Enhancing Community Based Tourism Programs towards Sustainable Tourism Development:
The Case of Gawad Kalinga Enchanted Farm

Zandee Boy H Briones,
Chair, Department of International Hospitality Management
College of Arts and Sciences – Manila, Philippines.

Roanne Marie S. Yusay,
Faculty, Department of International Hospitality Management
College of Arts and Sciences – Manila, Philippines.

Micheal Lawrence C. Ulep,
Faculty, College of Tourism and Hotel Management
Far Eastern University, Manila, Philippines.

Shariff Eboy,
Program Head, School of Tourism
Philippine Womens University, Manila, Philippines.

Abstract

The Philippine archipelago is naturally blessed with a land area and a tropical climate that when managed and used productively accounts to a huge potential as tourism assets. Yet, majority of which remains unexploited and isolated through a barrier of disconnectedness from one another. This blocks the sight of a prospective tourism development that could result to the benefits of the locals that in turn will progress to the word sustainability. In line with this concept, community based tourism is being promoted as an engine towards sustainable tourism development in which the local community is generated with improved livelihood while addressing the community’s environmental and social well-being.

Against this background, this study seeks to examine the potential and viability of the community based tourism programs of GK Enchanted Farm towards sustainable tourism development. For this purpose, this study uses quantitative methods to provide factual information, and qualitative methods for the collection and analysis of qualitative data with the aim of looking into the why’s behind the facts. This study identifies the current situation of the CBT projects of GK Enchanted Farm and provides suggestions for further enhancement towards sustainable tourism development.

Key Words: Community Based Tourism, Sustainable Tourism Development, CBT
1. Background of the Study

In the official website of Gawad Kalinga, Gawad Kalinga Community Development Foundation Inc. or simply known as Gawad Kalinga, is a Philippine-based movement whose main objective is to terminate poverty for five million families by primarily reinstating the dignity of the unfortunate. GK Enchanted Farm is Gawad Kalinga’s platform to cultivate social entrepreneurs, support our local farmers, and generate wealth in the countryside. GK Enchanted Farm is envisioned to be three things: A Farm Village University, A Silicon Valley for Social Entrepreneurship, and, A Disneyland for Social Tourism.

GK Enchanted Farm is envisioned to be a fusion of three different concepts. First, “A Farm Village University.” Our country is blessed with a land are and tropical climate perfect for growing our own crops, yet we import 70% of our chocolate, milk, and cheese demand, among others. Using our lands in a productive way and innovating structures to the advancement of technologies to make farming an encouraging endeavor are effective tools to fight Philippine poverty.

The village aspect of the Enchanted Farm stand on the grounds that it is our disjointedness from our land, from the deprived, and even from each other through artificial barriers such as social status, ‘public and private’ categorizations, that causes the continuity of poverty in our country. GK Enchanted Farm is a physical space where we can all gather as one and plant seeds of goodness side by side with the very poor whom we wish of helping.

Our existing educational system can do better imparting appreciation for the agricultural industry and love for the poor. Combining these two together with the daring passion of an entrepreneur, there opens the door of unending possibilities for our country.

Second, ‘A Silicon Valley for Social Entrepreneurship.’ Today, what Filipino entrepreneurs need, especially young and sprouting ones, is a setting that will help in the realization of their ideas and put them into the quest to aspire for greatest social impact. This means keeping in touch with the Community and access acquisition to good counseling, value-adding networking and basic facilities and resources – what the GK Enchanted Farm offers and even more.

Third, “A Disneyland for Social Tourism.” The GK Enchanted Farm, true to its name, intends to enchant its visitors not only from the Philippines but also from across the globe through lived stories not only of successful enterprise but also of genuine acts of caring and sharing. It is gearing up to house pioneer centers and social enterprises for sustainable development, farm high value crops and gather a robust selection of plant species. (GK, 2016; Doyo, 2011)

This study therefore aims to assess GK Enchanted Farm as a community based tourism, based upon the aforementioned category of its visions. Good practices and procedure will be measured, while issues and challenges will be examined. And then finally, suggest strategies.
and comments on how to further enhance the outcome of CBT towards a sustainable tourism development.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Conceptual Literature

The rapid growth of the global tourism industry today has become evident as the involvement of hundreds of millions of people upsurge each year in both international and domestic travel. For decades, tourism has become a significant factor that contributes to escalated economic activity that by the year 2012, statistics had hit more than a billion international travelers for the first time (WTO, 2014).

