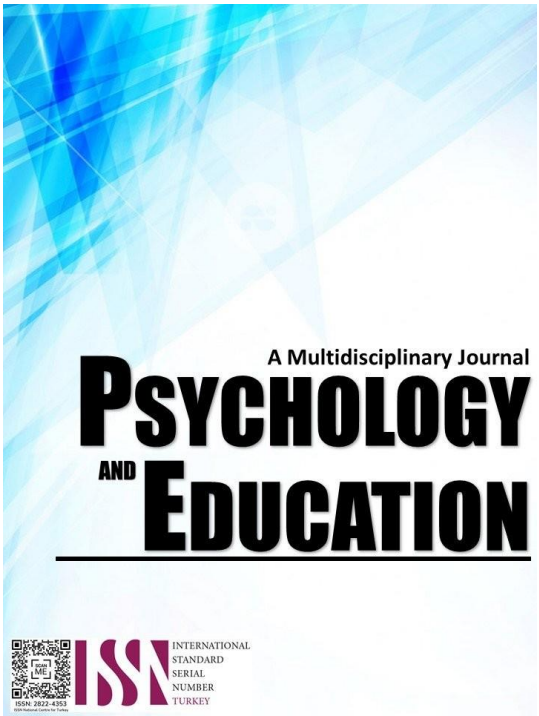
PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN CARMEN, CEBU, PHILIPPINES' TOURISM SECTOR (2023-2024): A FOCUS ON SDG 11



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Research Article

Promoting Sustainable Development in Carmen, Cebu, Philippines' Tourism Sector (2023-2024): A Focus on SDG 11

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Abstract

This study, which mainly emphasizes Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, examines the sustainability of the tourism industry in Carmen, Cebu, Philippines, from 2020 to 2023. The analysis uses quantitative and qualitative methods to address sustainability's ecological, social, cultural, safety, and economic aspects. Fifteen local owners of tourism-related businesses participated in the study, which gave a thorough understanding of the industry's sustainability initiatives. The findings reveal significant ecological and economic sustainability advancements driven by initiatives such as environmental preservation strategies and economic development programs. However, social aspects, particularly community involvement, employee training, and the protection of cultural heritage were identified as needing improvement. Recommendations include enhancing cultural heritage protection, prioritizing employee training and development, establishing robust environmental preservation strategies, encouraging greater stakeholder cooperation, and actively involving local communities in tourism activities. By implementing these recommendations, Carmen's tourism industry can enhance its sustainability credentials, creating a more resilient, inclusive tourism ecosystem that benefits current and future generations.

Keywords: *sustainable tourism, economic sustainability, community involvement, environmental conservation*

Introduction

The tourism sector has experienced significant growth and diversification over the years, making it one of the world's most dynamic and quickly expanding industries. It is a vital component of international trade, supporting economies and giving many underdeveloped nations vital revenue. Increased travel has fueled expansion in construction, agriculture, and telecommunications (UNWTO, 2019). In line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11, "Sustainable Cities and Communities," the goal is to advance human settlements that are safe, resilient, inclusive, and sustainable. To preserve their natural and cultural legacy, urban, peri-urban, and rural communities need to fortify their links with the economy, society, and environment (UNSDG, 2020).

According to the UNWTO, sustainable tourism prioritizes addressing current demands without sacrificing the capacity of future generations to meet their own. It entails resource management that preserves natural processes, biodiversity, and cultural integrity while satisfying social, cultural, and ecological demands. According to Dixit and Chaudhary (2020), sustainability in tourism in the Municipality of Carmen, Cebu, is meeting present requirements without sacrificing future ones.

Growth in the tourism industry must consider economic objectives and environmental effects, particularly in light of the anticipated rise in foreign immigration to ASEAN. It is essential to control the growth of tourism, especially cultural tourism resources, and ensure that the advantages are shared equally among different groups. Laws like the Tourism Act of 2009 (Republic Act No. 9593) and the Local Government Code of 1991 (Republic Act No. 7160) show how committed the government is to advancing tourism as a driver of investment, job development, and national advancement. These regulations give local governments the authority to spearhead tourism development initiatives by guaranteeing necessary services and facilities.

