Sustainable Local Tourism Industry in BLOM Areas

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ABSTRACT

A study in Sustainable Local Tourism Industry in BLOM Areas was conducted from December 2015 to March 2016 for benchmark data of existing and potential tourist destinations in the Municipalities of Barobo, Lianga, Oteiza/San Agustin, and Marihatag (BLOM). An inventory of eco-tourism attractions like beaches, islands, caves, and falls; also agro-industrial, socio-cultural attractions like festivals and indigenous products was done. It aimed to establish the status of these attractions, the level of implementation of tourism, structure, and governance. A researcher-made questionnaire was the main tool used. Stratified Purposive Random Sampling was employed, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research in assessing sustainability. Interviews, focused discussion and document analysis were the secondary sources of data. The study claimed that BLOM recognizes R.A. 9593 or the Tourism Act of 2009 and other related legal bases; BLOM has rich Tourism potentials other than those recognized by the Provincial Tourism Office. Status of the Local Tourist Attraction is found good, tourism enterprises much available, often visited by tourist, often functional but has seasonality. Recognition of tourism in development policies and projects in

tourism is partially implemented. Tourism policies and governance is partially implemented, promotion and support investment in tourism are poorly implemented, and measures for sustainability on local tourism development and operation are poorly implemented. Analysis of Variance was used to determine significant differences. In the Turkey pairwise comparison test, there exists a significant difference among four (4) BLOM areas. An Intervention program is then conceived to strengthen the tourism industry in BLOM.

KEYWORDS

BLOM, tourist attractions, destinations, sustainable tourism, mixed-method design, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The Tourism Industry in Barobo, Lianga, Oteiza, or San Agustin and Marihatag (BLOM) is increasingly notable these days. The lure of the coastal clear pristine beaches with its crystal clear water, undisturbed ecological beauty of the islands, the attractive landscape on its mountainside, and the rich scenery to admire and enjoy are some of the assets of these coastal municipalities. Most inviting are the seaside resorts with delectable seafoods from its rich marine waters. This study attempts to explore and assess the features for the sustainability of the tourism industry.

According to Goeldner and Brent Ritchie (2012), tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries and contributes to economic development and poverty alleviation. Tourism is a mixture of activities, services, and industries that deliver the travel experience. It includes restaurants, transportations, hotels, entertainment, and activity facilities, they added.

The destination, as well as the local government, should be fully aware that these independent businesses are part of the entire cycle and that they need to address the issues to make them operate successfully and perform the supplier role (Vibal, 2010). He further said it is the responsibility as well of the business managers to consider the maintenance and control of these resources to be able to sustain the interest of the visitors to return along with the tourism activity.

Sengupta (2012) claimed that there is a strong link between sustainability and commercial success. There is a need to motivate stakeholders in the

tourism industry to adopt sustainable business practices.

Likewise, there has to be an established and maintained governance and management structure for sustainable tourism. This means a body to support sustainable tourism activities and relevant capacity-building that promote environmental awareness, conserve and protect the environment, respect wildlife, flora and fauna, biodiversity ecosystem, and cultural diversity, and improve the welfare and livelihood of local communities by supporting their local economy and the human and natural environment as a whole (SIDS, 2014).

Libosada and Bosangit (2007) emphasized that what helps to sustain the business and industry of tourism are the instituted appropriate policies and impact control measures. The said control measures would prevent potential negative impact from occurring: or if it would be unavoidable, mitigate or lessen the full impact from the tourism business or destinations.

BLOM areas have yet to achieve a renowned reputation in the tourism industry of the country because, according to the Provincial Tourism Office (SDS Master Plan 2013-2016), there is still a need for Surigao del Sur tourism expansion and investment of strategic coalition for sustainable tourism practice and responsible tourism journeys that will in effect contribute to the economic development of the province. With this, tourist destinations in BLOM need documented data on the indices of the sustainable local tourism industry.

In this time when political empowerment of local communities is the trend, there is a need to stir and tap creative innovations to enhance travel experiences to tourist destinations in BLOM and to make the Tourism Industries sustainable. Therefore, it is timely for Lianga, the mother municipality of BLOM, to initiate a study on the Sustainable Tourism Industry in BLOM areas. The study can help generate tourism-related data define needed interventions that can be proposed for each of the four (4) LGUs of BLOM in order to promote green and sustainable tourism in Surigao del Sur. This can make the province a premiere green tourist's haven, of which greening tourists attraction in the province and promoting green and sustainable tourism are among its priority concerns (SDS Tourism Road Map, 2013-2016).

