



RESEARCH ARTICLE

ASSESSMENT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM POTENTIALITIES OF SORSOGON PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

This paper assessed the local tourism potentialities of Sorsogon province in the Philippines. Data gathering employed an online Delphi-based process to evaluate the criteria in measuring potentialities of local tourism; one hundred and fifty (150) respondents were selected via stratified random sampling; and data analysis used descriptive statistics and non-parametric Wilcoxon Rank Sum Test. Results suggest that to ensure sustainability to existing tourism potentialities, Sorsogon has to focus on the importance of quality tertiary education, the provision of stable local employment, the promotion of healthy and balanced community life, as well as prioritizing the basic social services of its communities. Sorsogon tourism destinations are characterized by the four (4) tourism typologies based on travel motivation: ecotourism, econautical, cultural, and educational tourism and findings indicate that most of Sorsogon's tourist destinations remained untouched by commercialism however, there is a need to balance the travel motivators and tourist personalities with the psychological needs of the local communities in order to sustainably manage these tourism destinations. This study recommends that aside from human resources, there's a need for stronger local government support and capital investment be maximized on information and communications technology in order to boost the local tourism economy and showcase Sorsogon's tourism potentialities beyond borders.

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization has opened new opportunities for tourism development around the world. Sustainable tourism is a driving force for job creation, economic growth and development (ILO, 2016). World Travel and Tourism Council data showed that tourism industries directly created over 107 million jobs and had supported 284 million jobs, equivalent to one in 11 jobs in the world (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2015). Indeed, sustainable tourism is included in the United Nations Sustainable Development Program (UN Agenda 2030), for example, in goal 8 i.e. *promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all through tourism while it also promotes local culture and products*; and in goal 14 i.e. *conserving and sustainably using the oceans, seas and marine resources* including targets related to ecotourism. Within the modern context of tourism, greater interest for more authentic, individualist experiences have broadened this concept including the varied activities and experiences that could be attributed to it. A growing number of tourists are interested in immersing in a rural lifestyle, taking in the learning skills and customs as a personality enriching set of experiences. The new lifestyle of people would save money and devote an ample

time and space for tourism zapping experiences. Most aspect of life's activities are now associated as being economically driven and the rising tourism economies is no exception.

Bicolandia's Tourism

Local tourism becomes the economic driver for most of the provinces in the Bicol Region. For decades, tourism had been synonymous with the province of Albay. It is the home to the world's famous Mt. Mayon, a perfect cone shaped active volcano. It is strategically located at the center of the region. Albay's capital, Legaspi City provides the Bicol's Regional Centers for economic, educational and business affairs. This is the second most visited province in the region with 1.41 million registered arrivals in 2015 (NEDAROV.gov.ph, 2016). Another province is Camarines Norte with Daet as its capital and dubbed as the "Bicolandia's goldmine" in the world's tourism taglines. The region's largest province, Camarines Sur with its Naga City is known as the "Heart of Bicolandia." It is the most visited province in Region V with 2.06 million tourists in 2015 (NEDAROV.gov.ph, 2016). Catanduanes and Masbate are island provinces. The former is known for its long stretch of white beaches making it an ecotourism paradise while the latter, which is located exactly at the center of the Philippine archipelago boasts for its mining and cattle industry thus known as the Rodeo Capital of the country.

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Sorsogon as a Tourism Gem

Among the Bicol provinces, Sorsogon is considered as a hidden tourism gem where the gifts of nature and good hospitable people with fun loving culture abound. Sorsogon province is favourably serving as the gateway between the Visayas and Luzon islands. The province is fast-booming for business opportunities and national/ international trades. The Sorsogon City and its nearby municipalities have favorable ecotourism destinations in the Philippines which remain untouched by commercialism and many of which were never featured in travel literatures and blogs both in the national level and abroad. With ardent political support for the provincial rural development, this city provides the focus where majority of the hotels, restaurants, banks, hospitals, transport groups, telecommunications and other IT service providers are located. The province has three (3) major ports, namely: the port of Matnog which serves as the point of embarkation and disembarkation for Phil-Japan Highway link travelers. This is the busiest with its inter- services and inter-island conveyance of people and goods. On the other hand, Bulan and Pilar Ports ferry terminal for all types of vehicles, passengers and goods coming from the islands of Masbate and Cebu. The Matnog and Bulan Ports serve as vital links to Visayas and Mindanao and to the rest of Northern Luzon.

