

A Greener Claver: A Qualitative Study of Green Marketing Strategies for Sustainable Tourism Industry

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Abstract: Sustainable tourism development has gained global momentum, contributing to economic growth and cultural exchange. However, this growth has led to environmental degradation and socio-cultural impacts, necessitating the adoption of sustainable practices. While extensive research acknowledges the importance of sustainability in the tourism industry, a gap remains in understanding the practical implementation of green marketing strategies in specific contexts. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the application of green marketing strategies in Claver's sustainable tourism industry in the Philippines—a region known for its mining activities. The central objective of this research is to comprehend and evaluate the effectiveness of green marketing tactics in promoting sustainable tourism practices within Claver's unique context. Employing a combination of focus group discussions (FGDs) and semi-structured interviews, the study delves into key stakeholders' perspectives, challenges, opportunities, and strategies for incorporating green marketing principles into Claver's tourism sector. The study's findings illuminate a diverse landscape of stakeholders, each possessing distinct expertise, experiences, and viewpoints. These stakeholders include local businesses, community members, government officials, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and proponents of community-based tourism. The analysis unveils Claver's operational and potential tourist attractions, underscoring the region's untapped potential for ecotourism and cultural immersion. Furthermore, a SWOC analysis reveals the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges inherent in Claver's tourism sector, providing valuable insights for formulating targeted green marketing strategies. The identified green marketing strategies encompass a spectrum of initiatives aimed at capitalizing on strengths, addressing weaknesses, leveraging opportunities, and tackling challenges. These strategies underscore the enhancement of Claver's image by showcasing its scenic beauty, fostering collaborations with local businesses, and promoting guided tourism experiences. Additionally, the study emphasizes the significance of addressing obstacles such as negative perceptions stemming from mining activities, waste management issues, and remote accessibility challenges. This research highlights the potential of green marketing strategies to advance sustainable tourism practices in Claver. By aligning tourism development with ecological and community well-being, green marketing holds the potential to instigate positive change. The study's insights contribute to the discourse on sustainable tourism by offering context-specific strategies to bolster environmental preservation, economic advancement, and local community empowerment. Ultimately, the findings underscore the pivotal role of strategic green marketing in shaping a more sustainable and ecologically-conscious future for Claver's tourism industry.

Keywords: Sustainable Tourism, Green Marketing, SWOC Analysis, Municipality of Claver

I. INTRODUCTION

The global tourism industry is a major contributor to economic development, witnessing substantial growth in recent years. In 2022, international tourist numbers exceeded 900 million, generating 1.2 to 1.3 trillion USD, a significant increase from 2019 (UNWTO, 2023). The Philippines also experienced post-pandemic growth, with its tourism industry generating PHP 208.96 billion (USD 3.68 billion) in 2021 (Department of Tourism, 2023; Bangko et al., 2022). However, environmental concerns persist, including land conversion and waste disposal (Aquino & Porter,

2022). This has led to the introduction of green marketing strategies to address these environmental challenges (Mercade Mele et al., 2019). Green marketing strategies have evolved to promote sustainable practices, including waste reduction and energy efficiency (Sarkar, 2012). Research shows that green marketing influences consumer behavior, as environmentally conscious consumers prefer and are willing to pay more for eco-friendly products (Shabir et al., 2020; Smith & Brower, 2012; Galati et al., 2019; Pretner et al., 2021). However, a gap exists between positive attitudes and actual purchases due to factors like lack of information and perceived costs. Bridging this gap requires transparent information and education (Kanner, 2021; Szabo & Webster, 2021).

Green marketing within the tourism sector positively affects consumer behavior, encouraging eco-friendly choices (Chin et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2021; Hojnik et al., 2021; Berger, 2019). To address the "green gap," accurate information about eco-friendly tourism's environmental impact and unique experiences should be emphasized (Li et al., 2021; Elhaffar et al., 2020). Successful green marketing offers competitive advantages and an improved corporate image (Iweama, 2014). Challenges in the tourism industry include communicating sustainable benefits, addressing skepticism, and dealing with perceived costs (Hameed et al., 2021). Transparency and highlighting added value are essential strategies (Chamidah et al., 2020; Port et al., 2021; Font et al., 2021). Drone technology aids tourism planning by efficiently identifying and evaluating attractions (UNWTO, 2023). SWOC analysis assesses strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges, aiding strategy development (Pongener & Sharma, 2018; Gyawali et al., 2022).

