

Recovery Status and Prospects of an Agritourism Establishment in Mangatarem, Pangasinan

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Abstract — The recovery of agritourism establishments post-pandemic is critical for the economic and cultural sustainability of rural areas. This study aimed to determine the recovery status and prospects of an agritourism establishment in Mangatarem, Pangasinan after the COVID-19 pandemic. The study utilized Collaizi's Method of Data Analysis and conducted an interview with the owner of an agritourism establishment operating for more than 5 years. The study found that the establishment was able to recover from the pandemic due to various factors such as utilizing online platforms, continuous farm operations, and government support. However, the establishment also faced challenges such as the loss of clients, cancellations due to political beliefs, insufficient funds for facility improvement, and inconsistencies in the workforce. Based on the findings, the study proposed development strategies such as joining business events, maximizing the use of the official website, establishing linkages, preparing for future droughts, outsourcing laborers, and investing in delivery transportation. The study concludes that the agritourism establishment has recovered from the pandemic but still faces challenges that need to be addressed through the proposed development strategies.

Keywords — Agritourism, Pandemic Recovery, Mangatarem, Pangasinan, Development Strategies, Challenges



I. Introduction

Global agritourism experiences have different tones as its development depends on the farm's agricultural resources and the cultural and natural landscapes of the surrounding communities (Gao, 2014). Such localized resource dependence has allowed Italy to become a staple of wine tourism, Spain to insert historic casas rurales within their farmscapes, and Peru to turn the cultura viva of indigenous communities into experiential offerings. Finally, geopolitical and economic contexts have also influenced the development of agritourism. Public initiatives in China, for instance, are supporting the transformation of entire agricultural villages into large agritourism destinations in which farmers become tourism providers of large numbers of urban dwellers seeking to escape from their daily lives (Han, 2013; People, 2010).

The complexity and diversity of agritourism offerings has encouraged farmers, scientists, and private and public development agencies to support this industry by stimulating good practices and overcoming barriers. On-the-ground evidence indicates that agritourism can deliver many economic and non-economic benefits to farmers such as increased profits, maintaining a desired lifestyle; their families in the ease of farm succession, reduction of undesired off-farm employment; and overall society like the maintenance of biological corridors, stimulation of local economies (Barbieri 2013). Yet, evidence also indicates that farmers have many personal and structural barriers reducing chances of success, take for instance, the limited business networks and gendered bias factors, respectively (Yang, 2012). The capacity of agritourism to foster sustainable development in agrarian settings by allowing visitors to experience genuine agricultural products and lifestyles has also stimulated the development of a robust scholarship line that has evolved over the years. Agritourism research has moved away from mere descriptions of the supply - farmers' motivations and goals) and demand - visitors' preferences to unveil nuances that can help to expand its positive impacts (Barbieri, 2019).

However, the CoVid19 has had a significant impact in global tourism affecting travel, tourism, hospitality, and events, which have shut down in many parts of the world (Roman, 2021). In the Philippines, agritourism lost its core – the actual farm experience, when the pandemic hit restricting travels for leisure or recreation. Agritourism sites offer activities like fruit picking, farm to table dining, hands on lectures, and live farming demonstrations. Other sites also offer amenities for overnight stay. Regardless of those activities, without tourists and visitors, agritourism operators/owners had to reutilize their amenities, like converting their swimming pools into fishponds to increase their production, while others had to shut their operations down since there are no tourists yet (Cinco, 2020).

In the province of Pangasinan, a greater focus on domestic visitors will allow the recovery of tourism revenue from a more sustainable perspective. It is also essential to diversify livelihood activities to reduce livelihood vulnerability. From an economic perspective, tourism businesses in the Local Government Unit of Mangatarem to a certain extent, fortunate that the Covid-19 crisis arose at the end of tourist season. Many new tourist attractions are rising in Mangatarem as part of

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the Government project to transform Mangatarem as an agritourism site. (https://www.pangasinan.gov.ph/gov-espino-mulls-to-transform-mangatarems-breeding-station-as-an-agri-tourism-site/).

Due to the aforementioned facts above, the researchers decided to conduct a study regarding an agritourism establishment in Mangatarem that aimed to determine its recovery status as to personal, business, and tourism aspects. In the same manner, it also sought to know the challenges encountered and as a result, it aimed to propose development strategies for the improvement of the agritourism establishment.