This study which hopes to yield data that could serve as indicators needed for a sustainable tourism industry can create an informed interest in the development of tourism potentials of BLOM. It aims to awaken

investors, residents, local government policymakers, non-governmental organizations, and tourists to the broad duty of moving toward sustainable tourism in BLOM.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study intended to document the tourist attractions in BLOM Municipalities both, the existing and those found potential. Emphasized in the study was the evaluation of governance in promoting the sustainability of the tourism industry in tourist destinations of BLOM.   This study was premised on the following legal bases as it wanted to generate data on the various dimensions of local tourism governance in BLOM Municipalities for its sustainability:

The Tourism Act of 2009 (RA 9593) declares that tourism is an "indispensable element of the national economy and an industry of national interest and importance, which must be harnessed as an engine of socio-economic growth and cultural affirmation to generate investment, foreign exchange, and employment, and to continue to mold and enhance the sense of national pride for all Filipinos (Vibal, 2010).

The law empowers the Department of Tourism by strengthening the different agencies attached to it to move efficiently and effectively as it coordinates functions and resources of the government for tourism promotion and development programs. It should enhance tourists' experience and ultimately raise tourism visitations and outflow in the province.

According to the Philippine Tourism Master Plan also, the successful implementation of the recommended development strategy and associated tourism in targets will require the adoption of new policy positions on cluster destinations strategies, tourist accommodation facilities, transportation infrastructure priorities, and services, marketing, product development, manpower training, development standard, and guidelines.

The master plan added that tourism development in the Philippines should be based on a policy attuned to creating Tourism Development Clusters. Each cluster should be served by one or two major international getaways linked to various satellite destinations.

Surigao del Sur in the Mindanao cluster including Davao, Zamboanga del Sur and del Norte, Cagayan de Oro, Surigao del Norte, Misamis Oriental

and Occidental is positioned for exotic wilderness and cultural destination. The objective is to bring about fair distribution of tourism in the Philippines (Libosada, 2003).

The Master Plan further stressed that marketing policy should be developed and implemented, and this includes: image with regard to stability and security, creating a new resort, special interest tour products based on location, land use, social values, landscape, and the environment, utility standards for solid waste disposal, sewage treatment, power, water, drainage, fire, and communication.

Finally, the Philippine Master Plan emphasized that all municipalities (LGUs) with jurisdiction over areas designated for tourism development should coordinate with the Department of Tourism (DOT) for Tourism proposals, especially those related to the tourism zone.

The Eco-tourism Master Plan of Palawan gave a picture that the eco-tourism sects have to sustainably manage their resource supply and demand relationships. Also, ecotourism must strive to balance the interest of all the stakeholders, taking into account the biophysical and human environments. The plan must seek to generate a form of tourism development rooted in the local communities, based on sustainable resource management principles, economically viable within the broader tourism market, empower local communities capable of integrating the needs of development with those of conservations.

On the other hand, the Surigao del Sur Tourism Master Plan (2013-2016) emphasized that to build the Province's reputation in the tourism industry, there is a need to tap creative innovations to produce a product that will enhance the travel experience in Surigao del Sur. Central in the Master Plan strategy is the development of an integrated tourism product capable of attracting an influx of tourists, both domestic and national and even international making, Surigao del Sur a must-experience destination. Thus, highlighting the Province as the Premiere Tourism Haven in Mindanao.

It is further stressed in the Master Plan that the vision of Tourism Product Development will not just simply happen. This has to be stimulated and should be directed to provide personal enrichment and full travel experience to tourists. This means having the appropriate institutional framework or legislation formulation which will aid in the development of the most effective marketing activities.

Likewise, the Surigao del Sur Tourism Roadmap (2013-2016) submitted to DTI-Regional Office categorizes the Tourism Industry of the province into: Nature/ecotourism, Health and Wellness Tourism, Sports/Adventure/Recreation, Industrial and Historical and Cultural Tourism. Of the BLOM municipalities, Barobo is identified only with its *Bogac Springs* for Local Tourism; Lianga with *Bao-Bao Falls* and *DAVISOL woodcraft;* Oteiza or San Agustin with its *Britania Islands;* and Marihatag with its *Tree park.* The Tourism Road Map stressed the plans to intensify and sustain the promotion of existing and potential tourism sites of the province in answer to Surigao del Sur's vision in Tourism as a premier green tourist haven.

Statement of the Problem

The main objective of the study was to generate data that would guide the Local Government Units (LGUs) of Barobo, Lianga, Oteiza/San Agustin, and Marihatag (BLOM) municipalities in the development plans of respective tourism industries.

