

Rural Tourism Development in the Philippines: Balancing Economic Growth with Ecological and Socio-Cultural Sustainability



Meralyn Supera¹, Erlita Guerra², Eric Villamar³, Cris Saranza⁴

^{1,2,3,4}Graduate School and Professional Studies, St. Paul University-Surigao, Philippines

^{2,3}College of Business and Technology, St. Paul University-Surigao, Philippines

ABSTRACT: This descriptive study investigated the perceived impacts and challenges of rural tourism in Surigao del Norte, Philippines. A survey of 400 stakeholders from 20 municipalities was conducted to assess perceptions regarding economic, socio-cultural, and ecological capital. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, and chi-square tests and z-tests were employed to analyze differences between demographic groups and correlations between perceived impacts and challenges. The findings revealed a predominantly positive perception of rural tourism's impacts on all three forms of capital, with significant benefits identified in job creation, investment attraction, cultural exchange, and environmental conservation. However, challenges related to infrastructure, business support, environmental protection, and community involvement were also highlighted, with perceptions of economic challenges varying significantly among stakeholder categories. This research contributes valuable insights for the development of sustainable and inclusive rural tourism strategies in the region.

KEYWORDS: Rural Tourism, Economic, Socio-Cultural, Ecological, Sustainability

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism plays a significant role in supporting rural development, both directly and indirectly. However, for this growth to be sustainable and aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, effective policies with positive economic, social, and cultural impacts must be implemented. Studies have shown that rural tourism can make substantial contributions to local economies and communities, but its success depends on careful planning and management (López-Sanz et al., 2021). This study aims to assess the contribution of rural tourism to inform the creation and implementation of such policies.

The global tourism industry, while significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, is demonstrating a promising recovery. In 2022, international tourist arrivals doubled compared to the previous year, reaching 917 million, though still below pre-pandemic levels (UNWTO, 2023). However, recent data reveals that in 2023, international tourism receipts reached USD 1.4 trillion, demonstrating the industry's strong economic recovery (UNWTO, 2024). Easing travel restrictions, pent-up demand, and increased digitalization are key drivers of this rebound. As the industry evolves, there is a growing emphasis on sustainable tourism practices, reflecting travelers' increasing desire for environmentally and socially responsible destinations.

In the Philippines, tourism is recognized as a crucial component of the national economy and an industry of national interest, as stipulated in the Philippine Tourism Act 2009 (Republic Act No. 9593). This act emphasizes the role of sustainable tourism in driving economic growth and improving the lives of Filipinos, as outlined in the National Tourism Development Plan 2023-2028 (Department of Tourism, 2023b). Pilar (2020) highlights the importance of balancing economic development with environmental and social responsibility to ensure the sustainability of tourism in the Philippines. The act mandates the creation and regular updating of a national tourism plan to identify areas with tourism potential and guide the industry's direction.

Environmental considerations are also paramount in the Philippines, particularly as tourism development expands. The Philippine Clean Air Act 1999 (Republic Act No. 8749) serves as the primary environmental law, aiming to protect and maintain air quality—a critical factor in preserving the natural attractions that draw tourists to rural areas like Surigao del Norte. This act regulates sources of pollution, promotes sustainable practices, and sets standards for emissions, compliance monitoring, and air

Rural Tourism Development in the Philippines: Balancing Economic Growth with Ecological and Socio-Cultural Sustainability

quality management. Such measures are essential for balancing the economic benefits of tourism with the preservation of the environmental resources upon which it depends.

The province of Surigao del Norte, a group of islands in the CARAGA region, boasts abundant natural beauty, including beaches, rock formations, caves, and mangrove forests. The island of Siargao, known as the "Surfing Capital of the Philippines," has experienced rapid tourism growth since surfing was introduced in the 1980s, gaining international recognition. Despite the growing importance of rural tourism, research is scarce on its impact in the Philippines, particularly in Surigao del Norte. This study aims to address this gap by assessing the impact and challenges of rural tourism in the province and proposing recommendations for improvement.

Global Phenomenon and Local Significance of Rural Tourism

Rural tourism has emerged as a significant global phenomenon, particularly in the Philippines, where it is seen as a potential driver for sustainable development, livelihood diversification, and the preservation of cultural and natural heritage. Recent studies have underscored the positive impacts of rural tourism, emphasizing its role in income generation, biodiversity conservation, and social transformation (Yamagishi et al., 2021).

The Philippines, with its diverse landscapes and cultural traditions, is well-suited for the growth of rural tourism. The government has shown commitment to this sector through initiatives like the Farm Tourism Development Act of 2016, which aims to facilitate the development and promotion of agricultural tourism activities (Kazmina et al., 2021). However, challenges such as limited infrastructure, access to finance, and capacity building need to be addressed to fully harness the potential of rural tourism in the country (You, 2022).

Rural tourism not only offers economic benefits but also contributes to environmental sustainability. Studies have shown that the integrated development of agriculture and tourism can have a positive correlation with the quality of the rural ecological environment, highlighting the potential for enhancing environmental quality through tourism activities (Wang et al., 2022). Additionally, rural tourism can play a role in improving the quality of life for rural populations by generating income and promoting cultural exchange (Podovac et al., 2019).

Impacts of Rural Tourism on a Multifaceted Landscape

The economic impacts of rural tourism are a complex interplay of benefits and challenges. Studies like Torres et al. (2019) and Briones et al. (2020) have documented the positive effects of rural tourism on income generation, employment, and local economic stimulation, particularly through farm tourism initiatives. However, Hall (2019) cautions that the distribution of economic benefits is not always equitable, with potential negative impacts such as increased land prices and resource competition. To ensure that economic gains are fairly shared among the community, a focus on community-based approaches and equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms is essential (Mbaiwa & Stronza, 2019).

Rural tourism's influence on socio-cultural dynamics is equally multifaceted. Richards and Wilson (2018) highlight the positive outcomes, such as the revitalization of cultural traditions, fostering community pride, and facilitating cultural exchange. However, the potential for cultural commodification, loss of authenticity, and social disruption cannot be overlooked (Scheyvens, 2022). Wearing & Neil (2023) emphasize the importance of active community participation in tourism planning and decision-making to mitigate negative impacts and ensure tourism respects and enhances local values.

The relationship between rural tourism and environmental protection is another critical consideration. While tourism can raise environmental awareness and contribute to conservation efforts, it also carries the risk of increased pollution, waste generation, and pressure on natural resources (Buckley, 2021). Considering a balance between tourism development and environmental protection requires the adoption of sustainable tourism practices, including responsible waste management, renewable energy utilization, and support for conservation initiatives (Gössling, 2019).

Challenges and Opportunities to Sustainable Rural Tourism

Rural tourism in the Philippines faces a set of challenges that must be addressed to achieve sustainable development. Infrastructure limitations, including inadequate roads, transportation, and sanitation facilities, pose significant obstacles (Department of Tourism, 2023a). Limited marketing and promotion efforts can also hinder the visibility of rural destinations (Tan, 2020). Furthermore, ensuring the quality of tourism products and services is crucial for attracting and retaining visitors (Department of Tourism, 2021). Addressing these challenges necessitates a collaborative approach involving stakeholders, investment in infrastructure, sustainable practices, and robust community engagement.

To ensure the sustainable development of rural tourism, it is essential to consider factors such as community attitudes, economic literacy, and the socio-cultural impacts of tourism development. Understanding residents' attitudes towards tourism impacts, enhancing economic literacy, and fostering community-based tourism can contribute to the long-term success of rural

Rural Tourism Development in the Philippines: Balancing Economic Growth with Ecological and Socio-Cultural Sustainability

tourism initiatives (Pavlić et al., 2019). Moreover, leveraging local wisdom in spatial planning and promoting sustainability advantages in rural tourism destinations can further enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of rural tourism offerings (Tou et al., 2020; Nuringsih et al., 2020).

