

Tracing the Flock: A Look at the Current State of Duck Raising Industry of Hermosa

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Abstract

The study aimed to describe the state of the Duck Raising Industry in the town of Hermosa, Province of Bataan in the Philippines from the point of view of various stakeholders. The study is a qualitative type of research built on a Phenomenological deductive approach. The researcher used interviews as the main tool in gathering the data needed for the study which focuses on the experiences the participants had in association to duck raising and duck egg processing from Mallard Duck locally known as *itik*. The study revealed that the duck Raising Industry in the town of Hermosa has been part of the growing up years of the participants and has greatly influenced their choice of livelihood and that the second generation of duck raisers in the family take on the business but is unlikely to be favored by the 3rd generation due to shifting careers and varied interests. The duck raising industry remains to be a good source of income and is appreciated by farmers for the quick daily turn out of profits. It is evident that through knowledge acquired from parents and relatives along with personal experiences, Hermosa duck raisers were able to generate best practices, techniques, and methods in duck raising.

Keywords: mallard duck, qualitative, phenomenology, culture, *balut*

1. Introduction

Food tourism has increasingly gained popularity over the years, tourists are drawn to visit destinations for their local produce and a handful of tourist destinations are centering their product development and marketing accordingly. With food being deeply rooted in its origin, destinations are marketing themselves distinctively that appeal to tourists through their flavors (UNWTO 2012). With destinations establishing signature dishes creating particular branding, the process by which food is consumed is in itself an attraction and so is how they are processed and managed. Food according to Le (2017) is an important part of the culture, traditional cuisines and delicacies are passed on from one generation to the next and operate as a cultural identity, that unique cuisine can reflect unique history, lifestyle, values, and beliefs.

The study is an inquiry on the state of duck raising industry in the town of Hermosa, recognized to be the top producing duck eggs for processing to *Balut*- an iconic food, known to be exotic in the Philippines and is currently the identified One Town One Product of Hermosa with its symbolic value and is known to be an acquired taste for native Filipinos and a rite of passage for others as it became increasingly popular among westerners brought by sensationalized depictions in various cultures and genres (Ty Matejowsky, 2013) *Balut* became the iconic symbolism of the Town of Hermosa as it was hailed as its signature; One Town One Product (OTOP), the program headed by the Department of Trade and Industries as a strategic tool that remains to provide an ecosystem of assistance from local government units, national government agencies, and the private sector (DTI, 2018). With the identification of products to carry the name of particular towns in the province of Bataan, an extensive study was conducted by the Bataan Provincial Tourism Office along with the Department of Trade and Industry to establish which product best describes a town and determines the most abundant resource each municipality has to offer. But over the years, with the changing time and various factors, the *balut* and duck raising industry in the town of Hermosa have observably declined. This study aims to explore whether there is indeed a threat and what could be the possible reasons behind the emergence of the thought of the possible loss of an industry people of Hermosa grew up with. With the pending thought of retaining *balut* as an iconic representation of a town and its heritage, the study would shed light on the threat of losing an industry on the brink of extinction or could be an

opportunity to save, conserve and preserve an agricultural heritage. The study aimed to identify the state of the Duck Raising Industry in the town of Hermosa from the point of view of various stakeholders. The study may be able to generate a description of the best practices of active duck raisers' and egg processors' operations; problems and issues that possibly brought former duck raisers and egg processors to halt operations that may lead to the possible eventual loss of industry in Hermosa. The study sought to answer the following specific objectives:

1. To describe the duck raising industry in Hermosa as perceived by various stakeholders as per:
 - 1.1. Current Duck Raisers' Perspective
 - 1.2. Former Duck Raisers' Perspective
 - 1.3. Current Duck Eggs processors' (*Balutan*) Perspective
 - 1.4. Former Duck Eggs processors' (*Balutan*) Perspective
 - 1.5. Department of Agriculture's Perspective
 - 1.6. Department of Tourism Officials and Practitioners' Perspective
 - 1.7. Residents of Hermosa
 - 1.8. Local Government Unit
 - 1.9. Duck Raisers' Family Members
 - 1.10. Department of Trade and Industry and MSMEs
2. To describe the problems encountered in duck raising from the perspective of various stakeholders mentioned in item number 1.
3. To determine methods and strategies utilized in duck raising.
5. To determine the implication of the study in the determination of retaining the one town one product commodity of the town of Hermosa.