Specifically, it aimed to answer the problem:
1.   What is the status of the local tourist attractions in BLOM areas?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used the combination of quantitative and qualitative research in assessing the sustainable local tourism industries in BLOM. A participatory resource and reconnaissance survey and inventory assessment of the site attractions helped validate data on the agro-ecotourism elements and features such as existing natural resources, specific environmental conditions, and other components of the industry.

Informal interviews and focused group discussions were conducted to help appraise the actual and potential resources, management, policies, and governance.

Research Setting

The research covered the following four (4) municipalities; Barobo, Lianga, Oteiza, or San Agustin, and Marihatag, called BLOM.

Barobo

Barobo, earlier a barrio under the Municipality of Lianga, lies in the coastal part of the province of Surigao del Sur. Barobo has been politically divided into twenty-one barangays located in the coastal areas.

Its cigar-piped shape carved out from the mother Municipality of Lianga signifies that it is of economic advantage over other areas in the province, being the center of trade and commerce due to the influx of people to tap and avail God-given resources which are abundant. Barobo is bounded on the North of Lianga Bay and the Municipality of Lianga, on the South by the Municipality of Tagbina, on the Southeast by the Municipality of Hinatuan, on the East by the Pacific Ocean, on the West by the province of Agusan del Sur. It is well known for its panoramic islands, Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), and Bogac Spring for health and wellness tourism.

Lianga

The Municipality of Lianga, with a land area of 26,300 hectares, is politically subdivided into 13 barangays, with a population of 25,014 in 4,713 households. It is located in the central part of the province of Surigao del Sur; the Municipality of San Agustin in the North, on the South by the Municipality of Barobo, on the West by the Municipality of Prosperidad, Agusan del Sur, and in the East by the Pacific Ocean. Lianga is 90 kilometers away from Tandag City, 237 kilometers from Davao City, 121 kilometers from Butuan City, and 16 kilometers away from Prosperidad – the capital town of Agusan del Sur. It is a town that prides itself a number of beaches and beach resorts, caves, falls, scenic mangroves, forest canopies, and magkono woodcraft/fixtures as an attraction.

Oteiza/San Agustin

The Municipality of San Agustin was formerly Municipality of Oteiza, a barrio of Municipality of Lianga. This Municipality is comprised of 13 barangays. On the North is the Municipality of Marihatag, on the South is the Municipality of Lianga, on the West is Agusan del Sur and on the East is the Pacific Ocean. This is a municipality noted for its group of islands with a long stretch of pure powdery white sand best for recreational activities. This is accessible through land transportation through a public vehicle that piles the route daily. Its Poblacion is seven hours from Davao City, four hours from Butuan City, and two hours from Tandag, the capital of Surigao del Sur.

Marihatag

Marihatag, a former barrio of Lianga is centrally located at the Province of Surigao del Sur. It is bounded on the North by the Municipalities of San Miguel, Tago, and Cagwait, on the South by the Municipality of San Agustin, on the West by the province of Agusan del Sur. The Municipality is well known in tourism for its Tree Park and Omangon Island with wakeboarding activity. This destination is accessible to the cities of Butuan, Davao, Cagayan de Oro through the national highway. It consists of twelve barangays, seven of which are in the coastal areas.

Research Respondents

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by tourist destinations; The BLOM municipalities, and their respective barangays. There were four groups of the 160respondents. Ten were from Local Government officials for each municipality in BLOM; ten were community residents, another ten the operators, and ten also were from excursionists/tourists for each municipality.

Table 1. Distribution of Research Respondents

BLOM Municipalities	LGU Officials	Community Residents	Operators	Excursionist/ Tourist	TOTAL
Barobo	10	10	10	10	40
Lianga	10	10	10	10	40
Oteiza	10	10	10	10	40
Marihatag	10	10	10	10	40
TOTAL	40	40	40	40	160

Sampling Procedure

Stratified proportional random sampling and purposive random sampling by Gay and Diehl (1992) were adopted in this study. This is a probability sampling technique wherein the researcher divided the entire population into four (4) different subgroups or strata, then randomly selected the final subjects proportionately from the different strata.

The number of respondents in a group of tourist destination operators was determined using stratified proportional random sampling, while purposive random sampling was used for the respondents in the excursionist group from four (4) tourist destinations under study.