While existing research provides valuable insights into rural tourism, there remains a gap in understanding the specific impacts and challenges in the context of Surigao del Norte. This study addressed this gap by investigating the local context, perceptions, and experiences of stakeholders. By focusing on the unique characteristics of Surigao del Norte, this research aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on rural tourism in the Philippines and inform strategies for sustainable development that benefit both the local community and the environment.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) and the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) theory, providing a comprehensive lens to examine the impacts and challenges of rural tourism in Surigao del Norte. The SLF emphasizes the interconnectedness of five capitals - human, social, natural, physical, and financial - and how they interact to shape livelihood outcomes (Scoones, 1998). This framework enables an analysis of how rural tourism affects the well-being of local communities by examining its influence on these various forms of capital. In the context of Surigao del Norte, this study will investigate whether tourism creates employment opportunities (human capital), strengthens community bonds (social capital), impacts natural resources (natural capital), leads to infrastructure development (physical capital), and generates income for residents (financial capital).

Complementing the SLF, the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) theory (Elkington, 1997) provides a holistic framework for evaluating the sustainability of rural tourism. This theory underscores the significance of balancing economic, social, and environmental considerations. In Surigao del Norte, this will involve assessing the economic impact of tourism through income generation, employment opportunities, and business development. It will also examine the socio-cultural impacts, including changes in cultural practices, community cohesion, and perceptions of tourism. Additionally, the study will evaluate the environmental impact by examining the effects on natural resources, pollution levels, and environmental awareness. By integrating the SLF and TBL, this study will provide a comprehensive assessment of the impacts and challenges of rural tourism in Surigao del Norte, ultimately informing recommendations for sustainable tourism development that benefits both the local community and the environment.

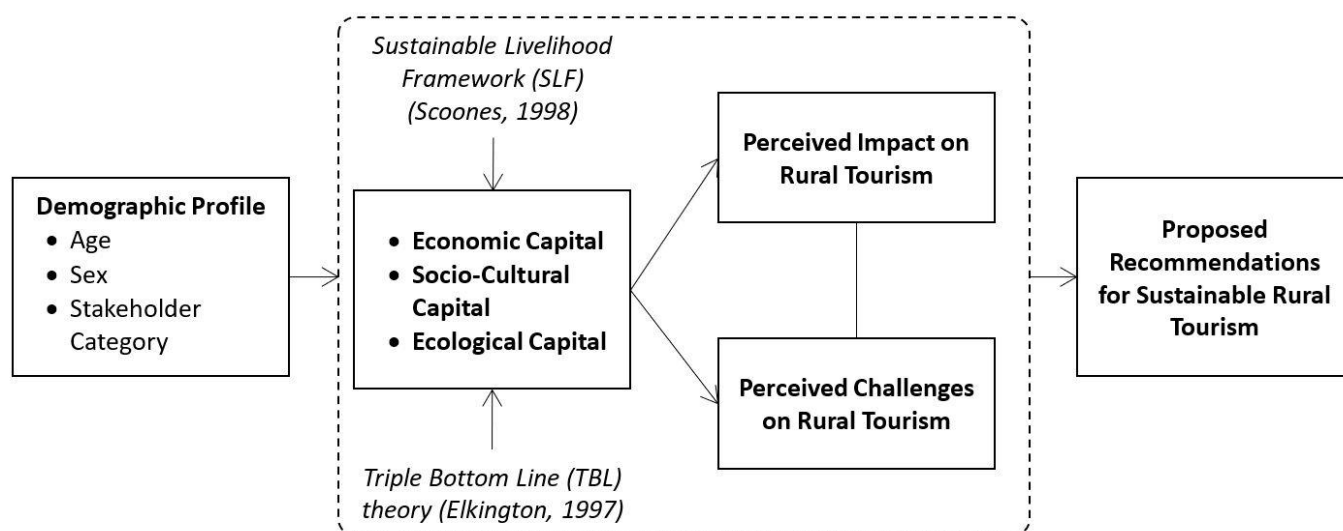


Figure 1. Research Framework of the Study

The framework illustrates the intricate relationship between rural tourism and sustainable livelihoods by drawing upon the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) and the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) theory. It recognizes the diverse demographic profiles of individuals involved in rural tourism, considering factors such as age, sex, and stakeholder categories as crucial in understanding their contributions. The SLF highlights the significance of various capital assets, including economic, socio-cultural, and ecological capital, in shaping rural tourism outcomes. The framework investigates the perceived impacts of rural tourism while also exploring the perceived challenges faced by the industry. By integrating the TBL theory, the framework emphasizes the importance of these dimensions when formulating recommendations for sustainable rural tourism. These recommendations aim to enhance positive impacts and mitigate challenges, ensuring a balanced and sustainable approach. The framework underscores the

Rural Tourism Development in the Philippines: Balancing Economic Growth with Ecological and Socio-Cultural Sustainability

interconnectedness of demographic factors, capital assets, impacts, and challenges, highlighting the presence of feedback loops that necessitate a holistic and adaptive approach to management and decision-making. Overall, this framework provides a comprehensive lens for analyzing rural tourism through the lens of sustainable livelihoods, offering valuable insights for developing effective strategies to promote sustainable practices in the industry.

II. METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive research design to analyze the data systematically. Descriptive research is well-suited for investigations aiming to gain insights into the current state of phenomena, quantifying group characteristics, and identifying prevailing conditions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It collects and analyzes data to describe and summarize various aspects of a particular topic or issue, offering a snapshot of the research subject (Saunders et al., 2019). By employing a descriptive approach, this research aimed to present a detailed and quantitative description of the rural tourism landscape in Surigao del Norte, shedding light on its current state and potential areas for future development.

Participants

This study was conducted in the province of Surigao del Norte, Philippines, a region renowned for its international water sports events and burgeoning tourism industry. Specifically, the research encompassed 20 municipalities within the province. The study population consisted of 400 diverse stakeholders vital to the rural tourism sector in Surigao del Norte. It utilized a convenience sampling method, and participants were selected from three distinct categories: 89 tourists, 117 business operators/owners, and 194 community residents. These stakeholders represent individuals or groups who both rely on and contribute to the success of the tourism industry in the region. To ensure a representative sample and address potential vulnerabilities, specific inclusion/exclusion criteria were applied. Business operators/owners were required to be actively engaged in tourism-related businesses (e.g., hotels, restaurants, transportation) and hold managerial or ownership positions. Tourists were defined as individuals or groups visiting the area for either leisure or business purposes. Community residents were required to have resided in their respective municipalities for a minimum of one year.

Research Instrument

An adapted survey questionnaire from the study of Katoch (2016) on the impacts of rural tourism on local community development served as the primary data collection instrument. Modifications were made to ensure the questionnaire's suitability for Filipino respondents. The questionnaire comprised three parts: Part 1 gathered respondent profile data, Part 2 assessed the impact of rural tourism on economic, socio-cultural, and ecological dimensions in Surigao del Norte, and Part 3 explored the challenges faced by rural tourism in the province. The questionnaire's reliability and internal consistency were verified using Cronbach's alpha, yielding an acceptable value of 0.785.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were employed to summarize respondent profiles and assess the degree of impacts and challenges (Turner & Houle, 2019). These statistics provide a comprehensive overview of the data, offering insights into the distribution and central tendencies of the variables under investigation. Non-parametric tests, such as the Mann-Whitney U test and the Kruskal-Wallis H-test, were utilized to examine differences in impacts and challenges based on respondent characteristics like sex, age, and stakeholder category (Mishra et al., 2019). These tests are particularly valuable when data do not meet the assumptions of normality required for parametric tests. The decision to employ non-parametric tests was based on the results of Shapiro-Wilk tests, which indicated non-normal distributions for some data (Mishra et al., 2019). Additionally, the Spearman rho correlation was used to assess the relationship between the degree of impacts and challenges.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Demographic Profile

The demographic profile gathered for the rural tourism perception survey in Surigao del Norte reveals a diverse sample. Gender distribution is nearly equal (49.5% male, 50.5% female), suggesting some interest from both genders in rural tourism. The prevalence of young adults (18-27 years old, 36.3%) aligns with a possible focus on attracting a younger demographic for adventure or eco-travel experiences (Liu et al., 2020). The significant presence of community residents (48.5%) is crucial for understanding local perceptions and potential concerns regarding rural tourism development (Nguyen, 2019). The business owner/operator segment (29.3%) provides insights into the economic perspectives and needs of those directly involved in rural tourism offerings.

