

Shared Governance in Community-Oriented Tourist Destinations: An Exploratory Case Study

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Abstract. Shared governance is vital for managing community-oriented tourism destinations and promoting stakeholder empowerment through collaboration, participatory decision-making, and sustainable development. However, its practical implementation is complex due to varying levels of engagement and governance challenges. This study examines the collaborative dynamics of shared governance in community-oriented tourism, focusing on factors that influence stakeholder engagement, challenges in implementation, and the impacts on sustainability and community empowerment. Conducted in Ormoc City, Philippines, the qualitative research involved in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with 13 stakeholders, including representatives from the local government, tourism associations, businesses, and community groups. The thematic analysis highlighted that effective, shared governance relies on multistakeholder engagement, strong public-private partnerships, trust, accountability, and clear roles. Challenges include conflicting priorities, resource constraints, power imbalances, and bureaucratic barriers. Despite these obstacles, shared governance fosters tourism sustainability by enhancing organizational efficiency, promoting inclusive decision-making, creating livelihood opportunities, and encouraging community-led conservation. Policymakers should strengthen stakeholder coordination, develop equitable resource distribution, and address systemic challenges to improve effectiveness. These insights are valuable for local governments and tourism leaders aiming for sustainable tourism and community empowerment.

Keywords: Shared governance; Community-oriented tourist destinations; Case study.

1.0 Introduction

Shared governance is an evolving but underexplored framework in tourism governance, particularly in community-oriented destinations where diverse stakeholders must align their interests. While shared governance has been widely studied in sectors such as healthcare and education, its application in tourism remains limited, particularly in developing economies. This study addresses the gap by analyzing how shared governance models operate in a tourism-dependent economy, with a focus on the interplay between stakeholder collaboration, policy implementation, and sustainability efforts. It constitutes a dynamic framework that fosters collaboration between public and private agencies through formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative decision-making processes. This approach ensures the effective implementation of policies and resource management across various sectors, including tourism. As Ansell and Gash (2008) and Dengi and Petrick (2021) noted, shared governance plays a crucial role in uniting government entities, private enterprises, and community stakeholders in the collective management and development of tourist destinations. This model enhances participatory decision-making,

strengthens stakeholder accountability, and promotes sustainable tourism initiatives, establishing itself as a critical governance strategy for tourism-dependent economies.

Ormoc City, a developing tourist destination in the Philippines, offers a diverse array of natural and cultural attractions, including Lake Danao, the historic Puente De La Reina, and eco-tourism initiatives such as the Naungan-San Juan Mangrove Planters Association (NSJMPA). However, Mercado and Zerrudo (2020) identified several governance challenges. These included inconsistencies in tourism programs resulting from leadership transitions, inadequate stakeholder coordination, and limited educational and skills development opportunities for professionals in tourism-related fields. The study emphasized the need for increased private-sector involvement, proposing collaborative approaches and economic incentives to promote local business and community engagement in tourism development.

This research builds upon prior studies by analyzing Ormoc City's shared governance model in the context of tourism management. It examines the roles of key stakeholders, including the Tourism and Culture Committee, the Ormoc Hotel and Restaurant Association (OHRA), and community organizations such as the Cabingtan Local Eco Guides (CALEGUID) and the Lake Danao Farmers Association (LADFA), in participatory decision-making. Notable figures, including Ma'am Ira Bantasan and Honorable Peter Rodriguez, play instrumental roles in aligning tourism initiatives with community interests through structured annual planning cycles. Establishing tourism councils, cultural foundations, and stakeholder-led eco-tourism projects demonstrates Ormoc's commitment to a community-driven governance model. Furthermore, this study aligns with global best practices in tourism governance by emphasizing collaborative governance structures similar to those in leading sustainable destinations. Models from destinations such as Bali, Indonesia, and Queenstown, New Zealand, demonstrate that a balanced approach between government oversight, community participation, and private-sector investment can significantly enhance tourism management. By benchmarking Ormoc City's governance against these established models, this study provides a comparative perspective on shared governance in tourism.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist. The city's reliance on tricycles as its primary mode of transportation restricts nighttime tourism activities and economic expansion. Addressing these constraints necessitates integrating transportation policies with tourism objectives, such as introducing night-specific transport franchises. Moreover, while private-sector actors, such as tour operators, significantly contribute to tourism services, their role in governance remains secondary. The private sector advocates for a governance model incorporating their expertise alongside public-sector support to ensure more comprehensive service delivery and economic circulation. Meanwhile, community-based organizations, including NSJMPA and LADFA, demonstrate the efficacy of shared governance in environmental conservation by collaborating with government agencies to maintain and protect natural attractions. Supplementary efforts from organizations such as the local Motorcycle Association further bolster sustainable tourism through safe transportation and environmental initiatives.

