

STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT OF TOURISM ASSETS AND SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT IN BULA, CAMARINES SUR

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Abstract: This study focuses on ecotourism site development plan in Bula, Camarines Sur which answers: identified ecotourism destinations in Bula, Camarines Sur; profile of the identified ecotourism destinations (Tourist Appeal, Accessibility, Products, Ecotourism Activities and Attractions, Facilities, and Safety and Security); how feasible are the identified ecotourism destinations for further development; what tourism development plan can be formulated in Bula, Camarines Sur. Conclusions: 1. The identified ecotourism destinations are Ballester Spring, Nalalata Falls and Caves, Itangon Beach, Caorasan Beach, Nadal Spring, Alina Resort, Papa Rudy's Resort, Tan-awan Nature's Park, St. Mary Magdalene Parish Church, and San Vicente Ferrer Shrine; 2. Profile (tourist appeal, accessibility, Products, Ecotourism activities and attractions, facilities, and safety and security. Accessibility: All the identified ecotourism spots were accessible to all forms of transportation and facilities are not much offered in the place. Development of the places are still needed; 3. Tan-Awan Nature's Park, Nalalata Falls and Caorasan Beach are considered as most feasible ecotourism spot to be developed; and 4. A developmental plan is a necessity. Recommendations: Tourist spot owners. The owners are well-guided in the plan. Tourism promotion should also be improved. Local Tourism Council. The office may plan an eco-tourism program on their tourist attraction to encourage more tourists. LGU-Bula PNP. Peace and security of the place are among the factors being considered for tourists aside from accommodation and amenities offered by the tourist spot. Researchers. Their study can be used as a guide for any improvement of the ecotourism spot/destination.

Keywords: Ecotourism, Site, Development Plan, Tourism Destination

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Tourism, both domestic and international, is taking place on such a large scale that has become a major economic activity in the world. We have inherited a big world, beautiful, green and full of fascinating human beings, animals and birds, oceans, grasslands, forests and deserts. Every place on earth is known and shown on the map. As such, ecotourism is a growing niche market within the larger travel industry, with the potential of being an important sustainable development tool. Its definition results to conserving natural areas, educating visitors about sustainability and benefiting local people. Proper planning and management critical to ecotourism's development otherwise it will threaten the biological diversity upon which it depends, (Cruz, 2006).

As the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon (2007) cited that, Tourism's contributes to development also advanced the cause of global solidarity. At a time of profound global economic uncertainty, tourism's ability to generate socio-economic opportunities and help reduce the gap between rich and poor is more important than ever.

In developing countries like the Philippines, ecotourism is strongly promoted such that it gives infrastructure development and paves way to job opportunities like small enterprises, investment and motivation to protect wildlife and forests as natural resources. Pursuing ecotourism and other alternative tourism are necessary in upgrading the variety of tourism industry, thus tapping its potential. Hence, the Philippines has a great potential to become a major tourist destination. It has a wide area of water territories, large patches of tropical rainforests, the biodiversity and endemism are so great. Hence, any person interested in natural sceneries would think that Philippines is a gold mine for studies.



In Region V, the Department of Tourism identified four key of ecotourism sites in region which include Mayon Volcano in Albay; Mt. Isarog in Camarines Sur; Whale Shark “Butanding” interaction in Donsol, Sorsogon; and Bulusan Lake in Bulusan, Sorsogon. Each key ecotourism site has a cluster of several tourist destinations, either natural or human-made destinations. While the potential ecotourism destinations are: Bogsanglay Natural Park in Masbate; Caramoan in Camarines Sur, Prieto Diaz in Sorsogon; and Mt. Isarog. (DOT, 2007-2014)

In the local setting, potential scenic spots can be developed as tourist destinations by the locality with the help of the local government unit. Hence, a development plan is needed to address the demand, and to provide these services to people like that of Bula as an eco-tourist destination. Ecotourism development in Bula is an investment, the need to create improvement, hence, the need of this study. Likewise it help in ensuring the sustainability use, growth, management, protection and conservation of the country’s environment and natural resources and cultural heritage for the enjoyment of the people; and provide the local government information from the gathered facts in the development and promotion of tourist industry in the town.

Furthermore, the researcher believe that planning and development is very essential in improving the tourism industry in Bula, Camarines Sur, as well as in preserving and sustaining the place. This study aim to discover the best assets of the municipality that can be offered to both local and foreign tourist and to evaluate ecotourism industry in Bula, Camarines Sur. Moreover, this study will create improvement and will help in the promotion of the place and it will also give the local residents the knowledge about their responsibilities in the place including preservation, conservation, maintenance and sustainable development that will surely benefit them and the entire constituents of Bula, Camarines Sur.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Ecotourism is an increasingly popular form of tourism in which tourists seek out wild and scenic areas such as rainforests and mountains for an active and educational trip. It is a growing source revenue for the long-term management and care of more than 33,000 protected areas worldwide.

