

RELEVANCE OF IGP'S IN THE UNIVERSITY: A PROPOSAL TO OPERATE RANCHO MARIA LUCAS RESORT

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ABSTRACT

Innovativeness and entrepreneurship in education are inevitable. Literatures reveal that for universities to thrive, there is a dire need to engage in Income Generating Projects (IGP) without sacrificing the 21st century skills – collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity. Therefore, innovation takes things that already exist, and puts them together in a new perspective (Tom Freston). The purpose of this paper include the assessment of the university in terms of status quo on the implementation of income generating projects, how innovation and entrepreneurship altogether can be entrenched into the operation, and how can the personnel and students create, communicate, collaborate, and develop critically through the IGP. In conclusion, this paper assessed that the existing income generating projects vis-à-vis the facilities and equipment used for innovation while engaged in entrepreneurial activities. It could be perceived that the implementation of the IGP had to be relevant to the vision and mission of the university which aimed to be a leading university of education and diverse disciplines attuned to local and global development needs. It is highly recommended to review the existing programs and propose a holistic approach in the implementation of the IGP by offering projects that boost innovation. The university offers the following income generating projects: bookstore, dormitory, summer enrichment programs, garments, food court, souvenir shop, institutional materials and printing, internet computing services, review center, trainings, t-shirt production, and Preparatory Learning center. Specifically, this study focused on the proposal to operate a resort named Rancho Maria Lucas.

Keywords: 1) Leyte Normal University 2) Income Generating Projects 3) Rancho Maria Lucas

1. Introduction

Nature is the heart of the Earth. Nature heals humans and builds the connection with our freedom, authenticity, and our souls. Such connection with nature gives us a divine pleasure, emotional satisfaction, and serenity that calms our hearts. Everyone loves to escape away in the mysteries of nature.

Rancho Maria Lucas is an existing farm resort within the outskirts of Tacloban City. It is located in Dampigan Sta. Rita, Samar just across the famous San Juanico Bridge the longest bridge in the Philippines and also called “Bridge of Love”, a bridge that connects Leyte and Samar.

Owned by the Solajes Family, Rancho Maria Lucas is a perfect gateway for all tourists who just want a taste of nature after a day’s hustle in the concrete jungle. Guests can enjoy the fresh air and the lush greenery of the ranch. They can also experience (1) horse-back riding along the vicinity. Rancho Maria Lucas could also be a best (2) location for reception for occasions like weddings, birthdays, reunions or even seminars the function hall can accommodate 200 persons. (3) Adjacent to the function hall is a restaurant where

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they can dine local menus and delicacies. It has also ecolodges where clients can rest and spend the night at the ranch.

This proposal aims to boost Rancho Maria Lucas competitiveness in the tourism market. Unlike most located within the city, it has a market potential because the farm resort is a place where one can enjoy the quietness of nature.

This research is conducted to ensure its feasibility as this resort has been offered to the university to be operated by the College in Management and Entrepreneur, specifically under the Hotel and Restaurant and Management Program and to be classified as an Income Generating Project (IGP).

2. Literature Review

Environmental Factors

Samar Island is the third largest island of the Philippines – following Luzon and Mindanao, respectively. It is divided into three main provinces namely Northern Samar, Eastern Samar, and Western Samar. Although the island is rich with diverse natural attractions such as caves, beaches, rivers, and mountains, negative attributes have been implied with the provinces like poverty and their susceptibility to natural disasters.

In November 2015, Governor Sharee Ann Tan of (Western) Samar initiated the Spark Samar tourism campaign with the goal, as she quoted, “to unravel the true beauty of our province”.² The campaign covers only the province of Western Samar.³ Sta. Rita is among the 24 municipalities of the province. The provincial government spent almost P500 million for road development to enhance accessibility to the different tourism sites.⁴ The campaign sparked the tourist arrival from 118,018 in 2013 to 207,709 in 2016 (shown in figure 2).⁵

Some of the featured tourist destinations and attractions in the campaign are the Sohoton Cave and Natural Bridge and mat-weaving in Basey, San Juan Floating Restaurant and Boardwalk by The Bay, the TORPEDO Boat Extreme Ride at Ulot River, Paranas and the Langun Gobingob Cave in Calbiga – which is known as the second largest cave in Southeast Asia.⁶

Some of the destinations aforementioned are part of the Samar Island Natural Park (SINP). SINP is the largest land-based National Park in the Philippines.⁷ The land area is 335,105.57 hectares with a buffer zone of 123,374.50 hectares, thus covering a total of 458,480.07 hectares which includes 36 municipalities of three Samar provinces.⁸ The SINP and the buffer zone should be under the administrative jurisdiction of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) through Protected Area Management Board (PAMB), and shall be managed in accordance with the law.⁹ It aims to protect the area from human pressure and ensure sustainability of providing agricultural products, thus uplift the lives of the Samareños as they are agriculturally-dependent and deliver them from poverty.¹⁰