Sorsogon is an amazing place to visit. Bacon District of Sorsogon City is known for its beautiful Paguriran Island showcasing bluish crystal clear water and a caldera-shaped lagoon. Based from the Sorsogon provincial tourism office's report, Donsol is the world's famous for the gentle giants "Butanding" interactions and eco-adventure. The Malawmawan Island of Castilla, a tadpole-shaped island is a diver's paradise because of its rich, colourful corral formations. Bulan's Sabang beach and Pilar's Bantigue Point plus an exploration of Pilar river that leads to the Egret Sanctuary, a place for diving, snorkelling, crab trap lifting, nipa shingles making and seaweeds harvesting experience for the visitors. For other municipalities, Sta. Magdalena is a hidden treasure nestled with powdery sand beaches of Balading and Olango are favourite spots of backpackers and balikbayans. Barcelona stages more than centuries old church walls made up of coral reefs making the church a priceless relic. Known to the locals, Bulusan has its Bulusan lake dubbed as the "Switzerland of the Orient." Bulusan Lake lies at the heart of Natural Park where tourists could enjoy aqua adventure or hiking with its Mt. Bulusan at the zenith.

Meanwhile, the Municipality of Irosin boasts for its numerous resorts of hot and cold springs. The municipality of Magallanes is the historically and culturally rich town. It has Gibalon, a remarkable landmark for the Sorsoguenos because this was the site where the first catholic mass in Luzon or even in the Philippines was celebrated. The municipality of Magallanes is a haven filled with landscapes, seascapes, naturescapes which provide ample tourists attractions for travellers engrossed with the waterfalls, springs, beaches and mountaineering activities. This study aims to evaluate the local tourism potentialities of Sorsogon province as inputs for the sustainable development plan of the province utilizing a psychology of tourism approach (Simkova, 2014). Specifically, the paper aims to describe the current socio-economic and demographics of the province; the various local tourism potentialities and the most pressing tourism challenges encountered by the stakeholders and the proposed strategy to

develop sustainable tourism in Sorsogon while providing equal benefits to both the local communities and the tourists or travelers.

Study site and profile

Situated at the southern tip of Luzon, Sorsogon (Figure 1) is surrounded by embayment and straits, and a thin land mass connects it to the main Bicol Peninsula. It is bounded on the northeast by Albay Gulf, on the west by Ticao and Burias Pass, on the southeast by northern Samar and on the east by the Pacific Ocean. Sorsogon's terrain is very hilly with no large mountain range. The highest elevation is Mt. Bulusan, an active volcano. Its total land area is 214,144 hectares divided into 15 municipalities including the capital town of Sorsogon City. Sorsogon's annual population growth rate was 1.30 reaching a total population in year 2015 to 792,949 with 166,853 total number of households (PDP, 2015). A total of 677,454 (85.43%) of the total population are rural settlers. Common in the area are houses made of concrete/brick/ stone walled (64,264 households); while other houses are made of wood (31,687 households) and bamboo/sawali/cogon/ nipa where 29,453 households are recorded using it (PDP, 2015). Rice, corn, coconut, mango and banana are the top five (5) agricultural produce of the province. In addition, it is a promising grower of calamansi (lemons) 2176 metric tons (46.7%) number 1 producer in the Bicol Region. Also, Sorsogon invested on Pili production to an area of utmost 4,139.81 hectares with 3950 accredited pili farmers and 100 pili processors and 138 pili traders. (OPAG, 2015) For the livestock, major production is on carabao, cattle, chicken, duck and goat.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Respondents

The respondents were selected through a stratified random sampling technique, a total of 150 respondents were taken from fifteen (15) municipalities (including Sorsogon City) in the province of Sorsogon. Only 122 (81%) out of 150 survey questionnaires were retrieved personally and the others were sent online by the tourism stakeholders and pool of experts (Colleges/ Local Government Unit/ local business owners/ community partners).

Measuring Potentialities of Local Tourism

For the purpose of this study, an online Delphi-based process was employed to evaluate the criteria for measuring potentialities of local tourism arriving at an acceptable rate which indicates that the survey instrument could be used to engage at stakeholders' assessment of the factors for sustainable local tourism potentialities. The Delphi method solicits the opinions of experts through a series of carefully designed questionnaires interspersed with information and opinion feedback in order to establish a convergence of opinion (RAND.org/2016). The inputs were collated, having the test on validity processed with additional factors considered in the instruments such as: Technological, Legal, and Socio-Psychological. Each of the factors have its subsequent potential indicators measured through likert scale. The studies of Trukhachev (2015) on the methodology for evaluating the rural tourism potentials and Gregoric (2014) on Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental,