Under the leadership of Former Mayor Richard Gomez and the incumbent, Honorable Lucy Torres-Gomez, Ormoc City has adopted a progressively inclusive shared governance model. Initiatives such as cultural mapping and restructuring the Ormoc Festival and Cultural Foundation enhance community engagement and attract external investments. These governance strategies facilitate a more transparent and collaborative tourism development framework, positioning Ormoc as a competitive destination that prioritizes cultural heritage, environmental sustainability, and economic inclusivity.

The study of shared governance in Ormoc City underscores the complexities of stakeholder collaboration and governance efficiency in tourism management. This study contributes to the broader discourse on sustainable tourism management by situating these findings within the context of global governance trends. It offers insights that can be adapted by other emerging destinations seeking to implement shared governance models. Its findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, industry practitioners, and future researchers in sustainable tourism development.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study examined the concept of shared governance in community-oriented tourist destinations in Ormoc City, Leyte, using an exploratory case study approach. A qualitative methodology was employed, with data collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions with community members, and key informant interviews from relevant stakeholder offices. A thematic analysis was used to document and narrate the collected data, providing a comprehensive understanding of shared governance dynamics within a single case: Ormoc City, Leyte, as a community-oriented tourist destination. The findings of this study, which offer valuable insights into the shared governance structure in Ormoc City, have the potential to significantly impact the formulation of its Tourism Development Plan.

2.2 Research Locale

The study took place in Ormoc City, Leyte, Philippines. Ormoc, officially known as the City of Ormoc, was a 1st-class independent component city in Eastern Visayas. According to the 2020 census, it was the second most populous city in Leyte, with a population of 230,998 residents. Ormoc, with its unique blend of cultural, commercial, and historical significance, served as the hub of western Leyte. Governed separately from Leyte Province, Ormoc was classified by the Philippine Statistics Authority as a province and was situated within the 4th Congressional District of Leyte, which included Albuera, Kananga, Merida, Palompon, and Isabel. Within this administrative framework, Ormoc actively collaborated with its neighboring municipalities, fostering a sense of unity and cooperation.

One of the primary objectives of the Local Government Unit of Ormoc was to promote peace and tourism. In 2020, a study on the Ormoc Tourism Sustainable Development Plan identified the city as a potential tourism destination, highlighting unique attractions such as the picturesque Lake Danao National Park, the historically significant Old City Hall that was converted into a museum, the ecologically diverse Ormoc Bay Mangrove, the serene Lake Janagdan, the culturally rich Japanese Memorial Park, the iconic Puente De La Reina, the refreshing Agua Dulce, the challenging Alto Peak, the Tongonan Geothermal Power Plant, the relaxing Naungan Hot Spring Resort, the innovative Solar Farm, the vibrant Pina Festival, the adventurous caves in R.M. Tan and Nueva, the lively Lake Danao Festival, and the various commercial recreation centers.