Pierce (2010), in his book, viewed tourist destinations from the five broad sectors namely attractions, transport, accommodation, supporting facilities and infrastructure. He explains that attractions encourage tourists to visit the locations, the transport services enable them to do so, the accommodations and supporting facilities like (e.g shops, banks, restaurants and hotel) cater for the tourist’s well-being during their stay, and the infrastructure assures the essential functioning of all above sectors.

Hoa Le (2012), since the early 1990s, Vietnam has become a new tourist destination in the world, due to its magnificent landscape, abundant biodiversity and distinctive culture. The Vietnamese government has accommodated their young tourism industry substantially, especially when they considered as on key focus of the national tourism development strategies. Weaknesses in their governance, insufficient and inefficient guidelines and regulations, enterprises’ low capacity in management and operation, and the continually increasing members of visitors oriented toward conventional tourism ventures mere the causes for the low quality of ecotourism in the country. From this perspective, it is argued that there is a need for a model with tools which enable interested entities to develop ecotourism with high quality products and to its principles in consideration of Vietnamese context. Hence, enterprises have encountered are sufficiency of qualified human resource, lack of expertise and access knowledge of what to do establishing and operating an ecotourism business. Being practical as well as proving more opportunities for the research results to be implemented, this research has taken enterprises as its target for the provision of effective and efficient guidance and framework for ecotourism development.

Mowforth and Munt (2010) explained that the latest trend in the tourism industry is called “ecotourism”, which refers to travel that combines preserving the natural world and sustaining the well-being of human cultures that inhabit it. In general, ecotourism openly promotes environmentally friendly travel and seeks to ensure that visitors do not disturb the natural environment of flora and fauna, nor they leave behind rubbish and hazardous materials, which can disrupt the delicate ecosystem.

In the book of Masan entitled *Tourism Impacts, Planning and Management* (2008) states that the major geographical focus of tourism planning and management are tourism destinations. It is here, in the destinations that tourist encounter and interact with the local community and the local environment. This interaction leads to impacts on the local population, the environment and also on the tourists themselves. These impacts can be beneficial in relation to, for example the local economy. However, the encounter between the tourist and the destination they are

visiting can also lead to for example, damage to the local environment. It is in relation to these impacts that much tourism planning and management is targeted.

In the book of David L. Edgell et. al. (2008) entitled *Tourism Policy and Planning Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* cited that the strategic overview or “plan”, for Kansan, as for any state, is multifaceted. The socio-economic environmental benefits from tourism are powerful. Tourism development for the state of Kansan has many attributes, especially with respect to its particular combination of natural, scenic, historical, archaeological, cultural, and heritage attraction. As already established herein, tourism is growth industry, and while growth may show some slowing in the short term, the long-term prospects are good, with expected growth based on continuously rising per capital incomes, lower travel costs, increased leisure time and changes consumers’ tastes and preferences toward travel, recreation and leisure goods and services. While tourism had many positive attributes for a community, it should not be regarded as a panacea for all the area’s development problems.

Tourism offers many opportunities for members of the lost community to participate in cultural and historical attractions or event. Added to the direct economic benefits reaped by local artisans and tourism industry employees are increased pride in the (local) heritage, enhanced self-worth, or global recognition through bringing the world and its cultures to the destination doorstep market demand is now forcing communities to considered a full range of impacts as a means to stay competitive, as a illustrative by coastal communities recognition that visitors come seeking clean beaches and, in many cases, a certain amount of tranquillity has been noted such as, “the user’s willingness to pay in increasing function of beach quality.”

The Philippines is gifted nation with bio-diverse flora and fauna which serves as virtual canvass to a lot of picturesque sceneries spread out in its 7,107 islands. People around the world are not only attracted to the bounties of the country but also fall in love, literally, with almost all the island they visit, enjoying nature at its best.

