

Tourism Studies in the Province of Batangas, Philippines: A Literature Review

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Abstract

This article aims to review the published researches in Tourism related studies of Lyceum of the Philippines University-Batangas from various journals to provide basic information on the findings of the previously conducted researches from different parts of the province. The most studied part of Batangas is the Heritage Town of Taal followed by San Juan. Most studies conducted within Batangas City are about establishing business enterprises. Only one research paper conducted and published among the festivals being celebrated in the province which is the Tinapay Festival of Cuenca. Each municipality must have a concrete tourism development plan in order to support the tourism program of the Province of Batangas. In this context, future studies may concentrate on various features of festivals to preserve the culture and values imbibed from these festivities.

Keywords: Beaches, Food, Churches, Festivals, Tourism Industry, native Products

1. Introduction

Batangas as part of the CALABARZON Region is rich in Filipino traditions and tourist destinations. Making the province famous in beaches, food and native products would create jobs and opportunities to promote the culture and sustain the good character of the Filipinos. Tourism has effect on the social, economic, environmental, cultural heritage and arts (Aguda, Tamayo & Barlan, 2013) of certain tourist destinations. It is a fast growing industry that has become a top priority of the economic agenda of a number of countries. It is believed that tourism can be used as a tool to solve problems like unemployment and poverty in developing countries (Mejia, Festijo, Borbon and Barlan, 2013).

Over the years, the Philippine tourism industry has been playing a key role in promoting mutual understanding among nations, and as an instrument of national and economic development through poverty alleviation and conservation of fragile natural and cultural resources (Vizconde & Felicen, 2012).

In providing information dissemination, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogs and Websites were the social networking site frequently used by individuals and hospitality industry. Social media applications served as an avenue to disseminate the information faster especially for the tourism establishments with lesser cost (Buted, Gillespie, Conti, Delgado, Marasigan, Rubico, Felicen, 2014).

Customer satisfaction is an important aspect to build a strong relationship with the clients. Studying satisfaction would provide baseline information on how improvements on certain areas of the business may be addressed accordingly. In the study of Barlan (2013), he found out that attentiveness and courtesy of the staff meets customers' satisfaction. To hold the customers, the business should give them very satisfactory service, extra attention, personalized service and products/services innovations.

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It is the main objective of this article to provide background information of the tourism related studies conducted and published by the faculty members and students of Lyceum of the Philippines University-Batangas in response to the needs of giving recommendations to the future researchers on what areas they could explore to complete their academic requirements.

2. Method

From the 42 published researches of the College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management, 19 of these are related to tourism studies of Batangas Province while 1 study was also considered from the Graduate School which was found out related with the total of 20 research papers. Findings of these studies were presented in the article as well as the recommendations provided by the researchers based from conclusions.

3. Discussion

The discussion part of this article was built from the findings of the previous studies conducted in the University and published in various journals. Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the country which is being given priority to promote the beauty of the nature and its civilization which is rich in traditions and culture. Leisure opportunities through spending the weekend out of town is always part of the stress coping mechanism of the people who also wanted to reunite with love ones, families and friends as teambuilding activity and celebration of thanksgiving both local and foreign tourists. This article discusses the findings of the studies done on beaches, food, churches, festivals, and native products as well as the opportunities for improvement.

Beaches

Family reunions and friends' get away party and celebrations are being held in beaches to relax and enjoy the ambiance of fresh air away from exhausted schedule of work in the office and traffic in the heart of the city. When people talk about beaches, Batangas is always part of their options in the Southern part of Luzon. Batangas is well-known to its magnificent beaches and diving spots in Matabungkay in Lian, Anilao in Mabini, Punta Fuego in Nasugbu, Calatagan, Sombrero Island in Tingloy, Ligpo Island in Bauan, and Laiya in San Juan.

In every development there are always positive effects in their social and economic standing that lead in the upliftment of certain place. Environment plays an important part in the growth of tourism. If the environment is degraded, interest of tourist will diminish (Miranda et al., 2013).

