

Status and Prospects of Agri-Tourism in Selected Municipalities of the 4th District of Batangas

Bianca Venus L. Recio, Kareen Angelica M. De Ade, Christine Joy M. Esguerra, Saharah A. Mandanas, Jissel T. Masangkay, Jessica A. Mendania, Jennie Margaret Apritado

Bachelor of Science in International Travel and Tourism Management, College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management, Lyceum of the Philippines University, Batangas City, Philippines

Date Received: April 25, 2014; Date Published: August 15, 2014

Abstract – *The study was to identify the profile of the agri-tourism sites in the selected municipalities in the 4th district of Batangas. Specifically, it determines the status and prospects of agri-tourism in the selected municipalities in the 4th district of Batangas in terms of Socio-Economic and Environmental Aspects; and have proposed an action plan to promote the agri-tourism as a destination.*

The researchers have conducted the study to see how the agri-tourism benefits the community in terms of their economy and environmental aspects. This study have provided more awareness to the community about the Agri-tourism in the place. In addition this research educates people to be more vigilant enough on giving importance on the Agri-tourism we have in Batangas. Results showed that 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 socio-economic effects to the residents of the fourth district of Batangas. Agri-tourism has no environmental effect as assessed by the residents of Batangas.

Keywords: *Agri-Tourism, Socio-Economic, Environmental Aspect*

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the industries that is currently boosting nowadays. It has grown into one of the world's major industries and has thus also become increasingly important (Aguba, Tamayo & Barlan, 2013). Although tourism has been popular, it cannot deny the fact problem do exist that hinder tourist growth in every place (Buted, Ylagan & Mendoza, 2014).

It is a dynamic and competitive industry that requires the ability to constantly adapt to customers' changing needs and desires, as the customer's satisfaction, safety and enjoyment are particularly the focus of tourism businesses. It is a major contributor to the economy of the Philippines. There are different branches of tourism; under this is the Industrial tourism.

Industrial tourism presents opportunities, when it comes to income and as a tool of management, for individual firms who open their doors - and consequently their local regions - to the public. According to Otgaar (2010) industrial tourism is a type of tourism which involves visits to operational companies and industrial heritage; it offers visitors an experience with regard to products, applications and historical backgrounds. Industrial tourism is classified

into different dimension such as, Arts And Crafts, Industrial Facilities and Agri-tourism for visitors.

On the other hand, Sznajder (2009) emphasized that agri-tourism is style of vacation that is normally spent on farms. The term agri-tourism is understood differently by tourists and providers of agri-tourists services.

One of the important issues in rural tourism is that many providers are involved in tourism. For example, the main business of a farm is in managing land, stock, machinery and the land. Family labour tends to be the main source of assistance in farm tourism enterprises. Successful farm tourism development requires substantive capital input, marketing, reliance on external advice and finance, (Page & Connell, 2012).

The Philippines topography is very ideal for Agri-tourism. Agri-tourism farms, such as those in Benguet and Guimaras, are scattered throughout the country. Leisure farms or farm resorts, as they are called by the Department of Tourism (DOT), have sprung up in different regions of the country. These are farms with resort, accommodation, and dining components. Representatives Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and Diosdado Macapagal Arroyo have filed House Bill No.

1808 in the 15th congress to promote agri-tourism in the country. The bill also proposes tax credits to registered Agri-tourism activities to help offset the expenses of venturing into Agri-tourism and to provide technical assistance to farmers who wish to enter the Agri-tourism Business (Lesaca, 2012).

According to the article of Fernandez (2012), an agri-tourism industry is taking shape in the country. Research is being harnessed to unravel the vast potential of this fledgling venture, whose development can considerably perk up the rural economy. Encouragingly, state colleges and universities (SCUs) across the country are taking the lead in developing this new field. It refers to working farms, ranches, winery, or any agriculture operation being opened to the public for their enjoyment and also for outdoor recreation activities, education, shopping, dining, or even lodging.

Agri-tourism generally activates as a small family enterprises, both socially and economically profitable. Also, it assists to mitigate emigration from remote areas and generate profit by diversifying economy. The cultural exchange of development with urban and rural areas adds quality to their life (Iorio et. al., 2010). Development of appropriate agricultural and environmental policies should produce and market agricultural products, to create job opportunities in agricultural and non-agricultural sector, to increase the contribution of agricultural productivity to national income and rural people (Zunic, 2011).

