

Destination attributes and marketing strategies as determinants of tourist behavioral intentions on agritourism sites in CALABARZON

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Abstract

The study analyzed the destination attributes and marketing strategies as determinants of tourist behavioral intentions on agritourism sites in CALABARZON. Specifically, it determined the respondents' profile in terms of sex, age, employment status and civil status; assessed the destination attributes in terms of destination characteristics, services and facilities, staff members, and price level; the marketing strategies used by agritourism sites in terms of product, place, price and promotion. It also determined the behavioral intentions of tourists in terms of social media, subjective norm, travel intention and willingness to support a destination; tested the significant relationship of the variables' destination attributes, marketing strategies and tourist behavioral intention. The study utilized quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design, and 383 tourists of the DOT accredited agritourism sites served as respondents. The study revealed majority of the respondents were male, ages 26 and above, employed, and single. The destination attributes of the agritourism sites were assessed as very good. The marketing strategies used by the agritourism sites were observed. Moreover, the respondents agreed on the behavioral intentions. Furthermore, there was a significant relationship among destination attributes, marketing strategies and tourist behavioral intention. Based from the findings of this study, a framework was crafted for the agritourism sites in CALABARZON.

Keywords: agritourism, destination attributes, marketing strategies, behavioral intention, CALABARZON

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1. Introduction

Agriculture is tantamount to society's sustainability as it provides food, livelihood, and environmental diversity. Yet, in addition to the numerous beneficial contributions that agriculture offers, another emerging trend is now gaining popularity which is called agritourism. This agritourism brings relaxation and leisure to the visiting guest while ushering in new jobs and profit to the owners. This makes agritourism worth studying to maximize its potential. According to Arru et al. (2021), agritourism is considered one of the most innovative processes of diversification in agriculture, as well as a subgroup of rural tourism in Italy. The sustainability of agritourism will depend on preserving the quality of the environment which includes agriculture.

The Philippines is one of the world's top agritourism destinations, where it drives the sector to provide additional revenue streams for the farmers due to its biodiversity and natural resources (Searca 2019). The Department of Tourism (DOT) has been exerting efforts to reboot tourism in the CALABARZON. It is by promoting agritourism through different activities such as culinary circuits and the program Green Corridor Initiative. It showcases the region 4A's farm tourism sites as well as farm-to-table dining experience (Business Mirror, 2022).

One of the challenges of agritourism is that farm owners have difficulties in identifying the preferences of tourists and their expectations, despite the positive potential of agritourism in the country. Based on the study of Delos Reyes et al. (2021), there was a lack of marketing support and an absence of farm owners in taking the function of tourism-related operations. Moreover, the Department of Tourism has launched programs that improve and promote agritourism sites in the country entitled "Future Farms" which was launched in 2022. Hence, based on these premises, this study aims to know whether such campaign improved the status of agritourism sites in the region.

One of the primary bases for an agritourism site to develop is tourist interest in visiting such attractions. Remarkably, attributes of a destination are considered as one of the factors that stimulates the intention of tourists to visit an agritourism site. The ability of a destination has five major components to offer to the visitors. The components are attractions, facilities, accessibility, image, brand and price (Andayani et al. 2021). The agritourism sites comprises the components that can be offered to the tourists. Whereas the marketing includes the identification of the target market of the agritourism business as well as the description of the goods services and experience offered (Ag Marketing Resource Center, 2021). Marketing strategies are important in agritourism which helps to reach the goals and target market of the organization with the use of the 4Ps which are the product, price, promotion and placement (Perlas et. Al, 2019). Interestingly, behavioral intention is an important concept to understand the selection of the destination and future motives of the tourists (Afshardoost and Eshaghi, 2020).

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) by Icek Ajzen attempts to predict human behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The TPB posits that attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control influence behavioral intention. The theory was widely used framework for understanding behavioral intentions. The purpose of an agritourism marketing framework is to provide a strategic roadmap for promoting agritourism sites, attracting visitors and enhancing the visitor experience. According to Perlas et al. (2019), a marketing framework aims to support the sustainable growth of agritourism sites by fostering community partnerships, enhancing customer satisfaction, and continuously improving marketing strategies based on feedback and performance evaluation.

