

Status of marketing strategies towards tourist attraction and local products: In the case of Lobo, Batangas, Philippines

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the present status of tourist attractions and inputs of local products and its marketing strategies in Lobo, Batangas. The total numbers of respondents were one hundred seventy (170) locals, tourist and tourism officers. Using a survey questionnaire being it as descriptive method of research. Based from the result, Faro de Punta de Malabrigo popularly known as Malabrigo Lighthouse was frequently visited. The Main local product and activities in Lobo is Anihan Festival which celebrates the bountiful production of local agricultural crops. The tamarind fruit is also one local product which is processed to become wines and sweet delicacies. Lobo thought of creating its own unique wine and one of the popular tamarind products is the tamarind wine. The marketing strategies were being measured in its effectiveness which has a positive response of establishment in support facilities and services. One of the key strategies recommended was to use humors, strong images, and wordplay message to easily catch attention and to utilize billboards and signage effectively.

Keywords: tourism attractions; local products; marketing strategies; festival; tamarind fruit

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1. Introduction

Tourism played a fundamental role in developing and building a place to become a tourist destination. Traveling pursue a gratifying intermission from everyday life. Tourist wants to relax, recreate, and rejuvenate themselves from the hustling and bustling of the metro. As tourists drive by, it will be the gateway to the town's unrevealed beauty. They can have the opportunity to witness not only the beach but the whole town with its natural, man-made, historical attractions, and more.

Batangas is one of the most beautiful provinces in Luzon and one of the premier tourist destinations of the country because of its strategic location of being near to the country's capital, Manila, makes it one of the most attractive destinations for foreign and local tourists (Tamayo, 2013). The provincial government promotes numerous admirable beaches and magnificent dive spots, contributing to the further growth of the local tourism industry. Local and foreign tourists visit the province from various entry points to engage in religious, cultural, historical, and educational purposes, a gastronomic adventure, or a beach vacation destination (Buted, 2014).

Lobo has a lot to offer, not only the coastal attractions and destinations but also its beautiful landscape. Like the Ifugaos and their world-famous terraces, the farmers of Lobo also planted their crops in level paved steps to improve their farms' water irrigation system. Jaybanga Rice Terraces is the mini version of the Banaue Rice Terraces. According to Bansil (2015), Lobo is part of the Verde Island Passage and is a popular tourist destination in the Province of Batangas. It is one of the famous coastal destinations in Southern Tagalog, wherein the town has protected mangrove forests and fish sanctuaries. The coastal parts of Lobo become a sanctuary for both local and foreign tourist scuba divers and surfers. Most of these coastal areas consist of living corals near the seashore.

Whereas aside from being known for its white-sand beaches, flowing rivers, and fertile agricultural plains. According to Boros (2013), Lobo produces agricultural products being consumed by many tourists. They also produce raw food like rice, corn, coconut, vegetables, fruits such as sugar apple, tamarind, root crops, etc. The known leading products of Lobo are sweet tamarind, tamarind wine, bagoong. Another most visited tourist spot is the Faro de Punta de Malabrigo (Malabrigo Lighthouse), overlooking Verde Island and Mindoro Island (WowBatangas, 2013). Lobo is also a mountainous destination, the stunning mountains of Lobo are Mt. Banoi, Mt. Lobo with Nagpatong Peak and Bangkalan Peak, Mt. Tibig, Mt. Naguiling, and Mt. Tilos. Aside from mountains, Lobo is also abundantly blessed with forestry and wildlife, all equally maintained for tourists to enjoy (Pinoy Mountaineer, 2015).

1.1 Objectives of the study

This study aimed to determine the present status of tourist attractions and inputs of local products and its marketing strategies in Lobo, Batangas. Thus, it requires identifying the potential landmarks that possessed wonderful sceneries and picturesque views to one of the prides of Batangas Province, the Municipality of Lobo. The coastline of Fabrica, Masaguisit, Olo-olo, Malabrigo, Soloc, and Sawang in Lobo turned as spot for scuba divers, surfers, foreign and local visitors to enjoy, relax, and having some fun spending their holidays. Lobo is situated in the Verde Island Passage, the "center of the center of marine biodiversity" in the world. Lobo is a landscape of scenic beaches with magnificent dive spots and fish sanctuaries, mountain ranges, and the historic old Malabrigo Lighthouse overlooking the Verde Island.

2. Methodology

The total numbers of respondents were one hundred seventy (170) locals, tourists, and tourism officers. The researcher made use of a survey questionnaire in the conduct of this research. Weighted Mean was used to identify the status and prospects of tourist attraction and local products in Lobo, Batangas and to determine the degree of participation of local community in the promotion of tourist attraction and local products. The researcher observed high confidentiality of conducting the survey and the interviews since there are particular names of the respondents are not cited in the paper Thus, personal opinion of the researcher was included in the study.