In the Philippines, tourism figures decreased due to the pandemic, with Claver Municipality welcoming 6,456 tourists in 2022. Despite being known for mining, Claver's unique geography makes it suitable for tourism (Aquino & Porter, 2022). However, concerns about negative impacts and challenges like waste management and safety must be addressed (Aquino & Porter, 2022).

The researcher, holding a position in LGU Claver, possesses the necessary data and resources to address tourism challenges. Privacy of confidential information is a priority (Aquino & Porter, 2022). Green marketing aligns with sustainability goals, promoting long-term survival, environmental improvement, and economic growth (Aquino & Porter, 2022)

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Green Marketing Concept and Evolution

Green marketing, also known as sustainable or environmental marketing, has significantly developed due to heightened environmental awareness (Dangelico & Vocalleri, 2017). The evolution of green marketing has transitioned from reactive responses to proactive strategies for sustainable development, marked by the adoption of innovative methods by businesses (Khare, 2015; Mathur, 2021). This concept has expanded beyond product promotion, embracing a broader business philosophy encompassing waste reduction, energy efficiency, and holistic product lifecycle considerations (Charter & Polonsky, 2017). Consumer attitudes toward green products have shifted, offering both opportunities and challenges for businesses (Punitha et al., 2016). Studies indicate that green marketing significantly influences consumer behavior, with environmental awareness and perceived effectiveness impacting preferences for green products (Rana & Paul, 2017; De Medeiros et al., 2016). However, a "green gap" exists, highlighting the discrepancy between positive perceptions and purchasing behavior for green products. This gap is attributed to a lack of knowledge, cost concerns, and skepticism (Dhir et al., 2021; Peyer et al., 2017). To address this gap, strategies such as transparent information provision and environmental education are being employed (Seegebarth et al., 2016; Yazdanpanah & Forouzani, 2015). Green marketing initiatives have positively affected tourist behavior, increasing preference for eco-friendly accommodations (Nekmahmud, 2020; Agag et al., 2020). However, the tourism industry also experiences the "green gap" phenomenon, where positive attitudes toward sustainable products do not always translate into action, often due to perceived trade-offs (Baker et al., 2014; Hyun et al., 2021). To mitigate this phenomenon, strategies have been proposed to bridge the gap, including providing reliable information about environmental impacts and promoting additional benefits associated with eco-friendly tourism options (Tsai et al., 2019; Paparoidamis & Tran, 2019).

2.2 Challenges and Opportunities in Green Marketing

Green marketing presents businesses with both challenges and opportunities. While companies targeting environmentally conscious consumers encounter obstacles like consumer distrust and perceived expenses, there are opportunities to gain a competitive edge and enhance their image (Charter & Polonsky, 2017). This complex interplay between challenges and benefits defines green marketing. Examining the literature on these aspects sheds light on the current state and future of green marketing. Numerous studies have explored challenges faced by businesses in implementing green marketing strategies. Consumer perception of high costs associated with green products is a major hurdle (Arli et al., 2018). Consumer skepticism and the need for authenticity in green claims create a trust gap that impedes green marketing efforts (Chen et al., 2020). Establishing standardized regulations and guidelines for green marketing also emerges as a significant challenge (Leonidou et al., 2016).