This study was deemed to serve as a tool for improving the agritourism sites in the region for the residents, local government units, and tourists aimed toward the economic impacts of the agritourism sites. Moreover, this study is relevant to the current situation of the tourism industry as the agritourism sector continues to prosper in the region. This study was delimited to the accredited agritourism sites in CALABARZON based on the list provided by the Department of Tourism Region IV-A. In addition, the study focused on the tourists who were physically present at the agritourism sites as the respondents of the study.

Objective of the Study - This study aimed to analyze the destination attributes and marketing strategies as determinants of tourist behavioral intentions on agritourism sites in CALABARZON. Specifically, this study described the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of sex, age, employment status, and civil status; assessed the destination attributes in terms of destination characteristics, services and facilities, staff members, and price level; determined the marketing strategies used by agritourism sites in terms of product, place, price, and promotion; determined the behavioral intentions of tourists in terms of social media, subjective norm, travel intention and willingness to support a destination; tested the significant relationships of destination attributes, marketing strategies, and tourist behavioral intention; and proposed agritourism marketing framework.

2. Methodology

Research Design - The study used the descriptive correlational method as a research design to determine the destination attributes and marketing strategies as determinants of tourist behavioral intentions on agritourism sites in CALABARZON. In this study, it determine any significant relationships of the variables, destination attributes and marketing strategies towards tourist behavioral intention.

Participant of the Study - The respondents of the study were the local tourists who visited the CALABARZON agritourism sites accredited by the Department of Tourism Region 4A. A total of 383 respondents were used based on the seventy-seven thousand four hundred fifteen (77, 415) tourist arrivals on the agritourism sites in 2021 from the Department of Tourism. The Raosoft sample size calculator was used to determine the sample size of this study with the margin of error of 5% and the confidence level of 95%. Stratified random sampling was used in the study. The number of the respondents per agritourism site were based from the percentage of tourist arrivals of the agritourism sites. The sample size was divided into twenty-nine (29) accredited agritourism sites. The number of respondents per agritourism site were based on the percentage of the tourist arrivals of each agritourism site. The researcher gathered the data based on the availability of the target respondents as well as their willingness to provide the required information.

Data Collection Instrument - This study used an adapted an instrument. Part one of the instrument identified the profile of the respondents. Part two of the instrument elicited the destination attributes based on the modified questionnaire from the study of Malkanthi and Routray (2012). Part three of the instrument determined the marketing strategies based on the modified questionnaire from the study of Perlas et al. (2019). Lastly, part four of the instrument was a modified questionnaire from the study of Duon et al., (2022) which determined the behavioral intentions of tourists. The instrument underwent content validation and pilot testing. The instrument's reliability was checked using the Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient Test. Most of the variable in the study have an excellent value of Cronbach's alpha higher than 0.90. While part two of the questionnaire used a Likert 5-point scale. The scale is composed of numbers 1-5 where 5 is considered the highest and 1 is the lowest, where 5 is Excellent, 4 is Very Good, 3 is Good, 2 is Fair, and 1 is Poor. While part three were answered by a Likert 5-point scale. The scale is composed of numbers 1-5 where 5 is considered the highest and 1 is the lowest, where 5 is Very Much Observed, 4 is Observed, 3 is Moderately Observed, 2 is Less Observed, and 1 is Never Observed. Lastly, part four were answered by a Likert 5-point scale. Which the scale is composed of the numbers 1-5 where 5 is considered the highest and 1 is the lowest, where 5 is Strongly Agree, 4 is Agree, 3 is Moderately Agree, 2 is Disagree and 1 is Strongly Disagree.

Data Gathering Procedure - Request for permission letters were processed to undertake this study to the

owners of the accredited agritourism sites with an attached endorsement from the Department of Tourism Region IV to conduct of the said study. To ensure the maximum data collection, the registered tourists who were in the said agritourism sites were the respondents of the study. The printed questionnaires were administered face to face in every agritourism site. Along with the consent letter and data privacy provision, the purpose of the study was explained. Immediately checking for the completeness data was done once respondents returned the instrument.

Data Analysis - Frequency and percentage distribution were used to present the demographic profile of the respondents. Weighted mean and rank were used to assess the destination attributes; to evaluate the marketing strategies used by agritourism sites; and to determine the behavioral intentions of tourists. The result of the Shapiro-Wilk Test showed that p-values of all variables were less than 0.05 which means that the data set was not normally distributed. Therefore, the Spearman Rho was used as part of the non-parametric tests to determine the significant relationship. All analyses were performed using SPSS version 28.

