Proposed Development Plan for Pangil Eco Park in Pangil, Laguna

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ABSTRACT

Ecotourism is providing food for occasion creators in the common habitat without harming it or upsetting environments. It is a type of travel industry including visiting delicate, flawless, and moderately undisturbed normal zones, planned as a low-sway and regularly little scope option in contrast to standard business mass the travel industry. The researchers chose Pangil River EcoPark because they saw its potential to be a good tourism attraction in Pangil, Laguna. With its natural beauty, tourists will be willing to experience the beauty and different adventure Pangil River EcoPark can offer. By improving the ecopark itself, the researchers thought that it will improve the number of tourists that are coming to the attraction. The researchers conducted interview with the tourim officers, locals, and tourists in the Pangil River EcoPark to know what are the things that must be improved and what are the things that must be added to the park. After conducting an interview, the researchers analyzed the answers which became the basis of the suggestions for the betterment of the ecopark.

Keywords: Ecotourism, ecopark, Laguna

INTRODUCTION

Eco-tourism is a responsible travel to a place that show and educate guest about its history. The researcher choose Pangil River Eco Park located at Pangil, Laguna as the focal of their study. Pangil River EcoPark is a mostly visited by families and friends. This place will assure you to give an awesome natural adventure by the river, relaxation and fun filled experience. The accessibility isn't hard and the fees are affordable for everyone. The researchers saw that this ecotourism park has a lot of opportunities to grow as well develop site for adventure, education, and recreational activities. With the help of local government this site can be nurtured.

This study is going to be significant for Pangil Eco Park which may help improve the local people. It will help for the municipality which will attract more visitors. It will also provide plenty of opportunities like new jobs for the locals. The propose tourism development plan will have the potential to boost the relationships between locals and tourist for entertainment.

Review of Literature

Tourism has become one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Similarly, it is an indispensable and competitive industry that requires the capacity to adjust continually to clients' changing needs and goals of consumer loyalty, wellbeing and satisfaction (Go2 Tourism HR Society, 2015).

In recent years, tourists are becoming more enticed to explore different types of tourism where most of the preferences were in discovering cultures and exploring destinations that sufficed their enthusiasm and fulfilling satisfaction. In this context, an increase of tourist arrivals most likely contributes to the economic development of tourism in a certain country.

One of the municipalities of Laguna is Pangil. It is a fourth class municipality with a land area consisting of two noncontiguous parts separated by Laguna de Bay (Loreto, 2011). The tourism industry in Pangil, Laguna generates income for the government and their community. Also, it provides employment that serves as an economic benefit to the community. The main attraction of the ecopark is the Pangil River. In the absence of multi-national factories, and with agriculture as the town's main

source of industry and livelihood aside from the cottage industry such as basket weaving and paper maché products for export, the town chief executive sought to tap the beauty of the river, the presence of a waterfall and the forested mountain thriving with a variety of fauna and flora as possible revenue generating tourist destination.

According to Cereno (2015), tourism here has evolved from the so-called five (5) S namely sun, sand, seas, sports, and sex into the five (5) F such as forests, farms, fishes, food, and festivals. In Laguna, many scenic spots have been identified and developed as ecotourism sites since they possess at least one or a combination of two or more of the five Fs.

In 2001, the Philippines was promoted using the "WOW Philippines" campaign strategy which drew attention from the local and foreigners came to Philippines to visit and see the beautiful places, people, and culture. Different campaigns and information materials were disseminated to increases awareness of interested visitors regarding places to go as well as providing souvenirs. (Abat-Parducho, 2015) The preferred destinations are Tagaytay, Cebu Province, Boracay Islands, and Metro Manila. As mentioned above, Manila is the capital of Philippines and since it is the prime gateway, it is accessible to everyone. In addition, it offers a wide range of tourist destination which the tourists could enjoy.

Rural tourism covers a wide variety of activities and attractions that takes place in a non-urban community or location. In addition, rural tourism has many benefits pertaining to its characteristics; these include wide-open spaces; low tourism development and direct visitor experiences with natural environment, agriculture and even culture. However, rural tourism is not only a farm-based tourism; It comprises variety of activities and interests like ecotourism, adventure, sports, health, hunting and fishing, education, ethnic, agriculture, arts and heritage tourism that can open potential opportunities (Irshad, 2010).

Nowadays, more and more tourists appreciate going to rural areas and want to experience the countryside lifestyle, experience different cultures and interact with the locals. However, rural areas should be sensitive to some changes that will transpire in the host community. With inevitable deviations affecting social fabric and economic wellbeing, it will require careful planning and thorough monitoring. Today, it is vital in the twenty-first century to recognize the impacts relating to planning. Being dependent on tourism is one of the concerns in rural tourism management; and it may result to greater capacity of visitors that necessitates careful consideration (Page & Connel, 2012).

According to The International Ecotourism Society (2015), traveling responsibly at the same time learning and being able to sustain and conserve the well-being of the whole environment is what ecotourism. Principles of ecotourism must be observed to attain a well-balanced environment. As such, minimizing impacts on behavioral, social, physical and psychological aspects, instituting cultural and environmental awareness, providing a positive atmosphere for locals and tourists, generating financial benefits for the stakeholders, constructing and designing low-impact facilities and amenities, and the most important thing is recognizing and respecting the rights of the indigenous people of the community and establish empowerment.

