

Assessing the Potential of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls in Laurel, Batangas, Philippines as a Tourist Attraction

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Abstract: This study involves the assessment of the potential of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls in Laurel, Batangas, Philippines as a tourist attraction using descriptive research and the survey method to describe the profile of the survey participants; assess the potential of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls with regard to services, tangibles and sustainability of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls; and ascertain the views of the survey participants as regards facilities and services that can be added as features of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls to increase their potential as a tourist attraction. The participants in the study included 80 local residents living within the vicinity of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls and 10 local officials involved in tourism development of the town. Data were gathered from the participants through the use of a survey questionnaire.

The results revealed that both local officials and local residents gave the highest rated assessment to the sustainability feature of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls followed by services. This means that both local officials and local residents felt that the sustainability attribute of the waterfalls was being maintained and that the natural endowments of the site were still intact and not yet exploited. The tangibles of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls, on the other hand, received the lowest rating from the local residents and local officials, which suggested that this feature needed much improvement to increase the potential of the falls as a tourist attraction. Lastly, it was concluded that the most important facilities and services that must be added at the Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls based on the views of local residents and local officials include shower rooms, souvenir shops, travel directions, improved road facilities, refreshment and retail outlets, and more picnic sites. Based on these significant findings and conclusions, it was therefore recommended that additional shower rooms, souvenir shops, provision of travel directions, improved road facilities, refreshment and retail outlets, and more picnic sites be provided at the Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls.

Keywords: Assessment of Tourist Attraction, Potential Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls, Laurel, Batangas.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study:

Laurel is a third-class municipality in the province of Batangas, a province in the southern part of Luzon, Philippines. It was formerly known as Bayuyungan (from the word Bayong) when it was still part of the town of Talisay, Batangas, Philippines. (<http://laurelbatangas.gov.ph/>).

According to the official statement of the municipal government of Laurel, Batangas, tourism is becoming one of the most important social and economic activities in the world today. Many cities have universally recognized the benefits of tourism. It has also recognized, however, that before starting up any tourism development program in the municipality, it was imperative to undertake planning as a vital part in boosting tourism. Laurel is one of the towns in Batangas which is

bursting with natural and potential tourism sites. This is why together with the Municipal Planning and Development Coordinator, the Sangguniang Bayan (Municipal Council) and the Municipal Mayor (Randy James E. Amo), are pushing Laurel to become one of the most promising tourist spots not only in Batangas but also in the whole country as well. (<http://laurelbatangas.gov.ph/tourism/natural-attractions/>).

Waterfalls, whose intrinsic appeal alone attracts tourists from afar, can be described as a resource-based attraction. People are prepared to travel great distances to see the famous Niagara, Victoria and Iguassu Falls, for example. Nevertheless, even splendid natural wonders such as these may be “developed” with additional artificial attractions. To entice travelers to return to tourist attractions, proprietors must learn to satisfy the desires and expectations of visitors (Hudson, 2012).

This study examined one particular type of geographic feature, waterfalls, as a tourist attraction. As landscape resources, however, waterfalls have not been fully appreciated by scholars, including geographers, particularly in terms of their cultural value and importance for tourism (Ahmadi, 2009). Waterfalls are among the world's popular tourist attractions, and for this reason an understanding of their appeal and potential are matters of some practical importance.

Laurel, Batangas, has natural springs called Ambon-Ambon Falls and Malagaslas Falls. It is a fantastic place with enough space for picnic activity. The view of the falls is spectacular, and made even more awesome by the tunnel-like river pathway leading to the falls, enveloped by the trees above and the river cutting into a very large rock. These two falls are adjacent and have been the pride of Laurel, Batangas. The researchers believe, that these two falls have the potential to become the prominent and major tourist attraction of the town. (<http://laurelbatangas.gov.ph/tourism/natural-attractions/>)



Although Ambon-Ambon Falls and Malagaslas Falls are known to local people, it is not sufficiently known throughout the Philippines, even among tourists. Assessing the potential of these Laurel waterfalls as a tourist attraction will enable officials and residents to adopt municipal policies and ordinances for sustainability programs so as to preserve the natural beauty of the waterfalls. This study was an initial attempt to assess the potential of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls as a tourist attraction so that local government officials of Laurel, Batangas could be provided with insights on what improvements were needed to increase the tourism potential of these waterfalls. This study could then serve as the basis for the development of facilities and services that would improve the conditions of the site and make it more attractive to tourists in order to attract more visitors.

1.2 Glossary:

The following terms used in this study are defined operationally:

- **Added features.** This refers to the views of local officials and local residents with regards to the improvements and developments that should be created in terms of recreation and tourism facilities of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls Resort.
- **Barangay.** This is the smallest unit of local government in the Philippines. It is governed by elected officials who constitute the Barangay Council
- **Assessment.** This refers to the evaluation by local officials and local residents of the services, tangibles and sustainability of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls.
- **Facilities.** This refers to the infrastructure or amenities that can be found in Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls.

- **Potential.** This refers to the capability of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls to develop their natural or man-made environment in the near future for the benefit of both local officials, residents, and tourists.
- **Profile.** This refers to the personal characteristics of local officials and local residents of Laurel, Batangas which include age, gender, level of education, official position or occupation.
- **Recreation.** This refers to range of activities that can be done for recreation, amusement or enjoyment at Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls were recreational activities are often done for enjoyment or pleasure.
- **Services.** This refers to the activities that Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls offers to visitors that cannot be seen nor touched but can be felt.
- **Sustainability.** This refers to the ability of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls to maintain their natural beauty and geographic wonders in the future.
- **Tangibles.** This refers to resources in Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls that can be seen or touched even if they are developed as tourist attractions or the ambience found in the natural environment.
- **Tourist attractions.** This refers to occurrence or creation or happenings in natural or human-made environments which is controlled and managed for the enjoyment and education of the visiting public. In this study, this will refer to Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls in Laurel, Batangas.

1.3 Preview:

The next section, **Section 2** gives the Statement of the Problem, after which the Significance and Scope of the Study are then discussed in **Section 3**. The next section, **Section 4** then the Review of the Literature, while **Section 5** discusses the Methods.

The Results and Discussion are the presented in **Section 6**, after which the study's Conclusions are given in **Section 7**, while the study's Recommendation are discussed in **Section 8**. This is followed by the Acknowledgement in **Section 9** and the List of References in **Section 10**.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem that this study sought to answer was "what is the tourist potential of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls from the viewpoint of selected local officials and residents of Laurel, Batangas. In particular, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of selected local officials of Laurel, Batangas involved in tourism development of the town in terms of:
 - 1.1 Age,
 - 1.2 Gender,
 - 1.3 Level of education, and
 - 1.4 Official position?
2. What is the profile of local residents in selected barangays in Laurel, Batangas in terms of:
 - 2.1 Age,
 - 2.2 Gender,
 - 2.3 Level of education, and
 - 2.4 Occupation?
3. What is the assessment by local officials and local residents of the services, tangibles and sustainability of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls?
4. What are the views of local officials and local residents with regard to the facilities and services that could be added as features of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls to increase the potential of the falls as a tourist attraction?

3. SIGNIFICANCE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

3.1 Significance of the Study:

This study was undertaken mainly for the benefit of various tourism stakeholders in Laurel, Batangas, particularly, the following persons/organizations:

- **Tourism Students.** This study would expand tourism students' knowledge of what constitutes a quality tourist attraction. The findings of the study would provide data that could be used by students in understanding how various services and tangibles of a resort enhance the potential of a particular tourist attraction.
- **Tourists.** Tourists visiting Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls could use the results of this study to create a positive and enhancing relationship with the residents that would foster sustainable tourism as well as friendly and mutually beneficial relations with the local residents.
- **Local residents.** The assessment of the tourism potential of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls could serve as basis to promote the involvement of local community of Laurel, Batangas in providing tourists with services like township experiences, hospitality traditional culture, music and dance. The recommendations contained in this study concerning local community involvement could form the basis for enhancing relations with tourists to foster tourism development in Laurel, Batangas.

Local Government officials of Laurel, Batangas. The results of this study could provide local government officials of insights on what visitors expect from Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls. This could serve as the basis for the development of facilities and services to improve conditions of the site in order to attract more tourists.

Researchers. Finally, this study could serve as valuable reference to students and other researchers conducting related or further studies.

3.2 Scope and Limitations of the Study:

The study's area was limited to the Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls and its vicinity located in Laurel, Batangas, Southern Luzon, Philippines. The scope of the study covered (1) the profile of selected local officials involved in tourism development of the town and the profile of selected local residents of Laurel, Batangas, (2) the assessment by local officials and local residents of the services, tangibles and sustainability of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls, and (3) the views of local officials and local residents with regard to facilities and services that could be added as features of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls to increase the potential of the falls as a tourist attraction.