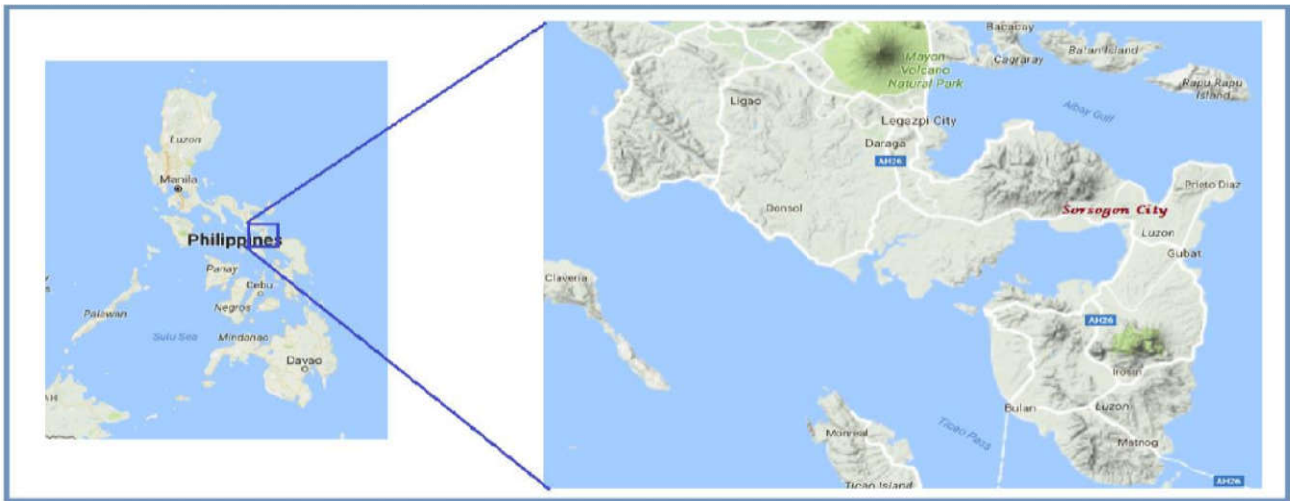


Figure 1. Map of Sorsogon Province, Bicol Region, Philippines

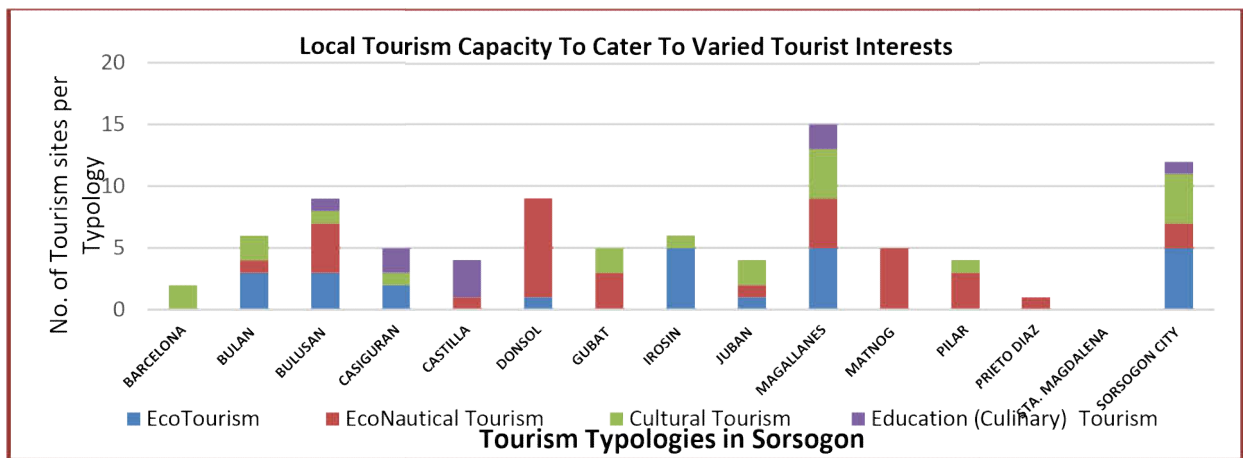


Figure 2. Capacity of Sorsogon province to cater to the different kinds of tourism needs