Research Instrument

A researcher-made questionnaire with three parts was the main tool utilized in this study. It was formulated by the researcher after intensive library research and online surfing for possible related articles and researches that have relevance to the present study, especially the attributes of sustainable tourism businesses.

Part I acquired the demographic profile of respondents. This includes personal information such as age, nationality/ethnicity of the respondents and the type of group represented. Then, the natural attractions and existing tourist enterprises by municipality of BLOM were accounted for, including its functionality and operation status.

Part II focused on the operation status of tourism attractions/ destinations assessment like infrastructures, quality of hospitality services, topography/ scenery, and related information including the functionality, all attributes considered in the tourism industry.

Part III evaluated the local tourism structure, legal bases, policy, and governance prevailing in every Municipality of BLOM as applied to tourism businesses, its promotion of enhanced activities for the sustainability of the tourism industry. Problems in governance were likewise identified and assessed.

Validation of Instrument

For the validity of the instrument, copies were given to five research experts for their comments and recommendations. Suggestions were incorporated and the final draft was referred to the adviser and the panelists for their approval before the final revisions were done, followed by the reproduction of desired copies.

To test the reliability of the questionnaire, it was administered to selected representatives from Local Government, teachers from the academe, operators, and locals that included bloggers with tourism inclination in and with roots in BLOM for a dry run.

Data Gathering Procedure

The following steps and procedures were undertaken by the researcher in the data gathering procedure.

First, awareness and permission for the conduct of the study were done and established with the Department of Tourism (DOT) provincial office and the Local Government (LGUs) of BLOM municipalities. Copies of tourism-local policies/resolutions were asked as approved by authorities concerned to support data treatment that would follow. Ocular visits to the identified spots of BLOM were likewise done later, along with the assessment.

Subsequently, after approval, the researcher proceeded with the conduct of the study and administered the data gathering, after which the results were retrieved. Follow-up interviews and focused group discussions were done to substantiate data. The data gathered and the ratings of the respondents were collated, tallied, and submitted to the statistician for computation. Afterward, the researcher analyzed and made the necessary interpretation.

In interpreting the data on Sustainable Industries of BLOM, the Likert scale was used, viz:

Ranges of Mean	Interpretation
4.3 – 5.0	The item in the questionnaire is manifested all the time.
3.6 – 4.2	The item in the questionnaire is manifested oftentimes.
2.7 – 3.5	The item in the questionnaire is manifested sometimes.
1.9 – 2.6	The item in the questionnaire is rarely manifested.
1.0 – 1.8	The item in the questionnaire is not manifested.

Statistical Treatment

In the analysis and treatment of data, the researcher used percentage and means to answer the problem stated in the study.

Percentage. This refers to the rate per hundred or proportion in hundred parts. This statistical tool was used in determining the distribution of samples from each tourist destination and each municipality of BLOM.

Mean. This is defined as an average, a degree or quality, often arithmetic mean. This treatment was used to determine the level of every element evaluated pertaining to the tourism industry of BLOM.

Cluster Analysis. Using Paleontological Software (PAST), cluster analysis was computed. Specifically, the Euclidean similarity index was used

to compute the mean quantitative measurements. The variables were the status of tourism attractions and destination features assemblages in the BLOM areas.

Analysis of Variance. Analysis of Variance was used in order to determine the significant difference between the Tourism Structure/Governance in the four (4) BLOM areas or Municipalities through Tukey Pairwise Comparison Test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Status of Local Tourism Attractions/Destinations

Data in tables 3, 4, and 5 show the evaluation of BLOMs Tourist attractions. This is in terms of destination features, tourism enterprises, the functionality of tourism attractions, and operation status. The data give wider insights into the Tourism Industry of BLOM. Data drawn serve as indices of sustainability level of BLOM Tourism industry.

Table 2. Tourism destination features of BLOM municipalities

Destination Features	Barobo	Lianga	San Agustin	Mari-hatag	Grand Mean	Adjectival Rating
Tourism Infrastructures (buildings)	3.0	3.6	3.3	3.3	3.3	**Good**
Accessibility to public transport (resort vehicles, van for hire)	3.8	3.4	3.4	3.9	3.6	**Very Good**
Quality of accommodation, Facilities and other, amenities (room accommodation, comfort room, lounge, lanai)	3.5	3.8	3.5	3.8	3.7	**Very Good**
Sporting facilities (billiards, water ski, skimboarding volleyball, etc.)	2.7	2.5	2.7	2.4	2.6	**Fair**
Beach Attraction (clean, fine sand, white beach picturesque landscapes)	3.8	3.9	4.0	3.9	3.9	**Very Good**
Quality of Sea Water (crystal and pristine water)	4.0	4.2	4.3	4.3	4.2	**Very Good**
Scenery and countryside (sun rise, sun set, rustic appeal)	3.8	3.9	4.0	3.9	3.9	**Very Good**