Literature Review

Baltazar & Espineli (2021) investigated agritourism's role in rural development in the Philippines. Using mixed methods, they assessed economic, social, and environmental impacts in select areas. Results indicated agritourism's potential for income generation, employment, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation. However, challenges included limited infrastructure, marketing skills, and government support, prompting policy and practical intervention recommendations.

Galang & Cruz (2018) assessed agritourism practices in Pangasinan, Philippines. Their descriptive research used a questionnaire survey of farm owners and operators. Findings revealed diverse activities like farm tours, educational programs, and farm-to-table dining. Challenges included limited marketing, infrastructure, and government support. The study recommends strategies to enhance agritourism's sustainability and competitiveness in Pangasinan.

Rueda & Batalla (2019) explored factors influencing farm owner participation in Philippine agritourism. Their quantitative research surveyed farm owners, revealing key motivators like economic incentives, market access, government support, and resource availability. Barriers included lack of knowledge, skills, finances, and infrastructure. The study recommends interventions to promote participation.

Catibog-Sinha & Hega (2017) discussed agritourism's potential, challenges, and strategies in the Philippines. They highlighted the country's agricultural resources, cultural heritage, and landscapes as attractions. However, limited infrastructure, marketing skills, and government support were identified as challenges. The paper proposes strategies like infrastructure development, promotion, and training to address these issues.

Valdez & Sayo (2014) examined agritourism's socio-economic impact in Benguet, Philippines. Their quantitative research surveyed stakeholders, finding positive impacts on income and employment. Agritourism also contributed to cultural preservation and environmental conservation. However, negative impacts like increased traffic and environmental degradation were noted. The study recommends strategies to maximize positive and mitigate negative impacts.



Koutsou et al. (2020) reviewed agritourism as a pathway for sustainable rural development. They explored the multifaceted relationship between agritourism and sustainability dimensions (economic, social, environmental), analyzing how agritourism can contribute to rural revitalization, diversification, and well-being. The study highlighted the need for integrated planning and stakeholder collaboration to maximize agritourism's potential for sustainable rural communities.

McGehee & Kim (2013) conducted a comprehensive review of agritourism and farm diversification. They analyzed the motivations behind farm diversification into agritourism, examining the economic, social, and environmental impacts. The study highlighted the diverse forms of agritourism activities and their varying effects on farm income, employment, and community development. It also discussed challenges and opportunities for agritourism as a diversification strategy.

Fleischer & Tchetchik (2014) provided an overview of research, development, and emerging issues in agritourism. They traced the evolution of agritourism research, identifying key themes and trends over time. The study discussed the various definitions and typologies of agritourism, its potential benefits and challenges, and emerging issues such as the role of technology and the impact of globalization. The authors emphasized the need for further research to address the knowledge gaps in the field.

Boerboom & Frenken (2017) proposed a conceptual framework for agritourism for sustainable rural development. They argued that agritourism can contribute to sustainable development by generating income, creating employment, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting environmental conservation. The study also presented an empirical analysis of agritourism initiatives in Europe, highlighting successful cases and lessons learned. The authors concluded by emphasizing the need for integrated planning and stakeholder collaboration to ensure the long-term sustainability of agritourism.

Tew et al. (2019) examined agritourism development trends and challenges in Asia. They analyzed the diverse forms of agritourism in the region, highlighting the unique characteristics and cultural contexts of each country. The study discussed the potential benefits of agritourism for rural communities, such as income generation, employment creation, and cultural preservation. However, the authors also identified challenges such as limited infrastructure, lack of marketing skills, and inadequate government support. The study concluded by recommending strategies to address these challenges and promote sustainable agritourism development in Asia.

The reviewed literature reveals a consensus on agritourism's potential to drive rural development in the Philippines and globally. Studies highlight its positive economic impacts through income generation, employment creation, and farm diversification (Koutsou et al., 2020; McGehee & Kim, 2013; Baltazar & Espineli, 2021; Galang & Cruz, 2018). The social benefits,



including cultural preservation, community engagement, and educational opportunities, are also well-documented (Fleischer & Tchetchik, 2014; Valdez & Sayo, 2014; Rueda & Batalla, 2019).