In the realm of tourism, studies over the past decade have identified limitations of green marketing. Consumers need to understand the environmental benefits of sustainable tourism (Kim & Han, 2010). "Greenwashing," where tourism businesses make false environmental claims, leads to customer distrust (Nguyen et al., 2019). Consumer perceptions of green tourism as expensive and less enjoyable pose marketing challenges (Font & McCabe, 2017). The absence of uniform certifications for sustainable tourism complicates customer identification of genuine sustainable options (Tepelus & Cordoba, 2005). Despite challenges, green marketing offers substantial opportunities. It can give companies a competitive advantage (Gadenne et al., 2014). Enhancing brand image, customer loyalty, and environmental appeal are potential outcomes of green marketing (Chan et al., 2019). Green marketing can encourage sustainable consumer behavior, aligning with corporate social responsibility goals (He & Harris, 2020). Tourism enterprises have multiple green marketing opportunities. Green marketing can enhance reputation and customer loyalty in tourism (Martinez, 2015). Eco-conscious consumers seeking sustainable options create a niche for enterprises (Rivera & Gutierrez, 2019). Tourists' willingness to pay extra for green tourism presents a business opportunity (Murphy et al., 2018). Overcoming the trade-off between sustainability and comfort can be achieved by emphasizing the distinctive experiences offered by sustainable tourism (Moeller et al., 2011).

2.3 The Future of Green Marketing in the Tourism Industry

Recent literature underscores the growing importance of sustainable tourism practices within marketing strategies. Lu and Nepal (2016) demonstrate that companies advocating responsible travel behaviors, such as waste reduction and cultural sensitivity, are increasingly appealing to modern tourists. This trend suggests a shift in tourist preferences towards environmentally conscious practices. Additionally, the concepts of authenticity and transparency emerge as pivotal elements in shaping the future of green tourism marketing. Vidon's (2019) study accentuates the significance of genuine natural experiences, while Rahman & Nguyen-Viet (2023) emphasize the role of transparency in green claims to combat greenwashing and foster consumer trust. This indicates that authentic and transparent green marketing will play a pivotal role in attracting future tourists.

Technology integration emerges as a central theme in discussions about the future of green tourism marketing. Trkman & Cerne (2022) contend that technological advancements can aid companies in monitoring and mitigating their environmental impact, efficiently communicating these efforts to tourists, and even offering virtual tourism experiences to curtail the ecological footprint of travel. The trajectory of green tourism marketing's future hinges on addressing diverse challenges and capitalizing on emerging opportunities. Budeanu et al. (2016) identify consumer skepticism and the absence of standardized green certification as significant challenges. However, the study also underscores the growing demand for sustainable tourism experiences, offering tourism providers a substantial opportunity to establish a niche market segment.

2.4 Tourism Situation in the Municipality of Claver

The Municipality of Claver, situated in Surigao del Norte, Philippines, presents a unique blend of challenges and opportunities in its pursuit of tourism development. The analysis of Claver's tourism situation highlights key factors influencing the town's tourism potential, residents' perceptions, and the current state of its economic, environmental, social, and knowledge-related aspects. Claver's tourism potential revolves around its distinctive destination drivers, including peace and order, accessibility, authenticity, and comprehensive information provision. The town's

geographical accessibility offers cost savings for travelers, enhancing its competitive edge in the post-Covid era. The analysis identifies the need to improve and develop local amenities, natural attractions, and unique experiences to attract tourists and enhance their satisfaction. Claver's mining heritage can be leveraged to create interactive tourism products, adding an innovative dimension to its offerings. Authenticity, transparency, and technology integration are emphasized in enhancing visitor experiences.

The local community in Claver views tourism as an opportunity for economic diversification and income generation beyond traditional livelihoods, such as mining and agriculture. They aspire for Claver to be recognized beyond its mining identity and believe tourism can provide an alternative source of income. However, residents are also aware of environmental challenges, such as illegal fishing, logging, and pollution, that must be addressed to ensure sustainable development. Despite concerns, residents are committed to responsible tourism development and preserving their natural and cultural heritage. The stakeholders generally support tourism development in Claver. They recognize the potential economic benefits, including job creation and improved local businesses. While many stakeholders see a connection between tourism and mining, there is also awareness of the need for responsible and sustainable development. However, there is a need for more extensive understanding and awareness of ecotourism concepts.