Rural Tourism Development in the Philippines: Balancing Economic Growth with Ecological and Socio-Cultural Sustainability

While tourists (local/foreign) represent the smallest group (22.2%), their presence allows for gauging visitor experiences and preferences.

The age distribution suggests a focus on attracting a younger demographic, possibly interested in activities like surfing, diving, or exploring natural attractions. However, further research within the survey can explore if experiences cater to a wider range of age groups. Recent studies suggest a growing interest in multigenerational travel, highlighting the potential to expand the target audience (Kim et al., 2023). The high number of community residents emphasizes the importance of understanding their perspectives on the potential benefits and drawbacks of rural tourism development. The survey can delve into their level of support, concerns, and expectations for tourism projects. Community engagement is crucial for sustainable tourism development (Nguyen, 2019). The business owner/operator segment allows for insights into existing challenges and opportunities within the rural tourism sector. The survey can explore their experiences, needs for infrastructure or support, and their perception of tourist preferences. Understanding their needs is essential for developing tourism initiatives that benefit both businesses and the local community (Hall & Page, 2002).

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondents

| | Frequency (n=400) | Percentage (%) |
|------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Sex | | |
| Male | 198 | 49.5 |
| Female | 202 | 50.5 |
| Age | | |
| 18-27 years old | 145 | 36.3 |
| 28-37 years old | 75 | 18.7 |
| 38-47 years old | 72 | 18.0 |
| 48-57 years old | 46 | 11.5 |
| 58 years old and above | 62 | 15.5 |
| Stakeholders Category | | |
| Tourists (Local/Foreign) | 89 | 22.2 |
| Business Operators/Owners | 117 | 29.3 |
| Community Residents | 194 | 48.5 |

By analyzing responses across demographic groups and stakeholder categories, the survey can reveal variations in perceptions of rural tourism. For instance, younger tourists might prioritize adventure activities, while community residents might be more concerned about cultural preservation. Similarly, business owners might highlight infrastructure needs, while local tourists might emphasize accessibility and local product integration.

Perceived Impact of Rural Tourism

Table 2. Perceived Impact of Rural Tourism in terms of Economic Capital

| Indicators | Mean | SD | Verbal Description | Interpretation |
|---|------|------|--------------------|------------------|
| 1. Rural tourism has generated new job opportunities in the community. | 3.29 | 1.02 | Completely Agree | Very High Impact |
| 2. Due to rural tourism, the basic facilities and infrastructure have been built and developed. | 3.02 | 0.90 | Mostly Agree | High Impact |
| 3. Rural tourism leads to an increase in the production of local products. | 3.01 | 1.07 | Mostly Agree | High Impact |
| 4. Rural tourism has attracted investors to invest in rural areas. | 3.26 | 0.89 | Completely Agree | Very High Impact |
| 5. Tourism increases the income of rural communities by offering their land and property for lease. | 3.12 | 0.99 | Mostly Agree | High Impact |
| 6. Rural tourism growth and development have resulted in high prices of land and property. | 3.24 | 0.92 | Mostly Agree | High Impact |

Rural Tourism Development in the Philippines: Balancing Economic Growth with Ecological and Socio-Cultural Sustainability

| | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 7. Rural tourism leads to an increase in business establishments in the locality. | 3.13 | 0.97 | Mostly Agree | High Impact |
| Average | 3.15 | 0.97 | Mostly Agree | High Impact |

Legend:

| Parameter | Verbal Description | Interpretation |
|-------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 3.25 - 4.00 | Completely Agree | Very High Impact |
| 2.50 - 3.24 | Mostly Agree | High Impact |
| 1.75 - 2.49 | Somewhat Agree | Moderate Impact |
| 1.00 - 1.74 | Slightly Disagree | Low Impact |

The survey results, as illustrated in Table 2, reveal the perceived impact of rural tourism on economic capital among the respondents. Most respondents "Mostly Agree" that rural tourism has a significant positive impact on various economic aspects. The highest perceived impact (Mean = 3.29, SD = 1.02) is related to job creation within the community, indicating a widespread belief that rural tourism is a significant driver of employment opportunities. Similarly, attracting investments and increasing land and property values are also perceived as having a "Very High Impact" (Mean = 3.26 and 3.24, respectively). Respondents also "Mostly Agree" that rural tourism positively influences infrastructure development, local product production, income generation through leasing, and the growth of local businesses. The average mean across all indicators is 3.15 (SD = 0.97), solidifying the overall perception of a "High Impact" on economic capital.

The findings align with recent literature that highlights the economic benefits of rural tourism. Job creation, as emphasized by the respondents, is a well-documented outcome of tourism development (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Tourism-induced infrastructure development and investment attraction are also consistent with previous studies (Adu-Ampong et al., 2021). The respondents' perception of increased local production and income generation resonates with the concept of tourism as a catalyst for economic diversification in rural areas (Perkins & Long, 2018). However, the high perceived impact on land and property values raises concerns about potential negative consequences, such as increased living costs and displacement of residents (Hall, 2019).

Thus, these results suggest a strong positive perception of its impact on economic capital among the respondents. While this is encouraging, it is important to acknowledge the potential downsides associated with rapid tourism development, particularly concerning land and property values. Additionally, it would be valuable to investigate the views of different stakeholders, including residents, business owners, and policymakers, to gain a more widespread understanding of the economic implications of rural tourism (Boley et al., 2022).

Table 3. Perceived Impact of Rural Tourism in terms of Socio-Cultural Capital

| Indicators | Mean | SD | Verbal Description | Interpretation |
|--|-------------|-------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Rural tourism leads to the prevention of local culture and heritage. | 2.88 | 1.05 | Mostly Agree | High Impact |
| 2. Rural tourism boosts the cultural identity and pride of the local community. | 2.01 | 1.08 | Somewhat Agree | Moderate Impact |
| 3. Rural tourism promotes local dishes and traditional clothes by selling them to tourists. | 3.03 | 1.15 | Mostly Agree | High Impact |
| 4. The presence of rural tourism brings awareness to sustaining and protecting local brands. | 2.31 | 1.05 | Somewhat Agree | Moderate Impact |
| 5. Rural tourism allows rural communities to share culture and respect other cultures as well. | 3.17 | 1.08 | Mostly Agree | High Impact |
| 6. The local community established its rules and regulations to protect the locality. | 2.56 | 1.23 | Mostly Agree | High Impact |
| 7. Rural tourism becomes a tool to alleviate poverty and sustain development. | 2.83 | 1.20 | Mostly Agree | High Impact |
| 8. Rural Tourism promotes interpersonal learning interactions between the tourist and the locality | 3.29 | 0.88 | Completely Agree | Very High Impact |
| Average | 2.76 | 1.17 | Mostly Agree | High Impact |

Rural Tourism Development in the Philippines: Balancing Economic Growth with Ecological and Socio-Cultural Sustainability

The survey results (Table 3) reveal the perceived impact of rural tourism on socio-cultural capital among respondents. While there is some variation in responses, the majority "Mostly Agree" that rural tourism significantly impacts socio-cultural aspects. The highest perceived impact (Mean = 3.29, SD = 0.88) relates to fostering interpersonal learning interactions between tourists and the local community, indicating a widespread belief that rural tourism promotes cultural exchange and understanding. Additionally, the perception that rural tourism allows for cultural sharing and respect is also strong, with respondents "Mostly Agreeing" (Mean = 3.17, SD = 1.08). Respondents also "Mostly Agree" that rural tourism contributes to preserving local culture and heritage, promoting local products like dishes and clothing, and alleviating poverty while sustaining development. The establishment of local rules and regulations to protect the community is also seen as having a "High Impact," though the mean (2.56) is slightly lower compared to other indicators. Conversely, the impact of rural tourism on boosting cultural identity and pride and raising awareness about local brands is perceived as more "Moderate" (Mean = 2.01 and 2.31, respectively). Overall, the average mean across all indicators is 2.76 (SD = 1.17), aligning with the general perception of a "High Impact" on socio-cultural capital.