The most frequently visited attraction in Batangas are beach resorts for it is a venue for diving and aqua sports activities. Batangas is visited due to the affordability of the tourist attractions and destinations including the amenities offered. Both local and foreign tourists were satisfied and enjoyed visiting the beaches due to the warm accommodation of the Filipino staff and personnel. The programs spearheaded by the local Tourism office in Batangas are geared towards developing Batangas as a beautiful place for relaxation accessible to its neighboring towns and provinces through its infrastructure and transport development. The private sectors and educational institutions like the Lyceum of the Philippines University can help the Batangas Tourism Office in the implementation of the programs and other projects to boost the Tourism Industry. With the help of the Lyceum Family including the students of the College of International Tourism & Hospitality Management, the Batangas Tourism Office may do tie-ups and spearhead viable projects and programs for the improvement of the tourism programs in the province (Vizconde & Felicen, 2012).

In terms of promoting and preserving marine biodiversity in Anilao, respondents agree that the increase of the tourist arrivals increases the volume of waste generated and pollution and climate change are the problem encountered in the preservation and promotion of marine biodiversity. For tourism development, it is important to see local communities as partners and work with community organizations to develop

services and facilities by improving local livelihoods for communities in coastal areas is closely linked to building a base for a more sustainable management of coastal and marine resources.

The tourism developers may categorically state their industry-wide commitment to environmentally compatible growth, targets for improvement should be established and monitored; and they should seek to implement sound environment principles through self-regulation, recognizing that local, national and international regulation may be inevitable and that preparation is vital; environmental improvement programs should be systematic and comprehensive (Mejia, Festijo, Borbon & Barlan, 2013).

Customer satisfaction is one of the important considerations in running a business to make it progressive and gain the loyalty of the clients. A study conducted in La Virginia Hotel Resort in Mataas na Kahoy, Batangas to determine the level of customer satisfaction with experience in amenities and services of the entire resort management. Majority of the respondents are Filipinos who went to La Virginia Hotel Resort for vacation and went to the resort for the first time. Customers are satisfied with the services rendered at La Virginia Hotel Resort in terms of tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and facilities/attraction as they were rated very good by the respondents. La Virginia Hotel & Resort may enhance the services and upgrade the facilities offered and they may continue developing more and different facilities that customers would highly satisfy. The DOT and the residents of Mataas na Kahoy may help in promoting La Virginia Hotel in order to increase counts of potential tourists (Kison et al., 2013).

Calatagan Batangas has a great aesthetic value that can be used for promoting in the Tourism Industry and has a possibility to attract and gain more tourists. In order to gain more tourists the resident as well as the resort owner should provide the quality services and determined the needs and wants of target markets and deliver the desired satisfaction more effectively and efficiently. Although tourism has been popular, we cannot deny the fact problem do exist that hinder tourist growth in every place. To know the root cause of such problems is a major distribution in determining ways to improve the Tourism Industry in Calatagan (Buted, Ylagan & Mendoza, 2014). The word “Calatagan” is derived from the tagalog word “Latag” and it is synonymous to “Kapatagan” which means a large expands of wide plain lands. Tourism has grown into one of the world’s major industries and has thus also become increasingly important (Aguda, Tamayo & Barlan, 2013).

The government does everything to meet and preserved the beauty of Calatagan. The government and resort owner should enrich more on all the attractions found in this destination specially those attractions that are less frequently visited so that it will be appreciated and patronised by many (Miranda et al., 2013). The government should properly implement all the programs and projects in Calatagan and they should try to lessen the problems encountered by the government employees, residents, resort manager and tourists by implementing those programs. The different business establishments related to tourism must improve and develop their products, goods, and services they rendered, also their facilities to attract more tourists (Azote et al., 2013).

The resident and local government of Calatagan should be responsible enough in upgrading the tourism industry in their place in order for them to gain more social and economic benefits. The government must fully identified programs to boost industry. However residents and resort owners as well as tourist should support the programs (Buted, Ylagan & Mendoza, 2014).