This study was conducted from December 2014 to February 2015. Respondents of the study were ten (10) selected local officials involved in tourism development of Laurel, Batangas and eighty (80) selected local residents of Laurel, Batangas. Data were gathered via surveys of the target respondents, using a survey instrument. The results of the study depended mainly on the responses of the target respondents in the survey.

4. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This section reviews foreign and local studies which have a significant bearing on the study's subject matter and research problem.

4.1 Foreign Studies:

Potential of Waterfalls as Tourist Attraction:

A waterfall is a river or other body of water's steep fall over a rocky ledge into a plunge pool below. It is a place where water flows over a vertical drop in the course of a stream or river. Waterfalls also occur where meltwater drops over the edge of a tabular iceberg or ice shelf. Waterfalls are also called cascades. The process of erosion, the wearing away of earth, plays an important part in the formation of waterfalls. Waterfalls themselves also contribute to erosion (Hudson, 2012a).

Often, waterfalls form as streams flow from soft rock to hard rock. This happens both laterally (as a stream flows across the earth) and vertically (as the stream drops in a waterfall). In both cases, the soft rock erodes, leaving a hard ledge over which the stream falls (Hudson, 2012b).

Several scholars are generally of the view that ecotourism is aimed at developing relatively undisturbed and natural areas. Such natural features or potentials should be identified and given proper evaluation in terms of protection and management with a view to developing them into viable tourism destinations. Unfortunately, most natural sites/ features such as waterfalls are yet to be given attention in terms of their identification and assessment for tourism purposes. The identification and assessment of scenic qualities should be the major concern in landscape evaluation for tourism development. However, Eja, Ajake and Effiom (2012), found that lack of community awareness and positive attitudes of the people has led to the abuse of ecotourism potentials of waterfalls, which has further depleted the environment for attractions.

While Amalu, Ajake, Oba and Okpara (2012) discovered that the careless and less-concerned attitude of the people about the content and state of their natural environment has negatively impacted the volume of tourists, other studies such as Ajake and Amalu (2012), Aniah, Okim, Eja and Ajake (2011) have attributed the development of ecotourism potentials of lakes and waterfalls as the basis of socio-economic development in Cross River State, Nigeria.

According to Hudson (2013), waterfalls are enjoyed by many people, young and old, all over the world, as evidenced by the large number of topographical books, travel literature and tourist guide-books which prominently feature these landforms. This enjoyment together with technological innovations, particularly in transportation, and the growth in leisure activities over the past century, has led to increased numbers of visitors at waterfalls and to the deliberate exploitation of these popular landscape features for recreation and tourism.

Among those who enjoy open air recreation and take delight in landscape beauty, there are some who can be variously described as "waterfall lovers", "waterfall buffs" or "waterfall fans" (Hudson, 2012). There are even "waterfall collectors" (Hudson, 2013), people learned in "waterfall-ology" who go "waterfalling" for pleasure. This landscape taste has contributed to the development of many tourist destinations, including Niagara, Victoria and Iguassu Falls where waterfalls are the major attraction, and Yosemite and Yellowstone National Parks, Switzerland, Iceland, Norway and New Zealand, where they are important aspects of the scenic attractions (Hudson, 2012a, 2013).

While most waterfalls remain more or less in their natural state, many of the more popular ones have undergone some development which may include food and drink outlets of different kinds and even accommodation. Popular waterfalls often have a range of eating places nearby, sometimes including good restaurants; and accommodation available there may be in the form of modest camp grounds or luxury hotels. Today, the Lodore Swiss Hotel in the English Lake District, established in the 19th century, is possibly more famous for its cuisine than for the beautiful cascades in its grounds, the Lodore Falls celebrated by Wordsworth and Southey. These were two of the nineteenth century Romantic poets who, unwittingly, helped to make the Lake District a popular tourist destination and to bring to public attention many of that beautiful region's scenic attractions, including the waterfalls there (Hudson, 2013).

According to Ahmadi, Tourists have long been accustomed to paying for the privilege of enjoying landscape, including viewing scenery, and waterfalls, commonly hidden away in narrow gorges or wooded valleys, lend themselves particularly well to this kind of economic exploitation. As early as the 1830s, with improved access by canal and rail, the Niagara Falls was suffering from uncontrolled tourism development. "Private developers quickly acquired the best overlooks, then forced travelers to pay handsomely for the privilege of using them. By 1860 gatehouses and fences rimmed the falls from every angle". Public outrage at the excessive commercialization of Niagara Falls was an important factor in the growth of the national park movement in America.

Natural landscape or scenery have become a resource, something for which there was a demand and which could be exploited for economic gain. Largely because of the romantic tastes of the period, certain types of landscape were regarded as particularly attractive, and wild nature had an especially strong appeal. Depending largely on scale and weather conditions, waterfalls could possess qualities of the sublime or the picturesque, both of which appealed to romantic taste (Hudson, 2012).

Assessment of Services, Tangibles and Sustainability of a Tourist Site:

Yusof and Rahman (2011) investigated tourists' perceptions of services delivered by resort operators in a Malaysian lake-based tourism site. A face-to-face survey was conducted with tourists who had stayed for at least one night at any of the nine resorts in Lake Kenyir, a lake-based tourism area in Malaysia. Assurance and sustainable constructs showed the highest service delivery scores. The item "visual attraction and appeal of natural attraction" had the highest rating followed by "noncrowded and unspoiled". However, the item "emphasized tourists to recycle and reuse products" showed

the lowest rating. The high performance of the service and sustainable constructs, specifically involving the lake and the natural attractions as well as non-crowdedness and unspoiled settings, should be maintained to increase the frequency of tourist visits to the area. Future improvement efforts should also emphasize recycling and reuse and focus on factors outside of the typical resort services.

Another study by Rahman, Yusof, Daud and Osman (2010) provided a better understanding of the quality of service in an ecotourism area in Southeast Asia. Specifically, the survey was conducted among tourists who stayed for at least one night in Lake Kenyir, Malaysia. Overall, the results of the study showed that the level of service quality in Lake Kenyir was low, leading to the dissatisfaction felt by the tourists. The service quality scores indicate that tourists at the ecotourism resort expected more than what they actually experience or received. It was also found that the dimension that relates to sustainability was considered the most important by the tourists.

In another recent study by Yusof, Rahman and Daud (2012) investigating first timers and frequenters' perceived service quality, the study drew from data collected based on tourists' experiences of service quality in Lake Kenyir, a lake-based tourism site in Malaysia. A conceptual framework consisting of 31 items of perceived service quality based on responsiveness, sustainability, value for money, reliability, and empathy and tangibles was utilized and items were measured using the 4-point scale. The mean score for tourists' perceived service quality was 2.944, higher than the mid-point of 2.5, indicating that in general the tourists were satisfied with the quality of products and services provided for them. The highest ratings of the tourists among the six components were tangibles, reliability, and responsiveness. Lowest rated component was sustainability followed by empathy and value for money.

Cracolici and Nijkamp (2010) studied the importance of pertinent versus complementary elements of tourist needs in Southern Italy and found that tourists placed greater weight on complementary elements, which were related to service qualities such as the quality of information, tourist services, products, living costs and safety issues, as compared with the environment or cultural characteristics of the area. These conflicting results raise a question regarding tourist perception of services delivered by resort operators in the Malaysian lake-based tourism industry.

Adetola and Adediran (2014) studied the attitudes of local residents towards sustainable ecotourism development in Olumirin Waterfall in Southwestern Nigeria. A field survey via structured questionnaire was conducted on 150 village respondents living in the vicinity of Olumirin waterfall of which fifty questionnaires were randomly distributed to each of the three communities that were purposively selected. Their results showed that awareness and knowledge of ecotourism was high in the communities. Majority (94%) of the sampled population have positive attitude towards ecotourism activities in Olumirin waterfall, exhibit great appreciation of the existence of the waterfall and are interested in the continuity of the site as ecotourism attraction. Negative attitudes have a minority perspective as tourists activities was not devoid of problems such as pollution, overcrowding and cultural diffusion. Gender ($X^2=14.11$, $p<0.05$), Education ($X^2=32.87$, $p<0.05$), and occupation ($X^2=64.4$, $p<0.05$), were significantly related to respondents' perception of ecotourism development in Olumirin waterfall. Responses for positive attitude are larger as compared to the negative attitudes in the study site because the contribution of ecotourism activities towards economic enhancement of the rural people is high. However, effective regulation and proper planning were deemed essential in order to enhance the sustainability of ecotourism in Olumirin waterfall while local people's active involvement at different levels of ecotourism development was deemed vital in ensuring its success.

