



GAP ANALYSIS OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: THE CASE OF AN LGU-MANAGED ECOTOURISM PROJECT OF RIZAL, LAGUNA

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ABSTRACT – Ecotourism has the potential to stimulate socio-economic development and foster environmental conservation in rural areas. By capitalizing on their natural and cultural resources, the local government unit of Rizal, Laguna initiated the development of an ecotourism project which then became a priority program. Considering the various issues and challenges associated with ecotourism, the study attempted to answer how the current state of TANAW de Rizal Park conforms with sustainable ecotourism. The study aimed to elucidate the gaps between the current state of ecotourism and the criteria for sustainable ecotourism. Key informant interviews, focus group discussions, site observations, and secondary data provided insights into historical information, current conditions, ongoing ecotourism projects, and future plans in the area. A gap analysis was utilized to evaluate the existing conditions of the park in relation to the criteria of ecotourism established in the National Ecotourism Strategy and Action Plan 2013-2022 as a benchmark. The study revealed that TANAW de Rizal Park generally aligns with the attributes of an ecotourism destination but there remain areas for improvement to fully adhere to the principles of ecotourism. Common issues emerged among the identified gaps, particularly, community involvement, capacity building, and environmental education that require earnest attention of the LGU. Results of this study are expected to provide direction to the LGU in developing the area into a sustainable ecotourism destination.

Keywords: ecotourism, ecotourism development, gap analysis, TANAW de Rizal Park, tourism



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