Duck raising and *balut* production is not just an industry to produce food or delicacy but in itself a culture, a way of life, and a tradition that is supposed to be passed on to the next generation to come. The town of Hermosa is recognized for its one town one product; *Balut*. But over the years, the duck raising and duck egg processing industry in the town gradually declined. The recognized barangays and families in this small town have been observed to stop the business. To the data gathered from the municipality of Hermosa (Mallard Duck Farm, 2015) out of the 48 backyard and commercial farm owners in the town of Hermosa in 2014, 21 were no longer in operation by 2015. An alarming number considering the incident was in occurrence for just one year. Though there may be several reasons for the inability of the municipality to gather adequate data for the past years and for the reason why there is a considerable number of farmers who stopped, they would shed light and gathered data to be used in tracing the state of duck raising industry in the town. Based on the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in its 2009 study on the impact of culture in tourism; culture tourism is one of the largest and fastest-growing global tourism markets. With culture and creative industries, the promotion of destinations has increased their competitiveness and attractiveness. This is one of the motivations of many locations, in developing their tangible and intangible cultural assets as a means of developing a competitive advantage in the tourism marketplace and creating a distinctive identity despite globalization.

2. Method

The study is a qualitative type of research built on a Phenomenological Approach. Defined as an approach to qualitative research that focuses on the commonality of a lived experience in a particular group where data collected is analyzed for similar phrases and themes that are then grouped to form clusters of meaning (Creswell, 2013), applied in the study to determine the state of duck raising industry in the town of Hermosa from various lenses. Participants of the study were active duck raisers, former duck raisers, active duck egg processors, former duck egg processors, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Tourism, and the community. The study focuses on the experiences the participants had in association to duck raising and duck egg processing from Mallard Duck; locally known as *itik*. The researchers used the interview as the main tool in gathering the data needed for the study. A self-made interview guide was formulated in response to the answers the researchers wish to find out from the study. A semi-standardized interview was applied where the principal questions are prepared and beyond the specific questions, the interviewer is free to probe as the interview commences (Dudovskiy, 2018). The interview guide was formulated through an initial interview and review of the literature. The set of questions generated was validated by professionals and experts in the field of agriculture, sociology, psychology, and research. On the actual data gathering, appointments were set with the participant's interviews in their respective

farms, manufacturing sites, and meeting places more convenient to the interviewees. The whole course of the interview was digitally recorded and transcribed for constant comparative analysis. To secure anonymity and for the privacy of the participant's responses, the recorded interviews were stored in an encrypted external hard drive with only the interviewer; interviewee and transcriptionist can have access. It was then processed by analyzing common phrases grouped in themes and clusters. All gathered data were then analyzed and interpretation of the meaning of the experiences of the duck raisers and duck egg processors were documented, labeled, coded, and grouped in themes.

3. Results

This section presents the findings of the study arranged according to the sequence of the objectives shown in the Introduction, chronologically arranged to the following topics: State of Duck Raising Industry in the town of Hermosa in the eyes of various stakeholders. Problems and issues experienced by duck raisers and methods and strategies utilized in duck farming. The interview contained inquiries on the duck raising industry, particularly with the start of the participants' duck raising experience, acquisition of skills, view on income generation, and intentions to continue with duck raising. Analysis of the data resulted in the emergence of the following themes:

3.1 Findings on the Duck Raising Industry in Hermosa

The interview contained inquiries on the duck raising industry, particularly with the start of the participants' duck raising experience, acquisition of skills, view on income generation, and intentions to continue with duck raising. Analysis of the data resulted in the emergence of the following themes:

Growing up with it. Several participants mentioned that they learned about duck raising from their parents during their growing up years. Some consider duck raising as a livelihood they grew up with and consider it to be the only business they know of.