In another study that assessed the quality of services in Niah National Park (NNP) located in Sarawak, a major ecotourism destination in Malaysia, Said, Shuib, Ayob and Yaakub (2013) utilized the ECOSERV instrument developed by Khan in 2003 to measure visitors' expectations and perceptions of service quality. The findings had revealed negative service gaps (differences between visitors' perceptions and expectations) pattern in almost all sixteen attributes and all six dimensions of services. This indicated that the levels of service quality in NNP are not meeting visitors' expectations, especially in the dimension of ecotangibles. The visitors' perception scores on the sixteen attributes of services were found somewhat lower than the expectation scores. The perception scores on the sixteen attributes of services were mostly moderately high ranged between 4.80 and 5.49. Visitors had highest perception score on service attribute related to "feeling safe during transaction" (mean = 5.49), followed by "convenient operating hours" (mean = 5.46) and "employees to provide necessary information" (mean = 5.45). In contrast, the three service attributes that had lowest perception scores were "facilities appropriate to the environment" (mean = 4.80), "employees to give service by certain time" (mean = 4.80), and "facilities to be kept in a clean setting" (mean = 4.90).

The overall findings appeared to show that management should possibly concentrate more attention on conservation than on service quality dimensions sought by visitors. Hence, the park management needs to address problems along all dimensions in order to improve its quality of service. Most importantly, the park management needed to provide greater attention to the three attributes that had biggest service gaps, implying greater degree of dissatisfaction on attributes performance. They needed to make sure the facilities were kept in a clean setting, environmentally safe, and appropriate to the environment (Said, et al., 2013).

Ijasan and Izobo Martin (2012) reviewed the Arinta Waterfall in Iloro Ekiti, Nigeria. The research examined how engaged the members of the community were regarding the resort. Interviews were held with key stakeholders in the community and in the state planning authority. Questionnaires were also distributed among staff of the resort as well as community members randomly. The results showed that the community members did not feel attached to the tourist site hence; there was a strong tendency for them to blame the lack of development and public awareness of the resort to the government officials. The findings from the interviews with the staff of Arinta waterfalls and community leaders showed the emerging themes for what they perceive to be major problems of the center, what they reckon should be done and ultimately what the center can achieve, should it be operated at a maximal level. The problem identified with tourism in Arinta waterfalls planning and development by the management of the center included: transportation, lack of good infrastructure, poor communication systems, poor communal facilities, shortage of staffs, lack of ethnic unity, poor research facilities, poor access routes, lack of benefits accruing to the host community. The management pointed out that there was poor maintenance culture on the part of the people of the host community who happens to be the main visitors to the place. They, however, were quick to add that the culture of maintenance of the people is likely to improve since they were willing to have tourism development.

Views regarding Facilities and Services that could be added as Features of a Tourist Site:

Ajake, Bisong and Eze (2013) conducted a preliminary assessment of an "uncharted" ecotourism asset: the case of Esori Waterfall in Cross River State, South Eastern Nigeria. It was revealed that the ecotourism potential of Esori fall is quite high. It holds a strong appeal to the natives for its aesthetic and spiritual value. Besides the two parallel falls separated by a band of walls within the same width, there is a wonderful array of rocks and a dense typical tropical jungle with games. The uniqueness of the fall is also found in the preferences of the local population based on their active expression for swimming, boating, sightseeing and camping. The pristine beauty of the rainforest around the waterfall may also constitute the home environment of many fauna and flora species which can be of interest to tourists from within and outside Nigeria. The economy of Etara/Ekuri –Eyeyeng communities is strongly based on wildlife, hunting and collection of NTFPs. Presently; there are six major hunting grounds which are also sources of Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) collection. The Bush Pig, Red Dear, Porcupine, (pangolin, Tortoise, Monkey, Chimpanzee, and the Drill are commonly hunted animals. The ecotourism potentials of some of the charismatic species such as Monkey, Chimpanzee, and Drill are huge if conserved and integrated into a string of attractions connected with the waterfall. In the words of the locals, they state categorically that “we want our excellent tourist attractions such as the waterfall and Onughi hills... to be developed in order to open up our community to other development influence as well as enable us to protect our culture, craft and forest products to outsiders. Among the specific request put forward to achieve this dream is the development of an access road to Esori waterfall, development of a guest house for tourist, and construction of a nature trail to Esori waterfall and the Onughi hills to enable access and improve their attraction. The immeasurable and scenic properties of Esori waterfall, makes it necessary for government and stakeholders to harness this valuable resource for enhanced economic growth and tourism development in Cross River State, South Eastern Nigeria.

One important study by Ikpi and Offem (2012) which assessed the fishery and the tourism potential of Agbokum Waterfalls in Nigeria revealed that people who felt happier in landscape dominated by waterfalls, visit the middle reaches of the river for outdoor recreation more often while people who feel happy in landscapes dominated by slow water current with an extensive wide area and floodplains, visit downstream reaches of the waterfalls more often. Activities that people wanted to perform more often along downstream reaches include fishing, bathing/swimming, boating and hunting while more favored activities in the middle reaches (waterfalls) include taking photographs, picnics, enjoying nature, outing with family and friends, looking at view, resting and relaxing. Relatively higher fish densities and species richness values in the upstream and downstream reaches, makes fishing, game hunting and photographing as the most preferred activities in this naturalscape. It was also concluded that the management strategies to improve tourism potential of Agbokum waterfalls must include: Legislation against water pollution, control and regulatory measures by community leaders to include: freeing of immature fish captures, obtaining permission from head fishermen before fishing, prohibition of fishing during spawning or immediate post-spawning seasons, mesh size regulation, registration and licensing of fishermen, prohibition of poison and bailing during dry season, management inputs in the form of improved gear and

craft, development of fish culture ponds in the floodplains using the network of swamps, lakes and ponds through evolution of appropriate technology for their conversion.

Ikogosi Spring Resort is one of the beauties of Nigeria in terms of natural endowment. It is an awesome site where two different springs flow side by side without disturbing each other: while one is cold, the other is warm and they maintain a temperature of about 37 degrees. The whole landscape in the area was beautified by green vegetation. However, research by Fatai (2011) showed that most water resorts contain minerals in solution. Moreover, hospitable facilities such as hotels and guest houses were not available in the vicinity. Visitors perceived that accommodation facilities should be part of the development of the resort with well-equipped conference room, seminar hall and catering service for the satisfaction of the visitors.

Bemanian, Ahmadi, Sadeghi and Baharlou (2010) conducted a study about improving environmental quality of Margoon Waterfall protected area through sustainable tourism development in the region. The protected area of Margoon Waterfall is the obvious manifestation of special ecological, environmental, economic, social, cultural and historical features and tourist attractions. The results obtained through the analysis and evaluation of the gathered data and questionnaires, the facilities and services necessary for greater tourist presence in the region under study are divided into three groups: (1) recreation and sport facilities (camping, cooperative sports, walking, fishing, jungle wandering, hunting, mountain and water sports), (2) welfare and (3) residential and training services.

In the local setting, Casipe, Co, Cruz and Saclapus (2012) assessed the potential of Balite Falls Spring Resort in Cavite as a tourist attraction. The results revealed that Balite Falls received the highest rating of “very good” from the visitors in the aspect of promptness of service, the helpfulness and enthusiasm of the staff and the product/service knowledge of the staff. In terms of tangibles, respondents had “very good” rating the aspect of availability of car parking; cleanliness of visitor facilities; condition of the resort and its facilities; atmosphere at the resort; availability of public shelters; and the range of accommodation options. Five of the eight items that measured sustainability of the Balite Falls resort received “very good” ratings from the respondents. These include visual attraction and appealing natural attractions; being a non-crowded and unspoiled spring resort; having minimal changes to existing land form and vegetation; integrating the development with local environment/culture; and using natural/local resources as equipment and facilities. Overall, the services provided by the Balite Falls Spring Resort were perceived by visitors as “good”. Meanwhile the resort’s tangibles as well as the resort’s sustainability were rated “very good”.

4.2 Local Studies:

Profile of Laurel, Batangas:

Laurel is a third class municipality in the province of Batangas, a province in the Southern part of Luzon island, Philippines. The town was previously known as Bayuyungan. It belongs to the 3rd legislative district of Batangas. It was a province in the Southern part of Luzon island, Philippines and founded on May 25, 1961 and named after the late Jose P. Laurel, Sr. who served as President of the Republic of the Philippines in 1943-1945. According to the 2010 census, it has a population of 35,674 people (NSO, 2010).

The municipality of Laurel has been headed by Mayor Randy James Amo from 2010 to present. It has 33 precincts and 21 barangays (i.e. subunit of a town). The primary sources of livelihood of the residents of Laurel are farming and fishing. The municipality’s main products are rice, corn, coconut and fish. It also produces sand, bamboo, and coco palms. The main delicacies of the municipality are tawilis, tilapia and maliputo (Official website of Laurel, Batangas, n.d.).