The Municipality of Carmen, which is encircled by the picturesque countryside of Cebu, is known for its rich cultural legacy and is home to the famous "sinamay" made from the abaca plant, which has earned it the moniker "The Sinamay Capital of Cebu." Additional attractions in the area include the Cebu Safari and Adventure Park. Even though her municipality is of the highest caliber, Carmen's dependence on the province for tourism-related projects emphasizes the necessity of sustainable tourism policy and local sovereignty. This study aims to assess the sustainability of Carmen's tourism industry, develop a comprehensive business plan for sustainable tourism, and provide practical recommendations.

Research Objectives

The study's goal was to assess the sustainability of Carmen, the tourism industry in Cebu, by evaluating sustainability in terms of economic, cultural, safety, social, and ecological aspects as perceived by the participants. It also suggested improvements to tourism offerings emphasizing affordability, brand identity, and storage efficiency and created a workable recommendation for sustainable tourism.

Methodology

Research Design

The study utilized descriptive research, which aims to assess the extent of the sustainability of the tourism industry in Carmen in terms

of economic, cultural, safety, social, and ecological aspects as perceived by the participants. In addition, the study also implores a simple qualitative study that tries to determine improvements to tourism offerings with an emphasis on affordability, brand identity, and storage efficiency, which will later be the basis for creating a workable business model for sustainable tourism.

Participants

The study was participated by 15 owners of tourism-related businesses in the Carmen municipality who satisfied specific requirements. It was mandatory for the participants to have been running their enterprises for at least three years and to have lived in the town continuously for the same time. This criterion ensured that participants had enough expertise and understanding of the regional tourism sector, which allowed them to offer insightful comments on the research. Purposive sampling, the sampling strategy employed in this study, is characterized by its emphasis on choosing participants who fit specific requirements pertinent to the study's goals.

Instruments

A two-part researcher-made questionnaire was used in this investigation. The first section included determining the type of tourism business enterprises in the Carmen municipality, whose services included trade associations, hotels and accommodations, transportation, leisure and recreation, and food and beverage offerings. Furthermore, the study included a 4-point Likert scale to assess the perceived sustainability of the tourism sector in economic, cultural, safety, social, and ecological dimensions (with four being completely implemented and one representing not implemented). The second section comprises short, open-ended questions on cost-effectiveness, brand identification, storage efficiency, opportunities, problems, and difficulties.

Procedure

The study commenced after an accredited research ethics committee evaluated the study. The study survey was distributed to the researchers to gather the necessary data to assess the sustainability of the tourism industry in Carmen, Cebu. To follow ethical principles, the researcher provided informed consent to each participant to ensure their willingness to participate. The study was conducted during the academic year of 2023-2024.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis was applied to the collected data to evaluate perceptions of sustainable tourism. First, frequency distribution analysis was used to determine the kind of tourism establishments to which Carmen respondents are connected. Then, average scores (mean) were computed to assess sustainability's social, cultural, safety, ecological, and economic dimensions. Thematic analysis used the Clark and Braun (2006) method to produce topics for improvement initiatives such as cost-effectiveness, brand identification, storage efficiency, possibilities, and difficulties. By finding, examining, and summarizing patterns in the data, this method offered a more in-depth understanding of the qualitative components of the research. Tables were used to display the results, with a descriptive commentary for the qualitative insights and tables for the quantitative data. By combining these techniques, it was possible to gain a thorough grasp of Carmen's sustainable tourism situation and identify areas that may be improved.

Results and Discussion

This section summarizes findings on tourism sustainability in Carmen Municipality, covering areas like Business Establishments, Perceived Sustainability (across Economic, Cultural, Safety, Social, and Ecological aspects), and Improvement Strategies (for Cost-Effectiveness, Brand Identity, and Storage Efficiency). It also touches on challenges and opportunities faced by local tourism.

Table 1. *Tourism Business Establishments in the Municipality of Carmen*

Tourism Business Establishment	*f*	*%*
1. Lodging/ Accommodations	7	46.67
2. Transportation	0	0
3. Leisure and Recreation	4	26.67
4. Food and Beverage Services	2	13.33
5. Trade and Association	2	13.33
Total	15	100

Based on Table 1, it can be observed that of the 15 tourism-related businesses, 7 (46.67%) offered lodging or accommodations; 0 (0%), transportation; 4 (26.67%) offered leisure and recreation; 2 (13.33%) offered food and beverage services; and 2 (13.33%) offered trade and association services. This suggests that the housing and accommodation industry accounted for most responders. In the tourism industry, lodging must accommodate all travelers seeking tranquility and a place to unwind. Since they are away from home when traveling, travelers naturally need a place to stay, in this case, an overnight stay, as one of their essential needs. As a result, commercial lodging has become more common, with each type offering varying amenities and services (Poudel, 2013).