The findings echo recent research on the socio-cultural impacts of rural tourism. For example, the perceived high impact on interpersonal learning aligns with studies emphasizing the role of tourism in fostering cross-cultural understanding and exchange (Sharpley & Telfer, 2018). The positive perception of tourism's role in preserving local culture and heritage resonates with findings by Boley et al. (2022), who found that tourism can contribute to revitalizing and celebrating local traditions. However, the moderate impact on cultural identity and pride highlights the need for caution, as excessive tourism can sometimes lead to cultural commodification and loss of authenticity (Scheyvens, 2020). The establishment of local rules and regulations, as acknowledged by respondents, may serve as a crucial mechanism to mitigate such negative impacts.

The results suggest a predominantly positive perception of its impact on socio-cultural capital. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge the nuanced nature of these impacts, with some areas requiring greater attention to ensure sustainable and responsible tourism development.

Table 4. Perceived Impact of Rural Tourism in terms of Ecological Capital

| Indicators | Mean | SD | Verbal Description | Interpretation |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Rural tourism leads to the prevention of the natural resources and landscape. | 3.41 | 0.89 | Completely Agree | Very High Impact |
| 2. Rural tourism leads to the implementation of renewable energy-saving technology. | 3.02 | 0.96 | Mostly Agree | High Impact |
| 3. Rural tourism makes the community practice proper waste disposal. | 3.38 | 0.92 | Completely Agree | Very High Impact |
| 4. Rural tourism helps locals use their lands and resources in more sustainable ways. | 3.53 | 0.82 | Completely Agree | Very High Impact |
| 5. Due to rural tourism, garbage and littering are managed properly. | 3.49 | 0.87 | Completely Agree | Very High Impact |
| 6. Due to tourism, land use planning and building regulations are implemented. | 3.35 | 0.95 | Completely Agree | Very High Impact |
| 7. Due to tourism protection of wild habitats is implemented. | 2.67 | 1.23 | Mostly Agree | High Impact |
| Average | 3.26 | 0.99 | Completely Agree | Very High Impact |

Moreover, Table 4 highlights the perceived impact of rural tourism on ecological capital among the respondents. The majority "Completely Agree" that rural tourism significantly and positively affects various ecological aspects. The highest perceived impact (Mean = 3.53, SD = 0.82) relates to rural tourism's influence on locals using land and resources more sustainably. Similarly, respondents strongly believe that rural tourism leads to proper waste disposal, garbage management, and land-use planning and building regulation implementation, all of which are perceived as having a "Very High Impact" (Means ranging from 3.35 to 3.49). Additionally, respondents "Completely Agree" that rural tourism contributes to the preservation of natural resources and landscapes (Mean = 3.41, SD = 0.89), further emphasizing the perceived positive ecological impact. Although the mean for tourism's role in implementing renewable and energy-saving technologies is slightly lower (Mean = 3.02, SD = 0.96), it still falls within the "High Impact" category. The lowest perceived impact (Mean = 2.67, SD = 1.23) pertains to the implementation of wild

Rural Tourism Development in the Philippines: Balancing Economic Growth with Ecological and Socio-Cultural Sustainability

habitat protection due to tourism. However, even this indicator leans towards a "High Impact" interpretation. Overall, the average mean across all indicators is 3.26 (SD = 0.99), solidifying the overall perception of a "Very High Impact" on ecological capital.

The findings are consistent with recent research emphasizing the potential of rural tourism to promote sustainable environmental practices (Diedrich & García-Buades, 2020). The respondents' strong agreement regarding sustainable land use, waste management, and resource conservation aligns with studies highlighting tourism's capacity to incentivize environmentally friendly behaviors (Boley et al., 2022). Furthermore, the perceived positive impact on natural resource preservation reflects the growing recognition of tourism's role in raising awareness and promoting conservation efforts (Hall, 2019). However, the relatively lower perceived impact on wild habitat protection suggests that this aspect might require more targeted interventions and policies to ensure its effectiveness.

The survey results paint a promising picture of the perceived impact of rural tourism on ecological capital. The respondents' overwhelming agreement regarding various positive ecological outcomes underscores the potential of rural tourism to drive sustainable development. However, it is critical to remain cautious about potential negative ecological consequences, such as increased resource consumption and habitat disturbance (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Additionally, it would be beneficial to explore the views of diverse stakeholders, including environmental organizations and communities, to gain a complete understanding of the ecological implications of rural tourism.

Perceived Level of Challenges in Rural Tourism

The survey results, depicted in Table 5, reveal the perceived challenges of rural tourism in terms of economic capital among respondents. The majority "Mostly Agree" that several challenges significantly hinder the economic development of rural tourism. The most pressing challenge, as perceived by the respondents, is the poor promotion and advertisement of rural tourism (Mean = 3.36, SD = 0.92), indicating a "Very High Level" of concern. Followed by the reliance of local businesses on loans as their leading source of working capital, as well as the dominance of foreign investors in the local business community (Mean = 3.21 for both). Respondents also "Mostly Agree" that the lack of government financial and technical support, high local taxation and regulatory requirements, and the seasonality of tourism businesses pose significant challenges. The average mean across all indicators is 2.81 (SD = 1.12), aligning with the overall perception of a "High Level" of challenges. Notably, the perceived challenge of expensive accommodation is considered "Moderate" (Mean = 2.47, SD = 1.18), while insufficient government budget allocation for sustainable tourism development is the least pressing concern, with respondents "Slightly Disagreeing" (Mean = 1.72, SD = 1.07).

Table 5. Perceived Level of Challenges of Rural Tourism in terms of Economic Capital

| Indicators | Mean | SD | Verbal Description | Interpretation |
|--|-------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Lack of financial and technical support from the government. | 2.83 | 1.21 | Mostly Agree | High Level |
| 2. Poor tourism promotion and advertisement | 3.36 | 0.92 | Completely Agree | Very High Level |
| 3. Expensive accommodation. | 2.47 | 1.18 | Somewhat Agree | Moderate Level |
| 4. Insufficient budget allocation of government for sustainable tourism development. | 1.72 | 1.07 | Slightly Disagree | Low Level |
| 5. High local taxation and other regulatory requirements. | 2.68 | 1.23 | Mostly Agree | High Level |
| 6. Seasonality of tourism business. | 3.05 | 1.14 | Mostly Agree | High Level |
| 7. Foreign investors dominated the local business community. | 3.21 | 1.05 | Mostly Agree | High Level |
| 8. Local business relies mostly on loans as their working capital. | 3.21 | 1.06 | Mostly Agree | High Level |
| Average | 2.81 | 1.22 | Mostly Agree | High Level |

