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ABSTRACT

Tourism plays a huge role in development. Tourist demands have gigantic impacts economic, environmental, and social levels of the society.

The Philippine, being endowed with natural resources and its people exhibiting a myriad of amalgamated culture has seen the flourishing of tourism. Hence, the country capitalized on this as a business. The Department of Tourism currently recorded a tourist volume's increase of 5.37% for 2010 vis-à-vis the same period in 2009 (<http://www.wowphilippines.com.ph>).

Many provinces in the archipelago have made their marks in the map as tourist hotspots. Palawan, Cebu, and Baguio City to name a few have become very popular tourist destinations. The success of tourism in these places had apparently greatly contributed to community development. The case is similar with the municipality of Sagada. It is but a fifth class municipality in the northern part of Mountain Province yet it has experienced noticeable development changes lately because of the tourism industry that has rapidly boomed over the years.

For several decades, Sagada has been attracting thousands of tourists not just from the archipelago but the globe as a whole. It has been a hotspot for visitors who are into adventure, sports, nature challenges, cultural experience and for those who would like to have their own doze of country living. Approximately 24,000 tourists, both foreign and local, frequent this place annually (tourist Information Center, 2007) Because of the influx of these tourists, the townspeople had been clamoring to make their own livelihood activities that are tourism-related.

This research is about exploring the tourism industry of Sagada, Mountain Province, focusing on the industry's current status.

Specifically, it aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the status of the tourism industry of Sagada, Mountain Province as to:
 - a. programs, policies and projects
 - b. tourism-related establishments
 - c. revenue and employment generated
 - d. Butler's Life Cycle Theory
2. What are the problems encountered by the tourism industry in terms of the following aspects:
 - a. economic
 - b. socio-cultural
 - c. environment
3. What programs may be development to uplift the tourism industry of the municipality of Sagada?

Data to answer these research problems were obtained using interview questionnaires for individual interviews and the focus group discussion, document analysis and participant observation. These were then analyzed and interpreted by utilizing the SWOT analysis.

Based on the research problems, the following are the findings of the study:

Findings

1. a.) There are existing programs, policies and projects that cater to tourism industry but these are not enough as to enable an all-out development of the town's major livelihood.

b.) A lot of tourism-oriented establishments were created since the rise of tourism in Sagada. However, as tourism has seasonal variations, these involved experience fluctuations in revenue intake.

c.) Tourism gave way to the increase in revenue and generation of employment. However, only limited few are able to benefit from this industry.

2. The problems that were encountered were broken down onto economic, socio-cultural and environmental aspects.

a) For the economic facet, the main issues are the insufficiency of funds, fluctuations in revenue intake, and the limitation of benefits to a select few.

b) Socio-cultural, the problem being faced is commercialization.

c) Pollution and disturbance of the natural sites are the problems being encountered.

3. Among the prospects projects and actions that the LGU has cited to undertake are the following: increase in tax collection among tourism-related establishments, patenting of genuine Sagada products and taking part in the product promotion of the local products. Moreover, the LGU is attempting to bank more on ecotourism and maximize the natural resources that are available in the destination. The LGU further aims to improve and build more infrastructures that would cater to visitor needs as these are apparently among the lacking necessities in this tourist destinations.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following are the conclusions of this research:

a) There are sufficient programs, policies and projects for tourism development.

- b) Tourism has spurred the establishment of businesses that cater to the needs of the visitors. The demands are such that a shift from an agricultural to entrepreneurial livelihoods was observed. The locals make the most of the peak seasons of the year as this industry entails differences in tourist entry hence variations in productivity as well.
- c) Although there's an increase in revenue intake and more livelihoods came about during the rise of tourism, the majority of the populace doesn't benefit from these. Only those who have the means and who are capable take part in the economic advantages that are brought by the industry.
- d) There are insufficient funds for tourism development, instability in the productivity of stakeholders and the majority doesn't benefit from the economic gains.
- e) Slight commercialization is taking place but not that drastic as to worry about issues of cultural commodification.
- f) Tourism activities lead to environmental degradation but policies and programs exist to avoid this. The locals are active participants in the implementation and maintenance of a clean and green Sagada.
- g) There is a need to create, implement and promote more projects and programs that would further and enhance the development of tourism in the locality.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following are recommended:

1. a.) There is a need to create, implement and promote more intensive programs, policies and projects that would cater to the development of Sagada's tourism industry.
 - b.) To be able to maximize the peak periods of tourism, the stakeholders have to provide adequate and quality goods and services to the clients.

c.) A more effective and efficient management system of the tourism industry should be implemented as to maximize the economic benefits that can be derived from this. It should likewise involve as many stakeholders as possible.

2. a.) Increase as well as additional taxes should be imposed as long as these are reliable. For the LGU, more enterprises should be promoted and supported.

b.) Policies on anti-commercialization should be created and strictly imposed.

c.) Policies and programs to maintain and further the preservation of natural and man-made sites need to be reinforced.

d.) Additional enterprises should be popularized. Tourism activities that could attract more tourists are encouraged.

3. The establishment of a Tourism Office is a critical move that can enable amore productive tourism industry.

4. Mutual obligations among stakeholders should be observed as well.

5. Lastly, sustainable tourism should be given utmost focus on.