2.3 Research Participants

The study established specific inclusion criteria to ensure the participation of a diverse range of stakeholders relevant to the tourism sector. Eligible participants included government representatives affiliated with local authorities, the Tourism Office, and regulatory agencies, such as the City Planning and Development Office, the Tourism, Culture, and Arts Office, the Tourism Committee, and designated working group members engaged in tourism-related initiatives. Additionally, community representatives involved in local governance, community development, or leadership roles within the tourism sector were included. These comprised members of People's Organizations, including but not limited to the Naungan San-Juan Mangrove Planters Association (NSJMPA), the Cabingtan Local Eco Guides (CALEGUID), and the Lake Danao Farmers Association (LADFA). Participants were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring that individuals with direct involvement in tourism governance and policymaking were represented. The selection criteria emphasized expertise, experience, and active participation in community tourism initiatives. A total of 13 participants were recruited, comprising 4 government officials, 3 community leaders, 4 business representatives, and 1 Tour Guide. The study prioritized diversity in perspectives to capture a holistic view of shared governance dynamics. To qualify, participants were required to be between 18 and 59 years of age, with no restrictions on gender. Conversely, individuals who did not meet the inclusion criteria were deemed ineligible for participation in the study.

2.4 Research Instrument

A self-made interview guide was developed based on a review of existing literature and best practices in governance research, and was validated by a panel of four experts, three of whom held a doctoral degree in Management, while one was an industry expert in tourism governance. The instrument was also reviewed by the institution's Research Ethics Review Board to assess potential risks to human participants, ensuring ethical compliance and participant well-being.

The final interview guide consisted of six open-ended questions designed to elicit in-depth insights into stakeholder roles, governance challenges, decision-making processes, and the perceived benefits of shared governance in Ormoc City's tourism development. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes to one hour, allowing for detailed responses while maintaining participant engagement.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher conducted structured interviews to gather information from participants, following preparatory steps to ensure ethical and methodological rigor. Experts developed and reviewed the interview guide during the proposal hearing. The Central Philippine University Research Ethics Review Board (CPU-RERB) approved the research protocol. The researcher coordinated with local officials, including Ormoc City's Acting Tourism Officer, and engaged stakeholders from community-based tourism to arrange venues and invite participants. Before data collection, the researcher provided a briefing to participants outlining the study's objectives, expected contributions, and confidentiality protocols. Informed consent forms were distributed detailing participants' rights, potential risks, and measures taken to protect their anonymity. Participants were given the option to select their preferred interview setting to ensure comfort and were informed of their right to withdraw at any point without repercussions.

The study utilized a combination of data collection techniques, including semi-structured in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and key informant interviews (KIIs). The FGDs facilitated an interactive dialogue among stakeholders, enabling the identification of collective challenges and shared governance experiences. Key informant interviews were conducted with policymakers and senior officials to capture strategic insights into tourism governance frameworks. Interviews were recorded using audio devices to ensure accuracy in data capture and were transcribed verbatim in English. The researcher maintained data security by storing digital recordings in a password-protected Google Drive, with all files scheduled for deletion upon publication of the study.

2.6 Data Analysis

For data analysis, the researcher employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis framework, ensuring a structured and systematic approach to identifying themes. Thematic analysis was conducted as follows: (a) Familiarization with data – Transcribed interviews were reviewed multiple times to identify initial patterns and recurring concepts, (b) Generating initial codes – Using an inductive coding approach, key phrases and statements related to governance dynamics, stakeholder engagement, and decision-making processes were highlighted, (c) Searching for themes – Codes were clustered into broader themes, such as *stakeholder collaboration*, *power dynamics, resource management, and governance barriers, (d)* Reviewing themes – Themes were refined and validated by cross-referencing responses from different participant groups to ensure consistency and credibility, (e) Defining and naming themes – Each theme was clearly articulated, with supporting excerpts from interview transcripts to illustrate findings, (f) Producing the report – The final themes were synthesized into a coherent narrative, linking empirical findings to theoretical perspectives in shared governance.

For example, the theme of "stakeholder collaboration" emerged through iterative coding, as multiple respondents described the importance of building trust and making joint decisions. Similarly, the theme "power dynamics" was identified from responses highlighting conflicts between government bodies and private-sector stakeholders. Following this systematic approach, the study ensured transparency, rigor, and reproducibility in its qualitative analysis. The integration of multiple data collection methods, including interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and key informant interviews (KIIs), further strengthened the credibility of the findings, providing a comprehensive understanding of shared governance in Ormoc City's tourism sector.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