Legend:

| Parameter | Verbal Description | Interpretation |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| 3.25 - 4.00 | Completely Agree | Very High Level |
| 2.50 - 3.24 | Mostly Agree | High Level |
| 1.75 - 2.49 | Somewhat Agree | Moderate Level |
| 1.00 - 1.74 | Slightly Disagree | Low Level |

Rural Tourism Development in the Philippines: Balancing Economic Growth with Ecological and Socio-Cultural Sustainability

The findings echo existing literature on the challenges faced by rural tourism destinations. The lack of sufficient financial and technical support from governments has been identified as a major constraint in many developing countries (Sharpley & Telfer, 2018). The dominance of foreign investors and the reliance on loans by local businesses can also exacerbate economic inequalities and limit the benefits accruing to local communities (Hall, 2019). The concerns about poor tourism promotion and the seasonality of tourism businesses highlight the need for strategic marketing and product diversification to attract a broader range of tourists and ensure year-round economic activity (Perkins & Long, 2018). Thus creating visually appealing and interactive experiences for tourists in rural destinations. This could involve designing attractive displays at visitor centers, using signage to highlight local attractions, or creating engaging online content that showcases the unique features of the area (Saranza et al., 2024b). The high local taxation and regulatory requirements may also deter investment and hinder the growth of small businesses (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

The results highlight the multitude of challenges that rural tourism destinations face in terms of economic capital. While rural tourism offers significant potential for economic development, these challenges need to be addressed to ensure its sustainability and inclusivity. It would be valuable to compare the perceived challenges across different rural tourism destinations to identify commonalities and context-specific issues.

Table 6. Perceived Level of Challenges of Rural Tourism in terms of Socio-Cultural Capital

| Indicators | Mean | SD | Verbal Description | Interpretation |
|--|-------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Absence of 24-hour services on basic facilities like safe water, electricity and communication. | 3.02 | 1.12 | Mostly Agree | High Level |
| 2. Untrained, unskilled, and incompetent tourism workers. | 3.10 | 1.01 | Mostly Agree | High Level |
| 3. Lack of tourist safety and security measures. | 3.21 | 1.05 | Mostly Agree | High Level |
| 4. Lack of government grants and subsidies. | 2.95 | 1.02 | Mostly Agree | High Level |
| 5. The government did not involve the local community to participate in the planning of tourism activities and developments. | 3.04 | 1.14 | Mostly Agree | High Level |
| 6. Limited improvement on roads and transport facilities. | 2.89 | 1.23 | Mostly Agree | High Level |
| 7. Food shortages and availability of utilities. | 3.24 | 1.07 | Mostly Agree | High Level |
| 8. Social change and culture clashes | 2.98 | 1.11 | Mostly Agree | High Level |
| Average | 3.05 | 1.10 | Mostly Agree | High Level |

The results presented in Table 6 reveal the perceived challenges of rural tourism in terms of socio-cultural capital among respondents. The majority "Mostly Agree" that several challenges significantly hinder the socio-cultural development of rural tourism. The most pressing challenge, as perceived by the respondents, is the lack of tourist safety and security measures (Mean = 3.24, SD = 1.07), indicating a "High Level" of concern. This is closely followed by the lack of 24-hour services on basic facilities like safe water, electricity, and communication (Mean = 3.21, SD = 1.05), as well as untrained, unskilled, and incompetent tourism workers (Mean = 3.10, SD = 1.01). Respondents also "Mostly Agree" that the government's lack of involvement of the locality in tourism planning and development, limited improvement on roads and transport facilities, and food shortages and availability of utilities are significant challenges. The average mean across all indicators is 3.05 (SD = 1.10), confirming the overall perception of a "High Level" of challenges. Notably, the perceived challenge of social change and culture clashes is considered "High" but slightly less pressing than other factors (Mean = 2.98, SD = 1.11). Similarly, the lack of government grants and subsidies is also perceived as a "High Level" challenge, though the mean (2.95) is slightly lower compared to other indicators.

The findings align with current research on the socio-cultural challenges faced by rural tourism destinations. The lack of essential services, safety and security concerns, and the need for skilled and knowledgeable tourism workers (Saranza et al., 2022) have been identified as critical barriers to sustainable tourism development (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Additionally, the limited involvement of local communities in tourism planning can lead to conflicts and resentment towards tourism development (Scheyvens, 2020). The concerns about inadequate infrastructure, such as roads and transport facilities, echo the challenges faced by many rural areas in providing adequate support for tourism activities (Perkins & Long, 2018). The issues of food shortages and social change further emphasize the need for a holistic approach to tourism development that considers the needs and concerns of local communities.

Rural Tourism Development in the Philippines: Balancing Economic Growth with Ecological and Socio-Cultural Sustainability

These results underscore the multitude of socio-cultural challenges that rural tourism destinations encounter. While rural tourism can offer cultural exchange and economic opportunities, these challenges must be addressed to ensure the well-being of local communities and the sustainability of tourism activities. Exploring the impact of government policies and investments in infrastructure and skill development could provide valuable insights for policymakers and tourism stakeholders. A thorough interpretation of the complex interplay between tourism and socio-cultural dynamics is crucial for creating a more equitable and sustainable tourism model in rural areas.

Table 7. Perceived Level of Challenges of Rural Tourism in terms of Ecological Capital

| Indicators | Mean | SD | Verbal Description | Interpretation |
|--|-------------|-------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Unrestrained land conversion and utilization of open spaces into tourism-related projects or establishments. | 3.23 | 0.94 | Mostly Agree | High Level |
| 2. The overcapacitated number of tourists who visited tourist sites resulted in environmental degradation. | 3.15 | 1.01 | Mostly Agree | High Level |
| 3. Loose implementation of laws on ecological solid waste management in every municipality, resulting in land, air, and water pollution. | 3.22 | 0.92 | Mostly Agree | High Level |
| 4. No measures are in place to protect local biodiversity or endangered species. | 3.13 | 0.97 | Mostly Agree | High Level |
| 5. Lack of signage in appropriate places; social messages encouraging cleanliness, litter prevention, nature conservation, and humility toward the environment. | 2.88 | 1.05 | Mostly Agree | High Level |
| 6. Increased waste production. | 2.01 | 1.08 | Somewhat Agree | Moderate Level |
| 7. Lack of tourist awareness programs in environmental education to maintain cleanliness and instill a culture of respecting and enjoying nature. | 3.03 | 1.14 | Mostly Agree | High Level |
| 8. Lack of enforcement mechanisms to ensure the application of the regulatory framework and quality standards relevant to all activities included in the ecotourism value chain. | 2.32 | 1.06 | Somewhat Agree | Moderate Level |
| Average | 2.87 | 1.11 | Mostly Agree | High Level |

The survey results, presented in Table 7, reveal the perceived challenges of rural tourism in terms of ecological capital among respondents. The majority "Mostly Agree" that several challenges significantly hinder the ecological sustainability of rural tourism. The most pressing challenge, as perceived by the respondents, is the unrestrained land conversion and utilization of open spaces into tourism-related projects or establishments (Mean = 3.23, SD = 0.94), indicating a "High Level" of concern. Next is the loose implementation of laws on ecological solid waste management, resulting in pollution (Mean = 3.22, SD = 0.92) and the over-capacitated number of tourists leading to environmental degradation (Mean = 3.15, SD = 1.01). Respondents also "Mostly Agree" that there is a lack of measures to protect local biodiversity, insufficient signage promoting environmental awareness, and a lack of tourist awareness programs in environmental education. The average mean across all indicators is 2.87 (SD = 1.11), confirming the overall perception of a "High Level" of challenges. Notably, the perceived challenge of increased waste production is considered "Moderate" (Mean = 2.01, SD = 1.08), while the lack of enforcement mechanisms to ensure regulatory compliance and quality standards in the ecotourism value chain is also perceived as "Moderate" (Mean = 2.32, SD = 1.06).