Destination Features	Barobo	Lianga	San Agustin	Mari-hatag	Grand Mean	Adjectival Rating
Continuous water supply (tanks)	3.1	3.7	3.0	3.2	3.2	**Good**
Cleanliness and beautification	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.5	3.3	**Good**
Solid waste management and drainage	3.3	2.9	3.2	3.2	3.1	**Good**
Historic interest (tablet/ exhibit/ bulletin of legends, pictures, events)	3.6	3.4	3.7	3.5	3.6	**Very Good**
Peace and order (presence of security guards, contact with the PNP & MDRRMO)	3.6	3.0	3.6	3.6	3.5	**Good**
Events (fiesta, fair, festival, excursion, evening entertainment)	3.7	3.9	3.6	3.6	3.7	**Very Good**
Delectable sea foods	2.9	3.2	2.7	2.9	2.9	**Good**
Local products and delicacies (Display Center LGU maintained)	2.6	3.1	2.8	2.7	2.8	**Good**
Quality of Hospitality Services (manpower)	3.1	3.6	3.5	3.4	3.4	**Good**
Marketing Services (Operator and LGU)	2.9	3.3	3.0	3.2	3.1	**Good**
Friendliness and Hospitality of the Locals	3.4	3.3	3.3	3.6	3.4	**Good**
Presence of Non-Government Organizations	3.3	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.4	**Good**
Grand Mean	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.2	**Good**
Adjectival Rating	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	**Good**

In table 2, it is seen that by destination features, all the four (4) Municipalities: Barobo, Lianga, Oteiza or San Agustin, and Marihatag obtained a grand mean of 3.2 with an adjectival rating of good. This means, these destinations have good potential for tourism.

Deeper scrutiny of the data implies there are five (5) notable features in BLOM tourist destinations and the grand mean of these five (5) features obtained an adjectival rating of very good. These are as follows in hierarchical order 1) quality of seawater is crystal and pristine with a grand mean of 4.2;

2) Scenery and countryside (Sunrise, Sunset, Rustic appeal) with a grand mean of 3.9; 3) Beach attraction (Clean, Fine sand, white beach, picturesque landscape with a grand mean of 3.9; 4) Events (Fiesta, Fair, Festival, Excursion, evening entertainment with a grand mean of 3.7; and 5) Quality of accommodation, facilities and other amenities (Room accommodation, Comfort lounge, Lanai) with a grand mean of 3.6. All these notable features obtained an adjectival rating of very good. BLOM areas, however, have yet to develop sports attractions. It was rated the lowest with a grand mean of 2.6, meaning fair.

In BLOM, Lianga as a tourist destination has edged over the three (3) others in eight (8) features: 1) Tourism infrastructure (Buildings) with a mean of 3.6 meaning very good; 2) Quality of accommodation, facilities and other amenities like room accommodation, comfort room, lounge, lanai which recorded a mean of 3.8 or very good; 3) Has continuous water supply 3.7 also very good; 4) Events like fiesta, fair, festival, excursion, and evening entertainment a mean 3.9 interpreted as very good; 5) Delectable seafood with a mean of 3.2; 6) Local products and delicacies display center, 3.3 in mean; 7) Quality of Hospitality services (Manpower) 3.4 and 8) Presence of non-government organization, 3.5. Features 5, 6, 7, and 8 are interpreted as good.

The notable features of Lianga, along with the quality of accommodations, facilities, and quality of hospitality services (manpower), are indicative of the influence and of the Hospitality course Bachelor of Science in Hotel and Restaurant Management offered by the Academe in Lianga, the Surigao del Sur State University. Likewise, its local products and delicacies and presence for non-government organizations may have been born to the Extension program/activities again by the Academe, one of the thrusts of a State University which SDSSU Lianga implements.

Vibal (2010) elucidated that the training ground for the manpower requirements of the hospitality industry includes the various educational institutions that provide the proper exposure and training of skills that the industry needs to provide the travel experience.

On the other hand, the municipality of San Agustin comes next with its six (6) good features: 1) Quality of sea, crystal and pristine water with a mean of 4.3, equivalent to an adjectival rating of very good; 2) Beach attraction (Clean, fine sand, white beach, picturesque landscapes, 4.0 in mean, also very good; 3) Sporting facilities (water ski, skimboarding 2.7,

good 4) Historic Interest (exhibits, bulletin of legends, pictures, events) 3.7 in mean interpreted as very good and 5) Peace and order (Presence of security guards, contact with the PNP and MDRRMO, a mean of 3.6, also very good.