"Since we were kids, my father's livelihood is duck raising. Then when I got married, we went here (Hermosa). Then all of my brothers-in-law followed and raised ducks. Ducklings were still cheap at that time, only 35 Cents". Current Duck Raiser 24

Good source of Income. Extra income, use for daily expenses, a good source of money to support children's education and daily living has been frequently mentioned as reasons why duck raising is still pursued and continued.

"During that time, if you are to look at families, all that were raising ducks were able to send their children to finish college. So, I have relatives who have their children finish no matter how many, just in duck raising". Former Duck Raiser 1

"Earning is good in duck raising. It's better than working abroad". Current Duck Raiser 5

"All is well, see my children can finish their education. Just with perseverance. But you are to have sleepovers in huts even if you have a huge house, you are spending the night with roof dripping and sometimes you sleep in tents just to tent to your ducks". Current Duck Raiser 11

Complements Rice Farming. The data revealed that most of the participants considered duck raising to be complementary to their rice farming; that in most flood-prone areas in town, rice farming may be difficult during rainy seasons, so to compensate for the lack of farming activities and jobs, duck raising is an alternative:

"In our case, just like my husband, we will buy in the month of June, sometimes May, depending on the harvest, sometimes we harvest early. We will then buy ducks, usually May-June then we will have the ducks wander in our rice fields since it's the rainy season. Not everybody plants because it floods. Usually planting around here is October –November". Current Duck Raiser 16

"I don't go full time in duck raising, only in this time, then October I will remove it already. Because I will plant rice here. Because I do not plant in rainy seasons yet due to flooding so, I put in ducks". Current Duck Raiser 18

Require Knowledge and Techniques. Based on the participants' responses, duck raising could be a very good business that would certainly bring profits when one is knowledgeable and techniques are applied. Participants articulated that they have been in the industry for a number of years and that even in the sound of the duck and the appearance of their feathers they would know if they were filled with eggs:

"We know that already, from their feathers, sound, then you would see. Just by their sound you would know if they are already filled with eggs". Current Duck Raiser

"But if you didn't see the technique, for example, those that have the money. They will buy in

bulk then they will neglect it. If you do, then you need to work on it for them to produce more eggs, then everything that you have earned will be used up and it wouldn't be enough to recover. However, if you know the techniques, just like that guy that you have interviewed earlier, you will not be bankrupt". Current Duck Raiser 12

Decreased in Number but is still in Business. Data revealed that participants recognized the decrease in the number of duck raisers in the town of Hermosa but are well aware that there may be some that stopped but others are starting up. It is likewise mentioned in several instances that some temporarily stopped but would still eventually return to business while others are replaced.

"Maybe it will not be lost as long as people have a capital. It wasn't given much attention but in reality, there are a lot of duck raisers here, actually we have the greatest number of eggs produced". Current Duck Raiser 5

"Here in our town, there are a lot of duck raisers here, they never stopped. Because here in our barangay we never stopped". Current Duck Raiser 12

"There are people who stopped, there are also those who return". Current Duck Raiser 14

"At the moment, we still have duck raisers. So, we haven't lost it. There are just some time periods or seasons that it declines but there are those still willing to do duck raising here. At the moment we still have some in various barangays that have that type of business". Tourism Officer of Hermosa

"Maybe not, Because, we haven't lost the duck raising here in Hermosa. If some would leave some would add up. If their duck is 200, some 500, oh, it wasn't lost". Municipal Agriculturist of Hermosa

3.2 Findings on the Problems and Issues met by Duck Raisers

To determine the underlying reasons associated with the decreased number of duck raisers in Hermosa, the study covered the identification of possible reasons why participants along with their fellow duck raisers halted operations. Participants identified the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo, Bird Flu, Boracay Island Closure, Lack of Capital, Feeds Price and Quality, Urbanization, Developments, Calamities, People taking advantage, and Poor Succession to affect duck raising at varied levels.