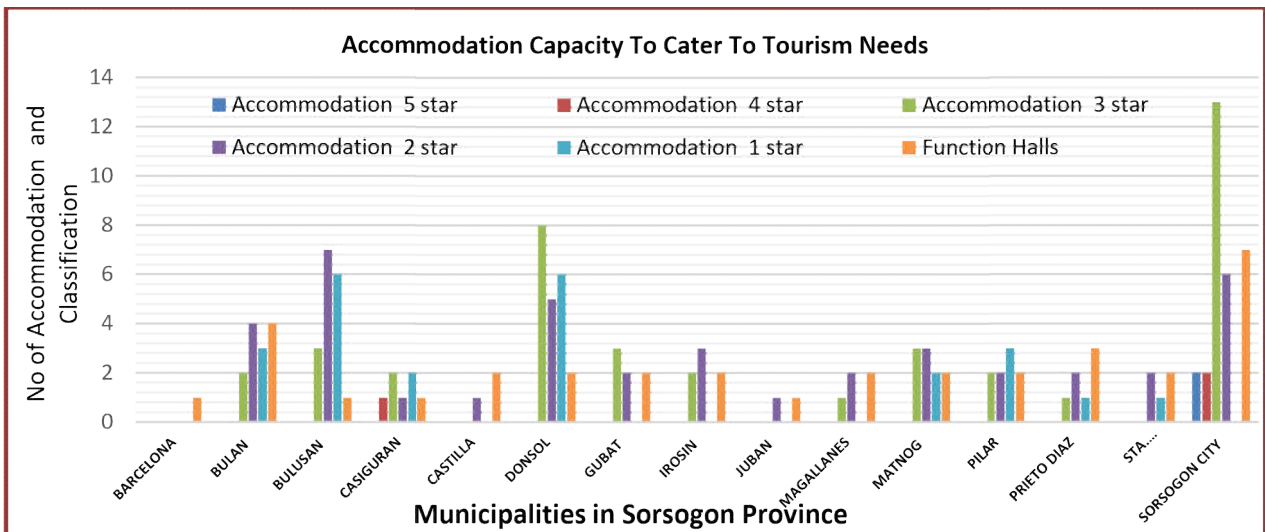


Figure 3. Capacity of the province to provide accommodation services

Legal (PESTEL) analysis on tourism destinations were considered to come up with a holistic framework based on the context of a locally sustainable tourism.

Data Analysis

This study employed the descriptive –exploratory methods in analyzing the raw data. The data were statistically computed

using descriptive statistics and a suitable non-parametric ranking method (Mann Whitney U Test (Wilcoxon Rank Sum Test)).

RESULTS

Local Tourism Typologies and Capacity: The varied motivation of tourists / travelers based on the Psychology of

Tourism (Simkova, 2014) were categorized into four tourism typologies namely: ecotourism, eco-nautical tourism, educational tourism, and cultural tourism as applied in the local tourism context of Sorsogon. These assessments of capacity would guide the province to attract tourists all over the world with varied personalities in a model referred to by Smith (1990). Figure 2 shows that aside from Sorsogon City the municipalities of Magallanes and Bulusan have the capacity to cater to a varied tourism motivations and purposes. This figure also reveals where the future direction of the other municipalities should be heading as far as the typology of local tourism is concerned. Some local tourists would visit far flung areas just to commune with nature in search for life's meaning and purpose. With the kind of socio-economic and demographics of the province, these are the kinds of tourists where Sorsogon could venture on, to make its tourism services more innovative, distinctive and sustainable compared to all the other tourism sites all over the world.

Accommodation Capacity

Figure 3 shows the province of Sorsogon has four (4) four-star tourism accredited hotels; 34 (thirty-four) threestar hotels and the rest are low budget lodging houses/ hostels. Aside from Sorsogon City, the municipality of Donsol has the greatest number, 19 tourism accredited accommodation establishments to cater to the tourists and travelers in the area.

Factors Affecting Potentiality of Local Tourism

Table 1 shows the factors that may affect sustainability of the local tourism industry. This can serve as guide to the provincial government to address the political (2.23) and technological factors (2.45) which are both very insufficient. Other factors such as economic (3.89), socio-psychological (3.84) and environmental (4.04) are found very sufficient in the province. These attest the strengths of the local tourism potentialities in the province. Based on the Cities/Municipalities Competitive Index, the province ranked 17th in the rising economic dynamism and ranked 2nd in its local economy growth (competitive.org, 2016).

Table 1. Indicators for the Potential Local Tourism in Sorsogon Province (Scale 1-5: 5- Very Highly Sufficient; 4-Very Sufficient; 3- Sufficient; 2- Very Insufficient 1- Very Highly Insufficient)

| Potential Indicators | Weighted Mean | Adjectival Description |
|--------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| A. Political Factors | 2.23 | Very Insufficient |
| B. Economic Factors | 3.89 | Very Sufficient |
| C. Socio-Psychological Factors | 3.84 | Very Sufficient |
| D. Technological Factors | 2.45 | Very Insufficient |
| E. Environmental Factors | 4.04 | Very Sufficient |
| F. Legal Factors | 2.98 | Sufficient |
| G. Cultural-Cognitive Factors | 3.48 | Sufficient |
| H. Infrastructure Development | 3.23 | Sufficient |
| Over-all Weighted Mean | 3.27 | Sufficient |

Local Tourism Challenges

Sorsogon local tourism challenges are presented in Table 2. Ranked first on these challenges is on poor interconnectivity (550) which is a requirement for a speedy information and communication access to boost the tourism economy. Next, is the lack of concrete provincial sustainability plan for most of the municipalities offering tourism to address the off-season

and lean months (599). This would address the concerns affecting most of the community beneficiaries whose income are dependent on tourism alone (Tsundoda and Mendlinger, 2009) (Jalani a, 2012). Then, the lack of rigor and aggressive promotion on the part of the local government and tourism council to promote its tourism sites (639); among other challenges.