However, challenges persist. These include limited infrastructure, marketing constraints, and inconsistent government support (Catibog-Sinha & Hega, 2017; Galang & Cruz, 2018). Despite these challenges, opportunities abound. The growing demand for experiential tourism, coupled with the increasing interest in local food and sustainable practices, presents a favorable environment for agritourism (Boerboom & Frenken, 2017; Tew et al., 2019). The studies collectively emphasize the need for strategic planning, stakeholder collaboration, and innovative approaches to overcome challenges and capitalize on opportunities. This includes leveraging online platforms, establishing partnerships, and investing in infrastructure and capacity building (Dulnuan et al., in the presented study; Catibog-Sinha & Hega, 2017). By addressing these issues, agritourism can truly become a sustainable pathway for rural development, benefiting both farmers and the wider community.

II. Methodology

Collaizi's Method of Data Analysis was utilized in this study as it allowed the researchers to describe the current situation regarding the Recovery Status and Prospects of an Agri-Tourism Establishment in Mangatarem. It also tends to put subjects in specific categories through open ended questions which eliminates complexity. To gather the data needed, an interview was conducted with the study's participant who was the owner of an agritourism establishment who have been operating for more than 5 years at the time of the study.

III. Results and Discussion

Status Of Agritourism In Mangatarem, Pangasinan

Category: Personal Aspect

The researchers divided personal category into two (2) self-fulfillment and personal care towards client. The participant said they were able to feel self-fulfillment by giving assistance to those locals who were in need of jobs during the start of the lockdown. It is not unbeknownst to everyone's knowledge that the pandemic has brought massive impact to everyone. Numerous establishments have closed, and a lot of people lost their jobs, which has been very stressful to a lot of people including the local workers who lost their source of income that sustains their basic needs specially during the enhance community quarantine. That being the case on the subject of providing temporary employment to fill in the financial needs of local workers.

They also said that they see to it that they give personal care towards their clients. In this light, the emphasized on their ability to meet client expectations. This is possible through making



on-time deliveries, maintaining the quality of their products and making sure, they have enough supply for their clients. Providing clients personal care is a big factor to achieve excellent customer satisfaction

Table 1. Personal Aspect

Sub-Category	Theme	Sub-Theme
Self-Fulfillment	Assistance	Temporary employment for locals in need
Personal Care towards	Ability to Meet Client	On-time deliveries
Clients	Expectations	Maintaining quality foods
		Availability of supply

Category: Business Aspect

For the business category, the researchers divided it into four sections namely, Financial, Marketing, Management, and Technical.

Generally, the business was able to increase its profit even during the pandemic due to different variables such as the online platform that the business was utilizing which allowed them to continue selling and connect with their customers since a lot of people were still hesitant of going out during the early days of the post pandemic era which resulted in a higher preference for ordering their essentials online and having it delivered in front of their doorstep.

The business also continued their farm operations with the continuous services of old laborers to help them plant their vegetable products. Apart from that, their local government also provided them one solar water pump that aided them in their operations and maintenance.

Table 2. Business Aspect

Sub-Category	Theme	Sub-Theme
Financial	Profit	Increased profit during pandemic
Marketing	Online Platform	Online selling site
Management	Operation of Establishment	Continuous job for old laborers
Technical	Government	Government provided solar water pump

Category: Tourism Aspect

For the Tourism category, there are still rules to be followed even in the recovery stage of after the pandemic.

The establishment still follows the inter-agency task force guidelines for the reopening of agritourism farm for tourists. Depending on the IATF Guidelines, they set a capacity limit for the farm in order to comply and not overpopulate the area. Proper protective equipments are also required such as facemasks and/or face shields.

For the products and services, the establishment is an Agri-Tourism and Training Center accredited by TESDA that offers technical and vocational education training courses. Before the pandemic, students are required to have their immersion and educational trips in the farm to increase awareness and to have a knowledge about the system of agritourism farms. The business owner wants to increase awareness among people not just locals regarding agritourism.

Table 3. Tourism Aspect

Sub-Category	Theme	Sub-Theme
New Normal	Recovery of Agritourism	Allowing of visitors in limited capacity
Product and Services	Increased Awareness	Required immersions and educational
		trips among students

Challenges Encountered Of Agritourism In Mangatarem, Pangasinan

Category: Personal Aspect

The challenges encountered by the farm owners personally was the cancel culture due to the political beliefs and different political candidate choices between the owners and the clients. Some of their clients refused to get orders or disregard supporting their business because of different political views. Another is the struggle on the delivery of products outside the province due to the borderline restrictions.