"The start of the decline in duck raising was when Mt. Pinatubo erupted in 1991 because most of the duck raisers let their ducks wander in rice fields to save money. They won't buy feeds because the ducks would feed on snails and rice grains on the rice fields. That's why there are a lot of duck raisers then because it was less expensive, they no longer have to buy feeds. We pick up eggs as far as Zambales because duck raisers of Hermosa were there and in Pampanga, and other provinces. But almost all are from Hermosa. They only care for the ducks in those areas because of the spacious rice fields. Now when Mt. Pinatubo erupted, all of the rice fields were gone; meaning, it was covered with sand, therefore, ducks have nothing to eat until such time that they were sold, got culled to be eaten, and was sold as food. Duck raisers lost their livelihood. Since they are not rich, when they lost their ducks, they weren't able to replace them. When the time came that they can use the rice fields to tend to their ducks again, they already lost their capital and found other means to earn; that was the start of the decline in the number of duck raisers." Former Duck Egg Processor; Balutan 1

"Last year, in 2017 almost all duck raisers were in agony, it suddenly dropped because of the Bird Flu, but now, it is going up, the price of the egg went up". Current Duck Raiser 24

"There are a lot who stopped especially with bird flu, there was a lot that got bankrupt. We are a bit affected because we didn't know where to take the eggs because they were saying, bird flu". Current Duck Raiser 6

"We were affected by that; we almost went down twice. First with the Bird Flu then with Boracay Closure" Current Duck Raiser 11

"What Boracay needs if I'm not mistaken is 25,000 balut a week. That's why when Boracay was closed they lost their market". Current Duck Raiser 5

"There was a slight decline in profit, this is because of the low price given by those that collect the eggs. So that is one major discrepancy why we stopped and the price of the feeds is too high". Former Duck Raiser 1

“Price increases, price of the egg would go up minimally while feeds go up constantly”. Current Duck Raiser 12

“During the '80s if you are to look at Barangay San Pedro, in the mid area; almost all houses may have ducks, 200,300, 400 heads, but you can hardly see it now. They are almost gone. You would see the trend. So maybe it's due to urbanization because those places became subdivisions”. Former Duck Raiser1

“Before, my duck pen was just on the other side. Of course, there were complaints already, due to the noise and smell since there are a lot of houses already”. Current Duck Raiser 15

“Our population is one problem because we are getting bigger. Before just at the back of your house you can raise ducks because you do not have neighbors. That's why there are several duck raisers before. But now that the population grew, the residential area became bigger. That's why those that have them in backyards stopped because they are being complained”. Former Duck Raiser 1

“For now, there are duck raisers downtown, but those that are in barangays that have several houses already will be moved. Of course, if they do not have a place to go, they will no longer pursue it because they do not have a choice they will be forced since they are surrounded by houses and they do not have a rice field to transfer to so they will eventually stop”. Municipal Agricultural Officer

“Sometimes, there are limited rice fields to utilize for tending ducks. This is due to the harvest and early replanting”. Current Duck Raiser 9

“Another problem is that harvesting is faster, because of the use of machine. Sometimes, in just two weeks they will replant already. The rice field will no longer be used by those that release ducks to wander”. Current Duck Raiser 1

“The only problem is when there is flooding. Duck egg production decreases”. Former Duck Egg Raiser10

“The typhoon at times, floodwater would be in our area, because it's not perfect as to the elevation of the soil. If it's raining for a month, almost everywhere has water. Even if they will say it subsides if there is more pouring in”. Former Duck Raiser 4