Ethical Consideration - The questionnaire was conducted physically on the premises of the agritourism sites. The initial part of the questionnaire, it has an area that indicated that the pieces of information given by the respondents were treated as confidential under the Data Privacy Act of 2012, and following the Code of Ethics. An area where the respondents provided their consent in participating in the study. The researcher ensured that all the respondents answered the questions freely and voluntarily through a consent form, which guarantees that the respondents express their ideas and opinions according to their inner will. The respondents also checked a box indicating that the respondents agreed to the terms presented on the survey instrument, which means providing the respondents full consent about the matter before proceeding in answering the questions stipulated in the instrument.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1

Summary of Tables in terms of Destination Attributes, Marketing Strategies and Behavioral Intention

Destination Attributes	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Destination Characteristics	4.25	Very Good	1
Staff Members	4.20	Very Good	2
Services and Facilities	4.05	Very Good	3
Price Level	4.04	Very Good	4
Legend:4.50-5.00=Excellent;3.50-4.49=Very Good;2.50-3.49=Good;1.50-2.49=Fair;1.00-1.49=Poor			
Marketing Strategies			
Promotion	4.22	Observed	1
Place	4.08	Observed	2
Product	4.04	Observed	3
Price	4.00	Observed	4
Legend: 4.50-5.00=Very Much Observed; 3.50-4.49=Observed;2.50-3.49=Moderately Observed;1.50-2.49=Less Observed;1.00-1.49=Never Observed			
Behavioral Intention			
Travel Intention	4.32	Agree	1
Subjective Norm	4.30	Agree	2
Willingness to Support a Destination	4.29	Agree	3
Social Media	4.27	Agree	4
Legend:4.50-5.00=Strongly Agree;1.50-2.49=Disagree;1.00-1.49=Strongly Disagree			

Table 1 shows the summary of tables in terms of destination attributes, marketing strategies and behavioral intention. In terms of destination attributes, the respondents rated all variables as very good. The variable destination characteristics got the highest weighted mean of 4.25, ranked 1st. This is followed by staff members with the weighted mean of 4.20, ranked 2nd. Then the variable services and facilities with a weighted mean of 4.05, ranked 3rd. However, the variable that price level with a composite mean of 4.04, ranked last. It shows that tourists of agritourism sites are drawn towards the characteristics of the destination. Featuring resources that are not common in the place of origin of the tourists. Agritourism sites feature various destination characteristics,

such as functional, psychological, individual, or global. It plays a vital role in shaping the image of the destination. As well as the perception of tourists (Arenes et al., 2022). Furthermore, destination characteristics are crucial components of agritourism sites, that influence the perception of tourists, their satisfaction and their intention to revisit the destination (Schlesinger et al, 2020).

In terms of marketing strategies used by Agritourism Sites. The respondents rated all variables as as observed. The variable promotion got the highest weighted mean of 4.22, ranked 1st. This is followed by place with the weighted mean of 4.08, ranked 2nd. Then the variable product with a weighted mean of 4.04, ranked 3rd. However, the variable that price with a composite mean of 4.00, ranked last. It shows that the promotional activities that are being conducted are clearly observed by the tourists of the agritourism sites. It captures the attention of the tourists that sparks curiosity and eagerness to visit the destination being advertised. Marketing of agritourism sites, promotion is crucial. It helps to attract visitors, increase engagements and grow the business effectively. Some of the key points in promoting an agritourism site are authentic content, social media, paid advertising, marketing mix and more (Perlas et al., 2019; AgMRC 2021). In terms of employment status, majority of the respondents were employed having 70.5 percent. It shows that working individuals were able to travel more as they were financially capable of traveling to experience outside of their usual work environment.

In terms of behavioral intentions of tourists. The respondents rated all variables as as agree. The variable travel intention got the highest weighted mean of 4.32, ranked 1st. This is followed by subjective norms with the weighted mean of 4.30, ranked 2nd. Then the variable willingness to support a destination with a weighted mean of 4.29, ranked 3rd. However, the variable that social media with a composite mean of 4.27, ranked last. It shows that travel intentions affect the behavior of tourists. Agritourism sites creates features certain attractions which creates intention to travel among the tourists. It affects the behavioral intention of the tourists towards the agritourism sites. According to Jiang et al. (2022), travel intentions affect the behavior of tourists significantly towards agritourism sites. Travel intentions influence the tourist behavior in terms of knowledge and information, perceived risk, subjective norms, previous travel experiences marketing strategies and tourist satisfaction.

