

# Competitiveness of Potential Ecotourism Destination in Libertad, Antique: Input for a Comprehensive Action Plan

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**Abstract.** This descriptive-correlational study aimed to determine the level of competitiveness of potential ecotourism destination in terms of core resources and attractors, support factors and resources, and qualifying and amplifying determinants in Libertad, Antique. It also sought to find out if there is any significant difference among the statuses of core resources and attractors, support factors and resources, and qualifying and amplifying determinants of ecotourism destination operations. The status of potential ecotourism destination scientific ability results from two hundred (200) respondents. The instrument used was an adopted questionnaire. The study revealed that there is no significant difference in the status of core resources and attractors, support factors and resources, and qualifying and amplifying determinants.

**Keywords:** Ecotourism; Tourism industry; Antique.

## 1.0 Introduction

In the tourism sector, the destination holds significant sway over tourist motivations and preferences. Its qualities, traits, shapes, and kinds all play a role in tourist decision-making. Tourism also contributes to the development of character and personality within domestic and international tourist industries, as well as in the economy, social, and environmental sectors. Consumer demands, expectations, and anticipated advantages vary from one destination to another. To stay competitive in the modern tourism industry, every location must strategically develop or improve through positioning decisions. Tourism strategy promotes tourist growth (UNWTO, 2019).

The Philippines, a nation of islands blessed with mesmerizing natural beauty and diverse wildlife, holds immense potential for ecotourism, natural resources, cultural and community attributes, infrastructure and services, community engagement, and sustainability. Libertad, a municipality in the province of Antique, Philippines, is renowned for its natural beauty and rich cultural heritage. Located in the northern part of the province, the town boasts several potential ecotourism destinations, including Maaghit Cave, Bungan-bungan in Barangay Union, Marine Sanctuary Pucio Point in Barangay Pucio, Parigus it Pari, and Baluon Pool in Barangay San Roque.

Despite the potential, there is a dearth of research on the competitiveness of potential ecotourism destinations in the Philippines, particularly in Libertad, Antique. This study aims to assess the competitiveness of potential ecotourism destinations in Libertad, Antique, utilizing the Crouch and Ritchie Conceptual Model of Competitiveness as a framework to identify key contributing factors.

This model evaluates the potential of ecotourism sites by considering core resources, attractors, support factors, resources, infrastructure, services, laws, and regulations. Qualifying factors ascertain if a place meets fundamental standards, while amplifying determinants enhance the attraction and success of an ecotourism destination. This

method helps determine the competitiveness of ecotourism sites. This study assessed the viability of ecotourism destinations in Libertad, Antique, using the Crouch and Ritchie model as a guideline. The identified elements can be leveraged to enhance the competitiveness of these destinations, leading to the formulation of an action plan aimed at improvement.

## **2.0 Methodology**

### **2.1 Research Design**

This descriptive-comparative research was used in the study to assess the competitiveness of Libertad, Antique as a potential ecotourism destination. The study will compare ecotourism destination to identify its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This aims to describe the differences between groups in a population without manipulating the independent variable (Cantrell, 2011). This approach was utilized in this study to describe the current status of ecotourism in Libertad across various aspects. To quantify the availability and quality of core resources and attractors, metrics such as physiology and climate, culture and history, ecotourism activities available, and special events were employed. Analysis of the presence and adequacy of support factors and resources included data on infrastructure, facilitating resources, and the spirit of hospitality. Additionally, evaluating the influence of qualifying and amplifying determinants involved factors such as safety and security, and cost value.

### **2.2 Research Participants**

The respondents of this study were divided into three categories: ecotourism operators, residents, and tourists at selected ecotourism destination sites in the municipality of Libertad, Antique. Among them, there were 100 tourists (50%), 40 tourism operators (20%), and 60 residents (30%). A non-probability sampling approach was employed in this study, where units were selected based on expertise and professional judgment, as proposed by the panel. The focus was on specific characteristics of the population of interest, such as tourists, tourism operators, and residents, who are considered major stakeholders in the tourism industry. This approach was chosen because the population is difficult to access due to its transient nature, and the required sample size was relatively small. The selected samples represented a diverse range of perspectives within the targeted groups of tourists, tourism operators, and locals, totaling 200 samples.