² JP Sium, #SparkSamar: Bringing Out the Best in Samar, March 15, 2018

³ Angelo C. Garcia, Summer 2018: 4 Exhilarating Activities To Do in Samar

⁴ Christa I. De La Cruz, Here’s How Samar Boosts Tourism Without Abusing the Environment, March 1, 2018

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Leony Garcia, Samar Gears Up as Eastern Visayas’s Prime Tourist Destination

⁷ UNDP, From Timber to Tourists: Community Transformation in Samar Island

⁸ Official Gazette of the Philippines, Proclamation NO. 422, s. 2003, August 13, 2003

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ ArcGISOnline, Samar Island Biodiversity Conservation Project, January 11, 2016

There are two ways to get to Sta. Rita – through the northeastern route from Luzon via Allen, Northern Samar or through the eastern route via Tacloban City passing through San Juanico Bridge. Highways and roads of the two routes are well-developed.

Furthermore, Sta. Rita, Samar is the first municipality of Samar islands that will welcome you from Leyte through San Juanico Bridge. With the developed road from the edge of the bridge to El Rancho Maria Lucas, the transportation is very convenient.

Although the site is positioned at the outskirts of the SINP, El Rancho Maria Lucas adheres to the goal of the provincial government, by implementing the SINP, that is to continuously provide tourists with a nature-based destination at the same time educating them about the environment for incremental ecological sustainability.

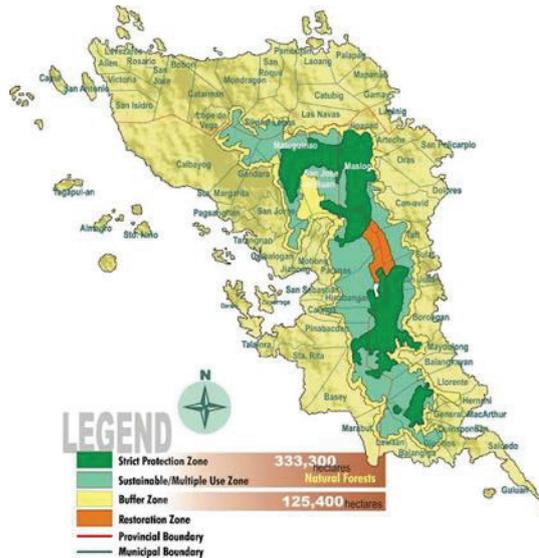


Figure 1: SINP Map

Competitive Analysis

Samar Island is a home of different tourist destinations. Within the municipality of Sta. Rita, San Juan by the Bay Floating Restaurant and Boardwalk and Bahay Kubo is infamous.

San Juan by the Bay Floating Restaurant and Boardwalk offers different activities like kayaking and swimming. They also offer typical seafood dishes. On the other hand, Bahay Kubo is an event venue. Alongside, they also offer catering services, accommodation and a function hall.

Another competitor is atop the mountain called the Restorante de Italiano or dubbed as Pasqualino, overlooking the San Juanico Bridge and the surrounding islands in the vicinity.

These businesses are strong competitors of El Rancho Maria Lucas. The latter offers several activities that the others do. Moreover, these destinations are featured in the tourism campaign of the province – Spark Samar.

Marketing Trends

Tourism marketing trends in 2018 includes deseasonalization and ‘promoting-your-city’. Hotels and other tourist destinations are deseasonalizing to offer their services not only during the peak seasons of the year. It can help in utilizing and maximizing their resources. They are practicing making use of their services rather than preserving them for the time when customer demands are high. On the other hand, promoting the locality where

the business is located (often termed as ‘promote-your-city’) is an emerging trend of marketing your business. With the advent of localization campaign, promoting the locality as a tourist destination has been proven to be helpful for the tourism and hospitality businesses within the city or region being promoted.

Another marketing trend is the EMarketing (Electronic Marketing). It is marketing in digital sphere, i.e. utilization of social media and media advertising rather than the traditional. Among other media, video is the most effective way of promoting a business. However, a video should contain marketing initiatives and effectively convey information about the business. Another effective EMarketing is the ‘Chatbots’. The automated messaging system that will immediately provide the customers with the needed information.

Among social networking sites (SNS), Instagram is the most influential in choosing tourist destination. One factor that affects the decision of a tourist is the instagramability of the place. Many businesses take advantage of it by inviting social media influencers, such as bloggers, to visit their place and thus promote it.

In top ten travel trends in 2018, solo travel ranked and Adventure tourism vying #8. Many people nowadays are looking for more self-indulgent travel, i.e. travelling alone. They want autonomy on what they want to see, where they want to go, what to eat and any other things to do by themselves. While, the definition of ‘adventure’ has changed over the millennium. It is no longer risky activities, instead it more of experiencing new culture, such as learning how to cook the native delicacies of a certain place and doing the livelihood of the locals.