Table 2. Local Tourism Challenges in the Province of Sorsogon

| Local Tourism Challenges | Sum of Ranks | Rank |
|--|--------------|------|
| Poor Interconnectivity (no tourism website; no online bookings for tourists) | 550 | 1 |
| Lack of concrete tourism sustainability plan strategizing off-season | 599 | 2 |
| Lack of rigor and aggressive promotion of the local government's tourism sites | 639 | 3 |
| Constant threat of extortion activities in the local tourism business sector | 688 | 4 |
| Habitat disturbance (threat to biodiversity) | 849 | 5 |
| Job opportunities lead to disinterest in education | 853 | 6 |
| Commercialism of tourism sites | 887 | 7 |
| Lack of government regulation on accreditation of tourism accommodations | 927 | 8 |
| Environmental hazards and vulnerabilities | 964 | 9 |
| Failure to provide widespread economic benefits | 1071 | 10 |
| Ill effects on too much exposure to technology-based tools | 1247 | 11 |
| Commodification of culture and values | 1271 | 12 |
| Lack of participation of local communities in decision making | 1273 | 13 |
| Conversion of arable lands to tourism sites | 1290 | 14 |
| Tourism revenues are not brought to the tourism sites | 1520 | 15 |

Tourism Typologies and Local Destinations

Table 3 shows the tourism typologies and local tourism destinations in Sorsogon. All the fourteen municipalities in Sorsogon including Sorsogon City could cater to the varied tourism motivation needs of the tourists/travellers however the municipality of Irosin which is a landlocked area does not have the potentialities for Eco-Nautical Tourism typology. However, Irosin is the only municipality in Sorsogon that is blessed with hot springs that makes it very suitable for the older ones applying the tourism dimension on health psychology.

DISCUSSION

Over the years, the world recognizes the important contribution of the tourism industry in economic growth and development. However, in order to sustain the greater demand in tourism that provides job opportunities for overall societal development, local tourism needs to be competitive in the global tourism sphere (including travel and leisure industries). "Glocalization" (oxforddictionaries.com, 2016) i.e. thinking global and acting local could be one of the innovative strategies for the local tourism industries to thrive at the local level. Local government units may introduce new approaches in order to maximize the development of human capital, generating more job opportunities and providing greater importance on the involvement of the community in the decision-making process (Chirenje, 2013; Lekaota, 2015) as well as provide capacity building to make them benefit in the tourism programs which is pro-poor and people centered (Lin and De Guzman, 2016). To make the local tourism competitive, it needs to provide access, evaluate its capacity to cater to varied interests of the future tourism industry needs.