### **2.3 Research Instrument**

The instrument used in this study was an adapted questionnaire (Marasigan & Borbon, 2021). The instrument item test was categorized into three parts. The first part is about the Core Resources and Attractors, consisting of four sub-variables: Physiology and Climate, Culture and History, Mix Activities, and Special Events, totaling twenty-four items. The second part is about Support Factors and Resources, comprising three sub-variables: Facilitating Resources, and Spirit of Hospitality, totaling nineteen items. The third part is about the Qualifying and Amplifying Determinants, consisting of two sub-variables: Safety and Security, and Cost Value, totaling nine items. The instrument's validity was ensured through content validation by five expert panels, including the Libertad Tourism Officer, three research experts, a language expert, and the advisor, who provided corrections to ensure accuracy and clarity in the final instrument.

### **2.4 Data Gathering Procedure**

The survey questionnaires were personally distributed by the researcher to each ecotourism operator, resident, and tourist. This distribution took place at the locations of Maanghit Cave and Bungan-bungan in Union, Pucio Point Marine Sanctuary in Pucio, and Parigusan it Pari and Baluon Pool in San Roque, where the ecotourism operators, residents, and tourists were present. During the administration of the research instrument, the respondents were provided with instructions on how to complete it. Additionally, the researcher collected the completed questionnaires upon completion.

### **2.5 Data Analysis**

The gathered data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), employing descriptive data analysis techniques. Frequency and percentage were utilized to determine the distribution of respondents across each potential ecotourism destination in Libertad, Antique. Mean and standard deviation calculations were employed to assess the status of each potential ecotourism destination. To determine if there were significant differences among the statuses of core resources and attractors, support factors and resources, and qualifying and

amplifying determinants, the Kruskal-Wallis test was utilized. This test was conducted at a significance level of .05, indicating that the null hypothesis is rejected if the obtained p-value is .05 or less.

## 2.6 Ethical Considerations

The researcher considered several significant issues in conducting the study, with a primary focus on securing the privacy of the respondents. Consent and confidentiality were particularly emphasized due to the sensitive nature of the matters involved. To maintain confidentiality, the researcher ensured that the names or personal information of the respondents were not disclosed in the study. Only relevant details about them were included, with a strict adherence to privacy protocols. Additionally, obtaining consent from the respondents prior to their participation in the study was paramount, ensuring that they were fully informed about the purpose and procedures involved. This approach respected the autonomy of the respondents and upheld ethical standards throughout the research process.

## 3.0 Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Ecotourism Destination Operations

**Table 1.** Profile of ecotourism destination in Libertad, Antique

| CATEGORY                     | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGE |
|------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| <b>Destination Type</b>      |           |            |
| Natural Park                 | 151       | 75.50      |
| Marine Reserve               | 49        | 24.50      |
| Cultural Heritage            | 0         | 0.0        |
| Rural and Agricultural       | 0         | 0.0        |
| <b>Geographical Location</b> |           |            |
| Coastal                      | 50        | 25.50      |
| Mountainous                  | 149       | 74.50      |
| <b>Price Point</b>           |           |            |
| Affordable                   | 185       | 92.50      |
| Moderate                     | 15        | 7.50       |
| Expensive                    | 0         |            |
| <b>Accessibility</b>         |           |            |
| By Motorcycle                | 154       | 77.00      |
| By Tricycle                  | 38        | 19.00      |
| By car                       | 8         | 4.00       |

Table 1 illustrates the profile of ecotourism destinations in Libertad, Antique, focusing on destination type, geographical location, price point, and accessibility. Natural parks dominate the destination types, comprising 75.5% of the total, followed by marine reserves. Geographically, 25.5% of destinations are coastal, while the majority, 74.5%, are mountainous. In terms of affordability, 92.5% of destinations are considered affordable. Access to these destinations primarily relies on motorcycles, accounting for 77% of transportation methods.