In addition, conferring to the study of Benckendorff & Lund-Durlacher (2013), referring to The Okavango Delta Management Planning, it was stated that stakeholders alliance in integrative planning sets a direction and limits of growth. They are also involved to the development of the place in terms of economic, social and environmental. For them, as a vital constituent for progress, evidences must be provided for the continuous support to Pangil's advancements.

This study aimed to influence visitors of the Ecopark through the implementation of its code of conduct activities which are necessary to maintain the pristine condition of the place for sustainability. According to Kaufmann and Oinas-Kukkonen, "persuasive technology was used to change attitudes or behaviors of the users through persuasion and social influence, but not through coercion. Most self-identified persuasive technology research focuses on interactive, computational technologies, including desktop computers, internet services, video games, and mobile devices." Although it has been around for a while, persuasive technology is becoming increasingly popular and profitable and based on the literature gathered and reviewed, persuasive technology is an effective tool to increase awareness on the

environment and in other areas (Soler, Zacarias, & Lucero, Molarcropolis, 2009) (Othman & Muhammad, 2011). The persuasive game can still be improved by incorporating a story as suggested by Red, Domingo, Santos & Banaag (2013) that would make the game more relevant to visitors of the Eco-park young or old.

Environment refers to any natural and humanistic landscapes and environmental facilities which could affect and stimulate visitors. Chang (2014) revealed that environmental attitudes refer to the visitors' continuous inclination, cognition, and preferences for everything in the environment. According to L. du Plessis (2010), the rise in the number of tourists will lead to the destruction of the natural environment if not managed responsibly. It is therefore important to develop things to minimize the impact of tourists to the environment. Environmental impact depends on the location and precise landscape of the destination. Some of these issues include resource overconsumption (water, land, and energy), degradation (soil, water, and vegetation), pollution (litter and noise, air, and water), and the disruption of wildlife (migration and hunting patterns, resources, and habitats) (Nelson, 2013). Added by Solberg (2017), the other impact of infrastructure development and the creation of tourist areas include deforestation and other vegetation and habitat loss. Although tourists can create environmental problems, it also helps to promote conservation and preservation of these natural attractions in order to continue a sustainable tourism industry (Nelson, 2013). Nevertheless, in general, when perceived that tourism impact is positive, place attachment is positive while perceived negative impact lead to negative place in the context of tourism (Wang and Luo, 2017).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework describes the goal of the researchers which is to improve the Pangil River Eco – Park in Pangil, Laguna. Identifying the plans and future actions of the Local Government Unit of Pangil, Laguna will help to improve the eco – park itself. By knowing the plans of the Local Government Unit of Pangil, Laguna, the researchers were able to identify what are the right actions for the betterment of Pangil River Eco – Park.

The researchers conducted a qualitative study to gather data through interviewing the locals and the tourism officers' perception regarding the plan of Local Government Unit. It is significant to the locals of Pangil, Laguna to know their perception about the research and the plan, the researchers will reach out to the community especially to the stakeholders which will be benefited.

A Tourism Development Plan was proposed for Pangil River EcoPark that will improve the eco – park itself to attract more tourists. It will also help the livelihood of the local residents residing near the eco – park. New jobs and opportunities will be offered to them.
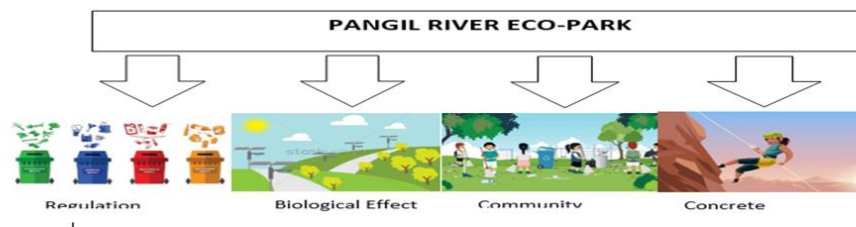

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to find out the plans and cause of actions of the local government and improve the Pangil River EcoPark. Moreover, it seeks to help the community to acquire knowledge that involve environmental, social, and economical awareness; to provide a different kind of enjoyment and thrill to

the tourist; and to provide opportunities in terms of economic development to the locals of Pangil, Laguna.