Marihatag as a destination has four (4) notable features. It topped the three others in: 1) Accessibility to public transport (Resort Vehicle, van for hire with a mean of 3.9, interpreted as very good 2) Friendliness and Hospitality of the locals with a mean of 3.6, also very good 3) Its cleanliness and beautification with a grand mean of 3.5 or good 4) Marketing service with a mean of 3.2, with an adjectival equivalent of good.

Barobo takes pride in the following features: 1) Peace and order (Presence of Security guards, contact with PNP and MDRRMO) with a mean of 3.6, meaning very good, and 2) Solid waste management and drainage with a mean of 3.3, interpreted as good.

According to Vibal (2010), attractions, whether natural or man-made, are the host of pull factors that influence the traveler to visit a destination; geography (proximity to market), accessibility to markets, availability of attractions, cultural links, availability of services, affordability, peace, and order, positive market image, and pro-tourism policies. In addition, Libosada and Bosangit (2007) emphasized infrastructure has to precede other development and has to be adequate to serve the needs of both residents and visitors, and it is commonly provided by the public sector.

As to the status of Tourism Enterprises in BLOM municipalities, Table 4 gives the picture. Data registered a grand mean of 3.6.

Table 3. Status of tourism enterprise in BLOM municipalities

Tourism Enterprises	Barobo	Lianga	San Agustin	Mari-hatag	Grand Mean	Adjectival Rating
Hotel/Apartelle	3.5	4.2	4.0	3.9	3.9	Much Available
Resorts	3.4	4.0	3.9	3.4	3.7	Much Available
Inns/Lodging Houses	3.5	4.5	4.5	4.0	4.1	Much Available
Pension Houses	2.6	3.0	4.7	4.7	3.7	Much Available
Holiday cottages	3.5	4.3	4.5	4.4	4.2	Much Available
Picnic sheds for family or group	3.3	4.0	4.5	4.5	4.1	Much Available

Tourism Enterprises	Barobo	Lianga	San Agustin	Mari-hatag	Grand Mean	Adjectival Rating
Convention Facilities/ Training centers/Function Rooms	3.0	4.3	4.0	3.8	3.8	Much Available
Aqua Sports Facilities	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.2	2.8	Available
Restaurants/Carenderias/Food Center	3.5	3.9	3.9	3.5	3.7	Much Available
Public Toilet/ Rest Rooms	3.0	3.0	4.6	4.0	3.6	Much Available
Souvenir Shops/ Pasalubong Center	2.4	2.5	2.3	2.3	2.4	Rarely Available
Tourist Assistance Service	2.5	2.5	3.9	3.8	3.2	Available
Medical and Health Services	2.8	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.0	Available
Security Services for tourists/ visitor	2.6	3.5	3.8	3.9	3.4	Available
CCTV Camera	2.2	2.0	3.1	3.5	2.7	Available
Availability of transportation going to destination (van, tricycle, pump boat for hire)	3.6	4.5	4.5	4.7	4.3	Very Much Available
Parking Spaces	3.4	3.4	4.5	4.5	4.0	Much Available
Banks/ATM	3.2	4.0	3.5	3.2	3.5	Available
Communication facilities (Fax, E-mail, internet, cellphone)	3.5	4.5	4.3	4.1	4.1	Much Available
Fire protection measures	3.5	3.5	3.2	3.3	3.4	Available
Risk/Emergency Services/Lifesaving Services	3.4	3.9	3.8	3.9	3.7	Much Available
Directional signs/billboards	3.2	3.2	4.1	4.1	3.7	Much Available
Socials and other entertainment centers to visitors and tourists	2.5	3.0	3.3	3.5	3.1	Available
Promotion and Marketing Schemes	2.4	3.0	4.2	4.3	3.5	Available
Tourism-Oriented Organization/ Association	2.3	4.0	4.6	4.4	3.8	Much Available
Grand Mean	3.0	3.6	3.9	3.8	3.6	Much Available
Adjectival Rating	Available	Much Available	Much Available	Much Available	Much Available	Much Available

The result in table 3 implies that BLOM municipalities have much available tourism enterprises. The municipality of San Agustin topped in tourism enterprises with a mean of 3.9; Marihatag, 2nd with a mean of 3.8;

Lianga, 3rd with a mean of 3.6, Barobo with a mean of 3.0. The Tourism Enterprises of San Agustin, Marihatag, and Lianga by status all fall under the much available category. Barobo Tourism enterprises fall on available adjectival rating.