Libertad offers a robust foundation for ecotourism, emphasizing natural parks, affordability, and motorcycle accessibility, which aligns community-based conservation initiatives like Integrated Conservation Development Projects (ICDPs) and Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM), which engage local communities in sustainable wildlife resource management and promote ecotourism for rural development. Local ecotourism committees demonstrate a proactive approach to resource management, fostering sustainable practices and equitable benefits for community members (K. Masungi & C. Mudzingi, 2023).

### 3.2 Status of Core Resources and Attractors of Ecotourism Destination Operations

#### *Physiology and Climate*

Table 2 presents the status of core resources and attractors of ecotourism destination operations in Libertad, Antique, specifically in terms of physiology and climate. The table displays the mean scores and standard deviations for each item, along with corresponding descriptions based on the questionnaire responses. According to the results, respondents rated good weather conditions ( $M=3.44$ ,  $SD=.58$ ), unspoiled nature/green areas ( $M=3.40$ ,  $SD=.60$ ), cleanliness of the destination ( $M=3.39$ ,  $SD=.63$ ), pleasant built environment ( $M=3.35$ ,  $SD=.64$ ), lively urban atmosphere ( $M=3.33$ ,  $SD=.72$ ), and quality of natural scenery and landscape/environment ( $M=3.35$ ,  $SD=.66$ ).

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics of the status of core resources and attractors of ecotourism destination operations in terms of physiology and climate

| INDICATORS                                             | MEAN        | SD          | INTERPRETATION     |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Good weather conditions.                               | 3.44        | 0.58        | Highly Competitive |
| Unspoiled nature/ green areas.                         | 3.40        | 0.60        | Highly Competitive |
| Cleanliness of the destination.                        | 3.39        | 0.63        | Highly Competitive |
| Pleasant built environment.                            | 3.35        | 0.64        | Highly Competitive |
| Lively urban atmosphere.                               | 3.33        | 0.72        | Highly Competitive |
| Quality of natural scenery and landscape/ environment. | 3.35        | 0.66        | Highly Competitive |
| <b>Mean</b>                                            | <b>3.38</b> | <b>0.41</b> | Highly Competitive |

Legend: 1.00-1.74 – Not Competitive; 1.75-2.49 – Less Competitive; 2.50-3.24 – Competitive; 3.25-4.00 – Highly Competitive

Overall, the status of core resources and attractors of ecotourism destination operations in Libertad, Antique, in terms of physiology and climate, was rated as highly competitive ( $M=3.38$ ;  $SD=.41$ ). The standard deviation indicates that respondents' assessments are closely aligned. These findings align with the study's model, which emphasizes core resources and attractors fundamental to a destination's appeal, along with supporting resources that enhance this appeal. Additionally, it considers destination policy, planning, development, management, and qualifying and amplifying determinants that define destination potential (Ritche & Crouch, 2003).

### Culture and History

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics of the status of core resources and attractors of ecotourism destination operations in terms of culture and history

| INDICATORS                                                              | MEAN        | SD          | INTERPRETATION |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| Diversity of cultural/historical attractions.                           | 2.96        | 0.73        | Competitive    |
| Opportunity to experience local life.                                   | 3.06        | 0.72        | Competitive    |
| Desire to learn about other cultures, their ways of life, and heritage. | 2.89        | 0.78        | Competitive    |
| Opportunities to experience traditional ways of living.                 | 2.98        | 0.74        | Competitive    |
| Promotion of cultural or religious events.                              | 2.78        | 0.70        | Competitive    |
| Opportunities for learning and experiencing cultural attractions.       | 2.92        | 0.79        | Competitive    |
| <b>Mean</b>                                                             | <b>2.93</b> | <b>0.52</b> | Competitive    |