This research received approval from the Central Philippine University Research Ethics Review Board (CPU-RERB), ensuring adherence to ethical standards. The researchers posed a negligible risk to participants, as there were no known physical, psychological, social, economic, or legal threats. The researchers implemented measures to secure data, guarantee voluntary participation, and uphold participants' right to withdraw at any time without facing consequences. Personal identifiers were replaced with unique codes to maintain anonymity. All collected data was securely stored and deleted after the dissertation was completed. The study benefited local communities by promoting shared governance in tourism, empowering stakeholders, and enhancing sustainable tourism

practices. The researchers also provided policymakers with valuable insights for effective governance frameworks. The researchers declared no conflicts of interest and prepared the findings for dissemination through research conferences and publications.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 How do Stakeholders Collaborate in Shared Governance Models to Manage Community-Oriented Tourism Destinations, and What Key Factors Influence Participation and Decision-Making?

Stakeholder Collaboration in Shared Governance

Stakeholders collaborate in shared governance models to manage community-oriented tourism through multistakeholder engagement, community empowerment, public-private partnerships (PPPs), and decision-making councils. This collaboration facilitates shared accountability, ensuring that policies align with economic growth, cultural preservation, and community welfare rather than being driven by a single dominant interest group (Graci, 2020; Chase et al., 2023). In Ormoc City, this collaborative structure is evident in the participation of various organizations, such as the Cultural Foundation, the OHRA Hotel Restaurant Association, and the Department of Education (DepEd), which collectively oversee tourism initiatives. However, while the inclusion of multiple stakeholders enriches decision-making, power imbalances and resource constraints often prevent equal participation, limiting the influence of marginalized groups (Okpala, 2021).

Community empowerment is also central to shared governance, as demonstrated by a representative from the Mangrove Association (P8), who described how their organization was consulted in the development of proposals for tourism projects. This participatory model supports long-term engagement and fosters a sense of ownership among local communities, which research suggests is critical for sustainable tourism (Muhamad Khair et al., 2020; Suryawan et al., 2024). Similarly, public-private partnerships (PPPs) enhance tourism governance by leveraging government support alongside private sector expertise, as emphasized by a business sector representative (P13), who noted that empowering the tourism council would ensure all stakeholders contribute to decision-making. Despite its advantages, shared governance through PPPs presents challenges in terms of ensuring equitable representation, as private enterprises with more significant financial resources may have a stronger voice than community-based organizations, potentially skewing decision-making in favor of profit-driven objectives (Herath & Herath, 2023).

Decision-making councils play a vital role in governance by formalizing collaboration structures, as described by the Tourism Committee Chair (P3), who emphasized the collective nature of discussions and decision-making. While this structure promotes transparency and accountability (Walker & Friendly, 2021; Widhiani et al., 2024), bureaucratic inefficiencies and entrenched power hierarchies may limit its effectiveness (Maswime, 2022). Addressing these barriers requires governance frameworks that strike a balance between inclusivity and efficiency, ensuring that all stakeholders, regardless of their political or economic power, have an equitable role in decision-making.

Factors Influencing Stakeholder Participation

Key factors shaping stakeholder participation include clear role definitions, access to training, trust, and economic incentives. When stakeholder roles are clearly defined, accountability increases, minimizing conflicts and ensuring structured decision-making (Schmidt et al., 2020; Koc & Gurgun, 2022). The LADFA representative (P10) highlighted their active role in environmental sustainability, participating in tree-planting activities and maintaining the area. However, while role clarity enhances participation, an overly rigid hierarchy may discourage grassroots involvement, as lower-tier organizations may feel their contributions are undervalued (Lansing et al., 2023).

Training initiatives further influence stakeholder engagement, as described by the Tourism Office (P4), which emphasizes that training programs equip community associations with the necessary skills to manage tourism operations. While training enhances competency and promotes professionalization in tourism governance (Johnson et al., 2023), its effectiveness relies on sustained follow-up and mentorship, as short-term training alone does not guarantee long-term engagement.

Trust and accountability play a fundamental role in fostering collaboration, as noted by a City Planning representative (P11), who emphasized that People's Organizations (POs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) provide valuable local insights. However, trust deficits arise when decision-making lacks transparency, particularly when government officials hold disproportionate control over project approvals, leading to stakeholder disengagement (Barrane et al., 2021; Abhayawansa et al., 2021).