The findings align with current research on the ecological challenges faced by rural tourism destinations. The overexploitation of land and resources for tourism development, inadequate waste management practices, and the negative impacts of over-tourism have been identified as critical threats to environmental sustainability (Diedrich & García-Buades, 2020). Additionally, the lack of protective measures for biodiversity and the absence of effective environmental education programs further exacerbate these challenges (Hall, 2019). The concerns about insufficient enforcement mechanisms highlight the need for stronger governance and regulation in the ecotourism sector to ensure that sustainable practices are adopted and maintained (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). The moderate concern regarding waste production suggests that while it is recognized as a challenge, it may not be perceived as the most urgent issue compared to others. Thus, emphasis on the importance of risk management at the

Rural Tourism Development in the Philippines: Balancing Economic Growth with Ecological and Socio-Cultural Sustainability

community level to identify and address risks associated with tourism development, such as environmental impacts or cultural commodification (Saranza et al., 2024a).

Overall, it emphasizes the multitude of ecological challenges that rural tourism destinations encounter. While rural tourism can contribute to environmental conservation and awareness, these challenges must be addressed to reduce negative impacts and ensure the long-term health of ecosystems. This could explore the potential of community-based ecotourism initiatives in fostering environmental stewardship and sustainable livelihoods and could provide valuable insights for policymakers and tourism stakeholders.

Analysis of Significant Difference in the Perceived Impact and Challenge Level in Rural Tourism based on Profile Variables

The analysis of significant differences in the perceived impact of rural tourism based on demographic profiles is shown in Table 8. It reveals one key finding: a statistically significant difference in the perceived impact of rural tourism on socio-cultural capital among different age groups (p -value = 0.021). This suggests that the age of the respondents influences how they perceive the socio-cultural effects of rural tourism. No significant differences were found according to sex or stakeholder category for any of the three forms of capital (economic, socio-cultural, or ecological), $p > 0.05$.

Table 8. The Significant Difference in the Perceived Impact of Rural Tourism based on the Demographic Profile

| Demographic Profile | Perceived Impact of Rural Tourism | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|---------|------------------------|------------|---------|--------------------|------------|---------|
| | Economic Capital | | | Socio-Cultural Capital | | | Ecological Capital | | |
| | Z-statistic | Chi-square | p-value | Z-statistic | Chi-square | p-value | Z-statistic | Chi-square | p-value |
| Sex | -1.441 | - | 0.150 | -0.952 | - | 0.341 | -0.255 | - | 0.799 |
| Age | - | 4.825 | 0.306 | - | 11.564 | 0.021* | - | 0.870 | 0.929 |
| Stakeholders Category | - | 0.109 | 0.947 | - | 1.182 | 0.554 | - | 1.392 | 0.499 |

The significant impact of age on perceptions of socio-cultural impact aligns with previous research that suggests varying perspectives on cultural change and preservation across generations (Boley et al., 2022). Younger respondents might be more open to cultural exchange and diversity brought about by tourism, while older individuals might be more concerned about preserving traditional values and practices. The lack of significant differences based on sex and stakeholder category indicates that perceptions of rural tourism's impact are relatively consistent across these demographics. This suggests that the concerns and benefits associated with rural tourism are shared across different groups within the community, regardless of gender or their role as stakeholders.

The results emphasize the importance of considering demographic factors, particularly age, when assessing the perceived impacts of rural tourism. Understanding these nuanced perspectives can help tailor tourism development strategies to address the specific concerns and aspirations of different demographic groups. This could help in exploring potential variations in perceptions within stakeholder categories (e.g., residents, business owners, tourists) and could provide a more nuanced understanding of the diverse perspectives on rural tourism.

Table 9 presents the analysis of significant differences in the perceived challenge level in rural tourism. The table reveals a statistically significant difference in the perceived level of challenges related to economic capital among different stakeholder categories (p -value = 0.007). This suggests that the stakeholder's role (e.g., resident, business owner, tourist) influences how they perceive the economic challenges of rural tourism. No significant differences were found according to sex or age for any of the three forms of capital (economic, socio-cultural, or ecological).

Table 9. The Significant Difference in the Perceived Challenge Level in Rural Tourism based on the Demographic Profile

| Demographic Profile | Perceived Level of Challenge in Rural Tourism | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|---|------------|---------|------------------------|------------|---------|--------------------|------------|---------|
| | Economic Capital | | | Socio-Cultural Capital | | | Ecological Capital | | |
| | Z-statistic | Chi-square | p-value | Z-statistic | Chi-square | p-value | Z-statistic | Chi-square | p-value |
| Sex | -1.905 | - | 0.057 | -0.711 | - | 0.477 | -0.723 | - | 0.469 |
| Age | - | 2.315 | 0.678 | - | 6.766 | 0.149 | - | 0.597 | 0.963 |

Rural Tourism Development in the Philippines: Balancing Economic Growth with Ecological and Socio-Cultural Sustainability

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|-------|--------|---|-------|-------|---|-------|-------|
| Stakeholders Category | - | 9.876 | 0.007* | - | 0.239 | 0.888 | - | 0.675 | 0.713 |
|-----------------------|---|-------|--------|---|-------|-------|---|-------|-------|

The significant difference in the perception of economic challenges among stakeholder categories aligns with the diverse interests and concerns of different groups involved in rural tourism. For instance, business owners might be more acutely aware of financial constraints, regulatory burdens, and competition from foreign investors (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Residents, on the other hand, might prioritize issues related to the equitable distribution of economic benefits, employment opportunities, and the affordability of local goods and services (Perkins & Long, 2018). The lack of significant differences based on sex and age suggests that the perceived challenges related to socio-cultural and ecological capital are relatively consistent across these demographics. This could indicate that these challenges are recognized as broader community issues, irrespective of gender or age. However, it is important to note that the sample size might not have been large enough to detect subtle differences that could exist.

These underline the importance of understanding the unique perspectives of different stakeholders when addressing the challenges of rural tourism. Recognizing the specific concerns of each group can help the development of targeted interventions and policies to mitigate these challenges effectively. Moreover, investigating the potential for collaborative approaches that involve all stakeholders in decision-making and planning could lead to more sustainable outcomes for rural tourism development.

Analysis of Significant Relationship in the Perceived Impact and Challenge Level in Rural Tourism

The analysis of the relationship between perceived impact and challenge level in rural tourism, as shown in Table 10, reveals that there is a statistically significant positive correlation (p-value = 0.0001) between the perceived impact and the perceived level of challenge in economic capital. This suggests that as the perceived positive impact of rural tourism on the economy increases, so does the perception of the associated challenges. Moreover, a statistically significant positive correlation (p-value = 0.0001) between the perceived impact and the perceived level of challenge in socio-cultural capital. This indicates that the greater the perceived positive impact of rural tourism on socio-cultural aspects, the higher the perceived challenges in this domain. However, no statistically significant relationship (p-value = 0.924) between the perceived impact and the perceived level of challenge in ecological capital. This suggests that the perceived positive impact of rural tourism on the environment does not necessarily correspond to a higher perception of ecological challenges.

Table 10. The Significant Relationship between the Perceived Impact and Challenge Level in Rural Tourism

| Perceived Impact of Rural Tourism | Perceived Level of Challenge in Rural Tourism | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|----------|------------------------|----------|--------------------|---------|
| | Economic Capital | | Socio-Cultural Capital | | Ecological Capital | |
| | Correlation Coefficient | p-value | Z-statistic | p-value | Z-statistic | p-value |
| Economic Capital | 0.240 | 0.0001** | - | - | - | - |
| Socio-Cultural Capital | - | - | 0.268 | 0.0001** | - | - |
| Ecological Capital | - | - | - | - | 0.005 | 0.924 |

The positive correlations found for economic and socio-cultural capital align with the notion that the benefits and challenges of rural tourism are often intertwined. As tourism grows and its positive impacts become more evident, it can also exacerbate existing challenges or create new ones (Scheyvens, 2020). For instance, increased economic activity can lead to higher demand for resources, potential conflicts over land use, and cultural commodification (Hall, 2019). The lack of correlation for ecological capital could be attributed to several factors. It might indicate that the perceived ecological benefits of rural tourism, such as conservation efforts and environmental awareness, are not always accompanied by a corresponding increase in perceived challenges. Alternatively, it could suggest that the ecological challenges are perceived as separate from the positive impacts, and their relationship is more complex than a simple correlation.