Table 3 presents the status of core resources and attractors in ecotourism operations in Libertad, Antique, focusing on Culture and History. The table includes mean scores and standard deviations (SD) for this aspect, as assessed during the questionnaire administration. According to the results, respondents perceived several factors as competitive: Opportunity to experience local life ( $M=3.06$ ,  $SD=.72$ ), Opportunities to experience traditional ways of living ( $M=2.98$ ,  $SD=.74$ ), Diversity of cultural/historical attractions ( $M=2.96$ ,  $SD=.73$ ), Opportunities for learning and experiencing cultural attractions ( $M=2.92$ ,  $SD=.79$ ), Desire to learn about other cultures, their ways of life, and heritage ( $M=2.89$ ,  $SD=.78$ ), and Promotion of cultural or religious events ( $M=2.78$ ,  $SD=.70$ ).

Overall, respondents rated the status of Core Resources and Attractors of Ecotourism Destination operations in Libertad, Antique, in terms of Culture and History as competitive ( $M=2.93$ ;  $SD=.52$ ). The standard deviation indicates that respondents' assessments are closely clustered. These findings support the study's conclusion that cultural and historical assets play a crucial role in the identity and authenticity of ecotourism destinations. These assets provide visitors with opportunities to engage with local traditions, customs, and lifestyles, facilitating cross-cultural exchange. Additionally, cultural attractions contribute to sustainable tourism development by offering insights into the region's past (Scheyvens & Biddulp, 2020; Hall & Lew, 2019).

### Mix Activities

**Table 4.** Descriptive statistics of the status of core resources and attractors of ecotourism destination operations in terms of mixed activities

| INDICATORS                                                       | MEAN        | SD          | INTERPRETATION |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| Variety of adventurous, challenging, and exciting outdoor trips. | 3.02        | 0.73        | Competitive    |
| Opportunity to be close to nature.                               | 3.22        | 0.84        | Competitive    |
| Opportunity to join recreational activities.                     | 3.06        | 0.79        | Competitive    |
| Opportunity to participate in religious activities.              | 2.65        | 0.74        | Competitive    |
| Opportunities for nature adventure/ cultural activities.         | 3.06        | 0.74        | Competitive    |
| Diversity of athletic or water sports activities.                | 2.85        | 0.79        | Competitive    |
| Offers leisure activities.                                       | 2.79        | 0.84        | Competitive    |
| <b>Mean</b>                                                      | <b>2.95</b> | <b>0.51</b> | Competitive    |

Table 4 illustrates the status of core resources and attractions for ecotourism destinations in Libertad, Antique, particularly focusing on mixed activities. It presents mean scores and standard deviations (SD) indicating the competitiveness of these destinations, as assessed during the questionnaire administration. According to the results, respondents perceived several aspects as "competitive," including the opportunity to experience nature closely (M=3.22, SD=.84), engage in recreational activities (M=3.06, SD=.79), and participate in nature adventure/cultural activities (M=3.06, SD=.74). Additionally, they found the diversity of adventurous outdoor trips (M=3.02, SD=.73), athletic or water sports activities (M=2.85, SD=.79), leisure activities (M=2.79, SD=.84), and religious activities (M=2.65, SD=.74).

Overall, the status of core resources and attractions for ecotourism destinations in Libertad, Antique, regarding mixed activities was perceived as "competitive" (M=2.95, SD=.51). The standard deviation indicates that respondents' assessments were relatively consistent across different aspects. These findings align with previous research, indicating that core resources often encompass biodiversity hotspots, protected areas, indigenous cultures, historical landmarks, and traditional livelihoods. Attractors, meanwhile, encompass specific features or experiences within ecotourism destinations that attract visitors and enhance their overall satisfaction and enjoyment (Dolnicar & Leisch, 2019). These can include iconic landmarks, wildlife viewing opportunities, adventure activities, and cultural festivals.