The situation analysis and report for Tourism in Claver, it highlights both positive and negative anticipated impacts. Respondents expect economic benefits in terms of job opportunities and enhanced businesses. However, concerns include the influx of migrants, the potential for criminal activities, rising prices, and local culture and privacy challenges. Respondents express confidence in the local government's ability to manage adverse impacts through the tourism master plan. Claver's current tourism situation analysis reveals a town enthusiastic about tourism development. Recommendations include comprehensive tourism planning, enhancement of existing tourist sites, the establishment of amenities, resident training programs, development of local products, scientific studies for conservation, safety measures, marketing efforts, and collaboration between stakeholders. Amid the enthusiasm for tourism development, residents hold concerns regarding waste management, safety, and security, potential negative impacts on prices and culture, and the risks of prostitution and exploitation. The displacement of residents due to resort development is a significant and compassionate concern, particularly in Alingkakajaw Island. Claver faces economic challenges such as declining agricultural productivity, the shift towards mining employment, and a diminishing farming population. Food insecurity is a concern due to limited local food production, affecting the town's overall nutritional well-being. Residents seek alternative livelihood opportunities to address their financial situation. They express concerns about competition from migrant mine workers and the cyclical nature of mining industry employment. Seasonal closures and the cyclical nature of mining employment also contribute to irregular income streams for residents. Also, Illegal logging remains a significant environmental concern, leading to flooding and damage to the watershed. Deforestation, flooding, and water scarcity result from these activities, impacting the local ecosystem and residents' lives. Furthermore, the declining cultural heritage and loss of traditional practices are poignant issues for residents. Efforts to revive traditions, particularly in handicrafts, are underway, driven by a desire to preserve cultural identity. Concerns about prostitution, sexual exploitation, and the influence of non-local culture on the younger generation are expressed. Lastly, the lack of expertise in tourism-related businesses and infrastructure development is evident. The town's stage in Butler's Tourism Life Cycle model emphasizes the need for comprehensive planning and expertise to avoid uncontrolled growth. Claver's tourism development journey reflects the interplay of its unique attributes, community aspirations, and challenges. Balancing economic growth with environmental preservation and community well-being is crucial for sustainable tourism in the Municipality of Claver.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study employed in the research study "A Greener Claver: A Qualitative Study of Green Marketing Strategies for Sustainable Tourism Industry" is comprehensive and well-structured. The research design focused on understanding green marketing tactics within Claver's sustainable tourism industry, utilizing a combination of focus group discussions (FGDs) and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders. The study was rooted in the Municipality of Claver in the Philippines, emphasizing the importance of sustainable tourism development in a region known for its mining activities. Purposive sampling was used to select participants with expertise in both the tourism industry and green marketing in Claver. This approach ensured that a diverse range of perspectives was captured, including those of local

businesses, entrepreneurs, community members, government officials, NGOs, and advocates for community-based tourism. The research instruments consisted of FGD guides and semi-structured interview guides, tailored to elicit insights into sustainable tourism and green marketing strategies. These instruments were designed to facilitate open-ended discussions and capture individual viewpoints.

The data gathering procedure involved personal visits to potential participants, where the study's objectives, timeline, and expectations were explained. Consent was sought, and participants were assured of anonymity and voluntariness. FGDs were conducted to facilitate group conversations and gather collective insights, while individual semi-structured interviews allowed for deeper exploration of individual perspectives. Transcriptions of audio or video recordings of these sessions were used for data treatment. Thematic analysis was applied to the transcribed data, systematically coding and categorizing themes, concepts, and categories. This process identified patterns, trends, and critical insights related to green marketing strategies for sustainable tourism in Claver. The interpretation of data was aligned with the research questions and objectives, bolstered by validation from participants to enhance credibility. The research findings were presented comprehensively, resulting in developing a detailed green marketing report and strategy that accurately reflected Claver's efforts toward sustainable tourism through green marketing practices.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The participants exhibit notable diversity across several dimensions. This diversity encompasses various age groups, genders, and professional backgrounds, collectively providing a well-rounded and representative sample that contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the community. Regarding their occupations, participants hold a spectrum of roles, including designations such as PPWRA, BLGU (indicating Barangay Local Government Unit), DEPED Supervisor (Department of Education Supervisor), MEPEO-AMRI, among others. This diverse occupational makeup signifies a wide range of community involvement and professional expertise. Residing in a broad array of areas such as Panatao, Ladgaron, Gigaquit, Bagakay, Urbiztondo, Magallanes, Cagdianao, Tayaga, Cabugo, Sapa, and Daywan, the participants' geographical distribution accurately mirrors the diverse cross-section of the local population. Furthermore, the length of their stay in respective regions varies, pointing towards a mix of long-term residents and newer arrivals. The participants encompass varying age groups, including instances where age is not disclosed or denoted as "NO AGE." This assortment of age representations provides valuable insights into the demographic structure of the surveyed population.

