

Challenges of Farm Tourism Sites in Nueva Vizcaya: Paitan Flower Farm and La Fortuna Farm

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ABSTRACT

Agri-tourism is a type of rural tourism that is gaining popularity and expanding as a large industry in the past few years. It includes both agricultural and farms in order to attract mostly urban tourists to visit the rural areas. The main purpose of this qualitative-descriptive research was to identify the challenges faced by Paitan Flower Farm and La Fortuna Farm tourism sites in terms of the four main functional areas of business. The study was conducted using interview guide questions to elicit answers necessary to the fulfill the objectives of the study. Results show that both farm tourism sites in Nueva Vizcaya had different challenges in four functional areas of business with the owner of Paitan Flower Farm having the most challenges when it came to managing the farm tourism site. Hence, it is recommended that the owners of both farm sites take more measures in managing and developing their own farm sites. This study provides a major contribution to knowledge by being among the very first studies that identified the challenges of farm tourism sites in Nueva Vizcaya. This research provides strategies on how to manage the four functional areas needed to be developed in the two farm tourism sites in Nueva Vizcaya.

Keywords: Business four functional areas, challenges, flower farm, farm tourism, strategies

INTRODUCTION

Agritourism is a strategy aimed at attracting urban tourists to rural areas by combining elements of agriculture and tourism. This innovative approach aims to provide farmers with lucrative opportunities to increase their income and employment opportunities through products and services, while providing social and educational benefits to visitors. The term agritourism leads to increased awareness that farmers can derive substantial economic benefits from this activity. In this regard, an online survey of 1,275 respondents was conducted in North Carolina and Missouri to learn about the preferences of farmers, locals, and extension agents regarding agritourism labels and definitions, and to find consensus among them. We have identified the areas that can be obtained. these groups. Therefore, a good description of agritourism would be this: Activities are provided for recreational or educational purposes on a farm or other agricultural setting (Rich, Shuangyu, Barbieri, and Arroyo, 2012).

Addressing the challenges faced by agri-tourism destinations provides stakeholders with valuable information to refine their strategies and increase the overall viability of their operations. Owners of on-farm tourism sites also need to actively consider and address the challenges in each of these functional areas. Fundamentally, an informed and proactive approach to addressing the challenges in the four functional areas will not only improve the immediate prospects of the agro-tourism destination, but also improve the overall outlook for the rural areas of Nueva Vizcaya. It also contributes to sustainability and growth. Agrotourism is generally considered a specific form of social innovation in agriculture and rural development in mountainous and rural areas (Chiodo, Fantini, Dickes, Arogundade, Lamie, Assing, Stewart, and Salvatore, 2019).

Another central purpose of agritourism is often used interchangeably with “agrotourism,” “farm tourism,” “agritourism,” or “agritainment” (National Farm Law Center, 2020) is the development of value-added products that meet wants and needs. Tourist needs. Regardless of concerns about the various terms and definitions used,

agritourism or farm tourism integrates aspects of both the agricultural and tourism industries to provide visitors, producers, and regions with a variety of educational and social. It offers a unique opportunity to provide both physical and economic benefits. Second, agritourism improves the tourism industry by increasing the number of visitors and length of stay (National Farm Law Center, 2020). Agritourism also provides food consumption resources for the tourism sector, as it serves as a backdrop for rural tourist attractions. Finding ways to leverage these connections to maximize the contribution of agribusiness and tourism to long-term regional economic development is undoubtedly important (Welteji and Zerihun, 2018).

In addition, agritourism paves the way for the development of additional farm income, but many business owners today consider various factors when developing business goals and strategies. But while there are many additional benefits to consider, starting and managing agritourism can be difficult and risky without professionally skilled farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs, so which strategy to implement? There are also some difficulties when considering, sustainable agritourism requires the study of agritourism potential, the study of development methods and strategies, and the evaluation of human resources. This study confirms that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on agritourism, as many people visited remote areas (such as rural areas) during the pandemic (Bhatta, Ohe, and Ciani, 2020).

Agritourism offers communities the opportunity to expand their local tax base, creates new job opportunities, provides public education opportunities, supports the preservation of agricultural areas, and provides states with opportunities to develop business activities. However, because agritourism creates new sources of income, in addition to the operational issues that are the focus of this study, agritourism businesses also face potential legal issues (National Farm Law Center, 2020). However, the development of the agritourism industry for the benefit of communities must also ensure that it contributes to the preservation of agricultural traditions and promotes environmentally friendly tourism in rural areas (Tugade, 2020).