Table 2
Relationship Between Destination Attributes and Marketing Strategies

Destination Characteristics	rho	p-value	Interpretation
Product	0.522**	0.000	Highly Significant
Place	0.517**	0.000	Highly Significant
Price	0.424**	0.000	Highly Significant
Promotion	0.469**	0.000	Highly Significant
Staff Members			
Product	0.507**	0.000	Highly Significant
Place	0.500**	0.000	Highly Significant
Price	0.507**	0.000	Highly Significant
Promotion	0.365**	0.000	Highly Significant
Services and Facilities			
Product	0.638**	0.000	Highly Significant
Place	0.516**	0.000	Highly Significant
Price	0.410**	0.000	Highly Significant
Promotion	0.486**	0.000	Highly Significant
Price Level			
Product	0.453**	0.000	Highly Significant
Place	0.436**	0.000	Highly Significant
Price	0.540**	0.000	Highly Significant
Promotion	0.430**	0.000	Highly Significant

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 2 shows the relationship between destination attributes and marketing strategies. As seen in the table, the computed rho-values ranging from 0.365 to 0.638 indicate a weak to strong direct relationship among sub variables of destination attributes and marketing strategies. There was a statistically significant relationship between destination attributes and marketing strategies because the obtained p-values were less than 0.01.

Based on the results, destination attributes were highly significant towards the marketing strategies. This

implies that the destination attributes were considered the characteristics of a destination that attracts tourists. Such attributes can include natural features, cultural attractions and recreational activities. While Marketing strategies are the methods used to promote the tourist destinations.

According to Baloch et al. (2022), there is a strong functional relationship between destination marketing, image and branding. In which marketing and strategic management is essential to the success of the tourism destination. Destination attributes can influence marketing strategies by suggesting what types of tourists are likely to be attracted to the destination. While marketing strategies can also influence destination attributes by making the destination more attractive to tourists. Destination image intermediates the relationship between tourist behavioral intention and quality of event. Furthermore, it demonstrates the connection the customers' satisfaction and sustainable marketing strategies (Wang & Butkouskaya, 2023).

Table 3
Relationship Between Destination Attributes and Behavioral Intention

Destination Characteristics	rho	p-value	Interpretation
Social Media	0.381**	0.000	Highly Significant
Subjective Norm	0.446**	0.000	Highly Significant
Travel Intention	0.418**	0.000	Highly Significant
Willingness to Support a Destination	0.389**	0.000	Highly Significant
Staff Members			
Social Media	0.236**	0.000	Highly Significant
Subjective Norm	0.317**	0.000	Highly Significant
Travel Intention	0.300**	0.000	Highly Significant
Willingness to Support a Destination	0.335**	0.000	Highly Significant
Services and Facilities			
Social Media	0.327**	0.000	Highly Significant
Subjective Norm	0.402**	0.000	Highly Significant
Travel Intention	0.387**	0.000	Highly Significant
Willingness to Support a Destination	0.304**	0.000	Highly Significant
Price Level			
Social Media	0.411**	0.000	Highly Significant
Subjective Norm	0.397**	0.000	Highly Significant
Travel Intention	0.417**	0.000	Highly Significant
Willingness to Support a Destination	0.338**	0.000	Highly Significant

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 3 shows the relationship between destination attributes and behavioral intention. As seen in the table, the computed rho-values ranging from 0.236 to 0.446 indicate a weak to moderate direct relationship among sub variables of destination attributes and behavioral intention. There was a statistically significant relationship between destination attributes and behavioral intention because the obtained p-values were less than 0.01. This implies that destination attributes had a highly significant relationship to the behavioral intention of tourists. Since destination attributes can influence behavioral intention by suggesting what types of activities tourists are likely to enjoy at the destination. While behavioral intention can also influence destination attributes by making the destination more attractive to tourists.

According to Ma & Jiang (2020), behavioral intention refers to the likelihood of taking specific actions based on the person's subject tendencies. In which, it is a crucial indicator in evaluation the visitor's loyalty on the destination. Which is crucial in the sustainability of the destination. However, Nazir et al. (2021) have a mixed finding between destination image and behavioral intentions. In which knowledge scarcity, vulnerability of tourists destination to travel risks and adverse destination images poses a gap. While behavioral intention poses a significant impact on the cognitive and affective image of the destination. Based on the study of Afshardoost and Eshaghi (2020), in predicting the behavioral intention of tourist's destination image plays an important role in different aspects. The overall image of the destination has great impact on the behavioral intention, then it is followed by cognitive image of the destination.