“The generation, in another, the inheritance, nobody replaces them; for instance, our parents are duck raisers, no one replaces them to continue raising ducks. It's that, as a farmer, the dream of a parent is for their children to get an education, isn't it? Now, once you were able to send your child to school and became an Engineer, of course, that will no longer raise ducks. They will be employed or perhaps have their own business or whatever it may be. So that's why successor of duck raising is lost”. Former Duck Egg Processor; Balutan 1

“There are a lot. Like those, that probably have parents that have the expertise in (raising ducks) but when their children grew up and maybe finished their studies. When they finish, they don't want to raise ducks anymore. That's how it is”. Municipal Agriculturist of Hermosa

“No, because I already have a different line of work, when I was processing balut, I wasn't working then. But when I started working, I never went back on processing balut”. Former Duck Raiser

3.3 Findings on the Methods and Strategies utilized by active Duck Raisers to stay afloat in the industry

The study may lead to the improvement if not development of a practiced – based instructional manual for duck raising; that may complement the changing time, environment, resources, and community. The purpose of the inquiry is to identify the current state of the duck raising industry as well as possible points of interest that could be an initial source of information to generate more studies and possible extension projects to further assist in the improvement and or sustainability of duck raising industry in Hermosa. The researcher gathered the following:

Methods that Suite. With the varied topography of Hermosa, with 23 barangays spread across its landscape, every area has its resources and a unique capability to adapt the most suitable method to use in every location. Data revealed that there are two main methods used by duck raisers, duck house poultry, *Pagala*, or letting duck flock wander in rice fields while some applied both. Respondents were also able to identify three main stages/ages of ducks to start with; Duckling, locally known as *Seho*, *Kite*, *Malutog*; 6-month-old duck called *Dumalaga* and matured ducks locally referred to as *Manaon*.

“When the ducks are wandering in the rice fields there is no expense, in other words, you will only spend when there is flooding, you will buy palay”. Current Duck Raiser 16

Business expansion to Cope and Profit. The data revealed that participants utilize opportunities for extending more profit windows within the duck raising industry in the form of duck egg processing, duck meat selling, breeding, and other livestock options.

“It is even better because you can extend it. If you are hard-working, you can make salted eggs, you would have more profit. For example, you can sell the fresh egg at seven pesos and if you ferment the eggs, you can sell it for nine fifty, like that”. Current Duck Raiser 5

“There is no problem with duck raising. Since I didn’t start with ducklings, I prefer mature ones that have already been to poultry. I don’t have any problems, I don’t lose, I just buy it, like for 90 pesos. If I want to sell it cull, I can sell it for 100, it is like I already benefit from the eggs and the meat”. Current Duck Raiser 22

“I never stopped. Every year I get new ones. I don’t get loans but this time I have pigs and 45 days of chicken. So that when my duck is in molting, with the chicken, it would take a month and I’ll earn a profit, in the pigs, about three to four months”. Current Duck Raiser 24

Community Spirit. Data revealed that duck egg production and processing in the town of Hermosa were among families, friends, and communities that established camaraderie and good working relationships over the years. They practically grew up together sharing experiences and assistance they may extend as the needs arise.

“I buy eggs, that’s the help I can extend with my fellow duck raiser. Of course, if you are a duck raiser, then you don’t have a buyer to purchase your eggs, it’s nothing. During those times, our buyers declined because it cannot be disposed of”. Former Duck Raiser 3

“We are getting tired already, at my age, I don’t want to do it anymore. But I pity the people, they won’t have anything to sell, so I still do it. Every day they buy rice to feed their families from the profit they make. They are complaining too”. Current Duck Egg Processor; Balutan3

“We are planning, that by December when we release ducklings, I will take him (whose poultry was washed out from the flood) as an assistant, then I will give him 200 heads because that was 700. That’s what the plan with my husband”. Current Duck Raiser 24

“Of course, you are to seek permission with the farm owner, and when it’s time for them to plant rice, we will look for a different one”. Current Duck Raiser 10

“It is also with how you mingle with the neighboring farm when tending to ducks in the field”. Current Duck Raiser 20

Understanding Duck Characteristics. Data revealed that participants over the number of years of experience and acquired knowledge from their parents were able to gauge the needs of the ducks as they tend to them and respond to the required care to maximize productivity while being able to work with the resources available to them.