Native Products

The Embroidery Industry in Taal found out that they have adequate human resources as well as the material resources. Most of the embroiderers were registered in the municipality of Taal which helped the government monitor the embroidery industry. As the means of the government in promoting embroidery in Taal, it was found out that through provincial events, it contributed to uplift the indigenous craft and boosted embroidery industry to the residents as well. The factors for not engaging in embroidery business always started from the budgetary problem that affected the whole circulation of the production. Embroidery business in Taal had long been and still is a popular domestic craft. It is expected to continue for as long as new designs, textiles follow the trend and continued patronage increase (Buted, Meñez, Baruc & Borbon).

There is no published study regarding balisong and café barako which are significant emblems of the Province including tapang Taal, Loming Batangas, Panotsa and Tabliya. These are native products that may be studied its characteristics and features that symbolize the values and culture of the Batanguenos.

Religious Festivities

Most visited cultural heritage attraction in Taal, Batangas was Basilica of St. Martin de Tours. Cultural heritage sites in Taal were perceived to have positive results in the assessments based on different aspects such as physical, social and economic aspects (Buted, Felicen, Bancoro, Maligaya, Rose, Panaligan & Sandoval, 2014). The pilgrim churches contribute to tourism in terms of social and economic aspect while they strongly agree in terms of cultural aspect. The most commonly experienced problem was the accessibility of the transportation. The church personnel may have a briefing on the history of the church so that if a visitor needs information it easy for them to answer (De Castro et al., 2014).

One festival included in the review is the Tinapay Festival in Cuenca, Batangas. It aims to determine the development strategies of community-based tourism in terms of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling; evaluated the effects of development of community-based tourism Tinapay Festival in Cuenca (Buted et al., 2014).

Furthermore, from the same study, there are several constraints to Cuenqueños participation in tourism activities. It provides two arguments as to why the involvement of local communities in tourism development is often difficult. The first is that the community of Cuenca is heterogeneous. Cuenca community consists of many different kinds of people, often with an equal position and different aspiration. This leads to an equal opportunity of community members to participate in tourism activities. Cuenca community members with a higher status are more likely to participate in tourism development, and will not always act in the best interest of other community members. The second difficulty is that Cuenqueños frequently lack information, resources and power. This makes it difficult to reach the market.

Socio-cultural festivals provide unity in the community while economically; hosting a festival is too expensive. The tourism students must be connected with the community through on-hand assessment of the cultures within Batangas Province by providing community programs that are related to tourism such as festival participation. The College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management may encourage their students to be engaged in different festivals in the whole Province of Batangas. They may send some students as part of their program to be part of the organization and activities of festivals (Magpantay, Decena, de Torres, Garcia, Villalobos, Felicen, & Dinglasan, 2014).

It is worth mentioning the festivals being celebrated within the Province with corresponding dates based from the information provided by the Batangas Tourism Office and these are: the Mahaguyog Festival in Sto. Tomas (Last Week of February-March 7), Yamang Dagat Festival in Mabini (April 23), Pabitin Festival in Balete (May 1), Sublian Festival in Bauan (May 2), Balsa Festival in Lian (May 8), Pastulan Festival in San Pascual (May 14), Piyesta ng Tinapay in Cuenca (May 15), Grand La Paz in Alitagtag (last Sunday of May), Sigpawan Festival in Lemery (May 26), Regatta in Maria Paz, Tanauan City (May 30), Sinukmani Festival in Rosario (June 9), Lomi Festival in Lipa City (June 20), and Bancathon Festival in Calatagan (June 24). For the next six months of the year, people witness the colorful celebration of Sublian Festival in Batangas City (July 23), Maliputo Festival in San Nicolas (August 9), Kambingan Festival in Tuy (August 12), Bancaton Festival in San Nicolas (September 10), Anihan Festival in Lobo (September 27), Calacatchara Festival in Calaca (October 24), Kabakahan Festival in Padre Garcia (December 1), Mardi Gras in Nasugbu (December 2) and Lambayok Festival in San Juan (December 12). It is recommended to have one documentation or studies of all festivals being facilitated within the province of Batangas as part of promoting the culture and heritage of Batangueños.