Table 3. Tourism Typologies and Destinations in the Province of Sorsogon

| TRAVEL MOTIVATORS | | LOCAL TOURISM AND DESTINATION |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| Eco -Tourism | | |
| Personal | Escape from life's concerns | Rempeolas Baywalk (Sorsogon City) |
| | Relief of Tension | Bulusan Lake (Bulusan) |
| | Interest in scenery | Bariis Lake (Bulan) |
| Physical | Sun-Lust | Mt. Bulusan (Bulusan) |
| | Wanderlust | Pipita Park (Sorsogon City) |
| | Relaxation | Alburo Spring Resort (Sorsogon City), Mt. Pulog (Sorsogon City) |
| | Health | Bato Limestone Cave (Sorsogon City), Calintaan Cave (Matnog), San Jose Cave (Pilar) |
| | | Bato Limestone (Sorsogon City), Nagsurok Cave (Prieto Diaz), Egret Sanctuary (Pilar) |
| Social | Family | Bat Sanctuary, Botong Twin falls (Sorsogon City), Bolos Crystal Spring (Irosin) |
| | Togetherness | Bulusan Crystal Spring (Bulusan), Firefly Watching and Donsol Riverbank (Donsol), |
| | Socialization | Mangrove Forest Eco-Exploration (Prieto Diaz) |
| | | Orok Spring Resort (Casiguran), Mateo Hot and Cold Spring (Irosin), Guest World (Irosin), |
| | | Bucalbacalan Spring(Magallanes), 7 Falls(Magallanes), Juag Lagoon(Matnog) |
| | | Joyland resort(Bulan), Crystal Spring (Bulusan), Residencia Del Hamor(Casiguran) |
| | | Tropical Spring (Irosin),401 K Spring (Irosin), Anog Spring (Juban) |
| Eco -Nautical Tourism | | |
| Personal | Adventure | Sorsogon Seaport (Sorogon City) |
| | Exploration | Whale Shark Watching (Donsol), Bacon Marine Sanctuary (Sorsogon City) |
| | Experience | Pinaculan Island (Sorsogon City), Tikling Island (Matnog), Whale Shark (Donsol) |
| | | Scuba Diving Magallanes, (Sorsogon City), Buenavista Surf Camp & Lola Sayongs (Gubat) |
| Physical | Relaxation | Rizal Beach Tourism Estate (Gubat) |
| | Sun-Lust | Bagato Island (Magallanes) |
| | Wanderlust | Coral Reef formation (Prieto Diaz) |
| Social | Family Togetherness | Panumbagan Marine Sanctuary (Pilar), Sablayan (Juban), Tinakos Island (Magallanes) |
| | Socialization | Panumbagan Sandbar (Pilar), Pilar Marine Sanctuary (Pilar), Sabang Park and Beach Resort (Bulan), Subic Beach (Matnog), Funtasea Beach Resort(Pilar) |
| | Convincing Oneself and Others of Achievement | Malawmawan Island Dive (Castilla), Parola 1 and 2 Dive and Beach (Magallanes), New Seabreeze Beach (Sorsogon City), Marthavanna(Pilar), Pilar Pitogo Beach (Pilar), Shoreline Beach (Donsol), Sirangan Beach (Sorsogon city),Villa Dianna(Pilar),Vera Maris(Gubat), Villa Celeste(Bulusan), Villa Victoria(Donsol),Viton Beach(Donsol),Woodland Beach(Donsol), Barracuda Beach Resort (Donsol), Casa Bianca Beach(Donsol), Balading (Sta Magdalena), Olango (Sta Magdalena), Suki Beach Resort (Sta Magdalena), Villa Corazon (Prieto Diaz) |
| Cultural Tourism | | |
| Cultural | Roots/ Ethnic Masonic Temple | (Sorsogon City) |
| Culinary | Gastronomy Old Houses | (Juban) |
| | Branding Barcelona Church | (Barcelona) |
| | Status and Prestige Kasanggayahan Festival | (Sorsogon City), Magalleones Festival (Magallanes), Padaraw Festival (Bulan) |
| | Pili Festival | (Sorsogon City), Paray Festival (Irosin), Unod Festival (Castilla), |
| | Religion Gibalon Historical Site | (Magallanes), FGM Handicrafts (Pilar), Casa Feliz (Juban), Presidencia |
| | Building Spanish Ruin | (Barcelona), Bulan Heritage Museum (Bulan), Sorsogon City Museum |
| Educational Tourism | | |
| Educational | Professional | Department of Education |
| | Continuing Education | Sorsogon State College (Magallanes, Bulan, Castilla, Sorsogon City) |
| | Resource Based | Abaca (Bulusan, Pilar, Barcelona), Pandan (Sorsogon City, Pilar), Buri (Bulusan, Pilar, Sta. Magdalena, Bulan), |
| | Industries/ Business | Anahaw (Magallanes, Pilar, Bulan, Matnog), Coco Twigs (Pilar), Handmade Paper (Gubat, Barcelona), Pottery (Gubat, Irosin), Marble Processing, Slabs, Ashline (Sorsogon City (Bacon) |
| | Skills Training | Fish Processing (Bulan, Matnog, Magallanes) |
| | | Metalcraft/Cuttlery (Sorsogon City (Bacon)), Limestone Processing (Pilar, Donsol), Brick making (Casiguran), Pili Processing (Irosin, Bulusan , Gubat, Sta. Magdalena, Juban), Seaweeds processing (Irosin, Bulusan , Gubat, Sta. Magdalena, Juban), Coco Fiber(Irosin, Bulusan, Castilla, Pilar), Sorsogon Provincial Agri-Industrial State(Castilla), BACMAN |
| | | Geothermal Plant (Sorsogon City), HydroElectric Plant(Cawayan Sor.City), |
| | Demo Farms | Amor Farm (Donsol), Balay Buhay Sa Uma (Bulusan), Iraya Bed and Breakfast(Casiguran), Grajo Agri Tourism and Eco Bee Farm(Casiguran), Arellano Farm (Castilla), DTI Bee Farm (Castilla) |

Local Tourism Strategy Using Psychology of Tourism Approach

Psychology of Tourism (Simkova, 2014) was used to categorize the four tourism typologies namely: eco-tourism, eco-nautical tourism, educational tourism, and cultural tourism; this approach was applied in the local tourism context of Sorsogon in this study. These led to the assessment of capacity of every municipality in the province to offer the four types of

tourism: Ecotourism (TIES, 2015), EcoNautical Tourism (the standard.com, 2014), Cultural Tourism (Richards, 2003) and Educational Tourism(Bastaki, 2015) would provide a wider opportunity for the province to attract tourists all over the world with varied personalities as referred to in a model by Smith (1990) i.e. the motivation of visitors are either psychocentric (centers on self); allocentric (interest on others), midcentric (mixture of both tourist personalities). Understanding the basic travel motivators as well as the

classifications of tourists/travellers would provide a vital information to address and manage economic impact of tourism specifically during lean months/off-season when tourism is not possible or at a minimum.

