that explore a range of national, regional, and local tourism management issues in the Philippines. The contributions are drawn from the works of Filipino academics based in the Philippines and overseas institutions, and non-Filipino academics researching tourism issues in the Philippines. The contributions are informed by a diverse set of disciplines including, but not limited to tourism studies, hospitality management, economics, business management, public policy, community development, education, and environmental science. In terms of methodology, the chapters are informed by different methodologies including quantitative, qualitative, and case studies. Following this introduction (Part I) are the contributions which were thematically divided into three parts:

Part II – Nature-Based Tourism and the Natural Environment

Part III – Product Development and Branding

Part IV – Accreditation and Industry Standards

Part II investigates the issues on ‘Nature-Based Tourism and the Natural Environment’ in the Philippines. This part starts with John Paolo Rivera, Eylla Laire Gutierrez, Ian Bencio David, and David Newsome’s exploration of the country’s National Ecotourism Strategy and allied policies (chapter “[Implementing an Effective Ecotourism Strategy for the Philippines](#)”). In this chapter, Rivera and colleagues review the challenges in implementing this strategy, revealing unsustainable nature-based tourism operations and practices in the country. Peter Jerome Del Rosario and Sheerah Louise Tasico take a ‘micro-level’ perspective in implementing nature-based tourism, by understanding the participation and involvement of residents in community-based ecotourism in Sampaloc Lake, Laguna Province (chapter “[Perception and Participation of Local Residents in the Tourism Development Program for the Sampaloc Lake in San Pablo City, Laguna](#)”). This chapter highlights the significance of participatory approaches in nature-based tourism management, alongside effective conservation strategies.

Part III tackles marketing management perspectives on ‘Product Development and Branding’ at the national and regional contexts. Aiming to strengthen the identity of Filipino cuisine at the world-stage through tourism, Eylla Laire Gutierrez, John Paolo Rivera, and Fernando Martin Roxas, map the diverse culinary heritage of the Philippines (chapter “[Culinary Tourism as an Avenue for Tourism Development: Mapping the Flavors of the Philippines](#)”). Using secondary information, their contribution presents a rich database of culinary treasures across 13 cultural groups (i.e., ethno-linguistic groups) in the country. Following this chapter for national tourism product development, is Maria Criselda G. Badilla’s work on regional branding in the Philippines (chapter “[Cagayan Valley: Your Islands and Valley of Fun – A Case of Regional Branding in the Philippines](#)”). Using the case of the Cagayan Valley Region, Badilla demonstrates best practices in regional destination branding founded on the concept of collaborative marketing. Furthermore, this chapter shows how to synergise a region’s diverse tourism product features into a coherent brand.

Part IV explores ‘Accreditation and Industry Standards’ particularly in terms of tourism enterprise standards and human capital development. This part begins with Reil Cruz’s investigation of the status and challenges of implementing the DOT’s mandatory accreditation scheme for private tourism businesses (chapter “[Tourism Accreditation in the Philippines: Government and Private Sector Perspectives](#)”). This chapter reveals the low level of accreditation rate in selected locations in the country, and calls for revisiting the requirements imposed in the national accreditation scheme. Joreen Rocamora operationalizes a model that measures Filipino tourism officers’ competencies (chapter “[The Philippines Tourism Officers’ Competencies Based on Tourism Act of 2009 and Local Government Code of 1991](#)”). Rocamora’s chapter is the first to assess the country’s tourism officers’ competence levels at a national scale. Pia Rhoda Pinpin-Lucero uncovers the perceptions of stakeholders on the adaptation of the Philippine hospitality industry to the ‘4th Industrial Revolution’ or ‘Industry 4.0’ (chapter “[Perception of Stakeholders on the Adoption of 4th Industrial Revolution Technologies in the Hospitality Industry in the Philippines](#)”), a vital undertaking in this ever-changing digital age. Lastly, in chapter “[Challenges in Implementing the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement for Tourism Professionals in the Philippines](#)”, Lilibeth Aragon and Ma. Christina Aquino proposes actions to effectively implement the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement for Tourism Professionals in the Philippines: an initiative that promotes competency-based instruction in educational institutions offering tourism and hospitality management qualifications.

This edited volume culminates with a concluding chapter that summarizes the key conceptual and practical contributions of the book (chapter “[Tourism in the Philippines: Conclusions and Implications for Management](#)”). It also collates the collective recommended actions to address the persistent and emerging issues, based on the perspectives of the contributors. While the inception of this book project occurred pre-COVID-19 pandemic, the emerging issues posed by this crisis on the Philippine tourism industry and worldwide cannot be neglected. This culminating chapter leaves suggestions for future research on issues not covered in this book, including those emerging challenges posed by the pandemic.

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