Currently, agritourism in the Philippines has experienced a remarkable boom in recent years, mainly due to its role in increasing income while alleviating economic challenges for family farms. These positive impacts on family farms highlight the important interplay between economic resilience and the growing importance of agritourism in the Philippine agricultural environment (Cabiladas, 2020). Agritourism is the most profitable and fastest growing form of travel, attracting people who want to return to their home countries, so if the service sells well, it can promote positive perceptions of agritourism. All of this can be provided by a well-managed agritourism business in which both families and employees play an important role. It was emphasized that agritourism projects play an important role in promoting the connection between urban populations and agricultural landscapes (Tugade, 2020).

Providing tours where tourists can actively participate in the harvesting and processing of agricultural products has the potential to expand the customer base and raise awareness of agriculture. But by leveraging agritourism, the state can protect agriculture while potentially increasing the appeal and demand for local products. However, despite all the benefits that farm tourism activities bring, there are also challenges to be addressed, especially in his four functional areas of the business: human resources, operations, finance, and marketing. Agritourism stakeholders must be able to identify the product presented to customers and communicate it to potential tourists (Rich, Shuangyu, Barbieri, and Arroyo, 2012).

Additionally, fostering relationships with other farmers, business groups, educational institutions, government agencies, and researchers can have a significant impact on the success of an agritourism project. Infrastructure investment in general tourism facilities is also an issue, as owners believe they need to expand their farmland to accommodate future growth and meet tourism demand. The development of agritourism around the world is creating a variety of experiences based on agricultural resources that also consider cultural and natural landscapes. For example, in China, government plans have turned entire rural villages into large-scale agritourism centers, with farmers serving as major tourism providers for urban residents seeking a break from daily life (Barbieri and Striper, 2019).

These impacts also affected the number of visitors and the operation of tourist attractions on the farm. By harnessing the potential of agritourism, the country aims not only to revitalize the tourism sector but also to improve overall agricultural productivity through innovative diversification strategies. It is often referred to as

the country's "sunrise sector." Farm tourism is a logical and attractive addition to the array of businesses that supplement the incomes of Filipino farmers. Recognizing the potential of this industry, the Ministry of Tourism recently introduced 'Future Farms'. According to Brunei Darussalam Indonesia Malaysia Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) (2022).

Nowadays, agricultural tourist destinations where you can experience nature away from urban areas are popular. However, it has also been noted that agritourism operators face a number of challenges, including inadequate training. Farm owners can also improve their farms through landscaping by making the site more attractive to visitors and tourists (Ablang, Acosta, Bullecer, Fonte, and Santos, 2022). Furthermore, the success of agritourism as an industry depends on comprehensive planning in physical characteristics, product development, training and education, leadership and entrepreneurship, marketing, and customer relations, and requires government support. To help Filipino farmers innovate and diversify their agritourism businesses, the Department of Tourism (DOT) provides tourists with services such as meals, wellness, and recreational activities. Tugade (2020) agrees, stating that everyone needs to be on board to maximize the potential benefits of this venture. It states that communities need to be involved in all areas of agricultural activities. The owners currently plan to transform the farm into an agritourism destination and Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) accredited learning facility.

In his study, Tugade (2020) used key informant responses from face-to-face interviews to identify five major patterns in business operations: performance, management resources, market management and financial success; Identify identified economic impacts. Agritourism can be a business venture that can generate income, make farms profitable, and provide financial security to the owners. Indeed, agritourism is becoming increasingly popular on American farms and ranches to achieve the goals of agricultural education, community building, and income diversification (Wang, Hollas, Chase, Conner, and Kolodinsky, 2022). However, there are few studies on the challenges faced by managers and the limited tools available to help, which is the aim of this study carried out in two flower farms in the province of Nova Vizcaya. in Nueva Vizcaya: (1) To determine the profile of Paitan Flower Farm and La Fortuna Farm (2) Challenges faced by Paitan Flower Farm and La Fortuna Farm in the following areas: Human Resources, Operations Management, Marketing, and Finance (3) To determine the strategies employed to overcome the identified challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative-descriptive with the interview guide questions and ocular visits as specific instruments to identify the challenges faced by two farm sites in Nueva Vizcaya. The study was conducted in the provinces of Nueva Vizcaya, specifically in the municipalities of Bayombong and Quezon. The informants of the study were the owners and employees of Paitan Flower Farm (1) and La Fortuna Farm (3). The informants were the owners, managers, and supervisors who are deemed knowledgeable about operations and the existing challenges faced by the farms. The researchers undertook steps like familiarization with the data, data coding, and finally, writing up all the examined data. These were subjected to analysis and interpretation at the option of the university research analyst.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Section 1. Profile of Paitan Flower Farm and La Fortuna Farm