A deeper evaluation of the data reveals that San Agustin has the edge over the other three (3) municipalities in the status of pension houses, holiday cottages, picnic sheds for family or group, restaurant and food centers, public restrooms, tourist assistance service, medical and health services, and parking spaces. It overshadowed the other municipalities in having a tourism-oriented organization association.

Marihatag, like San Agustin obtained the same grand mean of 4.7 in pension houses; and picnic sheds for a family group with a mean of 4.5 and parking spaces also 4.5. This means these features in their tourism enterprises are very much available. It topped the rest in Aqua Sports Facilities, security services for tourist/visitors, CCTV cameras, availability of transportation going to a destination, directional signs, billboards, and socials/other entertainment centers to visitors and tourists. All these obtained likewise an adjectival rating of very much available. Rarely available, however, in all BLOM areas tourism enterprises is souvenir shops/Pasalubong Center with a mean of 2.4, the lowest, and this means rarely available.

Vibal (2010) pointed out although it is natural that the less popular attraction will be noticed by the visitors, the need to be seen, heard, and preferably written about is material to the attraction within a region.

Gunn (1998) as cited by Ibimilua (2009), opined that attractions are the magnets that entice somebody to travel to a particular destination, and that satisfaction and dream are other significant experiences generating components of tourism. He noted further that food, accommodation, as well as personnel are some of the key ingredients to successful tourism experience. The functionality of tourism attraction in BLOM is reflected in Table 5. A composite grand mean of 3.6 has an adjectival equivalent of often. This means that people often avail of tourist amenities in BLOM areas. On the lead in functionality of tourism attractions is San Agustin with a mean of 4.1 which means often functional; followed by Marihatag with a mean of 4.0, also often functional. Lianga with a mean of 3.5, means sometimes functional. Barobo which obtained a mean of 2.9 is interpreted sometimes functional.

A closer look at the table and the grand mean of 4.0 makes it clear that people from nearby municipalities often hold seminars, celebrations like

wedding, anniversaries in the function room; the grand mean 3.9 means the local residents from the municipality often visit the tourism spots; the grand mean 3.8 means tourist from other parts of the province often visit the tourist destination; grand mean 3.8 discloses that local residents and nearby barangays often hold seminar, celebrations like wedding, anniversaries in function and room, and the grand mean of 3.7 implies foreigners often visit the tourist destination at least once a month.

Table 4. Functionality of tourism attractions in BLOM

Functionality of Tourism Attractions	Barobo	Lianga	San Agustin	Mari-hatag	Grand Mean	Adjectival Rating
Foreigners visit the local tourist destination at least once a week	2.7	3.0	4.0	3.4	3.3	Sometimes
Foreigners visit the local tourism destination twice week.	2.6	3.0	3.1	3.2	3.0	Sometimes
Foreigners visit the tourist destinations at least once a month	2.9	3.5	4.5	4.2	3.8	Often
Tourists from other parts of the Region/Country visit the tourist site	2.4	3.4	4.1	4.1	3.5	Sometimes
Tourists from other parts of the province visit the tourist destination	3.2	3.5	4.5	4.1	3.8	Often
Local residents from the Municipality visit the tourism spots	3.4	3.0	4.6	4.5	3.9	Often
Visitors/Tourist from other places stay overnight or more	3.0	3.1	4.3	4.4	3.7	Often
People from the Region hold seminar-workshop in function rooms	2.7	2.7	4.5	4.7	3.6	Often
People from nearby Municipalities hold seminars celebration like wedding, anniversaries in the function room	3.2	3.1	4.2	4.1	4.0	Often
Local Residents and nearby barangays hold seminars, celebrations like wedding, anniversaries in the function room.	3.2	3.2	4.2	4.5	3.8	Often
Grand Mean	2.9	3.5	4.1	4.0	3.6	Often
Adjectival Rating	Some-times	Some-times	Often	Often		Often

The World Tourism Organization as cited by Libosada (2003), states that domestic tourists, or persons traveling within their own country, are ten times as many as international tourists and, as a group, spend seven times the amount spent by the latter. With more Filipinos traveling around the country compared to foreign tourists, the domestic market is a huge force that should be appreciated and very well understood by the industry. And by doing so, there is a better chance that tourism can become an even stronger socio-economic and environmental instrument of the Philippines.