Factors Influencing Decision-Making

Inclusive representation, regulatory frameworks, collaborative platforms, and environmental sustainability influence decision-making in shared governance. Inclusive governance enhances legitimacy by incorporating diverse perspectives, as noted by a Tourism Committee representative (P2), who described how councils ensure representation from various sectors. However, excessive stakeholder representation can slow decision-making and create inefficiencies (Li et al., 2022). Regulatory frameworks provide stability and accountability, as noted by a business sector representative (P13), who stressed the importance of implementing clear rules for collaborative governance. While regulatory frameworks ensure equitable governance, they must remain adaptable to accommodate evolving challenges, as overly rigid policies may stifle innovation and limit community-driven initiatives (Fowler, 2021; Aziza et al., 2023).

3.2 What Challenges Arise in Implementing Shared Governance Within Community-Oriented Tourism Destinations, Particularly in Balancing Stakeholder Interests, Resource Allocation, and Power Dynamics? Challenges in Balancing Stakeholder Interests

Implementing shared governance requires balancing diverse stakeholder interests, yet challenges such as conflicting priorities, unequal representation, and limited community involvement often arise. Conflicting priorities between stakeholders weaken governance structures, as tour guide (P7) emphasized that disagreements among People's Organizations (POs) often lead to governance inefficiencies. Research suggests that misaligned stakeholder objectives lead to fragmented decision-making, necessitating structured conflict resolution mechanisms to facilitate compromise (Lezak et al., 2019).

Unequal representation in decision-making also hinders the effectiveness of governance. Tourism practitioners often feel sidelined in policy discussions, as a tour operator (P6) noted that legal professionals dominate ordinance drafting, resulting in regulations that may not accurately reflect on-the-ground realities. Effective governance requires integrating practical expertise from tourism practitioners alongside legal and regulatory input (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2022).

Challenges in Resource Allocation

Resource constraints, particularly in funding and infrastructure, present significant governance challenges. Tourism projects often struggle with inconsistent budget allocations, as noted by a representative from Tourism, Culture, and Arts (P1), who described how funding uncertainty delays project implementation. Research suggests that diversified funding sources, including government subsidies, grants, and private investments, can help mitigate financial constraints (Prakash, 2024). Infrastructure gaps, particularly in transportation, restrict tourism accessibility. As noted by an OHRA representative (P5), the reliance on tricycles as the primary mode of transport limits access to tourist sites. Addressing these gaps requires the development of integrated transport policies that align with tourism development plans (Rebelo et al., 2022).

Challenges in Power Dynamics

Power imbalances and bureaucratic barriers significantly impact the effectiveness of governance. Centralized authority limits stakeholder influence, as a business sector representative (P13) emphasized the need for a more equitable governance model that empowers local tourism councils. Research suggests that decentralization enhances stakeholder engagement and ensures governance aligns with local needs (El Nemar et al., 2020). Bureaucratic inefficiencies also hinder effective governance. A tour operator (P6) noted that ordinances are often approved without consulting tourism practitioners, leading to impractical regulations. Early stakeholder engagement is crucial to ensure that policies are both realistic and implementable (Stratil et al., 2020).

3.3 How Does Shared Governance Impact the Sustainability of Tourism Development, Community Empowerment, and Environmental Conservation?

Impact on the Sustainability of Tourism Development

Shared governance enhances the sustainability of tourism through structured system organization, collaborative decision-making, and an improved visitor experience. By integrating multiple stakeholders into governance processes, this approach fosters long-term stability, ensuring that tourism policies align with economic, cultural, and environmental priorities rather than being driven by short-term gains (Khater et al., 2024). However, despite its benefits, shared governance can sometimes introduce administrative inefficiencies, requiring a balance between inclusivity and streamlined decision-making (Grieser et al., 2023).