Transport Service

The SM City Lipa Grand Terminal presents positive effects in terms of accessibility and convenience denoting its high level of consideration to the needs and convenience of the public in using the terminal. Security measures were used to ensure safety of the passengers. Tourists sometimes experience problems

within the premises of the terminal. The terminal may have available PUJ's for the commuters of every town or municipality in Lipa. The terminal may have to expand the availability of trips to other destinations. It may have medical facilities/assistance for the sick, elders, and persons with disabilities. Public assistance desk may be provided by the administration (Bautista et al., 2014).

The residents of San Juan specifically Brgy. Laiya Ibabao is familiar with those possible benefits and problem that may encounter in the future domestic airport in San Juan. The top three possible benefits that they may have in the future domestic airport according to the result and discussion were the contribution to government revenues and accessibility of tourist spot, attracts influx of tourist and encourage investors to develop scenic spots/resorts (Azote et al., 2013).

Environment

The three major agri-tourism farms in the fourth District of Batangas were Vilela's Farm, British Farm and Moca Farm. Agri-tourism in Batangas has socioeconomic effects to the residents of the fourth district of Batangas. Agri-tourism has no environmental effect as assessed by the residents of Batangas. The farm owner may think of many ways on how to attract more tourists. Batangas as an agricultural area may encourage Batangueños to plant organic products. The owner should have tourist's feedback forms to raise guest involvement, cooperation and responsiveness. Farm owners may review the proposed action plan to promote agricultural products (Recio et al., 2014).

The respondents in Ilijan, Batangas City believed that the environmental effect of ecotourism industry in their place can help it to enhance the conservation of the marine biodiversity. The effects of socio-cultural can help both the local residents and the tourists in imposing their quality human experiences. The implementation of the marketing promotions thru the help of local government can help them to the development and marketing of the destination. The participation of the local residents in the implementation of the tourism development plan may be solicited as with their local government (Aguila & Ragot, 2014).

The status of the mangroves in the coastal areas of San Juan, Batangas is continuously propagating and the local government does not neglect the mangrove plantations in the said Barangays, thus it is properly protected. Mangroves are beneficial to the residents of San Juan particularly in terms of environmental/ecological, economic and health. The government's level of support given to the mangrove plantation in terms of policies, management and planning and budget are highly implemented while in terms of promotion is implemented only. Local government and local tourism may provide marketing strategy for promoting mangrove plantation as a tourist attraction in the community (Miranda et al., 2013)

Culinary Tourism

Filipino Cuisine was the preferred cuisine of the local tourists in San Juan and also the food frequently offered by restaurants. Only gender shows significant difference on the cuisine preference among American, Chinese, Japanese and Italian cuisines. On the other hand, nature of work shows significant difference on the cuisine preference towards French cuisine. The status of culinary tourism in San Juan, Batangas as of today is average and the prospect of culinary tourism in the next year is very positive. The restaurant owner may enhance the food services of their restaurants to be more attractive and refreshing to the tourists. They may also provide additional services to satisfy tourists, improve the quality of the foods and the characteristics of people in San Juan. The local government may exert additional effort in promoting culinary tourism. The local municipal tourism office may conduct training for the restaurant owners in the area of culinary tourism in order to make good use of the local products available in San Juan, Batangas. Residents and restaurant owners may put emphasis on the home grown products of San Juan, Batangas and turn them into culinary masterpieces that will truly reflect the rich culture and tradition of San Juan (Kalalo et al., 2014).

The famous native restaurants in Batangas City are A&M Village Restaurant, Sawali Restaurant and The Only Place. The promotion of Batangas City specialty foods as an attraction makes the tourism industry of Batangas province more appealing and competitive. It awakens the people's awareness to economic and socio-cultural changes with an insight that Batangas City specialty food can be part of culinary tourism and can be a tourist attraction. Native restaurants provide economic benefits to Batangas City through promoting

tourism in the place. The benefits of having native restaurant include social awareness and more job opportunities for the residents which can improve their social condition. The provincial government of Batangas may have a closer coordination with its local government units to enhance culinary tourism. Promotion activities that may increase the awareness of local residents and visitors towards native specialty food may be designed. Programs may be implemented to enhance culinary tourism in Batangas City by promoting the local products, providing contests about different specialty food of Batangas City, advertising the different native food of Batangas City, promoting different festivals in Batangas City, exporting these products to different countries and distributing sample leaflets and brochures of the different native specialty food of Batangas City to tourists and potential customers (De Chavez et al., 2013)