According to the data listed by the Philippines Statistics Authority, approximately 26 million out of 100 million or 26.3% of Filipinos live under the umbrella of poverty. (Magtulis & Regalado, 2016) Almost half of the Philippine’s populace could be found in the rural areas. And among them are the indigenous people, landless farmers, fishermen, youths, and women who are living the minimum quality of life. Most of whom depends on agricultural livelihood as their main source of income. But given the rich natural characteristics of these rural communities, are the potential of sustaining economic growth through tourism development which in turn would open job opportunities, and encourage non-agricultural enterprises in these areas. (Hechanova et al, 2014)

In the past years, Community-Based Tourism has been extensively promoted in literatures as essential from an ethical, equitable, and developmental perspective. (Bricker et al, 2013; APEC, 2010; Sinha, 2014) It is based on the idealism that as ‘first liners’ who will directly receive the impacts of tourism, community must be empowered and encouraged to participate in any tourism-related projects. (Santos & Manzano, 2014) Through community-based tourism, the community would be given their right to share the benefits from tourism, rather than just be left with no choice to tolerate its detriments. (Gabito, 2013) Moreover, it will result to enhanced tourist experience and social development. (Lagman, 2008) Community-based tourism also encourages cultural conservation and natural preservation. However, Community-Based Tourism is widely accepted in the definition that it is a form of Responsible tourism within a cooperative community which requires the participation of community, government, and the private sector where the community’s interest is of utmost importance. (Santos & Manzano, 2014; Bricker et al, 2013; Lucchetti & Font, 2013; Vibal, 2010; Guzman, 2012)

Community-Based Tourism is a type of sustainable tourism as it is considered to be a power engine for local economic development and poverty alleviation. (Guzman, 2012; Anasco & Lizada, 2014; Bricker et al, 2013) It promotes strategic development in a community setting where it provides livelihood while at the same time manages natural and cultural attraction in a sustainable manner. (PCAARRD, 2013)
Community-based tourism is defined as a form of Responsible Tourism within a cooperative community. It basically requires the participation of the three groups: community, government, and the private sector. (Santos & Manzano, 2014; Bricker et al, 2013; Lucchetti & Font, 2013)

The community is the key player and focus of Community-based Tourism as they may play as the stockpile of labor force. Also, it must be noted that the community must, in all aspect, be consulted first and agree on any tourism-related project as they will be the first liners that will directly receive the impacts of such. (Vibal, 2010; Guzman, 2012; Santos & Manzano, 2014)

In the book of Santos and Manzano (2014), government also plays an important role in community-based tourism because without them, there wouldn’t be any bridge between the community and private sectors. They are also concerned on the provision of local and national laws that aids the activities of the projects within the community. Private sector on the other note, manages the inflow of investments and capacity building meant for the community.

According to the Tourism Act of 2009, “The state shall develop responsible tourism as a strategy for environmentally sound and community participatory programs, enlisting the participation of local communities, including indigenous people, in conserving bio-physical and cultural diversity, promoting environmental understanding and education, providing assistance in the determination of ecotourism sites and ensuring full enjoyment of the benefits of tourism by the concerned communities.”

According to the Community Development Exchange (2008), “an empowered community is one which is confident, inclusive, organized, co-opertive, and influential.” These are the five dimensions on taking a community empowerment approach which is about making the most out of the opportunities and creating long-term benefits for the individuals involved, for the community working hand-in-hand, for the organization, and also for the society.