Among other industries, tourism and hospitality is the most affected with the advent of digital marketing. Moreover, other than knowing the marketing trends we should also know the travel trends among tourists so that we will have an idea of what particular marketing strategy we should use to address them.

3. Research Methodology

El Rancho Maria Lucas has a wide area of land where it has a big potential to grow. We created a marketing plan to present the opportunities that await to be pursued. The plan is aligned to the vision of the Leyte Normal University, that is, a leading university of education and diverse disciplines attuned to local and global development needs. It is designed to support our students who are to undertake OJT’s specifically those coming from the College of Management and Entrepreneurship Unit who are taking up Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management (BSHM) and Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management (BSTM). This will further equip them with the knowledge, skills and aptitude that are necessary in this competitive world.

The marketing plan will present activities that will help generate revenues for Rancho Maria Lucas that will boost it to become a sustainable project, worthy to be given moment or time.

Marketing Objectives

1. To directly reach the target market through vloggs, tarpaulins, promotional videos, and series of online posting in several social media sites.
2. To increase and maintain positive growth in number of new customers by 10% per month and create customer loyalty.
3. To be a business that is environmental friendly, sustainable and economical.
4. To provide the best activities that will be enjoyed by the customers- and experience they’ll never forget.

5. To make recognition of the foods, beverages, and delicacies that the business could offer, made only from its own resources.

6. Enhance agricultural attractions by involving LNU Tourism and Hospitality Management trainees, as well as the customers in participating tree-planting and plot-making for flowers, vegetable, and crop plantations.

7. Expand business by generating new upselling and cross selling techniques of the business' products and services, annually.

Target Market

Clientele of El Rancho Maria Lucas destination are teenagers, young adults, and adults. A certain group which purchases tour and service package per capital than those older, is our primary market segment. Tour packages and other exciting services are more likely by consumers in multiple parts of the region or from other countries. Many agreements of purchases are expected within their requirement for strong point-of-purchase support. 65 percent of the market is concentrated with other competitors. We have extensive experience of the management providing high quality, innovative type of service and experience. The idea of the business is more on ecological facilities that needs to be enhanced. For the chosen Young and Adults market, the Rancho Maria Lucas is the unique destination that suits for them. Among all agricultural and modern destinations, Rancho Maria Lucas provides a combination of extraordinary convenience, low prices, and comprehensive selection.

El Rancho Maria Lucas is a type of farm that offers a different variety of activities and facilities that are good for meetings and reunions with friends. The target market of this business are those people who enjoy spending lots of time with nature, enjoying the serenity of the environment and or having fun with friends or loved ones. People who are mostly outgoing and always in to vigorous activities such as volleyball and Tug of War are part of our target markets. For those group of friends or couples who do not want to participate with the above mentioned activities, they still have an option just like, horseback riding, biking, camping or even star gazing that would be well-matched with couples who wanted to be sweetly romantic by just laying back to the mat and watch the billions of stars from up above. They can also enjoy the swing and other natively carved structures that are being displayed in the function hall.

El Rancho Maria Lucas is a farm not far from the city of Tacloban; therefore, the accessibility of our target customers including tourists or local people to this place is convenient. Considering the prices of the food, services, and activities that we offer, we are also expecting customers who have permanent jobs or those who are willing to pay for our services, rest assured that the money that they will be paying will be all worth it. Whether the customers are looking for a full of life or just peaceful place to stay, this farm is ready to meet their needs, and give them the satisfaction they always wanted.

SWOT Analysis

<p style="text-align: center;">Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide land area • Peaceful location • Agricultural based business (good for nature lover tourists) • Multiple-activity based location • Varied customers • Only farm that offers certain activities • Soothing views 	<p style="text-align: center;">Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility • Water supply • Supply of raw materials for goods • Limited target customers • Internet connection
<p style="text-align: center;">Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LNU interns (job experience) • Partnership with other business • More markets/customers • Discoveries of new spots in the area 	<p style="text-align: center;">Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudden accidents (snake bites) • Grass fire • Wreckage of the area including the natural and agricultural resources • Mass tourism

4. Results

Based on the feasibility study conducted by the interns, results yielded that the resort can generate income for the university and provide wide array of trainings and preparation for the interns. Generally, the establishment of this business is highly competitive to the surrounding destinations that are accessible to the tourists here and abroad.

