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THE NEED OF TOURISM IMPACT STUDIES IN INDONESIA

As is the case worldwide there is today an increasing awareness and need need tourism impact studies to enable sound planning and healthy long term economic development. Unfortunately many countries have taken the short term view, and avoided investment in research and assessment and are now paying the price as will indeed many generations to come.

There are four aspects of this dimension we need to address:

1. The future dependence on Tourism in Indonesia.
2. Future opportunity analysis and conservation issue impact.
3. Role of tourism education in regional development.
4. Linkages with international expertise.

1. Indonesia is progressively moving from an agricultural economy of some 22% of the gross domestic product into the industrial arena competing head on with its Asean and Asian neighbours. In a similar vein Tourism is now emerging as a future strength and direction reinforced by the course of economic deregulation introduced in recent years. The present forecasts through the Worldwide Tourist Organisation indicate a sustained and productive decade ahead which places Indonesia into a favourable position providing the development and quality of the experiences match the expectations of the new markets needs. The proximity and increasing affluence of the Asean region provides with increased international ac-

cess immense potential for strategic growth of both trade and travel.

The Role and overseas income generated through Tourism as is the case internationally provides a major incentive to protect and enhance the appeal and character of the product mix which is unique to the Indonesian islands. The dramatic industrialisation of the Asian countries has generated many undesirable side effects pollution and congestion being perhaps the most undesirable. With tourism growth comes economic strength and employment in a labour intensive service sector, there are few industries that come close to the employment potential provided through tourism. In addition we can identify direct commercial benefits through the investment multiplier associated with social and trade development enhance through tourism linkages. The risk is to embrace all of the good and not plan for or at least minimise all of the bad elements which accompany this evolution process. The main threat is to destroy and pollute the very experiences that overseas visitors seek to enjoy and experience!!!

2. Opportunity Analysis: Conservation Issues

There are many well documented case studies which highlight this ongoing conflict of commercial opportunity versus national interest and heritage. The sad perspective is that all too often governments are slow to react and legislate for controlled change where commerce is driving their recovery or political direction.

In most evolving tourism destinations in their stages of development the foundations dictates the long term benefits for both the indigenous population and benefits shared with future generations through sound planning and conservation of resources.

Nature and the consumption of tourist experiences can be managed and enriched by respecting the natural attributes of the country, its culture, scenery and visible attractiveness. Two countries have recognised and incorporated this key philosophy into their respective tourism marketing and positioning: Canada & New Zealand.

A great deal can be learned by evaluating the success and respect for conservation and natural resources that is undertaken in these progressive countries. The fastest growing segment of international tourism today is in the areas of ecotourism, a whole new dimension related to participating in the outdoors with their experience needs of a rapidly expanding international interest provides a foundation for marketing positioning. In this focus we can identify perhaps the greatest opportunity for tourism growth with the thousands of Indonesian islands yet to be developed for the benefit of their local communities. In the strategic plan for tourism development in Indonesia the utilisation of national parks, recreation centres and the vast wealth of indigenous flora and fauna provides a natural asset without comparison in this age of exploitation and resource utilisation. A great deal of success can be achieved through working with the management authority responsible for natural resource planning, however an independent review is essential to ensure that all aspects are covered and the economic issues are not allowed to compromise the benefit of future generations as has been the case in many Asian countries in recent years.

3. Role of Education

Perhaps the catalyst to change in the world today is knowledge and the sharing of experiences to control and plan for

change. The vast resources in Indonesia are reaching a critical focus to maximise the future benefit and return to the country. Timing and the recognition of skills to manage and direct change requires a close communication and liaison through education.

The University system is ideally placed to facilitate exchange and progress international understanding and cooperation. In Australia, New Zealand and a number of linked institutions in the northern hemisphere there is access today to a major resource for training and development of the human resources, the most critical and important factor for planning and management of natural assets. The establishment of the Center for Tourism Studies is an important linkage with the overseas organisation which can provide a wealth of experience and guidance for strategic development.

4. Linkages with International Educational Institutions

On this context this leads into the linkages now available through memorandum of understanding with both the New Zealand and Australian Governments entered into for the purposes of education exchange and co-operation. In both countries in the last three years has been a surge of new courses introduced and developed specifically for the Tourism, Travel & Hospitality sectors. The diverse levels of qualifications and courses now provides a smorgasboard of opportunity for linkages and eventually "twinning relationships". In June 1994 Australia has mounted a major campaign in Indonesia to focus on the opportunity for joint venture and educational aid development programmes. The Tourism sector provides the catalyst for change and accreditation for continued study and regional development for both the government employment and private sectors.

Clearly the path for the future is evident through cooperation communication and the exchange of experience and expertise.