3. Results and discussion

Table 1

Tourist attraction frequently visited in Lobo, Batangas

Tourist Attractions	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Faro de Punta de Malabrigo	3.78	Frequently Visited	1
Submarine Garden	3.49	Moderately Visited	2
Tulay na Busog (<i>Biak na Bato</i>)	3.33	Moderately Visited	9
Ulopong Falls	3.27	Moderately Visited	13
Mangrove Swamp Forest	3.41	Moderately Visited	5
Jaybanga Rice Terraces	3.43	Moderately Visited	4
Naguiling Falls	3.34	Moderately Visited	8
Simbahang Bato	3.31	Moderately Visited	12
Malagundi Point Coral Wall	3.35	Moderately Visited	7
Gerthel Beach	3.32	Moderately Visited	11
Mount Banoi	3.32	Moderately Visited	10
Mount Lobo	3.45	Moderately Visited	3
Anihan Festival	3.26	Moderately Visited	14
Lumbangan Underwater Cave	3.38	Moderately Visited	6

Legend. 4.50 – 5.00 = Most Frequently Visited; 3.50 – 4.49 = Frequently Visited; 2.50 – 3.49 = Moderately Visited; 1.50 – 2.49 = less Visited; 1.00 – 1.49 = Not Visited.

Table 1 presents the status of tourist attractions frequently visited in Lobo, Batangas. Based on the result, Faro de Punta de Malabrigo, popularly known as Malabrigo Lighthouse, was frequently visited (3.78), followed by Submarine Garden (3.49), Mount Lobo (3.45), and Jaybanga Rice Terraces (3.43), all moderately visited.

The town center of Lobo is small. The municipal hall, the church, and the public market are right next to each other. It is here where one can get public transport to Batangas City. Road infrastructure crosses the long bridge over the Lobo River will lead to the coastal villages of Sawang and Malabrigo. The place has a lot of attractions. The lighthouse of the town is a known landmark and served as the warning light to the ship at Verde Island Passage. Meanwhile, the adventure-seekers are thrilled and excited to climb the Bangkalan and Nagpatong Peaks of Mount Lobo. The 3 to 4-hour trek is fun and at the end of the point lies the Passage, Mindoro, overlooking to the many mountain ranges of Laguna, Batangas, and Quezon. Jaybanga Rice Terraces is gaining popularity in Lobo, Batangas, as it is the mini version of Banawe Rice Terraces in Baguio.

The provincial government promotes magnificent beaches and majestic dive spots. These visitor-drawing sites contribute to the further growth of the local industry by hosting various water sports and tourism events in the province. Local and foreign tourists alike can pass through the province from various entry points, whether going on a religious, cultural, historical, and/or an educational tour, a gastronomic adventure, or a beach vacation destination, as suggested in the study made by Buted (2014).

Attractions such as Gerthel Beach (3.32), Simbahang Bato (3.31), Ulopong Falls (3.27), and Anihan Festival (3.26) were rated the least though considered moderately visited. Lobo is also known for its pristine beaches, Gerthel Beach and Simbahang Bato are some of the finest beaches in the area. However, if one is a fan of powdery sand beaches, this place is not for you unless you want to try something new. Beaches in Lobo are

known for having shorelines filled with pebbles. Anihan Festival is annually celebrated for a bountiful harvest, abundant graces, and festivities received by the townsfolk of Lobo, Batangas held every last week of September. It includes a trade fair that highlights the products of each barangay and street-dancing competition where costume and choreography reflect the agricultural gems.

According to the study of Ram (2016), place attachment is relevant to the perceived authenticity of major visitor attractions where the place attachment and authenticity are inseparable to the satisfaction of tourists. Major visitor attractions located in places are considered heritage attraction value. It is authentic and iconic with heritage value integrity. From the insights of the tourist, the authenticity of visitor attraction highlights the importance of the heritage value of tourism destinations. Strategic planning and marketing perspectives are included in the development policy for better utilization of the attraction is further recommended.

Festivals play a major role in the development of tourism. The celebrating elements are significant to the life of a given community and related to the culture and religion of local communities. Consisting of many different social and cultural events, the celebration relates to art and culture. Sometimes, the event organizers include a competition to make it more exciting and encourage local community involvement. Tourists travel to join the festival to experience the local culture (Cudny, 2013). However, whereas according to Laing (2018), festivals and event tourism are considered as tourism products. Just like any tourism product, it faces a lot of issues with the use of indigenous and traditional culture and rituals within festivals and events. Some of those issues are authenticity, commodification, and potential exploitation as well as their association to more positive effects such as reconciliation and capacity building, all of which require further study and analysis in a variety of contexts.

Table 2

Local products commonly patronized in Lobo, Batangas

Local Products	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Tamarind Wine	3.72	Agree	1
Sweetened Tamarind	3.61	Agree	2
Bagoong	3.32	Moderately Agree	6
Kaing (<i>fruit basket</i>)	3.51	Agree	3
Ookan	3.39	Moderately Agree	5
Atis (<i>sugar apple</i>)	3.48	Moderately Agree	4

Legend. 4.50 – 5.00 = Strongly Agree; 3.50 – 4.49 = Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Moderately Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree.