Research Findings

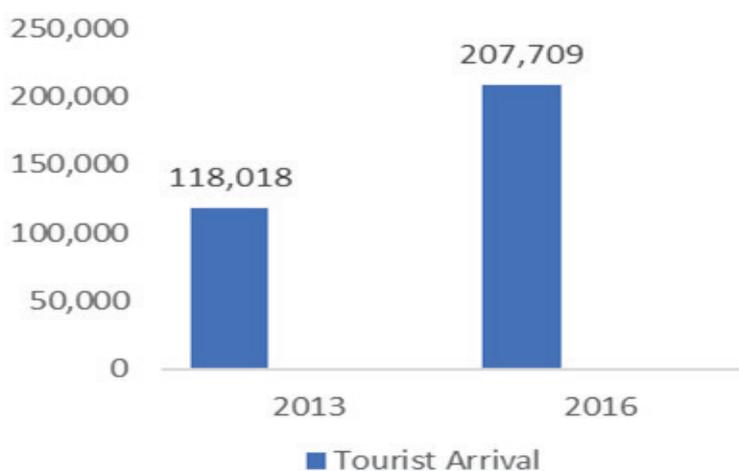


Figure 2: Shows the increase of tourist arrivals in Western Samar after the kick-off of the tourism campaign, #SparkSamar

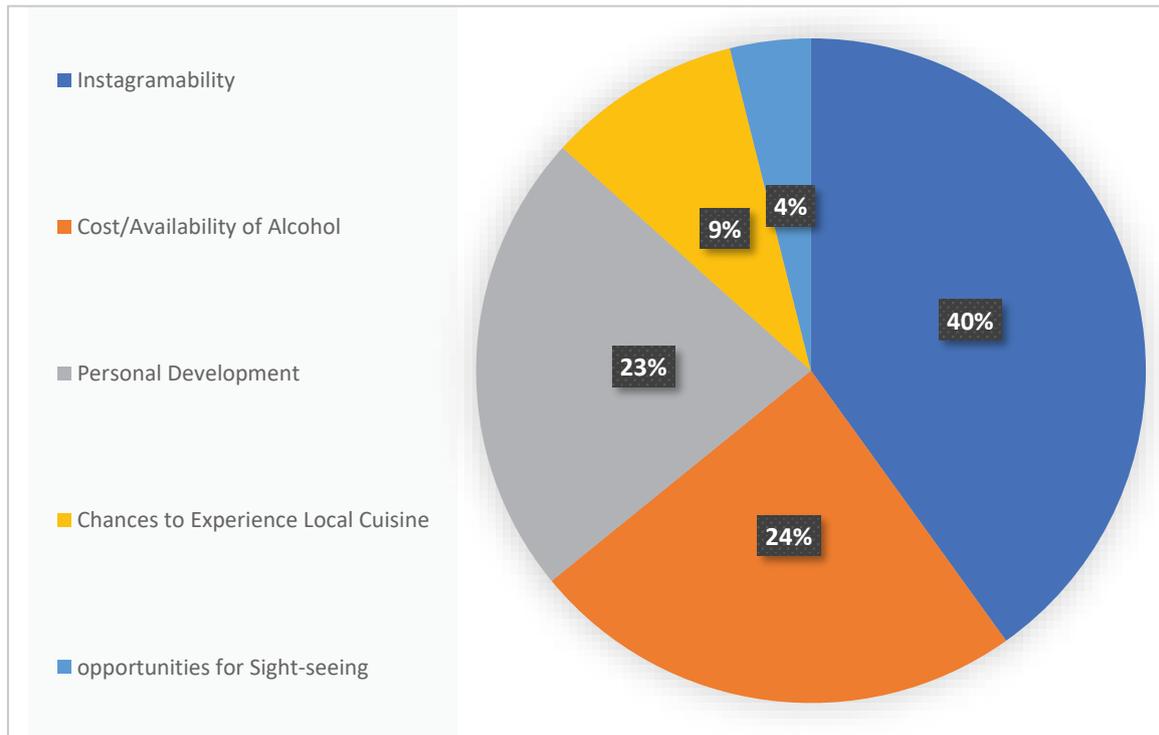


Figure 3: These are the factors influencing the decision of the millennial on choosing tourist destinations to visit according to a research by Phil Schofield¹¹

5. Conclusions

Based on the results of study, it can be deduced that the operation of the Rancho Maria Lucas is beneficial for the university and for the people in Eastern Visayas and even the whole country and the world. It can provide a venue for the on-the-job training for the Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management (BSHM) and Bachelor of Science in Tourism Management (BSTM) interns of the university. Here, students can develop their 21st century skills – collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and creativity. Relatively, it can boost tourism in the region where tourists from other places in the country and the world may enjoy the sights, foods, services, and nature in the resort at its best.

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* This paper is designed more as a proposal or marketing strategy plan to kick off the operation of the Rancho Maria Lucas: Operated by Leyte Normal University as an Income Generating Project. The presenter is not the sole author of this paper, but interns contributed to compose the whole proposal/research study.