The Extent of The Sustainability of the Tourism Industry as Perceived by The Participants in the Context of;

In Table 2, the indicators shed light on several areas related to tourist management in the Carmen Municipality. With mean scores

ranging from 2.87 to 2.67, certain areas—like fostering connections with stakeholders and sustainable tourist products/services—showcase strong execution, while others—like risk management and business strategy utilization—showroom needs improvement. According to Rahman (2023) and Smith (1994), two notable indicators that support earlier research highlight sustainable tourism practices and stakeholder participation, indicating that these factors are critical to achieving favorable results. Overall, Carmen's tourism management, from an economic perspective, takes a proactive stance, especially when promoting sustainable tourism and involving stakeholders. However, there are still areas that might be improved.

Table 2. *Economic Dimension*

Indicators	*Mean*	*Interpretation*
1. Utilizing the concept of risk management	2.67	Implemented
2. Promoting linkages to the different stakeholders in the Municipality of Carmen	2.87	Implemented
3. Promoting sustainable tourism products and services.	2.87	Implemented
4. Utilizing tourism business strategies that is suitable for your tourism establishment	2.73	Implemented
5. Coordinating with the Government agencies (LGU and DOT) and private sectors in participating any economic activity such as exposition and among others.	2.67	Implemented
Average Weighted Mean	2.76	Implemented

Table 3. *Cultural Dimension*

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Working with the Local Government Unit – Carmen in protecting and managing cultural destination/ establishment	2.67	Implemented
2. Coordinating with the Local Government Unit – Carmen in preserving and conserving cultural destination/ establishment	2.67	Implemented
3. Participating in cultural mapping conducted by the Local Government Unit-Carmen	2.67	Implemented
4. Implementing the different national laws and municipal ordinances within the tourism destinations/ establishment	2.73	Implemented
5. Coordinating with the local community and the local government unit in achieving sustainable programs	2.67	Implemented
Sub Weighted Mean	2.68	Implemented

Table 3 focuses on the cultural side of tourism management in the Carmen Municipality. The indicators' mean scores range from 2.67 to 2.73. Notably, the critical indication with the highest mean score emphasizes how crucial it is to abide by federal laws such as the Cultural Properties Preservation and Protection Act (Republic Act 4846) and local ordinances. On the other hand, other indicators show consistency, with mean scores of 2.67. Overall, the sub-weighted mean of 2.68 for the cultural dimension shows strict respect for local and federal laws, guaranteeing the preservation and efficient administration of cultural landmarks within Carmen's tourism businesses.

Table 4. *Safety Dimension*

Indicators	*Mean*	*Interpretation*
1. Promoting the development of road connectivity along tourism destinations/ establishment	2.67	Implemented
2. Implementing the municipal ordinances about safety, security, and peace and order in the tourism destinations/ establishment	2.87	Implemented
3. Promoting safety and security for the tourists visiting to the tourist establishment	2.60	Implemented
4. Working with the Local Government Unit – Carmen in maintaining peace and order in the tourism destinations/ establishment	2.80	Implemented
5. Promoting peace and safety relationships with the local community	2.73	Implemented
Sub Weighted Mean	2.73	Implemented

Table 4, which looks at the safety aspect of the Municipality of Carmen's tourism management framework, shows that all indicators are implemented; the mean scores range from 2.60 to 2.87. Reisinger and Mavondo (2005) highlighted the importance of destination safety and security, and one indication, in particular, stands out as having the highest mean score. On the other hand, the mean score for one indicator was the lowest. Overall implementation is shown by the safety dimension's sub-weighted mean of 2.73. This emphasizes how Carmen's tourism businesses follow the city's laws about peace, order, safety, and security, creating a welcoming

atmosphere for visitors.

Table 5. *Social Dimension*

	Indicators	*Mean*	*Interpretation*
1.	Ensuring education and training for all (employees)	2.13	Partially Implemented
2.	Ensuring that employees obey the national and municipal ordinances	2.60	Implemented
3.	Actively participating in any local government sustainable activity	2.40	Partially Implemented
4.	Supporting the Community Development	2.73	Implemented
5.	Promoting happiness, well-being, and quality of life within the destination, tourists, and its stakeholders	2.53	Implemented
	Sub Weighted Mean	2.48	Partially Implemented

Table 5 shows the social aspect; different indices correspond to varying implementation degrees. With a mean score of 2.73 showing implementation, for example, stressing support for community development scored highest, in line with David's (2024) opinion on the significance of small enterprises in job creation and community well-being. On the other hand, emphasizing employee education and training had the lowest mean score of 2.13, suggesting only minimal execution. The Social Dimension's sub-weighted mean points to a varied degree of implementation. Although there is much support for community development, more work needs to be done in areas like education and training if Carmen's tourism industry is to have greater social sustainability.