METHODOLOGY

This study was a qualitative research which objective is to know what are the plans and what will be the action of the Local Government Unit of Pangil, Laguna to their tourist destination which is the Pangil River EcoPark. The researchers asked questions to the tourism officers and some of the tourists were also asked questions on what they think the ecopark needs to improve. The researchers used interview question guide. The respondents of the said interview guide were the tourism officers of Pangil River EcoPark and some tourists that are present during the day the researchers conducted the interview. There are also additional questions for the tourism officers regarding their plans and action when it comes to the ecopark itself.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Plan and Action of the Local Government Unit of Pangil

Pangil is one of the famous municipality in Laguna when it comes to eco-tourism. It offers a lot of attractions that catch the attention of the tourist to come and visit the place. On September 11, 2019, the researchers visited the Municipality of Pangil. The tourism general manager and the tourism officer accompanied the researchers to enter and explore the Pangil Municipal building that took at least an hour. After that, they started the conversation by endorsing the researchers' proposal in Tourism Planning and Development inside the ecopark. They were convinced to consider the proposal and shared their thoughts and experiences about the tourist attractions that Pangil offered to the tourists, specifically in the Pangil River Ecopark. They are planning to have additional accommodation and restaurant inside the eco-park. Adding other facilities such as comfort rooms were also part of their plan. Our conversation with the two tourism officers ended productively because we tackled about the improvement of the Ecopark.

Perception of the Residents

During the visit to the Ecopark, other ideas for the proposal came to mind. First, the improper disposal of garbage. The researchers believe that this can be achieved by conducting an orientation about the strict implementation of the rules and regulation inside the ecopark. Since it is an ecopark, everybody should be aware on how to sustain the beauty of the nature. Second, the pool near the hanging bridge the ecopark river it seemed to be useless since the eco-river was already there. We believe that this can be built as Pangil delicacies restaurant that will offer native foods such as Kulawong Puso ng Saging, Pinais na Kabute, Pako, Adobong Matanda, Sinampalukang Native na Manok, and many more. Third, the free space at the trail to Ambon-ambon falls. We believe that this can be placed with other re-creational activities. Fourth, we thought of having a good quality of cottages because it seems to be not that firm, why don't we built a cottages with a firm foundation, instead of renovating it year by year. We save money in that way and it can be used for another development in the Eco-park. And lastly, we thought of adding another safety precautions around the area. Generally, the eco-park has its potentials when it comes to development. It just need some development for it to improve for the convenient of the tourists.

Proposed Tourism Development Plan

The Pangil river ecopark is naturally beautiful by itself. Experiencing the place will feel like you are being one with mother nature. According to trip advisor.com, the traveler rating for the ecopark is very good. It is a budget-friendly, good for summer outing, and offers different kind of adventure. However, according to the tourist offices they noticed that there are things that should be enhanced in the eco-park, and these are the following:

The tourist officer said that there are not enough garbage can inside the park. They noticed that tourists but dispose their garbage on the river itself; that will sooncause pollution on the river. The researchers thought of putting garbage can in every 5 meters. Every 5 meters location there will be 3

covered trash cans for proper segregation of garbage. Green bin for recyclable wastes, blue bin for biodegradable wastes, and red for non-biodegradable wastes. The tourist officer also noticed that the park has no light going to the cottages. Tourists will have a hard time seeing the pathways because of the fact that there are no lights. So the researchers thought of putting solar street lights for the convenience of the tourists. They thought of using solar street lights because it is more environmentally – friendly compared to the usual street lights. Next is putting up a restaurant that is made from bamboo tree. According to the tourist officers, they thought of putting up a bamboo made restaurant because they noticed that the eco – park does not have any food stalls at all. The researchers thought that the restaurant will offer native delicacies like Kulawong Puso ng Saging, Pinais na Kabute, Pako, Adobong Matanda, Sinampalukang Native na Manok, and many more.

Moreover, according to the tourist officer, they noticed that the cottages that are being rented beside the river are somehow dangerous because of the slippery rocks just below the river. Tourists might slip on these rocks and may cause injury. So the researchers thought of renovating the cottages especially the flooring. They of extending the flooring so that the slippery rocks will not cause any injuries to the tourist. Lastly, the researchers noticed that there is a large space that can be used as a team building site. Since the Eco Park has no team building site, it will be a great opportunity to have this kind of site. It will also be additional attraction to the said park. Several team building activities will be put up.

CONCLUSIONS

Pangil River Ecopark is beautiful by itself however, it still faces several shortcoming in terms of the equipment and other facilities that needs to be enhanced in order to preserve the eco-park without harming the nature. For this to be effective, concrete values, regulation systems, community plans, and evaluation of biological effects must be established and maintained. Thus, it possesses attributes that can be improve and sustain as well. The purpose of this study is to analyze the ecotourism potential of Pangil River Eco-park.

Recommendations

The researchers would like to recommend some points that can improve the eco-park. First is the proper segregation of garbage, since there are limited garbage can inside the park wherein tourists just dispose their garbage on the river—that will soon cause pollution on the river. Second, the use of solar street lights for the convenience of the tourists, because they tend to have a hard time seeing the pathways because of the fact that there are no lights. Next is putting up a restaurant that is made from bamboo tree, since that the eco-park does not have any food stalls at all. The restaurant can offer native delicacies like Kulawong Puso ng Saging, Pinais na Kabute, Pako, Adobong Matanda, Sinampalukang Native na Manok, and many more. Next is the renovation of cottages near the river, to extend its flooring. It is somehow dangerous because of the slippery rocks beneath the river. Tourists might slip on these rocks and may cause injury. Lastly, the team building site. Since the Eco Park has no team building site, it will be a great opportunity to promote the eco-tourism. Several team building activities can be put up.

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