In the book of Alampay, Ramon (2007) entitled “Sustainable Tourism: Challenges for the Philippines” states that sustainable tourism development is more generally understood to apply to tourism activity at the destination or community level, as well as at the enterprise or business level. Thus, the studies that focused on community or place specific issues magnify better the interplay between economic, equity, and environmental concerns of sustainable development. Tourism is primarily a business as the WTO states: “It is ... important to ensure that ecotourism is a good, economically sustainable business and that profits are generated from it. If there are no prospects for profit, then private entrepreneurs will not invest and there will be no benefits to distribute for local communities or conservation purposes” In the handbook of Masip (2011) entitled *Tourism Product Development* outlines the process in the tourism product creation, the foundation for the creation. The foundation of creation process is the existence of, a motivation to travel and the resource/ attractions in the destinations. The creation process itself consists of developing the specific activities or experiences. The combined resources, activities, and experiences will now comprise the tourism supply of the destination. Further steps involve communicating the functional and emotional benefits of the tourism supply to markets and targets audiences through branding and correct positioning. The end result should be the consumption management organization that should lead, coordinate, structure, develop and implement the process, taking into account the triple bottom-line.

Supported by the UNWTO and ETC identify the principles of product development. These cover infrastructure, attractions, activities, amenities, accommodation, and facilities that are connected to satisfying the needs of the visitors. To know what kind of tourism products one must develop, there should be a keen understanding of the profile, characteristics, tasks, and trends of various markets segments and knowing the full range of tourist resources that the place has to offer and take advantage of what day have. Develop activities around the natural assets of the destination. Specify types of tourist will have a set of expectations that must be met. The satisfaction is achieved when such expectations are met by actual delivery of performance/ experience and be able to identify the tourism products that may satisfy the needs and wants of the target market.

In the article of Bartilad (2013) posted in Manila Bulletin, it stated that the new ecological tourism (ecotourism) sites has been established by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). It seeks to strengthen the conservation of natural assets of a community and promote responsible travel within natural and cultural heritage areas to conserve the environment, manage indigenous knowledge and practices, upgrade the welfare of local peoples and communities, and promote educational and life-changing experiences.

In National Tourism Development Plan 2011-2016, the Department of Tourism (DOT) is banking on ecotourism as vehicle to protect the environment, develop opportunities in rural communities and educate tourists on practices and preservation.

Among the foreign studies, Drakopoulou (2008), in his revision on promoting sustainability in tourism in Greece stated that in order to develop sustainable tourism strategies, it is crucial to realize, first, the contribution of tourism to the restoration of regional and local balance, as well as, to the preservation and management of territorial resources. Ecotourism is a very promising choice form of tourist that has been advance ground in the preferences of tourists during the past years and is expected to become even more popular in the future. Ecotourism has the potential to become a driver to sustainable tourism development in Greece provided that it is actually implemented in a way that it truly respects its fundamental principles. Ecotourism provides opportunities for the development of the disadvantage, marginal and rural areas which are of vital importance. It constitutes a very promising tool for reversing the negative demographic and economic trends of these remote areas that often suffer from intense depopulation.

The study of Teye (2007) on development of tourism in Ghana states that in the case of most African countries, the rationale for tourism development is primarily economic and two levels: macro or nation or micro or local. At the macro level, tourism is expected to promote economic growth by generating foreign exchange as well as increase various forms of government revenue. At the micro level, tourism is expected to facilitate job creation, income and revenue distribution, and a balanced regional development, which ultimately should improve the quality of life of residents. The first major step in the formal development of tourism in Ghana was an evaluation of the country's tourism resources in 1970, 13 years after independence in potential tourism resources for a five-year development plan covering the period 1972-1976. As a result of this study, the government issued White Paper on Tourism, which identified investment areas for foreign participations, including various concessions and incentives for investors. Between 1972 and 1978, number of important studies were carried on various aspects of Ghana's tourist industry. In order for the tourism plan to be successfully implemented, a number of challenges have to be met.

The first challenge is the human resource capacity needed to implement an ambitious national tourism development plan in coordinated manner, with a municipality of public and private sector entities at the national, regional and local levels. The second challenge lies in the financing of the plan with respect to general infrastructure, tourism facilities, attractions, marketing and delivery of quality tourism services. . Four main avenues have been recommended for financing the plan, namely: a. government funding; b. establishment of a Tourism Development Fund; c. obtaining international donor assistance; and d. attracting private sector investment. The third challenge is with regard to air transportation access into Ghana from overseas markets. The projected annual arrivals figure which is in excess of one million visitors obviously depends on increased access from the main tourist-generating countries into Ghana.

The study of Ene and Baraitarul (2010) on "Sustainable Development Strategies in Domestic and International Tourism" emphasizes that tourism can bring both advantages and disadvantages to a region. Through careful planning, tourism can also create new jobs and increase revenue. Expansion of tourism activity even leads to the creation of new jobs and has beneficial effects on the qualifications of training level of the workforce. The prosperity of a region as a result of tourism development occurs in several phases: 1. immediately, following the direct consumption of tourism products; 2. short term, by continuing to absorb labor to welcome and encourage trade; and 3. long term, by the capital concentration in investment in general infrastructure and the tourism, travel and accommodation structures in the development of urban services.