The four tourism typologies maybe used in local tourism sustainability strategy; the municipalities could adopt various tourism circuit lanes to cater to these varied tourist groups, for example, for Eco-tourism, an EcoAdventure Lane may cater to tourists who are more inclined to explore and experience ecotourism and this lane could highlight the province's natural resources and nature formations (springs, waterfalls, cliffs, mangrove eco-parks etc.). In EcoNautical Tourism, a Marine/Aqua Adventure Lane maybe created for tourists interested in the marine environment such as aqua-sports, visits to marine corral reserves and sanctuaries, scuba diving, snorkelling and swimming. In Educational tourism, a strategy of creating a Kasanggayahan Lane for tourists who are more interested in continuing education and training ie. culinary tourism, educational field trips to demo farms and socio-laboratories to gain knowledge on the basics of food / fish preservation, canning, and experience of local culinary treats and local food products would be good components of this lane. In Cultural Tourism, a lane could highlight cultural and heritage tourism so tourists could experience Sorsogon's rich culture and heritage, immerse with the local lifestyle, traditions, and experience the natural healing methods and wellness treatments as well as local practices and artistic works.

Accommodation Quality and Capacity

The local tourism industry needs to provide accommodation or a place for lodging to tourists and visitors. Sorsogon offers varied accommodation from luxury hotels, to hostels, lodging houses or bed and breakfast to tourists and travellers. These accommodations offer a home that is safe and comfortable. The Department of Tourism (DOT) has established a national tourism accommodation standard through a star grading system (tourism.gov.ph, 2017), a manner in which tourism accommodations are classified. However, for Sorsogon's local tourism, it may be difficult to assess due to the diversity of various tourism accommodations which are highly embedded in the local cultural and economic contexts. Thus, the basis of local accommodation classification was anchored on Israeli (2002) which included in the review of the establishment's level of service, amenities, cleanliness, location and price, number of rooms, the number of employees and total area of the establishment located in every municipality.

Factors Affecting Potentiality of Sustainable Local Tourism

To attain full development and sustainability in local tourism, the provincial government should address the political (2.23) and technological factors (2.45) which are both very insufficient. This implies for the greater participation of the community and other stakeholders on policy formulation and tourism planning at the municipal level. There is also a need to evaluate the tangible support from the government authorities on funding tourism projects. The government's focus and the political input have to be directed to the tourism management agency, the government administrative system, the industry, and the response of these various groups to demands on the tourism sector (Elliot, 1987). In an interview with the tourism business sector in the province, the need for

the local government units (LGUs) to collaborate with the provincial tourism and the business sector together with the community who are expected to participate actively in the decision –making process was emphasized. This issue on government collaboration was deemed important to arrive at a common solution on ways to resolve the issues or concerns affecting the local tourism industry. The study of Trukhachev (2015), provided a methodology for evaluating the rural tourism potentials based on its capacity for sustainability using the case of rural settlements of Stavropol Krai, Russia. The study stressed that sustainability for rural areas is more than just a sustainable economic growth. The concept of sustainability in rural areas should integrate environmental, economic, cultural and social factors making every component important. He made use of ranking of the selected rural settlements according to their rural tourist capacity. Our study however, made use of descriptive statistics wherein the indicators were factored-in utilizing the PESTEL analysis (Gregoric, 2014).

A major asset to the sustainability of local tourism in Sorsogon are the Sorsoguenos themselves as the people are inherently hospitable (Astillero and Ocbian, 2015) and have high regard for humanity, values education, and have high respect for culture. Aside from human resources potential, another tourism potential is the presence of varied tourism destinations and activities (landscapes, seascapes, nature-scapes, rich marine flora and fauna, distinctive culture and heritage). A legislative policy is needed to safeguard and utilize these resources properly. Teo (2010) opined that whether the effects of tourism are expressed in terms of the economy, culture and heritage or the environment, understanding the global-local nexus credits local players with more control and enables a better understanding of the forces underpinning change and hence sustainability.