Paitan Flower Farm, a farm in the barangay of Paitan, started its operation in March 2019 and has since become a farm tourism site. The farm's name comes from a suggestion made by a vlogger, who suggested it be called "Paitan Flower Farm" due to the barangay's name. The farm is less than 1 hectare and has a starting capital of less than 500,000.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the farm faced challenges, including closures and reduced revenue. However, things began to return to normal as the pandemic ended. The farm offers an authentic rural experience, offering beautiful flowers and relaxation for visitors. The farm also offers educational and interactive experiences, with activities such as photoshoots, pick-and-pay for cut flowers, buying potted flowers, and enjoying open cottages for picnics and dine-ins.

Recreational opportunities at the farm include photoshoots, pre-nup, and 'pick and pay' activities for flowers. The farm also offers cut flowers and potted plants like sunflowers and chrysanthemums. Accommodation options include open cottages for customers carrying food for snack or lunch.

The farm practices organic farming methods, using organic fertilizers and reusing stems, seeds, or fruit. A family-friendly atmosphere is maintained, with rules such as "Basura mo itapon mo" (dispose your own trash) and "sira mo, bayad mo" (you are responsible for any damage you caused).

Local community engagement is limited, with the farm not having full-time employees but hiring temporary workers for cleaning and maintaining the farm. The farm's name is derived from an Italian phrase meaning "I love my fortune."

La Fortuna Farm, derived from the Italian phrase "I love my fortune," was opened to the public in November 2020 after a viral picture on social media. The farm, which started with leisure activities, has since expanded to include catering services and potted plants for additional income. The farm offers a home-away-from-home setting, offering overnight and daytime stays, and a peaceful environment away from urban areas.

The farm offers farm-to-table experiences, cooking from the farm's harvest and offering a floating tray of fruits. Recreational opportunities include swimming and camping in the pool and camping site, with entrance fees varying depending on the season. The farm is also perfect for hiking trails due to its elevated location on a mountain.

The farm offers accommodation options, including nipa huts and camping tents for rent. It is built in an eco-friendly environment, using organic soil for plants and surrounding it with various types of trees. The farm's rules and regulations are in line with the COVID-19 protocol, prohibiting noise, alcoholic drinks, and minors from camping.

Local community engagement is evident, with 10 employees working on the farm, including the owner's father, who seeks assistance from the community when needed. The owner is dedicated to helping those in need and supporting those in need.

Section 2. Challenges Faced by Paitan Flower Farm and La Fortuna Farm

Human Resources

Both Farms had difficulties in managing their workers/employees.

Operations Management

Paitan Flower Farm had their operational loss due to the weather disturbances just like typhoons, also they encountered difficulties in maintaining the flowers in the farm, and as a farm tourism site they are pressured with the demands as an Agri-Tourism site. While La Fortuna Farm some of their customers' complaint on their food service, also according to the informants' operation was the most challenging part they encounter, and they lay off some of their farm workers during the lean season/cutting work hours due to low tourists' visitation.

Marketing Management

Paitan Flower Farm are challenged by the affordability and availability of products and accessibility of the farm location. Paitan Flower farm and La Fortuna Farm are challenged in promoting their products and they only received minimal support coming from the LGU and DOT. La Fortuna Farm needs to have a marketing plan for their operation and, they are challenged by the affordability and accessibility of the farm location.

Finance Management

Paitan Flower Farm is challenged for meeting its supposed number of target tourists' visiting the farm and for the additional and increasing of costs. Both Paitan Flower Farm and La Fortuna Farm have financial challenges

before and after the pandemic and no financial support coming from the government. La Fortuna Farm need to reduce their number of workers and the need to change their budget, also for the additional and increasing of the costs.