Given the importance of economic, social and political development of tourism, its overall contribution to the development of a region, the necessity for the development, implementation and promotion of the tourism development of a region, the necessity for the development, implementation and promotion of the tourism development strategies seems obvious, not only nationally but also regionally. One aspect that should be taken into account in developing such strategies is the compliance principles of sustainable development, aiming at the development of tourism while respecting the requirements for protecting the natural environment, taking into account the specific objectives of each area or region. The sustainable tourism is an alternative form of tourism but it is based on the following principles: 1. Minimizing the impacts of tourism on the natural environment to achieve environmental sustainability by improving the conservation status by returning a portion of revenues from the protected area; 2. Minimizing negative impacts of tourism on the local community and its members to achieve social sustainability; 3. Minimizing negative impacts of tourism on culture/ traditions/ habits of local communities in order to achieve cultural sustainability; 4. Maximizing the local economic benefits as a result of tourism development to achieve economic sustainability; and 5. Education, training, information for all those involved in tourism. The local community is involved and consulted in all matters regarding the sustainable development tourism, being an active decision maker.

In the local studies, Trousalde (2008) had investigated the gap between tourism planning and implementation in Boracay. Research concerning development control on the island of Boracay in the Philippines suggested that

politics and governance in this democratic nation play a great role in bridging the gap when lack of information, knowledge, or concern among residents or tourist occurs. A survey from residents and tourists revealed that they were so concerned with the unregulated degradation of the island due to lack of implementation and enforcement of existing development control guidelines. The residents surveyed identified lack of monitoring, lack of political will, poor public awareness, and lack of administrative skills. This case study suggested that tourism research should focus on ways to improve governance in tourism destination rather than the widely appreciated negative impacts of tourism development.

Baldos (2007) in her study conducted to find out the reactions of the residents on the promotion of ecotourism in Ambongdolan. Reviewed the activities being done, the support structures that are present and which are still needed, and the plans for ecotourism. Furthermore, it looked into community perception on how promotion of ecotourism may be done and identified the ideal potential areas. It also aimed to determine the demographic profile of the tourists visiting Ambongdolan in order to identify their market segments, motivations, the specific attractions seen, the facilities and services that were availed of, satisfaction level, and the problems encountered.

Serrano (2011) in his study assessed that the Donsol, Sorsogon has been into Whale Shark Watching Activity for more than thirteen years, and such industry brought Donsol into economic prosperity. It has resulted to various alternative livelihood sources to the villagers and has produced various annual activities and program for the entire municipality. In view of ecotourism as a conservation tool towards sustainable development, Donsol community stakeholders played a vital role in the development of ecotourism activities and on furthering tourism value of the site through education in filtration. The good transition of the responsibilities from accommodation, small-medium industries supporting tourism, and other interconnected industries have harmoniously organized a circumventing proportionality of symbiosis that each and every industry support one another and reduce the negative impacts of overlapping activity. Thus, this has made Donsol a good model of ecotourism center in the Philippines, if not in the global perspective.

Briones and Sangcap (2010) in their study identified the status and prospect of the different waterfalls in Rinconada as contributory factor in Rinconada to be an ecotourism destination, though it lacks basic tourism elements. Rinconada area is eyed as a potential ecotourism site. Thus, the researcher recommended the following: 1. services; 2. the program of reservation and rehabilitations of the selected waterfalls will be helpful in boosting the development of the places; and 3. creation of the developmental plan will help the aim of uplifting the local government of Bula, Baao, and Buhi and of boosting the economy through tourism.

Lastly, Brabante (2011) in her assessment of Mt. Isarog National Park as an ecotourism destination revealed that it is being carried out for the purpose of exploring, appreciating and educating individuals toward the realization of the importance of the nature to the industry. Furthermore, she concluded that the Mt. Isarog National Park is a good potential for eco-tourism development thus, it needs general and urgent necessities for the national park to be fully developed.