### Special Events

**Table 5.** Descriptive statistics of the status of core resources and attractors of ecotourism destination operations in terms of special events

| INDICATORS                                                       | MEAN        | SD          | INTERPRETATION   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| Organize more recreational offerings, concerts, and stage plays. | 2.48        | 0.87        | Less Competitive |
| Organize sports tournaments.                                     | 2.44        | 0.87        | Less Competitive |
| Availability of cultural and other events.                       | 2.59        | 0.94        | Competitive      |
| Evening entertainment and nightlife.                             | 2.33        | 0.91        | Less Competitive |
| Conduct cultural festivals.                                      | 2.73        | 1.01        | Competitive      |
| <b>Mean</b>                                                      | <b>2.51</b> | <b>0.71</b> | Competitive      |

Table 5 displays the status of core resources and attractions in ecotourism operations in Libertad, Antique, specifically focusing on special events. The table presents mean scores, standard deviations (SD), and corresponding descriptions. According to the findings, respondents viewed the organization of cultural festivals (M=2.73, SD=1.01) and the availability of cultural and other events (M=2.59, SD=0.94) as "competitive." However, they considered the organization of recreational offerings, concerts, and stage plays (M=2.48, SD=0.87), as well as sports tournaments (M=2.44, SD=0.87), and evening entertainment and nightlife (M=2.33, SD=0.91).

Overall, respondents rated the status of core resources and attractions in ecotourism operations in Libertad, Antique, regarding special events as "competitive" (M=2.51, SD=0.71). The standard deviation indicates that respondents' assessments are relatively consistent. These findings suggest a "competitive" status of core resources and attractions in ecotourism operations in Libertad, Antique, concerning special events. This aligns with previous research indicating that festivals, rituals, and performing arts showcase the cultural diversity of ecotourism destinations, attracting visitors seeking immersive travel experiences (Goodwin, 2011).

### 3.3 Support Factors and Resources of Ecotourism Destination Operations

#### Infrastructure

**Table 6.** Descriptive statistics of the status of support factors and resources of ecotourism destination operations in terms of infrastructure

| INDICATORS                                             | MEAN        | SD          | INTERPRETATION |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| Old/ historic but visually appealing.                  | 2.95        | 0.76        | Competitive    |
| Modern and visually appealing.                         | 2.94        | 0.72        | Competitive    |
| Maintained sidewalks, pathways, and hallways.          | 3.00        | 0.79        | Competitive    |
| Provide more amenities with campgrounds.               | 2.73        | 0.80        | Competitive    |
| Accessible/high-speed communication system.            | 2.93        | 0.79        | Competitive    |
| Convenience and accessibility of local transportation. | 2.95        | 0.78        | Competitive    |
| Accessible road facilities with proper signage.        | 3.08        | 0.84        | Competitive    |
| Accessibility of facilities for disabled persons.      | 2.61        | 0.97        | Competitive    |
| <b>Mean</b>                                            | <b>2.90</b> | <b>0.52</b> | Competitive    |

Table 6 displays the Status of Support Factors and Resources for Ecotourism Destination Operations in Libertad, Antique, focusing on Infrastructure. It presents mean scores, standard deviation (SD), and corresponding descriptions from the questionnaire responses. Respondents rated various aspects as competitive, including accessible road facilities with proper signage (M=3.08, SD=.97), maintained sidewalks, pathways, and hallways (M=3.00, SD=.79), and old/historic but visually appealing sites (M=2.95, SD=.76). Additionally, convenience of local transportation (M=2.95, SD=.78), modern facilities (M=2.94, SD=.76), and accessibility of high-speed communication systems (M=2.93, SD=.79) were also considered competitive. Amenities such as campgrounds (M=2.73, SD=.80) and facilities for disabled persons (M=2.61, SD=.97).