In the book of Vibal (2010), continuous revenue inflow to the community by the tourism industry would lead to improvement and development of edifices and services. Good revenue would stir the government into upgrading and investing on the community through road enhancement, technological modernization, project developments, facility renovation, and global advancement that would then account to the attraction of more visitors and provision of better services. This will open the doors to new businesses, thus employment growth. On the other note, mismanagement of tourism would lead to detriments. In which case the cost would be heavier than the profit, losing the balance in the community. One of the issues that concerns the local government is the increased risk of security on properties and health caused by the inward and outward movement of tourist from time to time. Having tourists also creates competition for space and resources. Cultural authenticity might also be put in danger. And lastly, environment might be subject to damage.
According to Cruz (2013), managing sustainable tourism in a responsible manner has become the third world issue. Mismanaging sustainable tourism might then lead to unwanted outcomes at the destination’s expense. This is because an unsustainable tourism causes massive detrimental impacts to the very resources on which tourism depends, to the societal and cultural authenticity of the host community, and to the country’s economy. And although this might be fine on the tourists’ point of view, this is unacceptable for the host community. Sustainable tourism works in a way that would pave way to everyone’s satisfaction.

According to Rivera (2015), natural disasters such as typhoons and earthquakes result to destructive aftermaths that pose great danger in the tourism industry of the destination that is affected by it. Natural resources are wiped haphazardly, livelihoods are affected, and people lose mobility and confidence to start over. The need of solution to these disasters paved way to community-based tourism and tourism recovery that was addressed during a high level executive training program of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) held in the Visayas Region at Bohol. The focus of the participants in the UNWTO program is on community-based tourism and tourism recovery as a strategy to unveil the potential of tourism industry in the face of issues such as climate change, environmental and local issues.

According to an article by Asia Development Bank (2015), tourism is a vital key player in the economy of many developing countries in the Pacific and it is set that it would be the same for the anticipatable future. Plans on tourism development shall address the concerns on the impacts: socio-cultural, economic, and environmental. The report says, “The ability of small island environments to scale up tourism while maintaining the visitor experience and addressing the needs and concerns of local communities must be paramount in planning and decision making.”

A survey conducted by World Travel and Tourism Council development results to a fact that most, if not all private sectors are operating in ways that are considered to be sustainable. They have been able to gradually manage successful conservation measures and profitability hand-in-hand. A charter for sustainable tourism was which asserts that: (a) tourism must be sustainable. (b) the realization of sustainability is dependent in continued planning and cooperation of all parties involved. (c) tourism development must aim to improve the quality of human life and subsidize to local economic development.; and (d) the benefits and costs of tourism development must be reasonably distributed. (Sinha, 2014)

According to Goeldner and Ritchie (2012), indispensable threats or risks is accompanied by too much reliance on tourism. In small countries and islands, they have tendency to grow tourism but it is accompanied by pressures of inflation. Although this brings higher profit margins in such sectors and ignites inward investments yet adverse consequences in international competitiveness, future investment and other factors could have various
undesirable impacts such as social and cultural impacts where rapid development of tourism disintegrates society in its usual way of living, and environmental impacts.

According to a magazine article by O’Neill et al (2008), community-based tourism is where local communities welcome tourists and travelers to experience the community’s way of life. The benefits extend to the travelers and the community itself. Travelers get to explore the social, environmental, and economic schemes of the community wherein they can gain knowledge and experience. Whereas, the community will be more developed (not in a destructive way), less marginalized, and earn profit throughout the process that can economically sustain the community.

In the book of Bricker et al (2013), escalated human population creates a gap between the limited resources and large number of consumer. Thus, the need for employment. Environmental issues mainly caused by abusive activities results in the growing dependence on the market economy. The answer to this is the solution of alternative livelihood opportunities that are sustainable which often accounts to the promotion of high-end ecotourism.