A well-structured governance system ensures regulatory compliance, enhances safety, and supports operational efficiency. A representative from the Tourism Office (P4) emphasized the implementation of new safety measures, requiring lifeguards for water activities to ensure compliance with national safety laws. This policy exemplifies how governance structures enhance tourism quality by institutionalizing safety standards. However, while regulatory frameworks improve organization, excessive regulation may restrict flexibility, potentially discouraging community-driven innovation (Grieser et al., 2023). By fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration, shared governance ensures that tourism policies reflect diverse interests and sustainability goals. A LADFA representative (P10) highlighted how associations at Lake Danao collectively decide on tourism-related actions. Such collaboration fosters trust, transparency, and accountability, aligning with research that suggests participatory governance yields better policy outcomes (Gillovic & McIntosh, 2020; Pham et al., 2023). However, Mukhtar and Bahormoz (2022) caution that involving too many stakeholders may slow decision-making and create bureaucratic bottlenecks, emphasizing the importance of structured facilitation. Shared governance ensures that tourism sites are well-maintained, enhancing the overall visitor experience. A Caleguid representative (P12) noted how community collaboration fosters a sense of pride and cleanliness in tourist areas, which attracts more visitors. This aligns with studies that emphasize the importance of community engagement in tourism governance, as it fosters sustainability and visitor satisfaction (Rahman & Baddam, 2021). However, while shared governance promotes site maintenance, inconsistent service quality remains a challenge, underscoring the need for professional training and standardization measures (Chileshe et al., 2023).

Impact on Community Empowerment

Shared governance fosters community empowerment by creating livelihood opportunities, providing capacity-building programs, and instilling a sense of ownership among stakeholders. However, while shared governance expands economic opportunities, disparities in stakeholder influence can limit equitable benefits, particularly for marginalized groups (Wan et al., 2022). Tourism development under shared governance generates income opportunities for local communities. A Tourism Committee representative (P2) highlighted that training programs provide livelihood opportunities for tourism site barangays. Bhatta and Joshi (2023) affirm that such initiatives strengthen local economies. However, reliance on tourism-driven employment can pose risks due to seasonal fluctuations, necessitating the development of diversification strategies to ensure long-term economic resilience (Garanti & Berjozkina, 2022).

Capacity-building initiatives equip community members with skills needed for tourism management. A Tourism Office representative (P4) emphasized the role of training sessions in preparing community associations for providing tourism services. While training enhances competency and self-reliance (Scheyvens et al., 2023), research suggests that without ongoing mentorship, these programs may not yield lasting benefits (Aoun et al., 2022). Therefore, follow-up programs and knowledge-sharing mechanisms are essential to sustain the effectiveness of capacity-building efforts. Furthermore, when stakeholders have shared responsibilities, they develop a collective commitment to sustainable tourism governance. A LADFA representative (P10) noted that unity among tourism groups leads to better-maintained and economically beneficial sites. This observation aligns with Wan et al. (2022), who emphasize that distributed responsibilities foster long-term collaboration. However, unequal power distribution in governance structures can limit participation from certain groups, requiring inclusive frameworks to balance decision-making authority (Al Alawi, 2024).

Impact on Environmental Conservation

Shared governance contributes to environmental conservation by promoting community-led environmental initiatives and collaborative resource management. However, while governance frameworks support conservation efforts, conflicts over resource control and enforcement mechanisms can create challenges in implementation (Danielsen et al., 2022). Local communities play a crucial role in ecological preservation by integrating conservation efforts into tourism activities. A Mangrove Association representative (P8) described how tourists participate in tree planting as part of their visit. This approach ensures that tourism activities contribute to conservation rather than merely exploiting natural resources (Boshoven et al., 2022). However, Heucher et al. (2024) caution that while community-led initiatives are valuable, their scalability often depends on sustained institutional and financial support. Without adequate funding, conservation efforts may struggle to achieve their long-term objectives.

Integrating multiple stakeholders into resource management fosters sustainability and efficiency. A Tourism Office representative (P4) described the transition from independently managed organizations to a structured government-regulated system. While this shift improved operational consistency, it also raised concerns about centralized control limiting local autonomy (Danielsen et al., 2022). Research suggests that successful shared governance in environmental conservation requires a balance between government oversight and local leadership (Lee & Choi, 2023).