Overall, respondents rated the status of support factors and resources in terms of infrastructure as "competitive" (M=2.90: SD=.522). The standard deviation indicates close agreement among respondents. These findings align with research suggesting that ecotourism benefits the environment, society, culture, and economy of attraction areas and local communities (Osman et al., 2018). Infrastructure, institutional support, financial resources, human capital, and stakeholder collaboration are cited as crucial factors for ecotourism development (Dolnicar & Leisch, 2019).

### *Facilitating Resources*

**Table 7.** Descriptive statistics of the status of support factors and resources of ecotourism destination operations in terms of facilitating resources

| INDICATORS                                             | MEAN        | SD          | INTERPRETATION   |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| Visitor Information Center/Tourist Information Center. | 3.11        | 0.92        | Competitive      |
| Availability of money changer.                         | 2.09        | 0.95        | Less Competitive |
| Pasalubong center and souvenir shop                    | 2.20        | 0.88        | Less Competitive |
| Destination links with major origin markets.           | 2.64        | 0.89        | Competitive      |
| Accessibility of destination.                          | 3.14        | 0.82        | Competitive      |
| <b>Mean</b>                                            | <b>2.63</b> | <b>0.61</b> | Competitive      |

Table 7 illustrates the status of support factors and resources for ecotourism destinations in Libertad, Antique, specifically focusing on Facilitating Resources. Mean scores and standard deviations (SD) are provided, offering insights into the status of these factors during the questionnaire administration. According to the findings, respondents viewed destination accessibility (M=3.14, SD=.82) and the presence of visitor information centers (M=3.11, SD=.92) as competitive. Similarly, the assessment of destination links with major origin markets received a competitive rating (M=2.64, SD=.89). However, respondents perceived Pasalubong centers and souvenir shops (M=2.20, SD=.88) and the availability of money changers (M=2.09, SD=.95).

Overall, respondents rated the status of support factors and resources for ecotourism destinations in Libertad, Antique, concerning facilitating resources as "competitive" (M=2.63, SD=.61). Additionally, the standard deviation indicates that respondents' assessments were closely aligned. These findings underscore the competitive nature of support factors and resources for ecotourism destinations in Libertad, Antique. This aligns with ecotourism's focus on nature-oriented activities that benefit the environment, community, and local economy. Sustainable tourism practices, supported by financial resources, play a pivotal role in promoting conservation efforts, product development, and community engagement (Fennell, 2008a; Aas, Ladkin, & Fletcher, 2019).

### *Spirit of Hospitality*

**Table 8.** Descriptive statistics of the status of support factors and resources of ecotourism destination operations in terms of spirit of hospitality

| INDICATORS                                            | MEAN        | SD          | INTERPRETATION     |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Friendly, high-spirited, and hospitable local people. | 3.40        | 0.66        | Highly Competitive |
| Can communicate well with the tourist.                | 3.25        | 0.71        | Highly Competitive |
| Get people to stay longer.                            | 3.11        | 0.71        | Competitive        |
| Tourist-oriented local people.                        | 3.19        | 0.69        | Competitive        |
| Delivers quality guest service.                       | 3.15        | 0.73        | Competitive        |
| Can provide pleasure and satisfaction.                | 3.24        | 0.69        | Competitive        |
| <b>Mean</b>                                           | <b>3.22</b> | <b>0.51</b> | Competitive        |

Table 8 displays the Status of Support Factors and Resources for ecotourism operations in Libertad, Antique, focusing on the spirit of hospitality. It presents mean scores and standard deviations, along with corresponding

descriptions derived from questionnaire responses. Respondents rated Friendly, high-spirited, and hospitable local people as highly competitive ( $M=3.40$ ,  $SD=0.66$ ), along with the ability to effectively communicate with tourists ( $M=3.25$ ,  $SD=0.71$ ). Additionally, providing pleasure and satisfaction was deemed competitive ( $M=3.24$ ,  $SD=0.69$ ), along with being tourist-oriented ( $M=3.19$ ,  $SD=0.69$ ), delivering quality guest service ( $M=3.15$ ,  $SD=0.73$ ), and encouraging longer stays ( $M=3.11$ ,  $SD=0.71$ ).