Results highlight the complex interplay between the perceived impacts and challenges of rural tourism. While the positive correlations in economic and socio-cultural domains suggest that benefits and challenges often coexist, the lack of correlation in the ecological domain warrants further investigation. Future research could delve deeper into the specific factors that contribute to the positive correlations observed in economic and socio-cultural capital. Additionally, exploring the reasons behind the lack of correlation in ecological capital could shed light on the nuanced relationship between tourism's perceived ecological benefits and challenges. Understanding these relationships is necessary for developing sustainable tourism strategies that maximize benefits while mitigating potential negative consequences.

Rural Tourism Development in the Philippines: Balancing Economic Growth with Ecological and Socio-Cultural Sustainability

IV. CONCLUSION

The study reveals a complex interplay between the perceived benefits and challenges of rural tourism in Surigao del Norte. While respondents recognize the positive impacts of rural tourism on economic, socio-cultural, and ecological capital, they also acknowledge a variety of challenges that need to be addressed for sustainable and inclusive tourism development.

The strong positive perception of economic impacts, particularly in terms of job creation and investment attraction, supports the notion that rural tourism can be a viable economic development strategy. However, the concerns raised about the reliance of local businesses on loans, the dominance of foreign investors, and the seasonality of tourism highlight the need for policies and interventions to ensure equitable distribution of benefits and year-round economic activity.

The perceived high impact on socio-cultural capital. In particular, fostering cross-cultural understanding and preserving local traditions underscores the potential of rural tourism to enhance cultural exchange and revitalize communities. However, the moderate concerns about potential cultural clashes and the need for more effective community involvement in tourism planning emphasize the importance of balancing economic development with cultural sensitivity and preservation.

Despite the overwhelming agreement on the positive ecological impacts of rural tourism, such as sustainable land use and waste management practices, the concerns regarding unrestrained land conversion, over-tourism, and inadequate biodiversity protection point to the need for more stringent regulations and sustainable tourism practices. The moderate perception of challenges related to waste production and enforcement mechanisms suggests that while these issues are recognized, they might not be perceived as the most urgent priorities.

The analysis of demographic differences revealed a significant impact of age on perceptions of socio-cultural challenges, indicating that younger respondents might be more open to cultural exchange, while older individuals might be more concerned about preserving traditional values. The lack of significant differences based on sex and stakeholder category suggests that the perceived benefits and challenges are shared across these demographics, although the specific concerns within each stakeholder group may vary.

In conclusion, this research recommends valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of rural tourism in Surigao del Norte. The findings emphasized the value of understanding the complex interplay between the perceived impacts and challenges, as well as the diverse perspectives of different stakeholders. By addressing the identified challenges and harnessing the potential benefits, rural tourism can be leveraged as a powerful means for sustainable and inclusive development in the region. Future research should continue to explore these dynamics, with a focus on understanding the long-term impacts of rural tourism and developing evidence-based strategies for its sustainable management.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the following actionable recommendations are proposed to enhance the positive impacts of rural tourism in Surigao del Norte while mitigating potential challenges:

Economic Capital

- Strengthen Financial and Technical Support:** Government agencies should establish comprehensive programs to provide financial assistance, training, and mentorship to local entrepreneurs and businesses in the tourism sector. This could include low-interest loans, grants, and capacity-building workshops.
- Enhance Tourism Promotion and Marketing:** Develop a comprehensive marketing strategy that highlights the unique cultural and natural attractions of Surigao del Norte, targeting both domestic and international tourists. Employ digital programs and social media to reach a wider market.
- Diversify Tourism Products and Experiences:** Encourage the development of diverse tourism offerings beyond peak seasons, such as cultural festivals, culinary experiences, and adventure activities, to attract tourists throughout the year and reduce reliance on seasonal income.
- Foster Local Ownership and Entrepreneurship:** Implement policies and programs to encourage local ownership and management of tourism businesses. This could include incentives for community-based tourism initiatives and regulations that promote fair competition between local and foreign investors.
- Review Taxation and Regulatory Frameworks:** Evaluate the existing tax and regulatory environment to ensure it is beneficial to the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism sector. Consider tax incentives or simplified regulations for local businesses.

Socio-Cultural Capital

- Prioritize Infrastructure Development:** Invest in improving basic infrastructure, such as roads, transportation, and utilities (water and electricity), to enhance the visitor experience and support local livelihoods.

Rural Tourism Development in the Philippines: Balancing Economic Growth with Ecological and Socio-Cultural Sustainability

2. **Enhance Safety and Security Measures:** Implement comprehensive safety and security protocols in tourist destinations, including well-trained security personnel, emergency response systems, and clear signage for visitor safety.
3. **Invest in Skill Development and Training:** Develop training programs to train residents with the necessary skills for employment in the tourism sector. This could include hospitality training, language courses, and cultural awareness workshops.
4. **Promote Community Participation in Tourism Planning:** Establish participatory planning processes that actively involve local communities in decision-making regarding tourism development. This could include community consultations, workshops, and representation in tourism boards.
5. **Develop Cultural Exchange Programs:** Encourage cultural exchange initiatives that promote mutual understanding and respect between tourists and local communities. This could involve cultural festivals, homestays, and educational programs.

Ecological Capital

1. **Enforce Sustainable Land-Use Planning:** Implement stricter regulations on land conversion and development to protect natural landscapes and ecosystems. Promote the use of sustainable building practices and renewable energy sources in tourism infrastructure.
2. **Manage Tourist Capacity:** Establish carrying capacity limits for popular tourist destinations to prevent environmental degradation and ensure a high-quality visitor experience. Implement visitor management strategies, such as timed entry or permits, to control tourist flows.
3. **Strengthen Waste Management Practices:** Invest in waste management infrastructure and promote recycling and composting initiatives to reduce waste production and pollution. Encourage the use of biodegradable and reusable materials in tourism operations.
4. **Protect Biodiversity and Endangered Species:** Develop and implement comprehensive conservation plans for local flora and fauna, including measures to protect endangered species and their habitats.
5. **Raise Environmental Awareness:** Conduct environmental education programs for both tourists and local communities to promote responsible tourism practices and foster awareness about the importance of environmental conservation.

By implementing these recommendations, Surigao del Norte can foster a sustainable and resilient rural tourism industry that benefits both the local community and the environment. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of these initiatives will be crucial to ensure their effectiveness and to adapt strategies as needed to meet the evolving needs and challenges of the region.