Aside from tourism spots and world-class accommodations, one of the best assets of Laurel is its friendly and hospitable people. The people of Laurel, Batangas welcome tourists and even assist them with their needs. Laurel is basically a home of pure Batangas natives (i.e., Batangueños or Batangueñas) where residents fluently speak Tagalog or even deep Tagalog words so strange to hear but of common meaning. About 70% of the population can understand and speak English (<http://laurelbatangas.gov.ph/tourism/natural-attractions/>).

Demographic Profile of Local Officials:

Dionido and Sarroca (2014) examined the disaster awareness and preparedness of barangay officials in selected high income and low income barangays in Ternate, Cavite. The demographics of barangay officials revealed that respondents came from varied age group comprising of 27.8 percent who belonged to age group of 31 to 40 years, 22.2 percent belonging to age group of 41 to 50 years and 51 to 60 years, respectively and only few of the respondents belonged to age groups of 21 to 30 years (16.7%) and 61 years or older (11.1%). With regards to gender, majority (72.2%) of the

respondents were male and only 27.8 percent were female. In terms of education, 27.8 percent had secondary education, 22.2 percent completed their undergraduate degrees and 16.7 percent each had primary education and certifications from vocational trainings. Based on their official positions in the barangay, it was shown that 11.1 percent of respondents were barangay captains while 66.67 percent were barangay councilors. The remaining respondents were barangay secretaries (11.1%) and barangay treasurers (11.1%).

In a study by Guilo and colleagues (2012) of the factors affecting the implementation of barangay ordinances in Odiongan, Romblon utilizing 56 barangay elected officials and seven (7) appointed barangay secretary and treasurer of selected barangays in Odiongan, Romblon their findings revealed that majority of the respondents are male, aged 56 and above, married; college level. Their primary occupation prior to being elected were farming and self-employed, most of whom continued as such even after election as additional sources of income.

Demographic Profile of Local Residents:

Baldonado, Gadon, Denuyo and Mejares (2012) measured the residents' perceptions toward cultural impact of tourism in the host community in Tagaytay City. Participants of the study include 291 residents of Barangay Maharlika East, Tagaytay City. Results of the study showed that 146 (50.17%) respondents belonged to the "youth" age group with ages ranging from 18 to 30, and the remaining 145 (49.83%) belonged to the "adult" category with ages ranging from 31 to 50. There were also an almost equal number of male and female respondents comprising of 145 males and 146 females. In terms of education, 128 (43.99%) were college graduate, 63 (21.65%) were college undergraduate, 68 (23.37%) finished high school, 10 were not able to complete their secondary education while 8 respondents (2.75%) were able to finish their elementary education. Among the respondents, 71 (24.40%) were employed in white collar jobs, 55 (18.90%) hold blue collar jobs while 79 respondents (27.15%) claimed to be self-employed. More than a fourth of the respondents (86 or 29.55%) were unemployed during the conduct of the survey. Majority of the residents (247 or 84.88%) have been residents of Tagaytay City for a period of 10-12 years; ten (3.44%) have been living in the area for a period of 13-15 years while two respondents (0.69%) have dwelled in the city for 16-18 years. Thirty-two respondents (11%) claimed to have been living the area for a much longer period of 19 years or more.

In another study done by Berces, Boquiren, Buella, Cerico and Desales (2012) on the perceived benefits of local residents on the development of El Fraile Island as a tourist attraction, findings revealed that most of the residents living within El Fraile Island belonged to older age group of 46 years old and older. Out of 284 respondents, 126 (44.37%) were high school level/graduates, 62 respondents (21.83%) were college level/graduates, 54 respondents (19.01%) were elementary level/graduates and 35 respondents (12.32%) were vocational/technical graduates. In terms of gender, 55.28 percent of the respondents were male while 44.72 percent were female. The majority of the respondents were either self-employed or employed in private establishments. Of the total, 93 respondents (32.75%) were self-employed or had their own business, 84 respondents (29.58%) were employed in private establishment, 52 respondents (18.31%) were unemployed or in-between jobs and 34 respondents (11.97%) were employed in the government. Only 21 respondents (7.39%) were retirees.

Role of Local Officials in Tourism Planning and Development:

Tourism as a product and service oriented industry, could generate widespread benefits and impacts to the economy and society. It could contribute to the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) particularly those concerning poverty alleviation, environmental conservation, and generation of employment opportunities for women, indigenous communities and young people. Further, tourism could be a source of revenue (foreign exchange earnings, tax revenue) to the government and because of its multiplier effect, could provide opportunities for local economic development (LED). The direct, upstream, and downstream industries involved in tourism activities have the potential for creating sectoral linkages and economic opportunities in the localities (Javier & Elazigue, 2011).

According to Liu (2010) there are a range of stakeholders who have the right and, to a varying extent, ability to make changes to the tourism system and influence the process and consequences of development. These are tourists, tourist businesses (investors, developers, operators, shareholders, management, public and private employees) the host community and their governments. Liu (2010) states that these groups often have conflicting interests and different perceptions of tourism development, and to be successful and sustainable tourism development one should involve various government departments, public and private sector, community groups and experts.

In view of the socio-economic benefits that could accrue to communities, it is imperative that communities capitalize on opportunities from tourism. One of the major authorities which provide the key roles to this success is that of local government units (LGUs). LGUs could provide the ideal, authority, infrastructure, policy and planning procedures to maximize the benefit for its communities. Local government officials play a major role in a community's development, provide the links between the people and government, address its community's problems and concerns, enforce policies and hold influence over its communities. They are also intermediaries in channeling the framework of government into each individual community in order to create a beneficial outcome (Javier & Elazigue, 2011).

In the context of sustainable development, local governments also play important roles on the success of its local tourism industry, as well as have a strong influence in conserving its resources. Sustainable tourism development refers to the management of all resources that meets the needs of tourists and host regions while protecting the opportunities for the future, in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems (Tourism Act of 2009). Vital to this approach is the contribution of a full range of stakeholders and the community in planning and decision making in order to determine the community's long term interest. On this basis, the local government can have a profound influence on the local tourism industry, and plays a part in conserving the very asset on which its future depends (Javier & Elazigue, 2011).

Local government plays a significant role in tourism, given the influence that its functions, such as land-use planning and policy development, have on the tourism sector (Connell, Page, & Bentley, 2010). While local tourism associations and regional destination management organizations (DMOs) promote tourism, local governments tend to have the most direct involvement in tourism, through funding and operating tourism activities, events, and attractions (e.g. museums and art galleries, parks, and trails (Connell et al., 2010).

In addition, local governments typically provide funding for local tourism associations while maintaining essential local infrastructure from which tourism activity benefits. However, Connell et al. argue that one of the more important roles of local government is the development and implementation of community planning, legislation, and policy. While local governments are tasked with developing plans to set policy and guide development in varying areas of responsibility, there is no such legislative requirement for local governments to develop tourism plans, nor is there an adequate measure of their current level of engagement in tourism. However, while tourism-related developments are typically integrated within economic development plans (EDPs) or official community plans (OCPs), often there is no guiding policy framework or identified area of responsibility for tourism, which can be problematic for effective and sustainable tourism development (Connell et al., 2010).

5. METHODS

This section presents the research design, sources of data, participants of the study, data gathering procedure, research instrument, validation of instrument, data analysis and statistical treatment of data.

1.1 5.1 Research Design:

Descriptive research design was employed in this study. According to Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2006), descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypotheses or answer questions concerning the current work status of the participants in the study. A descriptive research design is used when data are collected to describe persons, organizations, settings, or phenomena.

1.2 5.2 Acquisition and Analysis of Data:

In this study, data were collected on the profile of selected local officials and local residents of Laurel, Batangas, the assessment by local officials and local residents regarding the services, tangibles and sustainability of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls and their views regarding the facilities and services that can be added as features of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls to increase the potential of these waterfalls as a tourist attraction. Hence, descriptive research design was used.