According to a high-level forum of Tourism Authority of Thailand (2016), one of the top priorities of the national government is the promotion of “Stability, Prosperity, and Sustainability.” New travel and tourism trends emerges aligned with the modifications in lifestyles and economic, social, and political structures. This new travel trend is viewed universally for simplicity appreciation, detail consciousness, sub cultures, minimalism, and local values. Community-based tourism is a combination of tourists’ needs, wants, and expectations, and environmental, economical, and social sustainability.(TAT, 2016)

According to the study of Gabito (2013), the key issues to be addressed in developing CBT projects are: Lack of appropriate skills and knowledge by the local communities on tourism management; Limited ownership, access, and management of land resources for tourism; remoteness of natural and cultural resources for CBT projects; Lack of marketing capacity; Seasonal and limited opportunities for employment; limited financial capital; vulnerability to local politics. While the key components of CBT projects are: Attractiveness of tourism assets; support of a reliable NGO or government agency that has knowledge of the industry policies and laws to aid CBT development; access to tourism resources; access to financial capital; creation of connections to wider community; commercial viability; non-partisan tourism support structure; women and your people empowerment.

In the research of Anasco and Lizada (2014), tourism industry has been established to be an effective tool for a secured and sustained economic development in the Philippines. This industry effectively enriches the country economically which eventually results to improved
quality of lives of many Filipinos. Thus, listed by Philippine government on the list of its top priorities.

2.2 Research Literature

In the study of Lagman (2008), tourism industries are the key generators of opportunities relating to entrepreneurship and business industries which extend to other industries such as construction industry, farm and agricultural industry, handicraft industry. This is because the tourism industries rely on these other industries on making its services possible for the tourist demands. Consequently, the tourism industry also encourages foreign investors with expansion and improvement of infrastructures, transportation systems, and building establishments like hotels and resorts.

In the thesis of Abo (2012), given the statistical evidence of increasing tourism arrivals in the Philippines in the past ten years, Bulacan failed to take part on the ecotourism drive of the government on acknowledging it as one of the tourist attractions in the Philippines. The municipality has failed to develop into a ‘nationally-known’ town given its potential natural resources and cultural offerings in contrast to other leading destinations like Vigan and Calamba. The gap to be filled towards a positive outcome for Bulacan’s tourism advancement accounts to the consideration for tourist satisfaction. Because tourist satisfaction is the paramount ladder to customer loyalty.

In the research of Okasaki (2008), community-based approach has played a very critical role in tourism management, leaving a big impact on the side of the local community and the tourism itself. In the long run, certain disputes has arose trying to give a justifiable definition, discussing how it can be both beneficial and not. Not only is it a channel for disseminating resources but as well as a way for the community members to move towards self-development hence making it long-term and effective. Moreover, it is a way for the locals to manage, thereby making them feel empowered because they, themselves are involved in decision-making.

In the study of Guzman (2012), it is emphasized by the World Tourism Organization that sustainable tourism development could be proven to be the door to poverty eradication when applied in certain geographical areas as it could be a beneficial tool for economic development. World Tourism Organizations Sustainable Tourism-Eliminating Poverty (ST-EP) Program is an initiative that supports Community-Based Tourism. With these initiatives, a horizon of possibilities ranging from business establishments, service industry, job opportunities, to empowering women and young has been opened to the community. Nevertheless, this could never be regarded as a substitution for primary sector undertakings but would always be complementary because CBT greatly depends on a lot of factors such as political, cultural, social, economic, and environmental.
In the study of Nawar (2014), lack of National policies and concrete plans demands for an adaptation of the principle of sustainability for tourism activity. Lack of community involvement in the industry and the lack of model practices and advantages in tourism management are major problems. Moreover, lack of effective promotional resources only adds to the struggles.

Sustainable approach to tourism has been acknowledged by the World Tourism Organization as one that provides the needs of tourist and host population while protecting and enhancing tomorrow’s opportunities. The main objective of sustainable development is positive cultural-economic innovation. This technically refers to the minimization of detrimental economic impact while sustaining the local populace. If properly designed and implemented, tourism industry will be the platform to economic empowerment of the host-community by improving quality of life and challenging the way they view things. (Rahman & Yeasmin, 2014)

Finally, considering that poverty in the Philippines, the potential of sustainable tourism development through community-based tourism should be benchmarked especially its potential as a strategy for livelihood creation and poverty alleviation. (Anasco&Lizada, 2014)

3. Conceptual / Theoretical Framework

Tourism is being identified by almost all of the developing countries as an effective tool in the endeavors of poverty reduction. However, some approaches to tourism development do not directly benefit the local residents.