4.0 Conclusion

The findings of this study contribute to governance models in tourism by demonstrating how shared governance enhances transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in tourism administration. The study provides empirical evidence that structured collaboration among governmental entities, private enterprises, and community organizations strengthens participatory decision-making and policy implementation. It emphasizes the importance of clearly defined stakeholder roles, ongoing capacity-building efforts, and structured incentive mechanisms to ensure equitable participation and long-term sustainability. Moreover, the study underscores the importance of balancing power dynamics within shared governance models, ensuring that a single sector does not dominate decision-making processes but reflects a collective approach. Findings also reveal that governance frameworks that integrate sustainability principles, such as environmental conservation, community empowerment, and multi-stakeholder cooperation, are more resilient and adaptable to tourism-related challenges. Addressing common governance barriers, such as bureaucratic inefficiencies and resource constraints, the study provides insights that can inform the design of more effective governance models in tourism-dependent economies.

To enhance governance outcomes, specific recommendations are proposed for different stakeholder groups. Government officials should strengthen stakeholder engagement mechanisms by establishing formalized platforms, such as tourism councils and advisory boards, where representatives from government, the private sector, and community organizations collaborate in decision-making. Equitable power-sharing frameworks must be implemented to prevent dominance by a single sector and ensure inclusive governance. Policies should integrate sustainability principles to align economic, environmental, and cultural interests with long-term governance strategies. Additionally, governments should allocate resources for continuous capacity building by investing in leadership, management, and operational training programs for local tourism stakeholders. Bureaucratic efficiency must also be improved by streamlining administrative processes to reduce delays in approvals, funding allocation, and policy implementation, ensuring that governance structures remain responsive and adaptable.

The private sector plays a crucial role in strengthening tourism governance through active collaboration and investment. Public-private partnerships (PPPs) should be fostered to ensure that tourism projects align with community needs and sustainability objectives. Private enterprises can support community-based tourism initiatives by providing financial assistance, technical expertise, and business mentorship to local organizations. Sustainable business practices should be promoted through eco-friendly tourism operations, responsible waste management, and initiatives aimed at reducing carbon footprints. Workforce development should also be enhanced through training programs that empower local tourism workers, fostering professional development and employment stability. Furthermore, ethical investment in tourism infrastructure is essential to ensure that

new developments align with environmental conservation goals and do not displace or marginalize local communities.

For community organizations and local tourism groups, strengthening participation in decision-making is vital to ensuring that local voices are considered in policy and development discussions. Establishing community-run tourism enterprises, such as eco-tours, homestays, and cultural experiences, can enhance economic opportunities for residents. Community organizations should also promote environmental stewardship by leading sustainability initiatives, such as reforestation programs, marine conservation efforts, and waste reduction campaigns, to align tourism development with ecological preservation. Enhancing community capacity through training and education is crucial, as participation in skills development programs can improve tourism management capabilities. Lastly, fostering collaborative networks with government agencies, private enterprises, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can help secure funding, technical expertise, and advocacy support for sustainable tourism projects.

The study reinforces the value of shared governance as a transformative model for sustainable tourism management. By addressing governance challenges such as power imbalances, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and resource constraints, tourism governance can be made more inclusive, equitable, and adaptive to emerging challenges. The recommendations provided outline specific actions for government officials, private sector representatives, and community organizations to optimize stakeholder collaboration, promote sustainability, and empower local communities in tourism development. Strengthening governance frameworks in tourismdependent destinations will ensure long-term economic viability while safeguarding cultural and environmental assets for future generations.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

Vicente S. Maravilla Jr. - The main author bears primary responsibility for the composition of the entire manuscript, including data collection, analysis, and presentation. This role involves formulating research objectives, executing data-gathering procedures, and articulating findings in a structured manner, adhering to academic and methodological standards.

Dr. Monsour A. Pelmin, the co-author, also serves as the research adviser, primarily contributing to the assessment of the manuscript's overall quality. This includes ensuring the precise presentation of results and advising on the necessary methodological and procedural aspects of the study. Additionally, the co-author provides critical oversight to maintain the integrity, coherence, and academic rigor of the research.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest associated with this research

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