The research framework used in the study is the Input-Process-Output Model. In the IPO model, a process is viewed as a series of boxes (processing elements) connected by inputs and outputs. The IPO model provides the general structure and

guide for the direction of the study. Substituting the variables of this study on the IPO model, the researchers came up with the following:

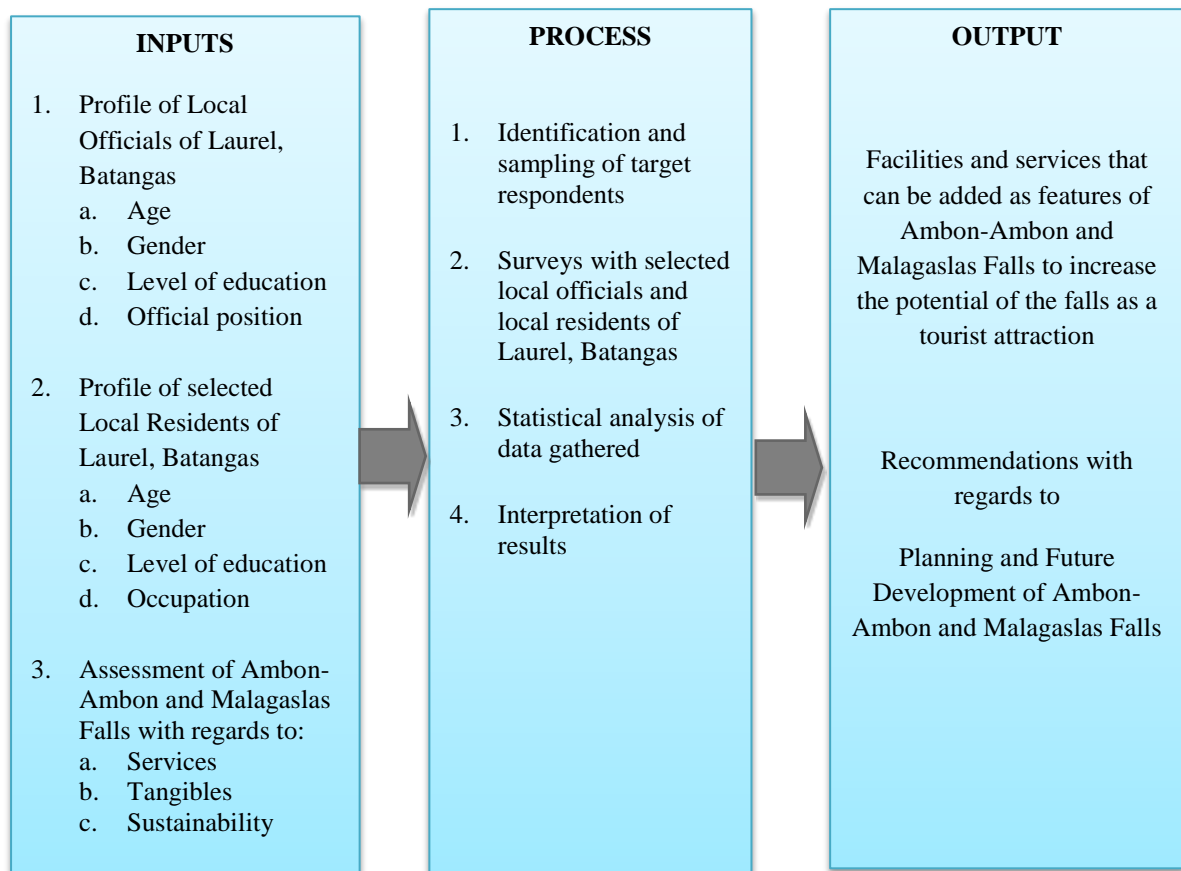


Figure 1. The Research Framework

As shown in Figure 1, the INPUT for this research included: (1) the profile of selected local officials of Laurel, Batangas involved in tourism development of the town; (2) the profile of local residents in selected barangays in Laurel, Batangas; and 3) the assessment by local officials and local residents regarding the services, tangibles and sustainability of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls.

The PROCESS consisted of the methods used to answer the objectives of this research such as (1) identification and sampling of target respondents; (2) surveys with selected local officials and local residents of Laurel, Batangas; (3) statistical analysis of data gathered; and (4) interpretation of results.

The OUTPUT of the study was the desired end-goal of the research work itself, namely: (1) facilities and services that can be added as features of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls to increase the potential of the falls as a tourist attraction; and (2) recommendations with regards to planning and future development of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls.

5.3 Source of Data: Survey Participants:

This study utilized two sets of participants: Purposive sampling technique was used in the selection the participants.

The ten (10) elected local officials of Laurel, Batangas and eighty (80) local residents of Laurel, Batangas living within the vicinity of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls. The criteria for the selection of local officials were: 1) an official of Laurel, Batangas who is involved in tourism development of the town; and 2) have direct participation on tourism planning and development of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls.

On the other hand, the criteria for the selection of local residents that participated in this study included: 1) above 18 years of age; 2) he/she must be a permanent resident of Laurel Batangas for at least five years; and 3) willing to participate in the survey.

Data Gathering Procedure:

Prior to the collection of data, permission to conduct the study was secured from the Research Adviser and the Associate Dean of the College of International Tourism and Hospitality Management. Thereafter, permission to administer the survey instrument to target participants was secured from the administrator of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls. Once approval is granted, surveys were administered to the participants from January to February 2015. All answered instruments were collected immediately after the participants completed the survey to avoid misplacement. Guided survey was used by the researchers to easily understand the survey instrument for local residents of Laurel, Batangas.

Research Instruments:

The survey instruments (**Appendix 1** and **Appendix 2**) prepared by the researchers were used to gather information from the target participants. Two sets of survey instruments were prepared; the first was intended for local officials (**Appendix 1**), and the second for local residents (**Appendix 2**). The instrument is divided into three sections: Part A- Profile, Part B - Assessment of services, tangibles and sustainability of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls, and Part C- Assessment of Facilities and Services that can be added as features of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls to increase the potential of the waterfalls as tourist attraction.

Validation of the Instrument:

The instrument was pilot tested to check its reliability before distributing it to the survey participants. The pilot testing was done among ten local residents of Laurel, Batangas who were not part of the actual participants of the study. Results of the conducted pilot testing were used for the improvement of the questionnaire.

To further ensure content and construct validity of the questionnaire, the researchers sought faculty experts validate the questionnaire. The suggestions and comments of these experts were considered in the final draft of the instruments.

Data Analysis:

The assessment by the participants of the services, tangibles and sustainability of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls were analyzed using the following parameters:

Table 1

Weighted Mean Range	Scale	Adjectival Interpretation
4.20 – 5.00	5 = Strongly Agree	Very Good
3.40 – 4.19	4 = Agree	Good
2.60 – 3.39	3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree	Fair
1.80 – 2.59	2 = Disagree	Poor
1.00 – 1.79	1 = Strongly Disagree	Very Poor

Statistical Analysis of Data:

The gathered data were tallied and organized into frequency distribution tables and were analyzed descriptively. Frequency counts, mean, range, percentages and standard deviations were calculated and interpreted to answer the objectives of this study.

The following formula were used.: Frequency counts were utilized to present the participants’ profile, the assessment of participants with regards to services, tangibles and sustainability of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls and the views of the participants with regards to facilities and services that can be added as features of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls to increase the potential of the waterfalls as tourist attraction.

Percentage (%) was used to present the participants’ profile and the assessment of participants with regards to services, tangibles and sustainability of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls.

$$\% = f / n \times 100$$

where:

f = class frequency

n = sample size

Weighted Mean was used to present assessment of participants with regards to services, tangibles and sustainability of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls.

$$\bar{X}_w = \frac{\sum wx}{\sum w}$$

where:

\bar{X}_w = weighted mean

x = values of the items in the distribution

w = weight of the items in the distribution

Simple ranking was employed to the views of the participants with regards to facilities and services that can be added as features of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls to increase the potential of the waterfalls as tourist attraction.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the potential of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls as a tourist attraction from the point of view of selected local officials and local residents of Laurel, Batangas. The presentation in this section is arranged based on the research problems posed in this study.

Profile of Selected Local Officials of Laurel, Batangas involved in Tourism Development of the Town

The profile of selected local officials of Laurel, Batangas involved in tourism development of the town that were considered in this study include age, gender, level of education and official position.

Table 2 Distribution of selected local officials by age

Age (years)	Frequency	Percent
31 – 35	3	30.0
41 – 45	3	30.0
46 – 50	3	30.0
56 or older	1	10.0
TOTAL	10	100.0

Age. As shown in **Table 1**, 30 percent each of the selected local officials belonged to age groups of 31 to 35 years, 41 to 45 years and 46 to 50 years. Only one local official belonged to the oldest age group of 56 years old or older.

The result suggests that the local officials involved in tourism development of Laurel, Batangas have varied ages ranging from 31 years to more than 56 years old. This further indicates that local officials involved in tourism development of the town are represented by various age groups.

This is similar to the study Dionido and Sarroca (2014) who examined the disaster awareness and preparedness of barangay officials in selected high income and low income barangays in Ternate, Cavite. The demographics of barangay officials revealed that respondents came from varied age group comprising of 27.8 percent who belonged to age group of 31 to 40 years, 22.2 percent belonging to age group of 41 to 50 years and 51 to 60 years, respectively and other respondents belonged to age groups of 21 to 30 years (16.7%) and 61 years or older (11.1%).