Table 4
Relationship Between Marketing Strategies and Behavioral Intention

Product	rho	p-value	Interpretation
Social Media	0.433**	0.000	Highly Significant
Subjective Norm	0.463**	0.000	Highly Significant
Travel Intention	0.442**	0.000	Highly Significant
Willingness to Support a Destination	0.363**	0.000	Highly Significant
Place			
Social Media	0.497**	0.000	Highly Significant
Subjective Norm	0.461**	0.000	Highly Significant
Travel Intention	0.454**	0.000	Highly Significant
Willingness to Support a Destination	0.428**	0.000	Highly Significant
Price			
Social Media	0.367**	0.000	Highly Significant
Subjective Norm	0.382**	0.000	Highly Significant
Travel Intention	0.366**	0.000	Highly Significant
Willingness to Support a Destination	0.387**	0.000	Highly Significant
Promotion			
Social Media	0.648**	0.000	Highly Significant
Subjective Norm	0.636**	0.000	Highly Significant
Travel Intention	0.544**	0.000	Highly Significant
Willingness to Support a Destination	0.502**	0.000	Highly Significant

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 4 shows the relationship between marketing strategies and behavioral intention. As seen in the table, the computed rho-values ranging from 0.363 to 0.648 indicate a weak to strong direct relationship among sub variables of marketing strategies and behavioral intention. There was a statistically significant relationship between marketing strategies and behavioral intention because the obtained p-values were less than 0.01. This implies that marketing strategies had a significant relationship between behavioral intention. Since marketing strategies were influenced by the behavioral intention of tourists and vice versa. marketing strategies can influence behavioral intention by making the product or service more attractive to consumers. And behavioral intention can influence marketing strategies by suggesting what types of marketing strategies are likely to be effective to the consumers. Based on the study of Nelson (2024) it is suggested that advertising appeal has more effectiveness and its exposure is considered as the foremost instrument frequently used in the marketing to persuade the individuals. The repetition of the advertising appeal is effective as the marketing strategy to enhance the chances to get the behavioral change of an individual about a certain product or service. While Eskiler & Altunisik (2021) stated that behavioral intention is considered as a determinant of the consumers purchasing behavior.

This agritourism marketing framework established that when agritourism site owners place premium on the destination attributes and marketing strategies, this can result to the behavioral intention of the tourists to revisit. The framework shows that destination attributes with the sub-variables' destination characteristics, staff members, services and facilities and price level as well as the marketing strategies in terms of product, place, price and promotion can affect the behavioral intention of tourists in relation to social media, subjective norm, travel intention and willingness to support a destination.

The left side of the framework in green color shows how the destination attributes affect the behavioral intention of tourists. The right side of the framework in red color indicates the marketing strategies that influence the behavioral intention of tourists. The center of the framework in blue color indicates the tourist behavioral intention. The framework shows the importance of destination attributes and marketing strategies towards the behavioral intention of tourists, to which the management of the agritourism sites can use the framework in this study in order to improve the behavioral intention of the tourists visiting the agritourism sites. In terms of destination attributes, the management of the agritourism sites may focus on the destination characteristics to which it serves as the strongest influences towards the behavioral intention of tourists. While improving the other attributes such as staff members, services and facilities and price level. In terms of marketing strategies, the management may focus on promotion as it serves as the strongest influence towards behavioral intention of tourists visiting agritourism sites. Followed by product, place and price. This framework can also serve as a

guide to which variables are needed to be improved in order for the agritourism sites to enhance specific behavioral intention of tourists, as the framework shows how the different variables in terms of destination attributes and marketing strategies influence the sub variables of the behavioral intention of tourists. Furthermore, the instrument of the study can be used as a reference in order to identify specific indicators to which the agritourism sites should improve.