REFERENCES

- 1) Adu-Ampong, E. A., Baffour Awuah, B., & Asamoah, D. (2021). Rural tourism development in Ghana: Opportunities, challenges and prospects. *Journal of Tourism Futures*, 7(2), 189-204.
- 2) Boley, B. B., McGehee, N. G., Perdue, R. R., & Long, P. (2022). Stakeholder perceptions of tourism impacts in rural destinations: A systematic review and research agenda. *Journal of Travel Research*, 61(3), 545-562.
- 3) Briones, R., Felipe, M., & Lucas, R. (2020). Farm tourism in the Philippines: Potentials, challenges, and opportunities. *Journal of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development*, 12(1), 1-10.
- 4) Buckley, R. (2021). Sustainable tourism: Research and reality. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 86, 103089.
- 5) Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- 6) Department of Tourism (Philippines). (2021). *National Tourism Development Plan 2016-2022*.
- 7) Department of Tourism (Philippines). (2023a). *Philippine Tourism Statistics 2022*.
- 8) Department of Tourism. (2023b). *National Tourism Development Plan 2023-2028*.
- 9) Diedrich, A., & García-Buades, E. (2020). *Rural tourism and sustainability*. Routledge.
- 10) Gössling, S. (2019). *Tourism and climate change: Impacts, adaptation and mitigation*. Routledge.
- 11) Hall, C. M. (2019). Constructing sustainable tourism: The 2030 agenda and the managerial ecology of destination communities. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 27(7), 1069-1088.
- 12) Hall, C. M. (2019). Constructing sustainable tourism: The 2030 agenda and the managerial ecology of tourism. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 44(3), 281-294.
- 13) Hall, D., & Page, S. (2002). *Tourism management: Principles and practices* (3rd ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
- 14) Higgins-Desbiolles, F. (2020). Social sustainability in tourism: A multidimensional perspective. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 36, 100756.

Rural Tourism Development in the Philippines: Balancing Economic Growth with Ecological and Socio-Cultural Sustainability

- 15) Kazmina, L., Provotorina, V., Makarenko, V., & Petrenko, A. (2021). Social and Financial Feasibility of the Development of Rural Tourism and the Hospitality Industry in the Rostov Region. *E3s Web of Conferences*, 273, 09002. <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202127309002>
- 16) Kim, J., Kim, Y., & Heo, C. Y. (2023). The rise of multigenerational travel: Understanding motivations and travel behaviors. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 47(1), 122-143.
- 17) Liu, Y., Kim, S., & Li, H. (2020). Age and gender differences in participation in outdoor recreation activities: A meta-analysis. *Leisure Sciences*, 42(2), 171-188. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/>
- 18) López-Sanz, J. M., Penelas-Leguía, A., & Rodríguez, P. G. (2021). Rural tourism and the sustainable development goals. A study of the variables that most influence the behavior of the tourist. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.722973>
- 19) Mbaiwa, J. E., & Stronza, A. (2019). Community-based natural resource management and tourism: Critical perspectives from southern Africa. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 27(1), 1-16.
- 20) Mishra, P., Pandey, C. K., Singh, U., Gupta, A., Sahu, C., & Keshri, A. (2019). Descriptive statistics and normality tests for statistical data. *Annals of Cardiac Anaesthesia*, 22(1), 67. https://doi.org/10.4103/aca.aca_157_18
- 21) Nguyen, T. H. (2019). Community engagement in sustainable tourism development: A case study of Sa Pa, Lao Cai province, Vietnam. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 27(1), 127-144.
- 22) Nuringasih, K., N., N. M., & Cokki, C. (2020). *Fostering Sustainability Advantage in Rural Tourism Destination at Kulon Progo, Yogyakarta*. <https://doi.org/10.2991/aebmr.k.200626.024>
- 23) Pavlič, I., Puh, B., & Mišković, L. (2019). *Residents' Attitudes Towards Tourism Impacts in Rural Area*. <https://doi.org/10.20867/tosee.05.19>
- 24) Perkins, H. C., & Long, P. T. (2018). *Rural tourism development: A multidisciplinary approach*. Routledge.
- 25) Pilar, M. G. A. (2020). Sustainable tourism development in the Philippines: Issues, challenges, and opportunities. *Journal of Tourism Futures*, 6(2), 189-201.
- 26) Podovac, M., Đorđević, N., & Miličević, S. (2019). Rural Tourism in the Function of Life Quality Improvement of Rural Population on Goč Mountain. *Ekonomika Poljoprivrede*, 66(1), 205–220. <https://doi.org/10.5937/ekopolj1901205p>
- 27) Richards, G., & Wilson, J. (2018). *Tourism, indigenous peoples and protected areas: New directions*. Routledge.
- 28) Saranza, C. S., Bueno, N. L. E., Andrin, G. R., & Ninal, M. M. (2022). Teachers' entrepreneurial competence and teaching methods in entrepreneurship education: A basis for teachers training curriculum. *European Scholar Journal*, 3(6), 66-86.
- 29) Saranza, C., Paqueo-Patosa, L., Gegona, D., Sulapas, R. R., Gorde, P. L., & Villanueva, M. J. (2024). Enterprise Risk Management on Business Performance: A Quantitative Analysis of Local Businesses in Surigao del Norte, Philippines. *IJBTSR International Journal of Business and Technology Studies and Research*, 5(2), 15-pages.
- 30) Saranza, C., Pendon, Y., & Andrin, G. (2024). Enhancing Retail Success: A Comprehensive Analysis of Visual Merchandising Influence on Customer Engagement and Purchase Behavior in Philippine Local Retail Businesses. *Journal of Business and Management Studies*, 6(1), 01-21.
- 31) Saunders, M. N. K., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2019). *Research methods for business students* (8th ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
- 32) Scheyvens, R. (2020). *Tourism and poverty alleviation: Can tourism reduce poverty and inequality?* Routledge.
- 33) Sharpley, R., & Telfer, D. J. (Eds.). (2018). *Tourism and development in the developing world*. Routledge.
- 34) Tan, K. (2020). Marketing rural tourism destinations in the Philippines: Challenges and opportunities. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 25(12), 1278-1291.
- 35) Torres, R., Momongan, E., & Cabalu, H. (2019). Economic impact of rural tourism: A case study of a farm resort in the Philippines. *Journal of Tourism and Hospitality Management*, 7(2), 43-56.
- 36) Tou, H. J., Noer, M., Lenggogeni, H., & Lenggogeni, S. (2020). *Local Wisdom in Spatial Planning for Rural Tourism Development*. 154–161. <https://doi.org/10.2478/9788395720406-018>
- 37) Turner, D. P. and Houle, T. T. (2019). Conducting and reporting descriptive statistics. *Headache: The Journal of Head and Face Pain*, 59(3), 300-305. <https://doi.org/10.1111/head.13489>
- 38) UNWTO. (2023). *International tourism to end 2023 close to 90% of pre-pandemic levels*. <https://www.unwto.org/news/international-tourism-to-end-2023-close-to-90-of-pre-pandemic-levels>
- 39) UNWTO. (2024). *International tourism to reach pre-pandemic levels in 2024*. <https://www.unwto.org/news/international-tourism-to-reach-pre-pandemic-levels-in-2024>

Rural Tourism Development in the Philippines: Balancing Economic Growth with Ecological and Socio-Cultural Sustainability

- 40) Wang, J., Zhou, F., & Ai-liang, X. (2022). The Impact of Integrated Development of Agriculture and Tourism on Rural Ecological Environment Quality. *Wireless Communications and Mobile Computing*, 2022, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/6113324>
- 41) Wearing, S., & Neil, J. (2023). *Ecotourism: Impacts, potentials, and possibilities*. Routledge.
- 42) World Bank. (2020). *Philippines Tourism Sector Assessment, Strategy, and Road Map*.
- 43) Yamagishi, K., Gantalao, C., & Ocampo, L. (2021). The Future of Farm Tourism in the Philippines: Challenges, Strategies and Insights. *Journal of Tourism Futures*, 10(1), 87–109. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jtf-06-2020-0101>
- 44) Yamagishi, K., Yagi, N., & Dela Cruz, R. (2021). Rural tourism development in the Philippines: A case study of Batanes Islands. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 87, 102495.
- 45) You, Y. (2022). Service-Oriented Architecture-Guided Information Service System for Design and Implementation of Rural Tourism. *Wireless Communications and Mobile Computing*, 2022, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/1480862>



There is an Open Access article, distributed under the term of the Creative Commons Attribution – Non Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits remixing, adapting and building upon the work for non-commercial use, provided the original work is properly cited.