Table 3 Distribution of selected local officials by gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	5	50.0
Female	5	50.0
TOTAL	10	100.0

Gender. Table 2 shows that there was an equal gender distribution of local officials who participated in this study comprising of five males and five females. This means that local officials of Laurel, Batangas involved in tourism development of the town are equally represented by gender.

This is opposed to the findings of the study of Dionido and Sarroca (2014) among barangay officials in selected high income and low income barangays in Ternate, Cavite which showed that majority (72.2%) of the respondents were male and only 27.8 percent were female. Guilo and colleagues (2012) who utilized elected officials in Odiongan, Romblon likewise found on their study that majority of the respondents are male.

Table 4 Distribution of selected local officials by level of education

Education	Frequency	Percent
High School level/ graduate	5	50.0
College level/ graduate	3	30.0
Post graduate level/ degree	2	20.
TOTAL	10	100.0

Level of education. In terms of education, half of the selected local officials (50%) reached high school and/or high school graduates while three of them (30%) reached college and/or college graduates (Table 3). On the other hand, there were two local officials (20%) with post graduate education.

The result implies that all of the local officials of Laurel, Batangas involved in tourism development of the town received formal schooling. Although half of the participating local officials had lower level of education, the remaining half had college and/or post graduate education.

This supports the finding of Dionido and Sarroca (2014) which examined the disaster awareness and preparedness of barangay officials in Ternate, Cavite. They found out that most of the respondents (27.8%) had secondary education followed by having their undergraduate degree (22.2%) while 16.7 percent each had primary education and certifications from vocational trainings.

Table 5 Distribution of selected local officials by official position

Position	Frequency	Percent
Municipal Councilor	1	10.0
Barangay Captain	1	10.0
Barangay Councilor	5	50.0
SR Secretary	1	10.0
MPDC Staff	1	10.0
Supply Officer	1	10.0
TOTAL	10	100.0

Official position. As shown in Table 4, half of the selected local officials (50%) involved in tourism development of Laurel, Batangas were barangay councilors. The remaining participants had official positions as Municipal Councilor (10%), Barangay Captain (10%), SR Secretary (10%), MPDC Staff (10%) and Supply Officer (10%).

The result implies that local officials involved in tourism development of the town are represented by different officials occupying varied positions in the local government of Laurel, Batangas. This further indicates that the planning and tourism development of the town is a coordinated effort of various government agencies and levels of LGUs.

The current study shows that barangay councilors had the most number of participants which is similar to the results of Dionido and Sarroca (2014) who revealed that based on their official positions in the barangay, it was shown that the majority (66.67%) of the respondents were barangay councilors and 11.1 percent of respondents were barangay captains.

Profile of Local Residents in Selected Barangays in Laurel, Batangas

The profile of local residents in selected barangays located within the vicinity of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls include age, gender, level of education and occupation.

Table 6 Distribution of selected local residents by age

Age	Frequency	Percent
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18 – 22	9	11.2
23 – 27	9	11.2
28 -32	8	10.0
33 – 37	10	12.5
38 – 42	11	13.8
43 -47	16	20.0
48 - 52	8	10.0
53 and older	9	11.2
TOTAL	80	100.0

Age. As shown in **Table 5**, 20 percent of the selected local residents belonged to age groups of 43 to 47 years, 13.8 percent or 11 residents belonged to age group of 38 to 42 years and 12.5 percent or 10 residents belonged to age group of 33 to 37 years. The remaining participants, on the other hand, belonged to the following age groups: 18 to 22 years (11.2%), 23 to 27 years (11.2%), 53 years or older (11.2%), 28 to 32 years (10%), and 48 to 52 years (10%). The result indicates that the local residents who participated in this study are represented by different age groups.

The results are somewhat similar to the study of Baldonido et al. (2012) who measured the residents’ perceptions toward cultural impact of tourism in the host community in Tagaytay City. Participants of the study include 291 residents of Barangay Maharlika East, Tagaytay City. Results of the study showed that 146 (50.17%) respondents belonged to the “youth” age group with ages ranging from 18 to 30, and the remaining 145 (49.83%) belonged to the “adult” category with ages ranging from 31 to 50.

Table 7 Distribution of selected local residents by gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	33	41.2
Female	47	58.8
TOTAL	80	100.0

Gender. Table 6 shows that almost 60 percent (58.8%) of the selected residents was female while 41.2 percent were male. This means that there is slightly higher population of female residents living within the vicinity of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls in Laurel, Batangas.

The finding of the study is similar to Ramseook-Munhurrin and Naidoo (2011) on the residents’ attitudes toward perceived tourism benefits in Mauritius. They revealed that there was a roughly even distribution of men and women with 49.2% for men and 50.8% for women, respectively.

Table 8 Distribution of selected local residents by level of education

Education	Frequency	Percent
No formal schooling	10	12.5
Elementary level/ graduate	16	20.0
High School level/ graduate	29	36.2
Vocational/ Technical graduate	6	7.5
College level/ graduate	17	21.2
Post graduate level/ degree	2	2.5
TOTAL	80	100.0

Level of education. With regards to level of education, Table 7 shows that 29 local residents (36.2%) reached high school and/or high school graduates, 17 residents (21.2%) reached college and/or college graduates, and 16 residents (20%) reached elementary and/or elementary graduates. On the other hand, there were ten local residents (12.5%) with no formal education, six residents (7.5%) who were vocational or technical graduates and two residents (2.5%) with post graduate education.

The result suggests that the local residents living within the vicinity of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls in Laurel, Batangas came from different educational background ranging from no formal education to as high as post graduate education.

The finding is in line with that of Ramseook-Munhurrin and Naidoo (2011) who found out that 47 percent of the respondents attained secondary school level, 29.6 percent of the respondents were diploma holders and 23.4% had a university degree.

Moreover, the results concurs with the study done by Berces et al. (2012) on the perceived benefits of local residents on the development of El Fraile Island as a tourist attraction. Their findings revealed that out of 284 respondents, 126 (44.37%) were high school level/graduates, 62 respondents (21.83%) were college level/graduates, 54 respondents (19.01%) were elementary level/graduates and 35 respondents (12.32%) were vocational/technical graduates.

Table 9 Distribution of selected local residents by occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Student	10	12.5
Self-employed	18	22.5
Wage employed	8	10.0
Retired	9	11.2
Unemployed	35	43.8
TOTAL	80	100.0

Occupation. In terms of occupation, Table 8 shows that less than half (43.8%) of the selected local residents were unemployed while 18 residents (22.5%) were self-employed. On the other hand, 12.5 percent of the selected residents were students, 11.2 percent were retirees and 10 percent were wage-employed workers.

The result implies that many of the local residents living within the vicinity of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls in Laurel, Batangas were unemployed. For this study, residents are classified as unemployed if they are jobless, actively looking for a job, and available for work. It should be noted that the labor force is made up of the employed and the unemployed. The remainder—those who have no job and are not looking for one are counted as not in the labor force. Many who are not in the labor force are going to school or are retired. This refers to Table 8 wherein (36.2%) or 29 local residents are High School level/ Graduate and in Table 9 (43.8%) are unemployed. Therefore, almost all High School level/ Graduate are unemployed in the survey of local residents of Laurel, Batangas.

This is in contrast with the findings of Berces et al. (2012) on the perceived benefits of local residents on the development of El Fraile Island as a tourist attraction, the majority of the respondents were either self-employed or employed in private establishments. Of the total, 93 respondents (32.75%) were self-employed or had their own business, 84 respondents (29.58%) were employed in private establishment, 52 respondents (18.31%) were unemployed or in-between jobs and 34 respondents (11.97%) were employed in the government. Only 21 respondents (7.39%) were retirees. Further, this result also differs with Baldonido et al. (2012) who measured the residents’ perceptions toward cultural impact of tourism in the host community in Tagaytay City. Out of total respondents, 71 (24.40%) were employed in white collar jobs, 55 (18.90%) hold blue collar jobs while 79 respondents (27.15%) were self-employed. More than a fourth of the respondents (86 or 29.55%) were unemployed during the conduct of the survey.