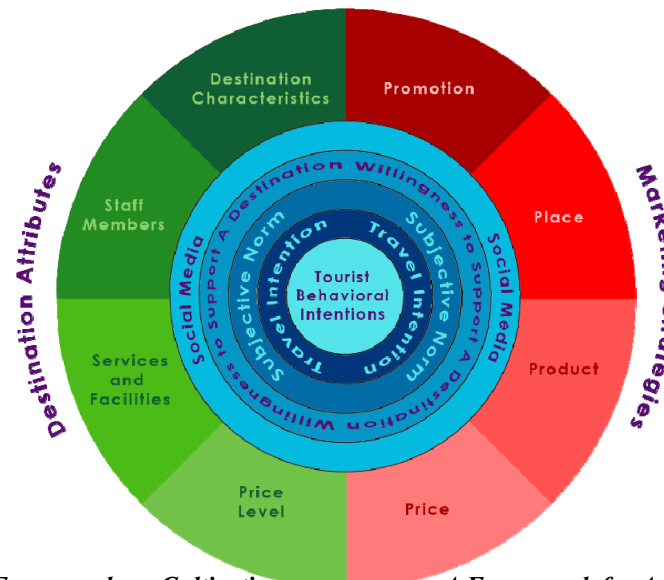


Figure 1. Orias Framework on Cultivating Connections: A Framework for Agritourism Development through Destination Attributes, Marketing Strategies, and Tourist Behavioral Intention

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

The profile of the respondents that mostly visited the agritourism sites were single male individuals, millennials, and currently employed. In destination attributes, agritourism visitors valued natural scenic beauty such as mountains or lakes, accommodating staff members, offers services and facilities that were education related such as farming and planting demonstration, and had reasonable prices. The marketing strategies used by the agritourism sites that were valued by the visitors were the quality of its agricultural products, its presence on social media, its strategic pricing and discount offerings, its promotion of the agritourism sites with the use of online advertisements in different social media sites. The behavioral intention of the tourists towards the agritourism sites, sparked interests in visiting the agritourism sites due to the photos posted on social media, the norm of being encouraged by friends and family, the travel intention of experiencing the fun and relaxation while inside the agritourism sites, and lastly, encouraging friends and family to visit the agritourism sites as a sign of willingness to support the destination. There were high significant relationships among destination attributes, marketing strategies and behavioral intention of tourists in this study. As the destination attributes were improved, the more marketing strategies were developed. Moreover, as the destination attributes were improved, the more the behavioral intention of tourists increased. Lastly, the more marketing strategies were developed, the more the behavioral intention of tourists increased. Consequently, based from the significant relationships among the destination attributes, marketing strategies and behavioral intention of tourists, a framework was proposed for the development of agritourism sites.

For the recommendation, the following are offered: Agritourism site owners may encourage younger age group to visit the agritourism site, as they are considered the generation that will continue to support such tourist destination and develop marketing strategies to increase female and married future guests. Moreover, the Agritourism site owners may create activities that are interactive in which the tourists could participate in and be able to appreciate the farming experience and the nature. In addition, Agritourism site owners may continue its online and social media presence as it is considered the more effective media to reach more potential tourists.

Collaboration with other businesses to further promote the agritourism site. Lastly, the Agritourism site owners may continue to produce contents that aesthetically appealing to tourists and promotes health and wellness, detoxifying environment that relieves stress from the urban environment. Agricultural products from the agritourism site should continuously promoted in order to support local farmers.

Both the local government and the department of tourism may create programs that help ease unemployment by providing knowledge and skills about agriculture and promotes agritourism. The local government may pass an ordinance or regulation that protects the natural surroundings of the agritourism sites in which maintains the authenticity of the natural environment. Also, promoting responsible tourism in order to protect natural tourist destinations in the area and maintain the authenticity of the environment in order to promote the agritourism sites to more tourists. Moreover, the local government and department of tourism may use the agritourism sites as event venues for seminars and workshops organized by the government. Furthermore, they may provide financial assistance to agritourism sites to further improve their agricultural products and enable to improve the price of products and services being offered by the agritourism sites. Lastly, the local government unit and the Department of Tourism may use the study as reference to draft new programs to support and promote existing agritourism sites based on the framework proposed based on the results of the significant relationship of the study. It will serve as a reference to the agritourism sites, LGU and the Department of Tourism to create activities and programs that supports agritourism.

For future agritourism researchers, to study further the three variables in the study since a highly significant relationship were established. The results may also serve as reference to open new services that will further promote the agritourism site, such as new products and attractions that will attract new tourists to visit the agritourism sites. Lastly, future research may be conducted to delve into brand equity of the existing accredited agritourism sites and widen the scope of this research study, by including the multiple regions or even national as the scope of the research.

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