The respondents identified the following current ecotourism activities: sightseeing, plunging/caving, swimming, and hiking. Potential activities were also identified as follows: bird watching, mountaineering, and camping. For these activities, the following structures are ready in place: roads, electricity, tour guides, comfort rooms, bridges, and an information center. However, road improvements, rest house/lodging house/hotels, communication facilities, and safety gadgets, are still to be installed. The views of the community folks on how they can help promote ecotourism include the following: fostering unity and cooperation among themselves beautification of roads and pathways, maintaining cleanliness, putting of waste cans on the road, maintenance of some available facilities, and giving a warm perception to the tourist. Consequently, this project as it invites tourists will eventually augment the coffers of the locality. More jobs will be created; and there will be economic prosperity.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to analyze the potential of Bula, Camarines Sur as a tourism destination by identifying its natural, recreational, cultural, and religious attractions. Specifically, it sought to describe the profile of the identified tourism attractions in terms of tourist appeal, including uniqueness, historical value, sociocultural value, and natural aesthetics; accessibility, including location, distance from the poblacion, and available modes of transportation; tourism products offered; existing ecotourism and recreational activities; distinctive natural, cultural, and religious features; availability and adequacy of visitor facilities and amenities; and safety and security conditions. It also aimed to determine which among the identified attractions have the greatest potential and feasibility for further tourism development, identify concerns related to accessibility, facilities, maintenance, safety, environmental conservation,

tourism promotion, and community participation, and propose a sustainable tourism development plan to enhance the accessibility, facilities, promotion, preservation, management, and overall competitiveness of tourism attractions in Bula, Camarines Sur.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study made use of descriptive research where survey questionnaire and documentary analysis were used as data gathering tools. The researcher used the descriptive method in order to discover and gathered data in conformity with its present conditions. This is the technique of a qualitative description which determines the prevailing conditions in a group of cases chosen for the study, (Peter and Laurentina Calmorin, 2002).

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Bula, Camarines Sur as a Tourism Destination in Camarines Sur

Bula, Camarines Sur has significant potential to become a competitive tourism destination because of its diverse natural, recreational, cultural, and religious attractions. Based on the researchers' ocular survey and observations, at least ten sites were identified as possible components of the municipality's ecotourism development plan. These include Ballester Spring, Nalalata Falls and Caves, Itangon Beach, Caorasan Beach, Nadal Spring, Alina Resort, Papa Rudy Resort, Tan-Awan Nature's Park, St. Mary Magdalene Parish Church, and San Vicente de Ferrer Shrine. Ballester Spring, Nadal Spring, and Alina Resort offer refreshing water resources and peaceful natural settings suitable for relaxation and nature-based recreation. Nalalata Falls and Caves provide opportunities for hiking, sightseeing, cave exploration, and environmental appreciation, while Itangon Beach and Caorasan Beach offer scenic coastlines, clear seawater, limestone formations, abundant marine resources, and potential activities such as swimming, boating, and island hopping. These features demonstrate that Bula possesses a broad range of tourism resources that can attract excursionists, nature lovers, adventure seekers, families, and other visitor segments.

Tan-Awan Nature's Park further strengthens the municipality's tourism appeal because of its panoramic view of Mount Isarog, Mount Iriga, Mayon Volcano, nearby lakes, agricultural landscapes, and surrounding urban centers. Its natural viewing area, native huts, convention facilities, and the 25-foot statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary titled "Queen of the Family" make it suitable for both leisure and spiritual activities. Privately owned establishments such as Papa Rudy Resort and Alina Resort also complement the municipality's natural attractions by providing swimming pools, cottages, food services, entertainment, and spaces for gatherings. In addition, St. Mary Magdalene Parish Church and San Vicente de Ferrer Shrine contribute to Bula's cultural and religious tourism potential. The historical importance of St. Mary Magdalene Parish Church, together with its annual patronal celebration, reflects the municipality's long-established Catholic heritage. Meanwhile, San Vicente de Ferrer Shrine attracts devotees who visit the site for prayer, healing, and religious observances. The combination of nature-based, recreational, historical, and spiritual attractions allows Bula to develop a more varied tourism experience rather than relying on a single type of destination product.

Despite these advantages, the tourism potential of Bula remains underdeveloped because several attractions are affected by poor accessibility, insufficient maintenance, limited visitor facilities, and inadequate transportation networks. Some sites require travel through mountainous or hilly terrain, while others can only be reached through a combination of land and sea transportation. These conditions may discourage visitors, particularly children, older adults, persons with disabilities, and tourists unfamiliar with the area. Therefore, stronger coordination among the Local Government Unit, tourism offices, barangay councils, local communities, private operators, and environmental agencies is necessary. Priority actions may include improving roads and directional signs, establishing safety measures and visitor information centers, training local tour guides, maintaining sanitation facilities, and developing responsible promotional campaigns. As the "Bamboo Village of the Philippines," Bula may also integrate bamboo-based products, local crafts, cuisine, and community enterprises into its tourism offerings. Through sustainable planning, environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and community participation, Bula can transform its existing attractions into accessible and distinctive tourism products that generate livelihood opportunities while protecting the municipality's natural and cultural resources.