Assessment by Local Officials and Local Residents of the Services, Tangibles and Sustainability of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls:

The assessments by the two groups of participants, the local officials and residents of the services, tangibles and sustainability of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls are summarized in **Tables 9 to 11.**

Table 10 Assessment by local officials and local residents with regards to services of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls

Service	Local Residents Mean	Interpretation	Local Officials	Interpretation
1. Staff of the falls provide prompt service	3.69	Agree	3.80	Agree
2. Staff are helpful and enthusiastic in providing service	3.68	Agree	4.10	Agree

3. There is safety and security at the site	3.54	Agree	3.80	Agree
4. Staff are well-trained, competent and experienced	3.49	Agree	3.40	Agree
Overall Mean	3.60	Good	3.78	Good

Legend:

Mean Range	Scale	Adjectival Interpretation
4.2 – 5.00	5 = Strongly Agree	Very Good
3.40 – 4.19	4 = Agree	Good
2.60 – 3.39	3 = neither Agree nor Disagree	Fair
1.80 – 2.59	2 = Disagree	Poor
1.00 – 1.79	1 = Strongly Disagree	Very Poor

As shown in **Table 9**, both groups of participants agreed on all of the four statements that assessed the services of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls. The highest mean rating of 3.69 for local residents was in the statement that the staff of the falls provide prompt service while the highest rated item for local officials was that the staff are helpful and enthusiastic in providing service with mean of 4.10. On the other hand, lowest rated item for both groups of participants was in the statement that staff are well trained, competent and experienced. Nevertheless, both groups of participants showed agreement on all of the four items.

The overall mean score of 3.60 for local residents and 3.78 for local officials suggest that the assessment of both groups of participants on the services of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls was “good”.

In line with the findings of Yusof and Rahman (2011) which investigated tourists’ perceptions of services delivered by resort operators in a Malaysian lake-based tourism site, it was found that assurance constructs showed the highest service delivery scores. For this study, prompt service is an assurance construct which was also found to be the highest rated among local residents.

The finding is also similar to that of Casipe et al. (2012) who assessed the potential of Balite Falls Spring Resort in Cavite as a tourist attraction. The authors found that the overall services provided by the Balite Falls Spring Resort are perceived by visitors as “good”. The present study also found out that the services of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls were rated “good” by both residents and local officials.

However, this is in contrast with the findings of Rahman, Yusof, Daud and Osman (2010) who assessed the quality of service in an ecotourism area in Southeast Asia. Overall, the results of the study showed that the level of service quality in Lake Kenyir was low, leading to the dissatisfaction felt by the tourists.

Table 11 Assessment by local officials and local residents of the tangibles of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls

Service	Local Residents Mean	Interpretation	Local Officials Mean	Interpretation
1. Visitor facilities are clean such as toilets and public shelters	3.78	Agree	3.70	Agree
2. The condition of the facilities is good	3.88	Agree	4.20	Strongly Agree
3. There is an inviting and pleasant atmosphere at the falls	4.28	Strongly Agree	4.50	Strongly Agree
4. Public shelters are available	3.61	Agree	3.90	Agree
5. Visitors have ease of accessing the Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls	3.64	Agree	3.40	Agree
6. There is a variety of food and drinks available at the site.	3.30	Neither Agree nor Disagree	3.30	Neither Agree nor Disagree
7. There are many alternative activities available in the area aside from swimming	3.33	Neither Agree nor Disagree	3.20	Neither Agree nor Disagree
8. There is a range of accommodation option for visitors	3.30	Neither Agree nor Disagree	2.90	Neither Agree nor Disagree
9. Picnic areas are clean and available	3.75	Agree	3.80	Agree

10.Refreshment and retail outlets are available	3.51		Agree	3.50	Agree
Overall Mean	3.64		Good	3.64	Good

Legend:

Mean Range	Scale	Adjectival Interpretation
4.2 – 5.00	5 = Strongly Agree	Very Good
3.40 – 4.19	4 = Agree	Good
2.60 – 3.39	3 = neither Agree nor Disagree	Fair
1.80 – 2.59	2 = Disagree	Poor
1.00 – 1.79	1 = Strongly Disagree	Very Poor

Local residents and local officials gave the highest rating to item 3 wherein both groups strongly agreed that there is an inviting and pleasant atmosphere at the falls with mean scores of 4.28 and 4.50, respectively (**Table 10**). On the other hand, local officials also strongly agreed that the condition of the facilities at the falls was good with a mean score of 4.20.

Moreover, both groups of participants neither agreed nor disagreed on items 6, 7, and 8 which state that: there is a range of accommodation options for visitors (mean = 3.30; 2.90); there are many alternative activities available in the area aside from swimming (mean = 3.33; 3.20); and there is a variety of food and drinks available at the site (mean = 3.30; 3.30).

The overall assessment by local residents and local officials of the tangibles of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls were both “good”, with an overall mean score of 3.64, respectively. This suggests that both groups believed that the tangibles provided at Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls are generally satisfactory.

The results are in contrast with the findings of Casipe and colleagues (2012) on the visitors’ overall assessment of Balite Falls Spring which was “very good”. Another study by Yusof et al. (2012) on tourists’ experiences of service quality in Lake Kenyir, a lake-based tourism site in Malaysia likewise showed that the highest ratings of the tourists among the six components were tangibles, reliability, and responsiveness.

Table 12 Assessment of local officials and local residents with regards to sustainability of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls

Service	Local Residents Mean	Interpretation	Local Officials Mean	Interpretation
1. The falls visually attractive and appealing natural attractions are maintained	4.24	Strongly Agree	4.60	Strongly Agree
2. The area is not crowded and unspoiled.	3.91	Agree	4.30	Strongly Agree
3. There are minimal changes to existing landform and vegetation.	3.94	Agree	4.40	Strongly Agree
4. Tourism development at the falls is integrated with the local	4.15	Agree	4.30	Strongly Agree
5. the falls make used of natural/local resources as equipment and facilities	4.09	Agree	4.10	Agree
6. The route passing is designed according to the natural slope of the water bed.	3.93	Agree	4.20	Strongly Agree
Overall Mean	4.04	Good	4.32	Very Good

Legend:

Mean Range	Scale	Adjectival Interpretation
4.2 – 5.00	5 = Strongly Agree	Very Good
3.40 – 4.19	4 = Agree	Good
2.60 – 3.39	3 = neither Agree nor Disagree	Fair
1.80 – 2.59	2 = Disagree	Poor
1.00 – 1.79	1 = Strongly Disagree	Very Poor

Table 11 shows that the overall assessment of local officials and local residents differed in the aspect of sustainability of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls.

The highest rated item for both groups was item 1 wherein local residents and local officials strongly agreed that the falls are visually attractive and appealing natural attractions are maintained with mean scores of 4.24 and 4.60, respectively. Meanwhile, local officials also strongly agreed on the following statements: the area is not crowded and unspoiled (mean = 4.30); there are minimal changes to existing landform and vegetation (mean = 4.40); tourism development at the falls is integrated with the local environment/culture (mean = 4.30); and the route passing is designed according to the natural slope of the water bed (mean = 4.20). In contrast, local residents only agreed on the aforementioned statements.

As a whole, local residents had an overall evaluation of “good” with mean score of 4.04 while local officials had an overall evaluation of “very good” with mean score of 4.32. This means that local officials strongly believe that the sustainability attribute of the waterfalls was highly maintained while local residents had lower assessment on this aspect.

This finding on the assessment by local officials of the sustainability of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls is in line with the study by Yusof and Rahman (2011) who investigated tourists’ perceptions of services delivered by resort operators in a Malaysian lake-based tourism site. The authors revealed that the sustainable constructs had the highest service delivery scores. Likewise, Casipe et al. (2012) assessed the potential of Balite Falls Spring Resort as a tourist attraction. The results revealed that Balite Falls Spring Resort received the highest rating of “very good” from the visitors on the resort’s tangibles as well as the resort’s sustainability.

Views of Local Officials and Local Residents with regard to the Facilities and Services that can be added as Features of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls to Increase the Potential of the Falls as a Tourist Attraction

The perspectives of local officials and local residents with regard to facilities and services that can be added as features of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls to increase the potential of the falls as a tourist attraction are shown in **Table 13**.

Table 13 Facilities and services that can be added as features of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls based on the views of local officials and local residents

Facilities and Service	Frequency (n=80)	Rank	Frequency (n=10)	Rank	Overall Ranking
Shower rooms	50	1	8	3.5	1
Souvenir shops	38	2.5	9	1.5	2
Travel directions	38	2.5	7	5.25	3
Improved road facilities	29	4	8	3.5	4
Refreshment and retail outlets	22	7.5	9	1.5	5.5
More picnic sites	24	5	7	5.25	5.5
Camping site	23	6	7	5.25	7
More accommodation	22	7.5	5	10.3	8
Photo and video shop	21	9	5	10.3	9.5
Delicacy store	20	10	6	9	9.5
Bird sanctuary	17	11	7	5.25	11
Entertainment areas	16	12	5	10.3	12

The table above shows that both groups of participants felt that the most needed facilities and services that should be added to increase the potential of the falls as a tourist attraction were shower rooms and souvenir shops. For both participants, travel directions was ranked third, improved road facilities was ranked fourth while refreshment and retail outlets and more picnic sites were ranked fifth. On the other hand, the addition of entertainment areas had the lowest ranking followed by bird sanctuary.