Coffee shop is also considered important part of everyday lives of the people as a meeting place for corporate and social gatherings. Batangas is also known for its Café Barako, therefore, studying coffee shops as part of the tourist spot in the province is necessary. In the study of Barlan (2013), the coffee shop customers are satisfied in terms of courtesy of the staff, friendliness of the staff, well groomed and sensitivity to the guests needs. Customers are satisfied in terms of accessibility of the coffee shop and they are also satisfied when the food and beverages are served in their right temperature but not with its price because it is quite expensive for just a cup of coffee. The location of the coffee shop should be accessible to its target market and the ambiance should also be considered to satisfy its customers. From the interview conducted, the managers believe that people still want a cozy and chic atmosphere, thus they promise to give extra attention to the service to their discerning market expects and deserves.

Opportunities for Improvement

The level of financial support from the government and waste management and disposal concern are the problems encountered in preserving heritage tourism in Taal, Batangas. Financial constraints and accessibility of transportation are the problems encountered in the development of Taal as a tourist destination (Aguda, Tamayo & Barlan, 2013).

The respondents also find the top three possible problems that they may encounter in establishing domestic airport in San Juan were the increase of waste materials and garbage, followed by the increase of crime rates and the traffic congestion (Azote et al., 2013).

The main problem encountered in using social media is that, customers' opinions, thoughts and expressions are not well presented that leads to bad impressions and unfair criticism. One must be familiar with different social media applications to avoid the negative usage of social media. Tourism industries may continuously use social media as their promotional tool but they should be ready for an immediate action to the problems that may arise (Buted, Gillespie, Conti, Delgado, Marasigan, Rubico, Felicen, 2014).

The national and local government may continue giving assistance by way of financial support in the development of tourism infrastructure. Active participation of the private sector may be encouraged in the development of tourism infrastructure. The local government of Taal may offer financial assistance for small entrepreneurs to produce products. Others may conduct similar study using different variables (Aguda, Tamayo & Barlan, 2013).

Municipality of San Juan may implement rules and regulations to avoid possible problem that may occur. The different business establishments related to tourism must improve and develop their products, goods, and services they rendered, also their facilities to attract more tourist. Through air transportation, as mode of transportation, it will help the tourist to reach the destination faster and easier. The Municipality of San Juan should tighten the safety and security to ensure the protection of all residents and tourists (Azote et al., 2013).

Vizconde and Felicen (2012) recommend that local residents and other private sectors should be part of the planning and organizing of programs and projects for the continuous development of the province without destroying the resources instead preserving its culture and heritage. Each municipality of the Province of Batangas as well as the owners of private attractions should further develop their tourist attractions by providing best services, amenities at an affordable price (Vizconde & Felicen, 2012).

Business establishments in Batangas can also be improved its services and business owners may offer services that would cater the needs of the tourists like Spa Tourism which one study conducted wherein majority of the spa businesses in Batangas City owned by a single person (sole proprietorship) has been in the business for 4-6 years, considered as SPA TOWN and always using mineral water with peat pulp and bathing services. Spa centers enhance the awareness of the tourists about the beauty of the place. Spa business in Batangas city strictly adheres to the standards set by the government. The spa in Batangas City must identify the essence of spa tourism and how it can help the economy (Atienza, 2014).

4. Conclusion

It is in this context that tourism really provides opportunity to create employment for local residents through establishing small business enterprise and for the investors to establish large scale business industries in the area. It also nourishes the Filipino traditions through celebrating various festivities and religious activities that symbolize the rich culture of the country. Batangas is famous in beaches because of its geographical location. Taal Volcano is another tourist attraction in the province of Batangas but it can be best viewed in Tagaytay City. The researchers have always recommendation to the Local Government Units of each municipality to strengthen the tourism development programs in cooperation with the private sectors who owned the resorts and other business firms.

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