Table 4. Challenges Encountered in Personal Aspect

Sub-category	Theme	Sub-Theme
Pandemic	Borderline Restrictions	Distrust of officials to essential travelers
Cancel Culture	Political Belief	Refusal of Clients

Category: Business Aspect

Just like in the previous section, the business aspect was categorized into four. Though the establishment increased its profit, there was still loss in terms of their clients, mostly restaurants, due to closure brought about by the pandemic. These restaurants were being supplied by the establishments for their products mainly vegetables.

They also faced a challenge in marketing their products due to multiple changes of the IATF guidelines, they have mentioned that there was a time where they delivered their products in Baguio and a sudden news came that there will a lockdown so they were stranded for almost 2 months there.

On the management category, the establishment struggle a bit when it comes to their work force. In addition, in spite of the job offers to the locals, some of them were not consistent in working as they were beneficiaries of the 4Ps.



For the technical category, the subject struggled in their product delivery because of the expensive freight fee especially if the orders are not in bulk.

Table 5. Challenges Encountered in Business Aspect

Sub-Category	Theme	Sub-Theme
Financial	Client Loss	Closure of Establishments
Marketing	Immediate Lockdown	Stranded
Management	Manpower	Refusal of locals to work due to 4Ps
Technical	Delivery of Product	Expensive Freight Fee

Category: Tourism Aspect

On the tourism category, one of the biggest challenges that every Agri Tourism farm has facing right now is climate change. As per the subject, climate change is the number one problem that they cannot resolve because of the nature's changing of seasons.

Compared to the past year the recent changes of season are very different, they noticed longer season of drought than rainy season. For this reason, there has been instances of insufficient water to protect their planted products.

Another challenge was the hesitation of tourists or visitors to travel due to the fear of getting infected by the virus, especially since at this time, there were still a lot of people who were doubtful of the vaccines available in the country. In addition, the reopening of the farm was not yet constant due to the changes of IATF guidelines from time to time.

Table 6. Challenges Encountered in Tourism Aspect

Sub-Category	Theme	Sub-Theme
Climate Change	Longer Period of Droughts	Lack of water supply
Pandemic	Safety	Risk brought by the virus
	Lockdown	Limited access

Proposed Development Strategies to Improve the Agritourism in Mangatarem, Pangasinan

This is to address the above-mentioned challenges encountered by the agritourism establishment in Mangatarem, Pangasinan. These strategies were derived to overcome the encountered management challenges as to personal aspect, business aspect and tourism aspect.

The proposed development strategies were derived from the SWOT Analysis and TOWS Matrix conducted by the researchers.

Table 7 shows the analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of Agritoutism in Mangatarem, Pangasinan. The strengths of the agritourism farm are stated as



follows: Increasing profit during pandemic, Continuous operation during pandemic and TESDA accredited.

The weaknesses are: Lack of laborers consistency, Client loss due to closure and Cancellation by clients.

The opportunities are: Required immersions and educational trips, Bazaars, Exhibits, Trade Fairs, Official Facebook account and Online shopping app.

The threats are: Climate change, Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program, Inter-Agency Task Force Covid19 Guidelines and Cancellation.

Table 7. SWOT Analysis of Agritourism in Mangatarem, Pangasinan

Strength	Weaknesses	Opportunity	Threat
Increasing profit during	Lack of laborers'	Required immersions	Climate Change
pandemic	consistency	and educational trips	
Continuous operation	Client loss due to	Bazaars, Exhibits, Trade	Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino
during pandemic	closure	Fairs	Program
TESDA accredited	Expensive freight fee	Official Facebook	Inter-Agency Task Force
	77	Account	CoVid19 Guidelines
Online Shopping App	Cancellation by clients		

Agritourism development strategies are one of the efforts aimed at improving the welfare of local people through sustainable agritourism activities. In addition, the development of agritourism is also expected to improve the quality of tourism itself. With the developed activities and programs, the existing potentials of Mangatarem are expected to grow so it can thrive and provide benefits to the local community. Through a strategic approach to the development of appropriate strategies and prospects, locals will have the opportunity to further develop and be the main people involved in the program implemented. Correspondingly, the understanding and awareness of the local community to be responsible for the preservation of the natural and cultural environment is also expected to increase.

Based on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified, strategies will be found through the TOWS Matrix. This is used to determine the development strategies as a result of the indicators that have been presented. This matrix was built based on the results of the SWOT analysis of agritourism development.