The overall results indicate that the most important facilities and services that should be added at the Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls from the views of local residents and local officials were shower rooms, souvenir shops, travel directions, improved road facilities, refreshment and retail outlets, and more picnic sites.

The results are similar to the study by Ajake et al. (2013) on their assessment of an "uncharted" ecotourism asset of Esori Waterfall in Cross River State, South Eastern Nigeria. According to the locals, they wanted their excellent tourist attractions such as the waterfall and Onughi hills to be developed in order to open up our community to other development. Among the specific request put forward by the locals to achieve this dream is the development of an access road to Esori waterfall, development of a guest house for tourist, and construction of a nature trail to Esori waterfall and the Onughi hills to enable access and improve their attraction. In this study, travel directions and improved road facilities

were put forward by local residents and officials as features that must be added to Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls to increase its potential as a tourist attraction.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary:

This study assessed the potential of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls in Laurel, Batangas as a tourist attraction. Specifically, the research aimed to: describe the profile of selected local officials and local residents of Laurel, Batangas; determine the assessment by local officials and local residents of the services, tangibles and sustainability of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls; and ascertain the views of local officials and local residents with regard to facilities and services that can be added as features of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls to increase the potential of the falls as a tourist attraction.

Descriptive research design was utilized in the study. The participants of the study included 80 local residents living within the vicinity of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls and 10 local officials involved in tourism development of the town. Data were gathered from the participants with the use of a survey questionnaire.

The Results of the study showed that local officials and residents came from varied age groups and educational background. There was an equal gender distribution of local officials while for local residents female residents were slightly higher than male residents. Local officials involved in tourism development of the town also had varied positions in the local government of Laurel, Batangas. On the other hand, many of the local residents covered in this study were unemployed.

As regards the assessment by local officials and local residents of the services, tangibles and sustainability of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls, the assessment by both groups of participants of the services and tangibles of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls were both “good”. On the other hand, the assessment by local officials and local residents differed in the aspect of sustainability of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls with local officials rating the sustainability aspect of the falls as “very good” while local residents rating as “good”.

The overall results indicate that the most important facilities and services that should be added at the Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls from the views of local residents and local officials were shower rooms, souvenir shops, travel directions, improved road facilities, refreshment and retail outlets, and more picnic sites.

Finally, with regard to facilities and services that can be added as features of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls to increase the potential of the falls as a tourist attraction, results of the study revealed that the ones that got the highest rating from the views of local residents and local officials were shower rooms, souvenir shops, travel directions, improved road facilities, refreshment and retail outlets, and more picnic sites.

Conclusions:

In view of the summary of findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

Local officials involved in tourism development of the town and local residents are represented by various age groups. Local officials of Laurel, Batangas involved in tourism development of the town are equally represented by gender. All of the local officials received formal education while local residents living within the vicinity of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls in Laurel, Batangas came from different educational background ranging from no formal education to as high as post graduate education. Many of the local residents living within the vicinity of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls in Laurel, Batangas were unemployed. Meanwhile, it was shown that local officials involved in tourism development of the town occupied varied positions in the local government of Laurel, Batangas which indicates that the planning and tourism development of the town is a coordinated effort of various government agencies and levels of LGUs.

The overall assessment by local residents and local officials shows that the tangibles of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls received the lowest rating among the three areas which suggests that this feature needed much improvement to increase the potential of the falls as a tourist attraction. The highest rated assessment was in the sustainability feature of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls and followed by services. This means that both local officials and local residents felt that the sustainability attribute of the waterfalls is maintained and the natural endowments of site are intact and not exploited.

Lastly, evidence suggests that the most important facilities and services that should be added at the Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls from the viewpoints of local residents and local officials include shower rooms, souvenir shops, travel directions, improved road facilities, refreshment and retail outlets, and more picnic sites.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

For the local officials and management of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls. Since the primary aim of the study was to assess the potential of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls as a tourist attraction, the major findings indicate that the tangibles of the site are the areas that needed much improvement to increase its tourism potential. The tangibles that must be prioritized and should be enhanced or added at the falls include availability of variety of food and drinks, alternative activities available in the area aside from swimming and a range of accommodation options for visitors. These three areas are the lowest rated features of the falls; hence, providing these tangibles would certainly enhance the potential of the falls as tourist attraction.

For the management of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls. Secondly, it is suggested that the management of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls should upgrade the level of services provided to visitors. The assessment for services is only “good” which indicates that there is much room for improvement. This can be done by training the staff in providing high quality service.

It is also highly recommended to provide additional shower rooms, souvenir shops, provision of travel directions, improved road facilities, provision of more refreshment and retail outlets, and more picnic sites at the Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls. These particular features are based on the actual views of local residents and local officials regarding what must be included to increase the tourism potential of the site.

For tourists. It is recommended that tourists attracted to ecotourism sites visit Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls in their future travel plans. Tourists are also encouraged to be responsible travelers and practice sustainable tourism practices during their visit to ecotourism sites like Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls.

For local residents. It is recommended to the local residents of Laurel, Batangas, particularly those living within the vicinity of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls to take an active part in preserving the natural beauty and environment of the falls and support responsible tourism development of the site. The support of the local residents would increase the likelihood of success of the tourism development of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls.

For tourism students and researchers. Finally, future studies to assess visitor satisfaction with services, tangibles and sustainability constructs of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls should be conducted to provide additional support to the findings of the current study. A replication of the study must include a larger population of tourism stakeholders including private organizations, various tourism officials, residents and tourists to increase the generalization of the findings.

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APPENDIX - A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LOCAL OFFICIALS OF LAUREL, BATANGAS

Please complete the following questionnaire by putting a check in the appropriate spaces provided.

A. Profile

1) Age:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20-25 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 41-45 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 26-30 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 46-50 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 31-35 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 51-55 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 36-40years | <input type="checkbox"/> 56 years or older |

2) Gender:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male | <input type="checkbox"/> Female |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|

3) Education:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No formal schooling | <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational/Technical graduate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elementary level/graduate | <input type="checkbox"/> College level/Graduate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High school level/graduate | <input type="checkbox"/> Post graduate level/degree |

4) Official Position:

- | |
|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mayor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vice-mayor |

- Tourism officer
 Municipal councilor
 Barangay captain
 Others, specify _____

APPENDIX - B

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS OF LAUREL, BATANGAS

Please complete the following questionnaire by putting a check in the appropriate spaces provided.

A. Profile

1) Age:

- 18-22 years 38-42 years
 23-27 years 43-47 years
 28-32 years 48-52 years
 33-37 years 53 years or older

2) Gender:

- Male Female

3) Education:

- No formal schooling Vocational/Technical graduate
 Elementary level/graduate College level/Graduate
 High school level/graduate Post graduate level/degree

4) Occupation:

- Student
 Self-employed
 Wage-employed
 Retired
 Unemployed
 Others, specify _____

Survey Questionnaire regarding:

A. Assessment of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls:

Instruction: Please provide your honest assessment of the Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls by encircling the number that corresponds to your answer using the rating scale below:

- 5 = Strongly Agree
 4 = Agree
 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
 2 = Disagree
 1 = Strongly Disagree

Service	5	4	3	2	1
1) Staff of the falls provide prompt of service					
2) Staff are helpful and enthusiastic in providing service					
3) There is safety and security at the site.					
4) Staff are well-trained, competent and experienced					
Tangibles					

5) Visitor facilities are clean such as toilets and public shelters					
6) The condition of the facilities is good					
7) There is an inviting and pleasant atmosphere at the falls					
8) Public shelters are available					
9) Visitors have ease of accessing the Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls.					
10) There is a variety of food and drinks available at the site.					
11) There are many alternative activities available in the area aside from swimming.					
12) There is a range of accommodation options for visitors					
13) Picnic areas are clean and available					
14) Refreshment and retail outlets are available					
Sustainability					
15) The falls visually attractive and appealing natural attractions are maintained.					
16) The area is not crowded and unspoiled.					
17) There are minimal changes to existing landform and vegetation.					
18) Tourism development at the falls is integrated with the local environment/culture					
19) The falls make use of natural/local resources as equipment and facilities					
20) The route passing is designed according to the natural slope of the water bed.					

B. Facilities and Services that can be Added as Features of Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls

1) What other facilities/services would you like to see developed in this area to increase the potential of the Ambon-Ambon and Malagaslas Falls as tourist attraction?(check all that apply)

- Shower rooms
- More accommodation
- Travel Directions
- Souvenir shops
- Refreshment and retail outlets
- Camping site
- Bird Sanctuary
- Delicacy store
- More picnic sites
- Entertainment areas
- Improved road facilities
- Photo and video shop

Others, please specify _____