“Ducks are sensitive; if cats, dogs, or chickens went in their pen the production of eggs will decrease”. Current Duck Egg Processor; Balutan3

“Problem there are animals like dogs, because when you leave them in the rice field, then there were stray dogs, they will kill the ducks. That’s the second problem of the ducks, the dogs”. Current Duck Raiser 19

“When they get disturbed, they won’t have any eggs. You are to watch out for everything, if there’s a dog, anything, including people”. Current Duck Raiser 10

“Also, I only allow one person to enter their pen, my employee. Even in clothes they only want one color of the person who enters. They know the scent; we can try to enter and they will be disturbed. But if he will enter, the ducks even go run after him”. Current Duck Raiser 23

“Also, when it’s the season for molting, there, the egg production is low”. Current Duck Raiser 8

“In duck raising, when the weather changes the egg production will decrease”. Current Duck Processor Balutan 3

4. Discussion

Based on the results of the study it can be reckoned that the duck Raising Industry in the town of Hermosa has

been part of the growing up years of the participants and has greatly influenced their choice of livelihood. It can be concluded that the second generation of duck raisers in the family take on the business but is unlikely to be favored by the 3rd generation in the family due to shifting careers and varied interests. The duck raising industry remains to be a good source of income and is appreciated by farmers for the quick daily turnout of profits and is suited for daily consumption. However, problems with the price and quality of feeds, flooding, and capitalization were highly observed. Duck raising is complementary to rice farming as it serves as an alternative livelihood during rainy seasons. It is likewise evident that residents strengthened resiliency in going about adapting to the threats of flooding is the creation of a scheduling scheme alternating rice farming and duck raising. However, it is not without risks and inconveniences toward maximization of profits. It can be decided that through knowledge acquired from their parents and relatives along with personal experiences, Hermosa duck raisers were able to identify best practices, techniques, and methods in duck raising. The duck raising industry in Hermosa has declined but cannot be reckoned to have been lost for though some stopped, some are starting while others return on an irregular basis to provide for capitalization in between.

It is recommended that succession planning be extended to families with an inclination to take on the business. It is also recommended that the Local Government Unit of Hermosa, use the Duck Raising Industry to create a platform for its Local Tourism and capitalize on the industry that has been associated with the municipality for decades; the Provincial Government or national agencies may be tapped to see about getting financial support for the duck raisers in terms of capitalization and or government subsidies. With the observed concern on the quality and price of duck feeds; it is recommended that the pool of agricultural experts and scientists through research in State Universities and other related agencies see about developing a cheaper and equally adequate type of feeds to alleviate the burden of duck raisers experience on the price of commercial feeds. Though the farmers and duck raisers manage to go about the flooding situation, it is recommended that Engineering and Architecture Departments in the university lead a team of researchers that may come up with projects that may help ease flooding problems thru innovative engineering and other similar assistance that can be corroborated with the Local Government Unit of Hermosa. A second phase of the study may be made to document the best practices, techniques, and strategies of the Duck Raisers of Hermosa and come up with a practical, experience and practice-based learning manual to help standardize duck farming and to preserve the Duck Raising Culture of Hermosa into an Outcomes-based book. In terms of the highlighting commodities, it is suggested that the One Town One Product of the Town of Hermosa remain to be the iconic delicacy *Balut*, for though there is a decline in the number of duck raisers that produce and process it, the industry itself is still thriving and further measures and in-depth analysis may first be made if a replacement is to be considered. Future researchers may also use the results of this study to conduct quantitative research to further investigate leading to the development of a Business Model in collaboration with the Local Government for the duck raisers and processors to follow.

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