Table 2 presents the local products commonly patronized in Lobo, Batangas. From the result, tamarind wine (3.72), sweet tamarind (3.61), and kaing (*fruit basket*) (3.51) were all agreed as patronized. Tamarind candy and tamarind wine originate in Lobo, Batangas; they are the said products' primary producers. This is a leading industry in Lobo, other than the production of sweet tamarind, bagoong, kaing, and ookan are also being produced. The mountains of Lobo are lined with tamarind trees; many of them are century-old. The locals harvest the fruits, lay them to dry under the sun, and coat them in brown sugar. Meanwhile, tamarind wine is a sweet-tasting wine made from fermented tamarind juice. Both products are locally made in Brgy. Balibago, Lobo, Batangas, manufactured by their cooperative, Seaside “B” Multi-purpose Cooperative.

Lobo is known for its Anihan Festival, celebrating the bountiful production of local crops. The tamarind fruit is processed to become wines and sweet delicacies. Lobo thought of creating its unique wine, and one of the popular tamarind products is the tamarind wine. The processed tamarind products were showcased during the Anihan Festival (Batangas Products, 2014).

Products with the least weighted mean are atis (3.48), ookan (3.39), and bagoong (3.32). All were moderately agreed to be patronized. Bagoong is one of the local products in Lobo that is commonly patronized by the locals and the tourists. The production of bagoong is a process of fermentation of fish the characteristics of this product vary depending on the places where it is made and consumed. Local products are done in a conventional procedure and used traditional flavoring, with that content creating nutritional-physiological

advantages among the tourist. The peculiarity of these products achieves a significant competitive advantage in the local and international markets (Boros, 2013).

Table 3

Status of marketing strategies of tourist attractions and local products

Marketing strategies	Yes		No	
	F	%	F	%
Tourist information center	95	55.9	75	44.1
Sample leaflets and brochures for tourist attractions and various local products	70	41.2	100	58.8
Informative and up-to-date official municipality website	94	55.3	76	44.7
TV, broadcast and print media and other social networking site to promote the tourist attractions and local products	106	62.4	64	37.6
Billboards, signage in strategic location	41	24.1	129	75.9
Establishment of support facilities and services	109	64.1	61	35.9
Products packaging for local and international exportation	108	63.5	62	36.5
Linked with the DOT website and promotions	87	51.2	83	48.8

Table 3 shows the marketing strategies of attractions and local products of Lobo, Batangas. The marketing strategies were being measured in its effectiveness. The positive response of establishment in support facilities and services got the highest frequency of 109 or 64.1 %, followed by products packaging with 108 or 63.5 % and TV, broadcast, and print media 106 or 62.4 %.

In Lobo, electricity, water, and telecommunications are present; thus, these are important existing tourist attractions found in the place. Which include good road infrastructure and existence of communication network that are very essential to many Travellers; they could still make connections from the place of origin. This could help in ensuring good marketing strategy in Lobo by having these facilities and services available in the place.

Public infrastructure serves the needs of the local resident as well as the tourists. These basic facilities, equipment, and installation needed for a functioning tourism industry are important and essential in the operation of many establishments (Kastarlak and Barber, 2012).

Meanwhile, the least marketing strategies are as follows: linked with the DOT website and promotions with 87 or 51.2 %; sample leaflets and brochures for tourist attractions and various local products with 70 or 41.2 %; and the least, billboards, signages in strategic location with 41 or 24.1 %. Billboards and signages are present in the place but not adequate. It seems that these were not used as a marketing tool in promoting products and attractions. In some ways, these served only for showing the direction of some resorts and other establishments. The marketing program combines a workable and viable strategic plan. The tourism marketing must search for the right marketing strategies. Thus, the marketing mix influences the marketing effort of the marketers and with the combination of elements to produce a profit (Shumate, n.d.).

Table 4

Proposed marketing strategies for tourist attractions and local products

KRA	Strategies	Person Involved
Marketing Strategies of Tourist Attractions and Local products	Use billboard and signage in promoting tourist attraction and local products within and outside Lobo proper	Department of Tourism
To utilize billboards and signage effectively	Make use social media platform like Facebook and YouTube for environmental awareness campaign	Provincial Cultural Affairs Office
	Place billboards and signage to station platforms and public sites	Local Government
	Use personalized, strong images, and wordplay message to easily catch the attention	Establishment owners
		Local Communities

Based on the result and findings of the study, the research come up with these marketing strategies to further strengthen the tourism products in Lobo, Batangas. The Main person involved is the Department of Tourism, Provincial Cultural Affairs Office, Local Government, Establishment owners and Local Communities.

4. Conclusion

Majority of the respondents frequently visited Faro Punta De Malabrigo (Malabrigo Lighthouse), Submarine Garden, Mount Lobo. Tourist Attractions are well-maintained and local products are readily available. The municipality of Lobo used the tourism information center/pasalubong center as one of the marketing strategies in the promotion of tourism attractions and local products.

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