The profile of the identified ecotourism destinations in Bula, Camarines Sur.

Profile in the study included tourist appeal, accessibility, ecotourism activities and attraction, products, facilities, and safety and security of the identified tourist destinations such as Ballester Spring, Nalalata Falls and caves, Itangon Beach, Caorasan Beach, Nadal Spring, Alina Resort, Papa Rudy's Resort, Tan-Awan Natures Park, St. Mary Magdalene Parish Church and San Vicente de Ferrer Shrine.

A. Tourist Appeal. When the tourist spots have more visitors, one can tell that it is more appealing. Thought it is subjective, yet it becomes foremost reason for tourist to flock in a place as it suits to their taste. This consisted of five criteria: uniqueness, historical value, socio-cultural value, natural aesthetic and visitors traffic which can be evaluated using score .range of 4 (excellent), 3 (Good), 1 (Fair), and 1 (Poor) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Tourist Appeal of the identified Tourist Spots as a Part of the Profile

Tourist Spot/ Destinations	Uniqueness	Historical Value	Socio- Cultural Value	Natural Aesthetic	AWM	Verbal Interpretation
Ballester Spring	3.12	1.88	3.32	2.16	2.62	Very good
Nalalata Falls	3.60	3.60	2.60	2.88	3.17	Very good
Tan-Awan Natures Park	3.88	3.88	3.60	3.12	3.62	Excellent
Itangon Beach	3.20	3.20	3.44	1.72	2.89	Very good
Caorasan Beach	3.28	3.28	2.84	3.12	3.13	Very good
Nadal Spring	3.28	3.28	2.16	2.36	2.77	Very good
Alina Resort	2.24	2.24	2.28	2.48	2.31	Very good
Papa Rudy's Resort	2.28	2.28	1.40	2.36	2.08	Good
St. Mary Magdalene Parish Church	2.40	2.40	3.60	1.00	2.35	Good
San Vicente de Ferrer Shrine	2.40	2.40	3.32	2.44	2.64	Very good

a. Uniqueness. Rated highest was Tan-Awan Nature's Park (WM = 3.88), followed by Nalalata Falls (WM – 3.60), and then Caorasan Beach and Nadal Spring (WM = 3.28), Itangon Beach (WM = 3.20) and Ballester Spring (WM= 3.12). Meanwhile, rated least were Alina Spring (WM = 2.24), Papa Rudy's Resort (WM = 2.28), St. Mary Magdalene Church and San Vicente Ferrer (WM = 2.40).

b. Historical Value. From the potential tourist spots, Tan-Awan Natures Park was rated highest (WM = 3.88), followed by Nalalata Falls (WM= 3.60), and then Caorasan Beach and Nadal Spring (WM= 3.28), Itangon Beach (WM= 3.20). Meanwhile, rated least were St. Mary Magdalene Parish Church and San Vicente de Ferrer Shrine (WM= 2.40), Papa Rudy's Resort (WM= 2.28), Alina Resort (WM= 2.24) and Ballester Spring (WM= 1.88).

c. Socio-Cultural Value. Rated highest was St. Mary Magdalene Parish Church and Tan-Awan Nature's Park (WM= 3.60), followed by Itangon Beach (WM= 3.44), and then Ballester Spring and San Vicente de Ferrer Shrine (WM= 3.32). Meanwhile, rated least were Caorasan Beach (WM= 2.84), Nalalata Falls (WM= 2.60), Alina Resort (WM= 2.28), Nadal Spring (WM= 2.16), and Papa Rudy's Resort (WM= 1.40).

d. Natural Aesthetics. From the potential tourist spot, the Tan-Awan Nature's Park and Caorasan Beach was rated highest (WM= 3.12) followed by Nalalata Falls (WM= 2.88), Alina Resort (WM= 2.48), San Vicente de Ferrer Shrine (WM= 2.44), and then Nadal Spring and Papa Rudy's Resort (WM= 2.36) and Ballester Spring (WM= 2.16). Meanwhile, the Itangon Beach (WM= 1.72) and St. Mary Magdalene Parish Church (WM= 1.00) was rated least from the tourist appeal.

Lastly on the presence of visitors, the researchers were unable to have surveyed due to lack of information from the different identified tourist spots. The owners were unable to have listed the visitors.