As a foundation for this study of GK Enchanted Farm as a community-based tourism, the researchers find it necessary to cite and discuss the following concepts.

A Bottom-Up Approach. Like most businesses, tourism-related enterprises in the country are owned and managed by private businessmen and investors. A “top to bottom approach” to business operations where the interest and decision of the owners or investors are listed as the top priority, is employed in some well-known tourist destinations. In this operation, the local residents are considered not to be more than mere employees as a source of manpower, while the business owners and investors is in full-control in the decision-making process. Conventionally, most part of the revenues of these businesses go to the owners or investors who could afford huge investments and capital-funding for infrastructure and other components, while basic salaries are given to the local people as their earnings from the services they provide. (Canalog et al, 2012)

Top to Bottom Approach in Conventional Enterprises

On the contrary, Community-based tourism enterprises employ “the bottom-up approach” to their operations where the local residents and their participation are listed as the top priority. Local residents are therefore regarded as the main beneficiaries of the tourism-related
enterprises. In the light of this concept, direct benefits in every tourism-initiatives to the local residents are ensured. (Gabito, 2013)

Inward-Oriented Development Model. In some tourist destinations, employment opportunities for local residents are limited. This is for the reason that the owners or investors who are not a local resident, choose to hire employees originating from their home provinces or towns. Due to this, the revenue is often allocated and invested somewhere else which results to tourism leakage. Instead of an outward-directed approach where the focus is on the attraction of new enterprises to the community, community-based tourism initiatives are more inward-directed. In an inward-directed approach, the focus is on helping the consumers become producers, users become providers, and employees become owners of the enterprise. This approach is therefore supported by the ideologies of economic self-reliance, ecological sustainability, community control, meeting individual needs and building a community culture. In the Community-Based Tourism Model, the locally generated revenue are also shared locally as local residents are able to take their equitable share on the enterprises while being able to conserve and improve their local diversity. (Kuivalainen, 2013)

Growth of CBT Perspectives. The necessity of a more “resident-responsive” tourism, a more democratic involvement in tourism decision-making process by local residents of a destination community paved way to the growth of community-based tourism perspective. Community based tourism is viewed to be an alternative to earlier approaches to tourism development which are regarded to be ‘failings’ to the community at large, evidently when part of the community are lying low under the umbrella of poverty. Moreover, community-based tourism is often related to “pro-poor tourism agenda.” Its main objective is to utilize tourism as a means of employment creation and poverty alleviation. (Moscardo, 2008)

Alternative Development. Alternative development promotes a break from the usual policies on economic growth. It suggests a wider range of resource-based, ‘bottom-up, approach addressing human and environmental issues. The fundamental principle of alternative developments is, therefore, the empowerment of the community to involve and share benefits from their own community. (Breugel, 2013)

The conceptual framework below represents how GK Enchanted Farm, as Community-based Tourism can lead to Sustainable Tourism Development based on the theoretical framework mentioned above. (See Figure 4.)

Community-Based Tourism Conceptual Framework
Figure 5 describes the conceptual framework of the study wherein the input is consisting of the following: Demographic profile of the respondents; the respondents’ perception of GK Enchanted Farm as a Farm Village University, a Silicon Valley for Social Entrepreneurship, and a Disneyland for Social Tourism.

On the other side, the process being used is through questionnaire, descriptive survey, and statistical treatment such as percentage, mean and tallied. The output is then the documentation of good practices and challenges in GK Enchanted Farm as a Community-Based Tourism towards sustainable tourism development.

The researcher wants to find out the good practices and challenges in GK Enchanted Farm as a Community-Based Tourism towards sustainable tourism development; a basis for the formulation of recommendations of strategies to enhance employment and livelihood outcomes of community-based tourism towards sustainable tourism development.