On the table below, each strategy was derived from a variety of indicators that supports the development of each program. These include the following:

SO Strategy. Strategies are made by using strengths to maximized opportunities. In this case, there were three strategies formed under SO. SO Strategy 1 (S1, S2, S3, O2, O3, O4) encourages the agritourism farm to join bazaars, trade fairs, and other events alike; SO Strategy 2 (S1, S2, S3, S4, O1, O2, O3) maximizes the usage of the official Facebook account to promote



products and services; SO Strategy 3 (S3, O1) establishes partnership with schools/institutions/travel agencies for educational/tourist visits.

ST Strategy. This is using strengths to minimize threats. ST Strategy (S1, T1) suggests acquiring new set of solar water pump for additional use during the dry season.

WO Strategy. In this strategy, weaknesses are minimized by taking advantages of the opportunities. WO Strategy 1 (W2, W3, W4, O2) encourages the agritourism farm to join events like expositions, exhibitions and the like.

WT Strategy. This strategy minimizes weaknesses and avoids threats. WT Strategy 1 (WT1, WT2, WT3) emphasizes the importance to outsource laborers from other towns/provinces; WT Strategy 2 (W3, O3) suggests to invest in own mode of delivery transportation; WT Strategy 3 (W3, T3) prepares all necessary documents needed in case the IATF changes guidelines.

Table 8. TOWS Matrix of Agritourism in Mangatarem, Pangasinan

External Factors	Opportunities	Threats
	O1.Required immersions and educational trips O2.Bazaars, Exhibits, Trade Fairs O3.Official Facebook Account O4.Online Shopping App	T1. Climate Change T2. Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program T3. Inter-Agency Task Force CoVid19 Guidelines T4. Cancellation by clients
Internal Factors Strengths	SO	ST
Strengths S1. Increasing profit during pandemic S2. Continuous operation during pandemic S3. TESDA accredited	Join bazaars, trade fairs, and other events alike (S1, S2, S3, S4, O2, O3) Maximize the usage of the official Facebook account to promote products and services (S1, S2, S3, S4, O1, O2, O3) Establish partnership with schools/institutions/travel agencies for educational/tourist visits (S3, O1)	Acquiring new set of solar water pump for additional use during the dry season. (S1, T1)
Weaknesses	WO	WT
W1. Lack of laborers' consistency W2. Client loss due to closure W3. Expensive freight fee	Join events like expositions, exhibitions, and the like. (W2, W3, W4, O2)	Outsource laborers from other towns/provinces. (W1, T2) Invest in own mode of delivery transportation (W3, O3) Preparing all necessary documents needed in case IAFTF changes guidelines (W3, T3)



Proposed Development Strategies For Agritourism Farm

Areas Of Improvement	Strategies	Activities
Increase profit,	Join business events	Join trade fairs, bazaars, expositions, and events.
promote products and services, and acquire	Maximize usage of the official website	Keep the official page active and updated for client inquiries.
new clients/market		Utilize official Facebook account to promote products and services.
	Establish linkages	Partner with institutions/travel agencies for required educational/tourist visits.
Climate Change	Prepare in advance for future drought	Acquire new set of solar water pump for additional usage during the dry season.
Lack of Laborers' Consistency	Outsource laborers	Employ workers from other towns/provinces
Expensive Freight Fee	Use own delivery transportation	Invest in motorcycle/tricycle as a means of delivery for client orders.

IV. Conclusion

Based from the results of the study, the following can be concluded: (1) The subject felt personal fulfilment during the pandemic as he/she was able to give assistance to their fellow locals even in a minimal way. Business wise, their profit increased due to home deliveries made by people through their developed website wherein people can make orders, and old workers were still able to continue with their jobs. As to the tourism aspect, since the latest update of the IATF guidelines, they were able to gradually reopen their farm to tourists. (2) Personally, one of the challenges encountered by the subject is the loss of clients due to the closure of establishments where they supply their products. Another is the cancellation of clients because of having different political beliefs. As to business, they admitted that they have insufficient funds to build and improve the existing facilities in order to accommodate the visitors and tourists and provide better services. The proposed development strategies should be implemented to achieve the target prospects for the improvement of the agritourism farm. The agritourism farm should coordinate with the local government unit for better formulation and implementation of agritourism initiatives, benefiting not just the subject farm but also other agritourism farms in the municipality. Additionally, further research similar to this study should be conducted to continually assess and enhance the recovery and development of agritourism in the region.

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