Indrayanti (2010) stressed that many travelers today are choosing their destinations based on the eco-friendly business practices followed by hotels and tourist attractions. As part of citizens in a global world, they do not only want to protect the environment but they also want to witness how it is done and experience it themselves. Dadua Jr. et al., (2010) found out that Agro tourism is most popular in Batangas province. The concept of Agro tourism is a direct expansion of Ecotourism which encourages visitors to experience agricultural life at first hand. Agro tourism is gathering strong support from small communities as rural people have realized the benefits of sustainable development brought about similar forms of nature travel.

The provinces development program undertakes projects and activities such as human resource development, cultural and historical enhancement, product promotion, tourism promotion, services/domestic tourism promotion, ecotourism and destination development (Reyes, 2012). Tew (2010) examined the perceived performance of agri-tourism through two indirect indicators: their willingness to

recommend agri-tourism to other farmers and their plans for further development of recreational activities.

Mnguni (2010) emphasized that agri-tourism is increasingly recognized as a means of enterprise diversification for most agricultural producers and in most cases, it is developed and adopted by developed farmers, worldwide. In addition, the study conducted by Ochterski (2008) entitled "Getting Started in Agri-tourism", farm agri-tourism experience provides an excellence opportunity for day tripper so start focusing media outreach in communities within an hour drive of the farm. Target major population center starts with a weekend openhouse to test the draw experience so that you meet the expectation. Agri-tourism combines with ecotourism, edutourism and culinary tourism. Most agri-tourism enterprises are located in rural area, where customer or few and far between to be successful at attracting visitors, an agri-tourism enterprise must become a destination where regional visitor will intentionally visit.

Since Batangas is very rich in agricultural lands and products it is very suitable to have and develop agri-tourism here in our province. Batangas is visited due to the affordability of the tourist attractions and destinations including the amenities offered (Vizconde & Felicen, 2012). Agri-tourism in Batangas is a new emerging kind of tourist attraction that focuses on the way of living of the farmers and also to educate people about the agri-tourism business. The best example of Agri-tourism sites here in the province is the Vilela's Farm, British Farm and Moca Farm. Vilela's Farm is located at Ibaan, Batangas. It is the first farm to be accredited by the Department of Tourism as a Farm Site Destination. Another farm is owned by Mrs. Irene Triffit, is the British Farm that is located in Brgy. Salao, Rosario, Batangas.

The researchers conducted the study to see how the agri-tourism benefits the community in terms of their economy and environmental aspects. This study provides awareness to the community about the Agri-tourism in the place. In addition, this research is to educate people to be more vigilant enough on giving importance on the Agri-tourism we have in Batangas.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to determine the status and prospects of the Agri-tourism in the selected municipalities of the fourth District of Batangas in terms of socio-economic and environmental aspect; and to propose an action plan to promote the Agri-tourism as a tourist destination.

III. METHOD

Research Design

In order to determine the needed information regarding the status of the agri-tourism in the selected municipalities in 4th district of Batangas, the descriptive method of research was used in this study. This method includes the collection of data to answer questions concerning the status of the subject.

Descriptive method of research, on the other hand, as opposed to an experimental or normative method, develops knowledge by describing observed situations, events and objects. The descriptive method is used in most branches of science, as well as in social sciences. The goal of the descriptive method is to learn more about something as it already exists without causing any changes to it (Robinson, 2010).

Participants

A total of 100 respondents were used in order to determine the effects of agri-tourism in Batangas. The tourists and residents of the selected municipalities as the respondents were randomly selected for the determination of the present condition of the study.

Instrument

Survey questionnaire was used as the main data gathering instrument for the study. The questionnaire was composed of two main sections. The first section is the profile that contains the profiles of the farms. The second part is the survey proper that explores the perceptions of the respondents on the status of agri-tourism particularly on the Socio-economic and Environment Aspects. The survey part of the questionnaire contains questions that were structure using the Likert format. Four choices were provided for every question or statement. The choices represent the degree of agreement for each respondent on the given question.

Procedure

The primary forms of the questionnaire are referred to the adviser for comments and suggestions regarding the format and item content, the suggestions served as guidelines for the revision of questionnaire. The questionnaire generated using qualified questions modified from related research and subjective questions formed by the researchers. In this study, questions were comprised the participants' perception concerning the status and prospects of the agri-tourism in the selected municipalities in 4th District of Batangas. The researchers conducted visitation in the farms and interviewed the farm owner, the nearby area and in the municipalities to gather information about the topic of the research. The researchers have gathered the questionnaire immediately after the respondents have answered it on that same day.

Data Analysis

After the collection of the questionnaire, the answers were tallied, tabulated and analyzed. Different statistical treatment were used and recorded.