4. Statement of the Problem

This study intends to assess GK Enchanted Farm’s good practices, and issues/challenges as an employment generation strategy to sustainable tourism development.

Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following sub problems:

1) What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
   1.1 Age
   1.2 Sex
   1.3 Civil Status
   1.4 Annual Income
   1.5 Occupation

2) How do the respondents perceive GK Enchanted Farm in terms of:
   2.1 Cultural Minority Recognition
   2.2 Gender Equality
   2.3 Resource and Facilities Sharing
   2.4 Capacity Building
   2.5 Environment Protection
   2.6 Employment Generation
2.7 Profit Distribution

3.) How do the perceptions of the respondents compare in terms of its profile.

4.) What recommendations can the researcher make to enhance the outcomes of GK Enchanted Farm as a community-based tourism towards sustainable tourism development?

5. Assumptions

The study was anchored on the assumption that the respondents were accurate and objective in expressing their perceptions on the good practices and processes, and issues and challenges of GK Enchanted Farm as a Community-based tourism towards sustainable tourism development.

6. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will redound to the benefit of the:

For the local community. The study will be beneficial to the community of GK Enchanted farm in increasing the awareness on the potential of community-based tourism towards sustainable tourism development.

For the local government of Bulacan. The study will be beneficial to the Government as they will be able to gain further knowledge on the potential of a community-based tourism towards sustainable tourism development. Thus, this study could be a basis for the government to support and provide funding for these types of initiatives.

For Tourism Related Sectors. The study will benefit the tourism related sectors of investors as they will be aware on their role on the success of a community-based tourism towards sustainable tourism development which would lead to the proper management of the inflow of investments and capacity building meant for the community.

For Tourism Development Teams. This study will benefit tourism development teams as they will learn the assessed practices and processes as well as the issues and challenges of a community-based tourism. And from it, build a firmer strategy on how to integrate these insights into the community in the most positive way through sustainable tourism development.

For Tourists. For the tourists, so that they will be well-aware of their role in the industry as to what they contribute to the community of the destinations they visit, and how they should act appropriately as to the aim of sustainable tourism development.

For Students. Through this study, the student will gain further knowledge about the practices and processes as well as the issues and challenges of a community-based tourism in the case of GK Enchanted Farm.

For future researchers. The study will benefit the researcher to uncover the viability of a community-based tourism towards a sustainable tourism development. And furtherly, have a better understanding on a matter that former researchers were yet to explore.
7. Scope and Limitations

The study focused on the assessment of good practices and processes, and issues and challenges of GK Enchanted Farm as a Community-based tourism towards sustainable tourism development. At the same time, it included the recommendation of possible strategies to enhance the outcomes of GK Enchanted Farm towards sustainable tourism development.

The researcher delimited the study only to 60 respondents due to lack of time. The study is focused on the perceptions of the local residents in the community living with tourism rather than tourist experience and perceptions. The 60 respondents, particularly would be selected through non-random sampling on which they would be categorized based on the three envisions of GK Enchanted Farm: A Farm Village University, A Silicon Valley for Social Entrepreneurship, and, A Disneyland for Social Tourism. And would be administered with a researcher-made questionnaire, descriptive survey, and statistical treatment.

The supplementation of data was employed by means of an interview, observation and survey. The questionnaire was validated by a professor and was finalized by her adviser before administering it. Furthermore, the survey questionnaire was formulated with the data accumulated through articles, books, journals, thesis, dissertation, magazines, interview and observation.

8. Timeline of Proposal

- December 1-30: distribution of questionnaires
- January 1-15: interpretation and analysis of data
- January 30: finalizing the texts

References

A. Local and Foreign Literatures (Books, Ebooks, News, Magazines)

B. Local and Foreign Studies (Thesis, Dissertations, Referred Journals)
   - Bagadion, B., and Juan, N., Transforming Protected Areas into Effective and Sustainable Ecotourism Destinations, 2013, p. 2, 11.