As a whole, based on the average weighted mean (AMW) of the tourist appeal as rated by the respondents, Tan-Awan Natures Park (3.62) as highest, followed by, Nalalata Falls (3.17), and then Caorasan Beach (3.13).

On the other hand, rated least were, Itangon Beach (2.89), Nadal Spring (2.77), San Vicente de Ferrer Church (2.64), Ballester Spring (2.62), followed by, St. Magdalene Parish Church (2.35) and Alina Resort (2.31) and Papa Rudy's Resort (2.08).

Accessibility

The result shows the accessibility profile of tourist spots/destinations in Bula, Camarines Sur. This included accessibility in all forms of transportation such as land, air and water. Domestic and foreign tourists could reach Bula through the different mode of transportation such as local buses, van, jeepney, tricycles/trimobile and motorized vehicle to reach their destinations in Bula.

Location. The Ballester Spring is located at Brgy. Casugad, Nalalata Falls (Brgy. Lubgan), Itangon Beach (Brgy. Itangon), Caorasan Beach (Brgy. Caorasan), Tan-Awan Natures Park (Brgy. Bagoladio) and Nadal Spring (Brgy. Ombao Hts.). Moreover, the St. Mary Magdalene Church is located at Brgy. Quipayo of Calabanga, San Vicente de Ferrer Church (Ombao Pulpog), Alina Resort (Lubgan) and Papa Rudy's Resort (Sagrada).

Area/Distance. The area/distance away from the poblation to the Location. The Ballester Spring is (4.0), Nalalata Falls (9 km), Itangon Beach (17 km), Caorasan Beach (25 km), Tan-Awan Natures Park (6.3 km), Nadal Spring (5.2 km). Furthermore, St. Mary Magdalene Church with the area/distance of (300 sq. m, San Vicente de Ferrer Church (2 km.), Alina Resort (2.5 km) and Papa Rudy's Resort (1km).

Transportation. Bula Camarines Sur is accessible in all forms of transportation. Jeepney and Motorized is the most popular mode of transportation in the municipal to reach the tourist spots/ destination.

The data imply that tourists who would want to visit Bula have choices on what of mode transportation can be used to reach the Bula. Busy people whose purpose of travel is on business could go to the air transportation but people who prefer long trips and enjoy sightseeing while on tri could utilized both land and sea modes of transportation.

Products, Ecotourism Activities and Attraction

Product. From the potential tourist spots, the Ballester Spring, Nalalata Falls, St. Mary Magdalene Church , San Vicente de Ferrer Church and Papa Rudy's Resort the products are their products itself, and then Itangon Beach and Caorasan Beach their products are seafood's, Tan-Awan Natures Park their very owned Organic Chicken Binakol and Nadal Spring are source of portable water in the poblation.

Ecotourism activities. There were different activities that tourist can do in various location. Ballester Spring (Swimming, Hiking), Nalalata falls (Hiking, Diving, Picnicking, Rappelling), and then Itangon Beach, Caorasan Beach (Swimming, Island Hopping, Snorkelling) Tan-Awan Natures Park (Sightseeing, Hiking), Nadal Spring, Alina Resort and Papa Rudy's (Swimming), St. Mary Magdalene Church and san Vicente de Ferrer Church (Religious Activities). Among the activities, swimming is done most by the tourists as activity in the bodies of water.

Ecotourism attractions. From the potential ecotourism site, there were different attractions. On the Ballester Spring (Cold Spring), Nalalata Falls (Cave and Falls), and on the Itangon Beach and Caorasan Beach the crystal-clear water on the beach, St. Mary Magdalene Church and san Vicente de Ferrer Church (Statues of St. Mary Magdalene and Saint Virgin Mary). Moreover, the Alina Resort and Papa Rudy's Resort (Fish Ponds and Pool) and Nadal spring (spring).

Facilities. A certain place can be considered as ecotourism potential. If it offers different tourist facilities. This ay bay include accommodation, food and others that are used for the benefits and satisfaction of the visitors/tourist. However, though the place can be attractive, but the patronage of such place diminishes when basic amenities are crude and limited. First, there must be availability of food and beverages. For pleasure seekers, bringing baggage especially food baggage can be cumbersome. In all the sectors of the travel industry, eating is necessity as well as a pleasure for travellers. Secondly, comfort rooms are needed in any destination visited. And, lastly, the availability of cottages for tourist to spend the whole day; and lodging facilities for tourists who came far from places.

Due to socio-economic conditions of Bula, these facilities are not much offered. Putting up service establishment is not yet on its priority. The government should have allocated budget or fund for these since this will help a lot in the development of the place as a potential destination.