Weighted mean was used in determining the status and prospects of the agri-tourism in the selected municipalities of the fourth district of Batangas in terms of socio-economic and environmental aspect.

The interpretation of the total responses of all respondents for every question used on the scale below by computing the weighted mean: 3.50 – 4.00 –Strongly Agree (SA); 2.50 – 3.49 –Agree (A); 1.50 – 2.49 – Disagree (D); 1.00 – 1.49 –Strongly Disagree (SD).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 presents the status and prospects of the agri-tourism in the selected Municipalities of the fourth District of Batangas in terms of socio-economic aspect.

Table 1. Status and Prospects of the Agri-tourism in the Selected Municipalities of the Fourth District of Batangas in terms of Socio-economic Aspect (N=100)

Socio-economic	WM	VI	Rank
1. Improve the living of the agri-tourism business.	3.60	Strongly Agree	5.5
2. Upgrade social condition of the community.	3.61	Strongly Agree	3.5
3. Contribute to the economic growth in Batangas as an agri-business.	3.61	Strongly Agree	3.5
4. Increases demand production of the local agricultural products.	3.56	Strongly Agree	7
5. Agricultural products (rice, herbs and spices, organic plants, vegetables, poultry products, etc.)became part of the trading industry.	3.65	Strongly Agree	1
6. The agricultural business provides additional revenues to the local government.	3.60	Strongly Agree	5.5
7. Promotes local agricultural products of the farm	3.63	Strongly Agree	2
Composite Mean	3.61	Strongly Agree	

It can be observed from Table 1 that the respondents strongly agreed that the agri-tourism in the selected municipalities of the fourth District of Batangas has an effect on the socio-economic aspects having a composite mean of 3.614.

The entire items yield high to very high mean ranging from 3.56-3.65 interpreted as “Strongly Agree” and “Agree”. As seen from the results, agricultural products became part of the trading industry got the highest rank having a weighted mean of 3.65 and was strongly agreed by the respondents. It is followed by promoting local agricultural products of the farm which got the weighted mean of 3.63.

According to the interview with the farm owners it is stated that agriculture can be one of the most satisfying and rewarding ways to make living. From farming and food production to forestry, agribusinesses contributed to the health of the population and security of the community. Stating and running an agricultural business involves a lot of paperwork, regulations and technical know-how.

As the researchers conducted tours at Vilela’s Farm, Moca Farm and British Farm, they all have different varieties of plants and vegetables, agricultural products such as Dill, Coriander, Celery, Cherry Tomato, Lemon Basil, Rosemary, Tarragon, Peppermint, Spearmint, Chocomint, Italian Oregano, Thyme, Stevia, Grapes, Vanilla, King Mandarin, letus, sunflower, corn and a lot more.

Like many farmers, the owners are looking for agricultural opportunities to add revenue to their traditional farming operation. As they continued to

explore new opportunities like small-scale, local food production and agri-tourism, they preserved the traditional crops grown on their family farm for decades; sugarcane and spices.

However, the lowest three in rank such as “Improve the living of the agri-tourism business.”, “The agricultural business provides additional revenues to the local government.” And “Increases demand production of the local agricultural products” were agreed by the respondent which has weighted mean 3.56 and 3.60 respectively. According to the study conducted by Otchterki (2008), Agritourism provides an additional source of revenue for farms that allows them to keep farming and increase the quality of life for their family.

Based from the formulated data, this implies that the agricultural products have less demand from the consumer. More so, agritourism business was being improved to benefit community and local government as well. Agritourism in the selected municipalities in the fourth district of Batangas produces different products that becomes or serves a big part in the tourism industry which got the highest rank next to it which ranked no. 2 stated that the respondents believe that, agritourism help promotes local agricultural products of the farm on the other hand it is shown in our survey that the respondents agreed that when it comes to the socio economic aspect, agritourism helps upgrade social condition of the community and contribute to the economic growth in Batangas as an agri-business having the same weighted mean of 3.61. It is for the reason that the farms revenues contributes to the socio-economic growth in the the 4th district of Batangas.

Table 2. Status and Prospects of the Agri-tourism in the Selected Municipalities of the Fourth District of Batangas in terms of Environmental Aspect (N=100)

Environment	WM	VI	Rank
1. The development of agri-tourism posts hazard to the natural environment.	1.94	Disagree	5
2. The agricultural products increase generation of waste.	2.05	Disagree	4
3. Development of agri-tourism causes degradation of the landscape and natural resources.	1.88	Disagree	6
4. The agricultural business supports the clean and green project of the area (Go Green Environment, Zero Waste Management, Three Rs Waste Management).	2.92	Agree	1
5. The agricultural business decreases the available land scape.	2.17	Disagree	3
6. Proper implementation of land used or zoning.	2.83	Agree	2
7. Agri-business destructs the flora and fauna.	1.75	Disagree	7
Composite Mean	2.22	Disagree	

Based on the Table 2 the agricultural business supports the clean and green project with the weighted mean as 2.92, rank as number 1 verbally implemented

as Agree. While, the proper implementation of land used or zoning with weighted mean 2.83, rank as number two with verbal interpretation as Agree.