Overall, respondents assessed the status of Support Factors and Resources for ecotourism in Libertad, Antique, regarding the Spirit of Hospitality as "competitive" ( $M=3.22$ ,  $SD=0.51$ ). The standard deviation indicates close agreement among respondents. These findings support the study's conclusion of a "competitive" status of support factors and resources for ecotourism operations in Libertad, Antique, concerning the Spirit of Hospitality. The spirit of hospitality is characterized by a sincere desire to serve others and create memorable experiences, encompassing qualities like empathy, attentiveness, flexibility, and responsiveness to guests' needs and preferences (Lashley, 2000; Brotherton & Wood, 2008).

### 3.4 Status of Qualifying and Amplifying Determinants of Ecotourism Destination Operations *Safety and Security*

**Table 9.** Descriptive statistics of the status of qualifying and amplifying determinants of ecotourism destination operations in terms of safety and security

| INDICATORS                                                              | MEAN        | SD          | INTERPRETATION   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| Security personnel are visible and always available for assistance.     | 2.83        | 0.92        | Competitive      |
| Security equipment is visible (CCTV cameras, Fire extinguishers, etc.). | 2.39        | 0.90        | Less Competitive |
| Helpful police services around the area.                                | 2.95        | 0.98        | Competitive      |
| Availability of fire extinguishers and other safety equipment.          | 2.66        | 0.99        | Competitive      |
| Maintain or secure guest privacy.                                       | 2.99        | 0.93        | Competitive      |
| <b>Mean</b>                                                             | <b>2.76</b> | <b>0.75</b> | Competitive      |

Table 9 presents the Status of Qualifying and Amplifying Determinants of Ecotourism Destination Operations in Libertad, Antique, focusing on safety and security. It includes mean scores and standard deviations (SD) for these determinants, along with corresponding descriptions based on questionnaire responses. The results indicate that respondents viewed certain aspects as competitive in maintaining or securing guest privacy ( $M=2.99$ ,  $SD=.93$ ), availability of helpful police services ( $M=2.95$ ,  $SD=.98$ ), visibility and availability of security personnel ( $M=2.83$ ,  $SD=.92$ ), and availability of safety equipment ( $M=2.66$ ,  $SD=.99$ ). However, respondents perceived Security equipment visibility (CCTV cameras, fire extinguishers, etc.) as less competitive ( $M=2.39$ ,  $SD=.90$ ).

Overall, respondents rated the status of Qualifying and Amplifying Determinants of Ecotourism Destination Operations in Libertad, Antique, concerning Safety and Security as competitive ( $M=2.76$ ;  $SD=.75$ ). The close standard deviation values indicate consistency among respondents' perceptions. The results suggest a competitive status of support factors and resources for ecotourism destination operations in Libertad, Antique, regarding safety and security. This aligns with the theory of the hierarchy of needs, which emphasizes safety and security as crucial factors for tourists. Ensuring tourists feel safe is vital, considering factors like natural disasters, crime, and health concerns, which significantly impact destination competitiveness (L. Manrai, A. Manrai, and S. Friedeborn, 2020).

### *Cost Value*

**Table 10.** Descriptive statistics of the status of qualifying and amplifying determinants of ecotourism destination operations in terms of cost value

| INDICATORS                                                 | MEAN        | SD          | INTERPRETATION     |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|
| Reasonable fees (environmental fees, entrance fees, etc.). | 3.30        | 0.72        | Highly Competitive |
| Value for money.                                           | 3.15        | 0.75        | Competitive        |
| No hidden charges.                                         | 3.14        | 0.81        | Competitive        |
| Appropriate prices for the services received.              | 3.25        | 0.77        | Highly Competitive |
| Promotes energy consumption                                | 3.16        | 0.76        | Competitive        |
| <b>Mean</b>                                                | <b>3.20</b> | <b>0.63</b> | Competitive        |