Safety and Security

The town of Bula and its tourist spot is generally peaceful. But some concern has been raised to the presence of rebel groups in the upland barangays of the municipality. There had been no negative experience about insurgency in the upland barangays thus this turns out into a positive image in the community. The existence of barangay tanod outpost serve as a good help to the PNP personnel in maintaining peace and order in the community.

How feasible are the identified ecotourism destinations in Bula for further development?

Tourism is multi-mentioned phenomenon that deals with pleasure, adventure, and travel that creates tourism expertise within different variations such as: transportation, accommodation, food and beverages, entertainment, etc. The tourism industry contributes to the economy development of the country.

With the collaboration of the government, land/resort owners, and residents, development can be pushed through. Feasibility studies conducted by the researchers shows the potential of not only one but ten areas, some already established, and some with the most potential, if proper planning and implementation of programs are applied. Outsourcing and promotions should go hand in hand to provide budget for the implementation of said development.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that Bula, Camarines Sur possesses considerable potential as a tourism destination because of its diverse natural, recreational, cultural, and religious resources. The identified attractions—Ballester Spring, Nalalata Falls and Caves, Itangon Beach, Caorasan Beach, Nadal Spring, Alina Resort, Papa Rudy's Resort, Tan-Awan Nature's Park, St. Mary Magdalene Parish Church, and San Vicente de Ferrer Shrine—provide opportunities for nature-based recreation, adventure activities, religious visitation, sightseeing, swimming, hiking, island hopping, and cultural appreciation. Among these attractions, Tan-Awan Nature's Park, Nalalata Falls and Caves, and Caorasan Beach demonstrated the strongest development potential because of their uniqueness, natural appeal, available activities, and capacity to provide distinctive visitor experiences. The combination of scenic landscapes, water-based attractions, religious sites, local food products, and community-based resources provides Bula with a foundation for developing diversified tourism offerings that can appeal to different market segments.

The findings further showed that the development potential of the municipality is limited by inadequate visitor facilities, inconsistent maintenance, insufficient tourism services, limited promotional activities, and accessibility challenges affecting some destinations. Although the attractions may be reached through available modes of transportation, travel to several sites involves hilly terrain, long distances, or combined land and sea transportation, which may reduce visitor convenience and safety. Basic amenities such as comfort rooms, cottages, food and beverage outlets, lodging facilities, directional signs, communication facilities, information centers, and safety equipment remain inadequate in several locations. Nevertheless, the generally peaceful condition of the municipality and the presence of local peace-and-order mechanisms provide a favorable environment for tourism development. Overall, Bula may become a more competitive and sustainable destination when tourism planning is supported by coordinated infrastructure improvement, environmental protection, destination management, community participation, and consistent public and private investment.

7. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings imply that the Local Government Unit of Bula, the Municipal Tourism Office, barangay councils, attraction owners, community organizations, and private investors should adopt an integrated destination management approach rather than develop each attraction independently. Priority investments should initially focus on highly feasible sites such as Tan-Awan Nature's Park, Nalalata Falls and Caves, and Caorasan Beach, while gradual improvements should also be undertaken in the remaining destinations. Management interventions should include the improvement of access roads and pathways, installation of directional and interpretative signs, construction and regular maintenance of sanitation facilities, provision of waste disposal systems, establishment of visitor assistance and information areas, and availability of emergency and communication equipment. Clear safety standards, carrying-capacity guidelines, environmental rules, and regular site inspections should also be implemented, particularly in waterfalls, caves, beaches, springs, and mountainous locations where visitors may be exposed to physical and environmental risks.

Tourism managers should also transform the municipality's attractions into organized tourism products by creating nature, adventure, religious, coastal, and cultural tourism circuits. Activities such as guided hiking, cave exploration, swimming, island hopping, sightseeing, pilgrimage visits, local food experiences, and bamboo-based

demonstrations may be packaged into coordinated itineraries. As Bula is recognized as the “Bamboo Village of the Philippines,” local bamboo crafts, agricultural products, cuisine, souvenirs, and community enterprises should be incorporated into the visitor experience to strengthen local identity and distribute tourism benefits among residents. Attraction owners and community members should receive training in tour guiding, customer service, hospitality, environmental conservation, first aid, food safety, and tourism entrepreneurship. A unified destination brand, supported by digital promotion, official tourism information, updated maps, visitor records, and partnerships with travel operators and nearby municipalities, would also improve market visibility. Through collaborative governance and evidence-based planning, tourism development may generate employment and business opportunities while preserving the natural, historical, cultural, and religious assets of Bula.

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