Local Tourism Challenges

Within Asia and the Pacific region, governmental laxity and corporate profit-conscious attitudes towards tourism education and training, as well as lack of trainers and teaching staff, have been identified as some of the factors responsible for inadequate professionalism in its tourism industry (UNWTO.org,2016). The primary challenge of the local tourism in Sorsogon is the poor internet connectivity (550) which is a requirement for a speedy information and communication access to boost the tourism economy. In today's information age, fast and reliable internet connectivity is necessary for every tourism operation or activity, thus, this study argues that it is a must that every local municipality has to provide a web portal that is responsive to the needs of the internal and external stakeholders. Information technology defines the past, present and the future of tourism industry (Buhalis, 1997; 2002; 2003). Next, is the lack of concrete provincial sustainability plan for most of the municipalities offering tourism to address the off-season and lean months (599), then, the lack of rigor and aggressive promotion on the part of the local government and tourism council to promote its tourism sites (639). Most of the municipalities do not have tourist information booth for better marketing and promotion which have to be equipped with the Information Technology-enabled tools and equipment for immediate feedback for inquiries. This would also make local destination sites accessible all over the world. The provincial tourism council could disseminate (in print and non-print) the tourism

brochures at the embassies and other strategic places all over the country in order to promote the tourism destinations of the province. Another important challenge is on peace and security of the business sector who are operating in support to addressing community and tourism needs. The constant threat of extortion activities in the local tourism business sector (688) makes these support services lessen their interest on investing or worst closing business operation in the area. The local business sector's survival is contingent on the reflexive approach to tourism. In order for the local tourism industry to become sustainable, all the sectors of the society should manifest support balancing the interests and safeguarding the rights of its internal and external stakeholders (Swarbrooke, 2009 in Paul 2015). These are the top most challenges which need to be addressed by all the stakeholders of the province.

“Psychology of Tourism” Approach

Psychology is the scientific study of human and animal behaviour. It is related to the broad fields of psychology such as social, environmental, cognitive and health psychology considers the influences of others, the physical setting, human thinking and information processing and health and wellness on human behaviour. In tourism, findings of these psychology fields/ areas are used to understand tourists' behaviour, attitudes and their motivations. As Villamira (2001) also stated psychology in tourism studies tourists' travellers behaviour, motivation and cognition. In the interview with the respondents, their initial inputs provided were on the motivation of their tourists to travel which includes: finding new environment for escape, relaxation, to find life's meaning and purpose, exploring new interests or experience unique situations in a new / alternative environment. The result impacts not only economic investment but also personal-emotional investment as well. Also, Simkova (2013) provided the key elements from tourism psychology perspective to include motivation (needs), expectation, decision making, satisfaction and experience, including analysis of relations. It is in this context that this study was anchored on ways the local potentialities be harnessed to become effectively sustainable.

The sustainability strategy for local tourism would maximize the utilization of the tourism potentialities of Sorsogon province while creating a balance on the take of both the tourists and the local community under the tourism psychology principle. All the fourteen municipalities in Sorsogon and Sorsogon City could cater to the varied tourism motivation needs of the tourists/travellers, except the Municipality of Irosin which has no potentialities for Eco Nautical Tourism typology. Although, Irosin is the only municipality in Sorsogon that is blessed with hot springs that makes it very suitable for the older ones applying the tourism dimension on health psychology; Lynn (2015) opined that soaking in a hot spring need not be solely reserved for a relaxing vacation or a weekend getaway as it has been reported that mineral-rich baths offer a slew of natural health benefits with distinct healing powers widely accepted as natural treatment options for various common ailments using water or balneotherapy as a cure or relief for pain, stress, and skin problems.

Finally, this study believes that the success of every municipality's tourism strategy would yield better opportunities and development for the province and the country. The participation of the community shall remain at the core, while harmonizing with the academe and other institutional partners such as the provincial government and

external organizations. The successful implementation of the province and municipalities tourism plan depends on the extent of government support; the recognition of its potential impact on the political, economic, social, environmental, technological and legal (PESTEL) dimensions; the openness and participation of the communities; and its readiness and acceptance of innovation and future transformation of the province of Sorsogon.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The future of the province of Sorsogon relies heavily on the following: importance of quality tertiary education; provision of stable local employment; promotion of healthy and well-balanced community life as well as prioritizing the basic social services of the community it serves. Aside from Sorsogon City, the municipalities of Magallanes and Bulusan have promising Tourism potentials to cater to the four (4) tourism typologies: ecotourism, econautical tourism, educational tourism, and cultural tourism. The province caters to low-cost budget accommodations and multipurpose function halls to accommodate the varied needs and motives of its growing clientele. The province is blessed with varied tourism destinations, most of which remain untouched by commercialism however, there is a need to balance the travel motivators and tourist personalities with the psychological needs of the local community in order to sustainably manage the tourism destinations all over the province. Aside from human resources, the province needs to invest in technology-enabled tools and equipment in order to showcase Sorsogon's tourism potentialities at global scale.

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