Natural and Economic Environment of Bulusukan Ecoagrotourism Park in Pila Laguna; A Basis for an Action Plan to Enhance its Tourism Appeal

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Abstract

This study assessed the tourism potential of Bulusukan eco-agrotourism Park in Pila, Laguna, intending to create plans to increase its tourism appeal. It looked into the park's natural and economic environment, focusing on water quality, biodiversity, landscape, job opportunities, income level, and tourism revenue. A survey to gather data regarding the assessment of the natural and economic environment of Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park in Pila, Laguna. The findings revealed a strong correlation between water quality, landscape, and job opportunities, suggesting that improving these aspects could increase employment opportunities. While there is significant correlation between the natural environment and income level, the landscape had a moderately positive correlation with tourism revenue, implying that improving the park's visuals could attract more visitors and create more revenue. The study highlighted the significance of creating an action plan that addressed the park's qualities and potential while encouraging sustainable tourism practices, economic growth, and community development. Researchers believed that Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park in Pila, Laguna, might become a successful tourism destination that helped both the local community and the environment. It was also disclosed that the high scores for income level and tourism revenue suggested that the park does not only provide financial benefits to individuals but also boasts local businesses, hence leading to more job opportunities. to conclude, there is significant relationship between the natural and economic environment of Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park.

Keywords: Bulusukan Park; Pila, Laguna; Action plan; Natural environment; Economic environment; Tourism revenue; Economic growth; Community development; Visitor insights; Sustainable tourism.

1. Introduction

The Philippines is blessed with rich natural resources and has numerous tourist attractions, including beaches, impressive mountains, hills and valleys, and a rich cultural heritage. In particular, the Province of Laguna, endowed with the bounty of nature such as hot and cold springs, majestic waterfalls, and protected forest areas with a great diversity of flora and fauna, the province is an important destination for eco- agritourism. However, there is still a lot that needs to be transformed into tourism sites, as cited in the study of Brian James Lu, (2024).

Incidentally, Pila Laguna, is known for its agricultural areas. And Pila, derived from "PAILAH", which means "palay" (rice), has several farm sites, which includes the Bulusukan Eco-Agro Tourism Park. Bulusukan Ecoagrotourism Park located at Barangay Pinagbayanan Pila, Laguna. The natural beauty and

recreational opportunities of Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park in Pila, Laguna, have not been enough to draw many visitors.

It is in this context, that a study entitled, The Natural and Economic Environment of Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park in Pila, Laguna: A basis for an action plan to enhance its tourism appeal is undertaken. It is aimed that Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park has the potential to develop into a major tourist attraction. Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park is a natural jewel located in Pila.

Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park offers a unique combination of natural beauty and agricultural richness. This Park, which offers tourists a unique and engaging experience, combines agricultural attractions, and beautiful environment. Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park has a hanging bridge, a Bulusukan road where you can go jogging, and a River where you can go fishing.

Also, this study aims to assess its natural and economic environment, existing in this park, and the interests and needs of potential visitors. The findings will serve as a basis for an action plan to enhance the Park's tourism appeal. This study aims to increase visitor numbers and ensure that tourism development is sustainable and beneficial for the local community and environment.

By doing so, this study hopes to contribute to the broader understanding of how eco-agrotourism can be harnessed as a tool for sustainable development.

2. Theoretical Background

This study utilized two prominent theories, Carol Weiss's Theory of Change and the Tourist Area Life Cycle (TALC) theory, to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the development and sustainability of Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park. Importantly, these theories work in tandem to offer a holistic perspective. Carol Weiss's Theory of Change, introduced in 1955, provides a framework for achieving desired goals through a clear understanding of the change process. This theory helps in evaluating a program's effectiveness and potential to deliver desired results, ultimately leading to more successful program delivery. Furthermore, it explains why certain activities or actions will lead to specific outcomes, informs the community about the program's aims, and justifies government or charitable expenditures. Complementing this, the Tourist Area Life Cycle (TALC) theory, proposed by Richard W. Butler in 1980, outlines the six stages a tourist destination goes through: discovery, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation, and decline. This model aids in strategic planning and helps identify benefits, drawbacks, opportunities, and risks associated with a destination's appeal. The TALC model has significantly impacted tourism and destination management research, providing a clear framework for understanding the life cycle of tourist destinations, balancing growth, sustainability, and community well-being. By integrating these two theories, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the development and sustainability

of Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park. The Theory of Change will guide the evaluation of the park's effectiveness in achieving its goals, while the TALC theory will provide a framework for understanding its current stage of development and potential future trajectory.

3. Research Problem

The study specifically tackled to determine the natural and economic environment of Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park in Pila, Laguna, as a basis for an action plan to enhance its tourism appeal. It assessed the respondents' views on the natural environment in terms of water quality, biodiversity, and landscape. Additionally, it measured the economic environment in terms of job opportunities, income level, and tourism revenue.

4. Data and Methods

Quantitative descriptive correlational research method was utilized in this study to evaluate and assess the factors of the natural and economic environment in Bulusukan Eco-Agrotourism Park in Pinagbayanan, Pila, Laguna. The data is gathered in numerical format, and analyzed in a quantitative way using statistical tools. Fifty (50) respondents, were chosen randomly to accomplish the questionnaires.

5. Tables

The results of this study show the significant correlations between natural and economic environment of Bulusukan eco-agrotourism Park in Pila Laguna. Key findings are detailed below.