Section 3. Strategies Employed by Paitan Flower Farm and La Fortuna Farm to Overcome the Identified Challenges

The interview revealed that both Paitan Flower Farm and La Fortuna Flower Farm have implemented various strategies to overcome challenges in human resources, operation management, marketing management, and finance management. Paitan Flower Farm focuses on sunflowers, while La Fortuna has a Bali-themed farm. Both farms offer unique products like camping, renting spaces for events, and floating trays. Paitan Flower Farm also offers picnic huts, food, photoshoot services, and cut flowers. La Fortuna seeks other income sources like banana chips and pastillas. Both farms actively promote on social media and are mindful of their purchases, focusing on investments like flower and vegetable seeds. Despite facing challenges in human resources, operation management, marketing management, and finance management, they have found ways to continue their business.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

1. Profile of Paitan Flower Farm and La Fortuna Farm

Paitan Flower Farm and La Fortuna Farm started their operation in the year 2019-2020. The name of Paitan Flower Farm was based on the location of the farm and as suggested by tourists. La Fortuna Farm was derived from an Italian phrase which means, “I love my fortune” and in reference to the owner who lives in Italy. Both farms also are about 1 hectare wide. Their estimated starting capital also ranges from 50,000 to 500,000 pesos. Paitan Flower Farm and La Fortuna Farm are both private properties and only opened to the public as a farm tourism site because of the encouragement of the public and the local government.

The main activities, products and amenities offered in both farms are pick and pay cut flowers, potted flowers, cottages, picnic areas, and photoshoot activities. La Fortuna offers additional services for overnight stay, catering services, and a swimming pool.

Entrance fees range from 50 to 80 pesos. Both farms do not have the proper vision, mission, goals, and objectives for they only started this business because of the encouragement of individuals that their location is good for tourism.

2. Challenges Faced by Paitan Flower Farm and La Fortuna Farm

2.1. Human Resources

Employees do not follow work schedules. They come to work late and decide what time they would go home, and what time they would take some rest but despite all of this, they still get their salary with no deductions. When the owner does not adjust to the employees, they have difficulties finding for someone else to do the job. The employees also need to be watched at work so they will not focus their attention on other things like playing mobile phones, especially those younger workers.

2.2. Operations Management

Maintaining the flowers is one of the challenges because of the unpredicted weather as well as meeting the customers’ expectation based on photos posted on their Facebook page. Managing events is also one of the challenges because every manpower must be hands-on. Entertaining guests is another challenge because some customers are demanding. Other challenges include keeping up to the pressure of being “tourism sites” which means the place must always be pleasing and beautiful to the customers, shortage in water for the plants in

summer as well as decrease of customers in off-peak season.

2.3. Marketing

Posting on social media can be challenging because they need to post what are their farm's current looks or situation and the farm may not always be in a good condition. When they post the best pictures which do not actually represent the present, customers get disappointed. The lack of promotion support from the local government unit is also one of the challenges that was shared by the informants.

2.4. Finance

Lack of budget during the pandemic was one of the challenges that fall under finance because the number of customers who visit the farms was decreasing. When stocks are low, money is being spent immediately. Also, with the new emerging competition, the farms need to upgrade their farms such as improve landscapes to attract more customers which causes a lot of money for the expenses. Lack of financial support from the local government also is one of the challenges for the farms.

3. Strategies of Paitan Flower Farm and La Fortuna Farm to Overcome the Identified Challenges

Paitan Flower Farm and La Fortuna have both aimed to attract tourists by planting different types of flowers, especially after the pandemic. Paitan is unique in producing sunflowers in Nueva Vizcaya, while La Fortuna has a Bali-styled farm. Both farms offer unique products like camping, renting spaces for events, and floating trays with fruits in the pool. Paitan also offers a kawa hot bath with hot water, bubbles, and flowers. La Fortuna focuses on making banana chips and pastillas and delivering them to stores. Both farms actively promote their products and services on social media, and are mindful of their purchases, such as investing in flower and vegetable seeds.

Recommendations

The researchers recommend the following:

To the Farm Owners: The researchers recommend that both farms implement an effective employee training program to address the challenges associated with their employees' attitudes and work behaviors. The researchers also recommend that both farms expand in certain areas, such as adding new products and services, rather than simply keeping to what they offer and that both farms implement an effective business plan to maximize profitability and minimize expenses. Lastly, the researchers recommend both farms to always have their social media pages active and up to date to gain more opportunities to build trust with potential customers, partners and employees.

To the Department of Tourism: The researchers recommend this office to collaborate with local farms to organize educational programs, workshops, and demonstrations. This could include activities like cooking classes, farming techniques, and sustainable agriculture practices. It can also organize seasonal events and festivals on farms, celebrating harvest seasons, planting seasons, and other agricultural milestones. This can attract visitors during specific times of the year and to work with local schools to organize field trips to farms, promoting agricultural education among students. This can also include farm-related contests, projects, or partnerships with educational institutions.

To the Future Researchers: Future researchers may conduct similar studies on farm tourism sites and should not limit to one or two farms and include additional farms to find other challenges encountered by other tourism farm sites.

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