In general, adopted in BLOM municipalities is the cooperative marketing campaign with a mean of 26.5 followed by diversification of operation spread throughout the year with a mean of 23.5, then by promotional activities with a mean of 20.8 finally by planning and creating business opportunities with a mean of 18.3. The least done activity during off season is the reduction of the workforce as shown by the mean of 11.0.

Table 6. Alternative tourism activities during off season

Alternative Activities	Barobo	Lianga	San Agustin	Marihatag	Mean
Diversification of operation spread throughout the year	30.0	28.0	17.0	19.0	23.5
Planning and creating business opportunities/activities	23.0	16.0	16.0	18.0	18.3
Promotional activities/ or invitation on special educational tour packages	15.0	20.0	23.0	25.0	20.8
Cooperative marketing campaign/ business cooperation with other existing businesses	22.0	21.0	35.0	28.0	26.5
Reduction of workforce	10.0	15.0	9.0	10.0	11.0
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	

San Agustin gave a data 35% of its efforts for Cooperative marketing campaign/business cooperation with other existing businesses; 23%

for promotional activities/ or invitation on special tour package; 17% for diversification of operation spread throughout the year; and 16% for planning and creating business opportunities/activities. The least done is to reduce workforce.

Marihatag institutes the same alternative activities with San Agustin to sustain business in the same order of prioritization. Barobo and Lianga have similar strategies. Foremost is the diversification first of operation spread throughout the year 30% and 28% respectively. Least done is the reduction of workforce 10% and 15% respectively.

The diversification of operation spread throughout the year as adopted by BLOM areas attests to what Beus (2008) emphasized that in many cases, there is no solution to the problem associated with seasonal employment, but one strategy that some agri-ecotourism farms successfully do is to diversify their operation such that work is spread through the year. Careful planning of events, activities and business opportunities may enable the operator year round employment.

Likewise as pointed out by Vibal (2010), operators can most effectively target marketing efforts to people who are most likely to patronize the product, the market characteristics, the flow of the tourist and their preference, seasonality and distribution of demand. This will help the suppliers and marketers prepare the appropriate yield management that will set their pricing and inventory. He added many marketers as the key start out in the industry learn that marketing is partly the right product in the right place, at the right price, at the right time.

As to the average annual income, Marihatag leads and registers 2 million above per year, followed by San Agustin. Barobo, pegged at 900,000 Php per year; Lianga 100,000 to 200,000 Php. Tourism generates additional income earned by local enterprises from goods and services purchased by the traveller; also provides wages to households in the area in connection with tourism-related employment and income to the government through tourism-related taxation and fees (Vibal, 2010).

CONCLUSIONS

BLOM municipalities recognize the claim of R.A. 9593 or Tourism Act of 2009 and other tourism-related mandates which emphasize that tourism is an engine of socio-economic growth. As such, respective Local Ordinances/

Resolutions manifest efforts for the development of this industry in BLOM.

These four (4) Municipalities of BLOM have rich tourism attractions be it agri-ecotourism, culture and sports tourism where each LGU can create new brand image for tourism investors.

Status of Local tourism attractions in BLOM is good in terms of destination features, availability and functionality of tourism enterprises. However, the status of tourism attractions in BLOM varies greatly among the four (4) municipalities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure the sustainability of tourism industry in BLOM municipalities, more well-researched ordinances or resolutions are needed: such as Prohibition or minimization of selling agri-fishery products outside the municipality which ensures steady resource supply for tourism providers. Avoid high leakages which result in local prosperity. A large portion of tourism revenue must be retained locally, contributing to local prosperity. Beachfront easements and exclusion of permanent and temporary structures need to be done to ensure tourist free flow. Sewerage disposal measures and others are examples of concerns that must be addressed in Local Ordinances.

With attractions, follows development, and development may discard the unique appeal of the attraction, which provides beauty in the first place. With these, ordinances are needed to preserve and create minimal damage to the attraction that the destination offers. As such, skilled and fully capable member of the Municipal Tourism Council, Local Tourism Promotion Board be strengthened. Demographic data, or tourist profile data for the product, and market definition, shall be monitored as these can influence the efficacy of marketing strategy and planning.

To sustain the tourism industry, the adoption of behavioral change expert methodologies for tourism service providers ensures customer satisfaction. Exceeding tourist expectations in terms of services could mean the difference between stagnation of tourist destinations and sustainability. Whoever gave tourists the quality service they need means such destination will forever be part of their next vacation site option. Service is also an added attraction.

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