A balanced gender distribution is evident, as the survey includes male and female participants. This inclusive gender representation allows for potential gender-related analyses if such insights are deemed necessary. The dataset also contains individuals holding leadership roles within the community, such as Punong Barangay (Barangay Captain) and BLGU-Kagawad (Barangay Kagawad), indicating the representation of community leadership within the surveyed sample. The educational sector is also well-represented, with participants from roles encompassing teachers, administrators, and principals. This presence from the education community underscores their active involvement in the study and highlights the importance of the educational sector in the context of the surveyed community.

To ensure sustainable tourism across various destinations in Claver, several key strategies are proposed. In Bagakay's Mangrove Trail, improving walking paths, informative signage, and guided tours by local experts are recommended while adhering to sustainable visitor guidelines. In Hayanggabon, prioritizing eco-friendly infrastructure and engaging local communities for mangrove conservation is emphasized, along with promoting low-impact activities, waste management, and ecological monitoring. For Lapinigan's Kabujian Islet, sustainable boating tours are advised through collaboration with local fishermen and waste facilities maintenance. Panatao's Dujong Forest calls for marked trails and guided tours to educate about its biodiversity. Additionally, potential tourist attractions like Cabugo's Lambason Island, Cagdiawan's Togonon Falls, Daywan's Forest Trail, Magallanes's River Cruise, Sapa's Malinawa Spring, Tayaga's Lawihon Blvd., Urbiztondo's Marine Sanctuary, and Wangke's Mangrove Trail are all encouraged to integrate eco-friendly infrastructure, conservation measures, waste management, and educational experiences to ensure sustainable and enriching tourism practices.

To institutionalize these green marketing strategies in the Municipality of Claver, a concerted effort involving various stakeholders and targeted initiatives is essential. To begin, collaborative efforts with local tourism boards are recommended to create promotional materials showcasing Cabugo's natural beauty and ecotourism potential.

Simultaneously, marketing campaigns across diverse media channels can effectively emphasize its scenic vistas and unique nature-based experiences. Furthering sustainable initiatives, collaboration with local businesses can be initiated to offer a spectrum of tourism-related services, ranging from eco-friendly accommodations to sustainable dining and locally crafted souvenirs. Incentivizing businesses aligned with sustainable principles reinforces commitment. Addressing misconceptions about mining involves awareness campaigns highlighting mining companies' positive strides in green practices and sustainability, complemented by sharing success stories of contributions to environmental conservation and community development. Eco-friendlier transportation options, like electric shuttles and bicycles, can be introduced through collaboration with transportation providers, advocating both convenience and eco-conscious exploration. Developing and marketing guided tourism packages that underscore responsible practices and educate visitors about local environments and conservation's importance can elevate experiences. Promoting support for local artisans as an avenue for cultural sustainability and livelihood enhancement can be achieved by encouraging the purchase of locally-made crafts and establishing designated marketplaces. Waste management education campaigns targeting both tourists and locals, accompanied by proper signage at tourist sites, guide waste disposal. Elevating tourist safety and security measures through collaboration with local security agencies and ensuring well-lit, well-maintained areas fosters comfort and trust. Moving towards institutionalization, involving local government authorities to integrate these strategies into policies and regulations ensures a cohesive approach. Establishing partnerships across sectors, including businesses, mining companies, transportation providers, and security agencies, fosters a collective commitment to sustainable tourism. Additionally, conducting workshops and training sessions for various stakeholders underscores the significance of green marketing strategies and their role in sustainability. Monitoring mechanisms to track implementation progress and impact and regular reporting to stakeholders and the community ensures transparency and accountability throughout the process.