Table 10 displays the status of qualifying and amplifying determinants of ecotourism destination operations in Libertad, Antique, focusing on cost value. It presents mean scores, standard deviation (SD), and corresponding descriptions derived from the questionnaire. The respondents rated reasonable fees (e.g., environmental, entrance

fees) as highly competitive ( $M=3.30$ ,  $SD=.72$ ). Similarly, they viewed appropriate prices for services received as competitive ( $M=3.25$ ,  $SD=.77$ ). However, the promotion of energy consumption was perceived as competitive ( $M=3.16$ ,  $SD=.76$ ), along with value for money ( $M=3.15$ ,  $SD=.75$ ) and the absence of hidden charges ( $M=3.14$ ,  $SD=.81$ ).

Overall, respondents rated the status of qualifying and amplifying determinants of ecotourism destination operations in Libertad, Antique as competitive ( $M=3.20$ ,  $SD=.63$ ), with standard deviation indicating consistency among responses. These findings align with efforts to understand destination competitiveness, including price competitiveness, and emphasize destination management's role in sustainability (Ritchie and Crouch, 2003). However, while destination management is crucial for sustainability and attracting repeat tourists, it may not fully capture the breadth of destination competitiveness.

### 3.5 Difference among the Status of Core Resources and Attractors, Support Factors and Resources, and Qualifying and Amplifying Determinants

Table 11. Kruskal Wallis test result

| VARIABLE                               | P-VALUE  | DECISION               |
|----------------------------------------|----------|------------------------|
| Core Resources and Attractors          | 0.387*** | Accept Null Hypothesis |
| Support Factors and Resources          |          |                        |
| Qualifying and Amplifying Determinants |          |                        |

\*Highly significant at .01 level of significance

\*\*Significant at .05 level of significance

\*\*\*Not Significant at .05 level of significance

Table 11 displays the test of difference among the status of core resources and attractors, support factors and resources, and qualifying and amplifying determinants. The Kruskal-Wallis test yielded a p-value of .387, indicating that the p-value exceeds the .05 level of significance. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the status of core resources and attractors, support factors and resources, and qualifying and amplifying determinants. Consequently, the null hypothesis is accepted.

This model offers a comprehensive understanding of destination competitiveness, incorporating various factors contributing to its success. These factors include the macro environment, reflecting global trends shaping world tourism, and the competitive microenvironment, involving location and the tourism system. Additionally, the model considers core resources and attractors fundamental to the destination's appeal, along with supporting resources enhancing this appeal. It further examines destination policy, planning, and development, destination management, and qualifying and amplifying determinants contributing to determining destination potential. Finally, the destination audit serves as a means of operationalizing the model. Overall, this model serves as a valuable tool for assessing and enhancing destination competitiveness in both business and academic contexts (Ritchie and Crouch, 2003).

## 4.0 Conclusion

Based on the study's findings, Libertad, Antique, possesses significant potential as an ecotourism destination. Its abundance of natural parks, budget-friendly options, and accessibility via motorcycle appeal to tourists seeking nature-based experiences. While weather conditions and infrastructure are competitive, there's room for improvement in cultural and religious event promotion, as well as facilities for disabled persons and money changers. Maintaining safety and security, along with transparent pricing and a focus on guest privacy, enhances Libertad's appeal to visitors. Moreover, the study's conclusion that there's no significant difference in various determinants underscores the consistency of assessments across different aspects. Moving forward, implementing the proposed ecotourism action plan can provide a detailed road map for achieving ecotourism's potential. It emphasizes ethical conduct in order to attain a balance of environmental, economic, and social well-being. Libertad can position itself as a premier ecotourism destination by carefully monitoring and evaluating this strategy, so contributing to a more sustainable future.

## 5.0 Contributions of Authors

The author initiated and completed this study.

## 6.0 Funding

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## 7.0 Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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