Table 1. Summary of the status of natural environment of Bulusukan eco-agrotourisn Park

INDICATORS	Mean	SD
Water Quality	4.58	0.54
Biodiversity	4.16	0.72
Lanscape	4.18	0.71
Overall	**4.30**	**0.65**

The respondents strongly agreed that it was important that the water in the river of Bulusukan Eco- agrotourism Park was clean. The mean and standard deviation (M = 4.88 and SD = 0.33) suggested a strong consensus on the significance of clean water for the park. Furthermore, the respondent agreed that the water quality in Bulusukan Ecoagrotourism Park was suitable for recreational activities. While the mean and standard deviation were slightly lower (M = 4.20 and SD = 0.73), although this score was lower than the others, it still reflected an agreement that the water was appropriate for recreation, but with a slightly lower level of enthusiasm than the other statements.

In terms of water quality, the natural environment's status achieved a weighted mean score of 4.58 and a standard deviation of 0.54, which was verbally interpreted as very good among the respondents. This implied that, on average, the respondents viewed the water as being of good quality and contributing positively to the

park's environment and recreational use. This study is supported by Pantić et al. (2021), who stated that the Park also needs clean water for recreational activities. Water Quality, such as rivers, lakes, and even marshes, enriches a place and, in addition to their indisputable biological duties, serves as major tourist attractions. It is vital to conduct a water quality analysis at a specific place since it will be utilized to track how the freshwater is doing.

Under the aspect of biodiversity, the respondent strongly agreed that it was important that there were different kinds of fish alive in the river of Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park. The mean and standard deviation (M = 4.50 and SD = 0.58) suggested a strong recognition of aquatic biodiversity in the park. Similarly, the respondent agreed that the natural areas in the park were in good condition. While the mean and standard deviation were slightly lower (M = 3.82 and SD = 0.83), respondents suggested they agreed but with less conviction that the natural areas in the park were in good condition. The natural environment's status in terms of biodiversity attained a weighted mean score of 4.16 and a standard deviation of 0.72, which was verbally interpreted as good among the respondents.

This finding supports the idea that the tourism sector has the potential to promote both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development due to its non-extractive nature and reliance on natural beauty, Echeverri, A., Smith, J. R., et. Al. (2022).

Moving on to the landscape, the respondent firmly concurred that the landscape of Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park needed to be improved. The mean and standard deviation (M = 4.70 and SD = 0.54) suggested while the park was appreciated, respondents still saw significant room for enhancement. However, the respondent agreed that the natural landscape in Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park was well maintained. While the mean and standard deviation was slightly lowered (M = 3.76 and SD = 0.80), respondents suggested the natural landscape is well maintained, but not with as much conviction as the other statements.

In terms of landscape, the status of the natural environment attained a weighted mean score of 4.18 and a standard deviation of 0.71, verbally interpreted as good among the respondents. This implies that respondents find it attractive but also recognize the potential for improvements. Overall, across all indicators in Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park—Water Quality, Biodiversity, Landscape—the combined mean result is reported as being at a level where respondents agree on its positive status with a mean score value of 4.30. This is consistent with Cheablam, O., & Dachyosdee, U. (2022), who found that landscapes significantly affect the experiences gained during visits to a tourist destination. And, based on the study indicated that the landscapes attracting visitors have considerable natural tourism resources and can be utilized as tools to promote tourism.

Table 2. Summary of the status of Economic environment of Bulusukan eco-agrotourisn Park

INDICATORS	Mean	SD
Job Opportunities	4.15	0.81
Income Level	4.37	0.65
Tourism Revenue	4.83	0.39
Overall	**4.45**	**0.62**

The development of Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park has significantly increased job opportunities for residents, according to survey respondents. The mean and standard deviation (M = 4.42 and SD = 0.70)

strongly suggest a positive impact on employment. Furthermore, respondents agreed that the park offers a variety of job opportunities, although with greater fluctuation (M = 3.84 and SD = 1.02). Overall, the economic environment in terms of job opportunities received a weighted mean score of 4.15 (SD = 0.81), indicating a positive perception of job creation in the park. This aligns with the findings of Dašić, D., Živković, D., & Vujić, T. (2020), who found that tourism development can boost employment, preserve jobs, and create new business opportunities.

In addition to job creation, the park's positive impact extends to income levels. Respondents strongly agreed that developing small businesses around Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park could significantly increase income levels (M = 4.66 and SD = 0.56). This reflects a strong belief in entrepreneurial opportunities. While respondents agreed that the average income level in the park was relatively high (M = 3.86 and SD = 0.76), they also noted more variation in responses compared to other statements. The economic environment in terms of income level attained a weighted mean score of 4.37 (SD = 0.65), indicating a very good perception of the park's potential to contribute positively to income levels. This is supported by UNWTO (2023), which highlights tourism's ability to increase income levels by creating jobs, supporting local businesses, and diversifying income sources.

Moreover, respondents strongly agreed that Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park needs to improve its facilities to attract more visitors (M = 4.88 and SD = 0.33), highlighting the importance of infrastructure in tourism. While respondents agreed that the park's current facilities are relatively good (M = 4.76 and SD = 0.48), they also suggested that new attractions could significantly enhance tourism revenue. The economic environment in terms of tourism revenue attained a weighted mean score of 4.89 (SD = 0.39), indicating a very high perception of the park's potential for increased tourism revenue. This aligns with Tumusiime, A. O. & D. M. (2020), who state that tourism and the revenue it generates are frequently fronted as the main selling points for establishing and maintaining national parks.

6. Conclusion

Based on the summary of the findings, the following conclusions were concluded:

1. The natural environment, of Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park in terms of water quality is assessed 'very good', while biodiversity and landscape are assessed 'good' respectively. On the other the overall assessment of the natural environment of Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park is to be 'good'.

2. The economic environment of Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park in terms of job opportunities is assessed as 'good' while in income level and tourism revenue are "very good", respectively. Additionally, the overall assessment of the economic environment of Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park is rated "very good".

3. There is a significant relationship between the natural and economic environment of Bulusukan Eco-agrotourism Park in Pila Laguna.

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