V. CONCLUSION

Through a comprehensive Focus Group Discussion involving Barangay Captains and other stakeholders in Tourism Sectors, operational attractions like the Bagakay Mangrove Trail, Mangrove Eco Park in Hayanggabon, Kabujian Islet in Lapinigan, and Dujong Forest in Panatao were identified. Additionally, a SWOC analysis revealed valuable insights into Claver's tourism sector's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges.

Based on the SWOC analysis, impactful green marketing strategies have been proposed to harness Claver's strengths and opportunities while addressing weaknesses and challenges. These strategies encompass eco-friendly packaging, responsible waste management campaigns, collaboration with local artisans, livelihood creation through guided tours, sustainable material usage, marketing campaigns, and enhanced transportation options. These strategies aim to promote sustainable practices, improve waste management, alter perceptions of mining, and showcase Claver's unique culture and heritage.

The institutionalization of these strategies requires collaboration among diverse stakeholders and a focused approach. Promotional campaigns for Cabugo, partnerships with local businesses, changing the perception of mining, and government involvement are vital steps. Through education, training, and monitoring, Claver aims to weave these strategies into its tourism policies and regulations, ensuring their sustained implementation. The Municipality of Claver is committed to sustainable tourism and is ready to take action towards achieving this goal. The Municipality of Claver is committed to sustainable tourism and is ready to take action towards achieving this goal. The Municipality of Claver is committed to sustainable tourism and is ready to take action towards achieving this goal.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the comprehensive study of Claver's tourism sector, several recommendations were crafted to address the identified challenges and capitalize on the opportunities. These recommendations aim to enhance the sustainable development of the tourism industry while preserving the environment and local culture.

Operational and Potential Tourist Attractions: Develop comprehensive plans for operational tourist attractions like the Bagakay Mangrove Trail, Panatao Ecopark, and Kabujian Islet. For potential attractions, initiate feasibility studies for Lambason Island, Togonon Falls, Forest Trail, River Cruise, Malinawa Spring, Lawihon Blvd., Marine Sanctuary

Museum, and Mangrove Trail in Wangke. These studies can guide infrastructure development, visitor management, and conservation efforts.

Launch targeted awareness campaigns highlighting mining companies' positive strides toward environmental conservation and community development. Emphasize the balance between mining and tourism, showcasing how both industries can coexist harmoniously and contribute to Claver's sustainability.

Collaborate with local transportation providers to introduce eco-friendly transportation options, such as electric shuttles or bicycles, to improve accessibility to various attractions. Highlight these options as environmentally conscious ways for visitors to explore Claver's offerings.

Develop and market guided tourism packages that incorporate responsible and sustainable practices. These packages should enhance visitors' experiences and provide educational insights into the local environment, culture, and conservation efforts.

Implement waste management education campaigns for tourists and locals, emphasizing proper disposal practices and reducing waste. Encourage using eco-friendly packaging materials and alternatives to single-use plastics, such as eco-bags and locally-made baskets.

Foster collaborations with local businesses and artisans to create eco-friendly tourism-related offerings, including accommodations, dining options, and souvenirs. Promote the purchase of locally made products to support artisans and contribute to cultural sustainability.

Collaborate closely with local security agencies to enhance tourist safety and security measures. Ensuring well-lit, well-maintained areas and visible security presence fosters a sense of trust and comfort among visitors.

Work closely with local government authorities to integrate the proposed green marketing strategies into tourism policies and regulations. This institutionalization ensures a consistent and coordinated approach toward sustainable tourism development.

Organize workshops and training sessions for tourism stakeholders, residents, and businesses. These sessions can emphasize the significance of green marketing strategies, their role in sustainability, and ways to implement them effectively.

Establish mechanisms for monitoring and reporting the progress of the implemented strategies. Regularly share updates with stakeholders and the community to ensure transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

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