Therefore, the two aspects received better attention from the local government.

The Agri-tourism or sometimes called “farm or rural tourism” is a fast expanding tourism product which acts as a supplemental activity to the main activity of farming. This is characterized by a link between travel and products, services, and experiences of the agriculture and food systems, (www.gov.nf.ca).

According to the researchers’ interview with the owners of British farm, they said that they are willing to invite children from different schools whether public or private schools. This is for the reason that the couple would like to educate the children to be more vigilant enough to take good care or give importance to the environment so as to give importance to farming or agri-tourism aspect. It is important that children nowadays or even in the future generations must learn the importance and benefits of farming and planting. In fact according to the owners, they are willing to offer some parts of their land to some schools for them to actually exercise farming. It is a proof that people engaged in agritourism business are properly using their land not only to provide agricultural products but also to provide access to educate the people to know deeply the importance and benefits of agritourism.

On the other hand, the destruction of flora and fauna by agri-business and the development of agri-tourism and causes degradation of the landscape and natural resources with weighted mean of 1.75 and 1.88 respectively both has verbal interpretation of Disagree. The respondents do not believe that the Agri-business has a negative effect on the flora and fauna, whereas the

development of agri-tourism negatively degrades the landscape and natural resources.

According to the interview that the researchers had with the Farm Owners, from using high-yielding hybrid varieties, the owners also employ improved techniques of production. They prepare their land for planting thoroughly. They are proud to say that unlike any other farms; they used only organic fertilizer for their plants and crops. Farm life need not to be boring, for Moca Farm, communing with nature means communing with people.

In fact, the agri-business maintain the environment while, the development of agri-tourism innovates their landscape for better purpose and protects the natural resources for better presentation in the Tourism Industry and other sector benefiting from the changes. This study examined the perceived performance of agritourism through two indirect indicators: their willingness to recommend agritourism to other farmers and their plans for further development of recreational activities.

The research tackles about the agritourism in the province more specifically in the 4th District of Batangas. It can be seen that agritourism has an effect in the socio-economic aspect. it helps in the economic growth of the local community and also teach the local and the tourists to appreciate more the nature and also the life in the farms. Agritourism proved that it doesn’t have any negative effect when it comes to our environment. The agritourism is a special enterprise or feature at a working farm to attract, educate, and inspire visitors. It can be a source of supplemental income for your farm and it really helps non-farmers understand the enormous effort it takes to run a farm.

Table 3. Plan of Improvement

Key Result Area	Objective	Activities	Person Involved
Socio Economic Improve agri-tourism business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides all year around source of living for local community. • To promote agri-business as a tourist destination to the society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct livelihood program for alternative source of living • Coordinate with the DOT, provincial tourism and with the travel agencies for the promotion of the selected farms in the 4th district of Batangas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government Unit • Non-Government Organization • Department of Environment and Natural Resources • Department of Agriculture • Travel Agencies • Department of Tourism • Local Government Unit • Department of Agriculture

Table 3 (cont). Plan of Improvement

Key Result Area	Objective	Activities	Person Involved
Environment			
Agricultural Business supports the clean and green projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To strengthen the environmental understanding among the residents and government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct seminars and workshop about the implementation of the clean and green projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provincial and Municipal Local Government Unit Local Community Department of Agriculture
Proper implementation of land usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proper implementation of land usage To ensure that any future development activities do not adversely affect the ecological, archeological, historic, landscape and natural character values of the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For additional activity like camping, team building. Conduct Seminars and workshop about the proper implementation of land use or zoning. Interactive activities wherein tourists could be part of the agricultural activities while appreciating the value of the products. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provincial and Municipal Local Government Unit Local Community Department of Agriculture Provincial and Municipal Local Government Unit Local Community Department of Agriculture

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

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 socio-economic effects to the residents of the fourth district of Batangas. Agri-tourism has no environmental effect as assessed by the residents of Batangas. Proposed action plan was devised by the researchers to enhance/promote agricultural products.

It is recommended that the farm owner should 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. Future researches may conduct similar study containing additional variables.

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