Table 6. *Ecological Dimension*

	Indicators	*Mean*	*Interpretation*
1.	Promoting environment-friendly tourist destinations/ establishment	2.87	Implemented
2.	Promoting green innovation and products	2.27	Partially Implemented
3.	Promoting efficient use of resources	2.87	Implemented
4.	Promoting Waste Management	2.60	Implemented
5.	Promoting resource conservation (water and electricity)	2.87	Implemented
	Sub Weighted Mean	2.69	Implemented

Table 6 (the ecological dimension) shows varying degrees of implementation. Significantly, a few indicators had the highest mean score (2.87), indicating that they promoted eco-friendly travel destinations and institutions, resource conservation, and efficient use. These results support Buckley's (2010) theory regarding expanding conservation tourism. In contrast, one indication had the lowest mean score (2.27), suggesting that just a portion of the promotion of green products and innovation has been implemented. Overall implementation is suggested by the Ecological Dimension's sub-weighted mean of 2.69. This suggests that, although there is always room for improvement in promoting green innovation and goods, Carmen's tourism enterprises prioritize resource efficiency and environmental friendliness.

Table 7. *Overall Weighted Mean*

		Mean	Interpretation
1.	Economic Dimension	2.76	Implemented
2.	Cultural Dimension	2.68	Implemented
3.	Safety Dimension	2.73	Implemented
4.	Social Dimension	2.48	Partially Implemented
5.	Ecological Dimension	2.69	Implemented
Grand Weighted Mean		2.67	Implemented

Table 7 shows that, with a grand weighted mean of 2.67, Carmen's tourism industry's overall sustainability is implemented moderately. The highest score (2.76) for the economic dimension, which highlights successful activities related to stakeholder involvement and economic growth, demonstrates outstanding financial sustainability performance. However, the social dimension received the lowest score (2.48), indicating the need for growth in community involvement, employee education, and the fair distribution of tourism advantages. Bervar and Bertoncelj (2016) assert that significant adjustments to socioeconomic systems, cultural norms, and governmental frameworks are necessary for sustainable development. Although Carmen has made considerable progress, more concerted efforts are needed to ensure long-term sustainability in all economic, social, cultural, safety, and ecological areas.

In summary, Carmen is headed toward sustainable tourism; nonetheless, strategic enhancements in all areas are required to guarantee long-term survival and that tourism contributes to the environment and community. Carmen can improve its overall sustainability and develop a more balanced and sustainable tourism sector by filling in the gaps that have been found and seizing development opportunities.

Conclusions

The results show Carmen's appeal for lodging and other accommodations, emphasizing the value of offering cozy lodging that satisfies visitors' basic needs. According to the report, although sustainability initiatives are effectively carried out, noteworthy progress has been made in promoting environmental friendliness, involving stakeholders, and upholding safety regulations. There is still an opportunity for improvement in the social elements, especially regarding staff training and community involvement. Attaining sustainable tourism in Carmen can yield noteworthy outcomes, including conserving cultural patrimony and encouraging economic expansion via tourism. For example, investing in staff education programs could enhance the quality of services provided and encourage visitors to have a deeper understanding of the area's culture. Similarly, local communities can benefit monetarily from tourism while maintaining their distinct cultural character. The study suggests concentrating on cost-effective projects that improve operational efficiency without sacrificing environmental goals and enhance stakeholder participation. Carmen can be a sustainable tourism destination by highlighting brand identity through distinctive cultural experiences. Implementing these suggestions may bring Carmen's tourism sector closer to sustainable development goals. This will solve socioeconomic and environmental issues and build a more resilient and lively future. These initiatives highlight the importance of collaboration and the comprehensive sociocultural changes required to achieve long-term sustainability.

The study's conclusions, which evaluated the sustainability of Carmen, Cebu's tourism sector, led to the implementation of several recommendations that could improve sustainability overall:

Boost Stakeholder Collaboration: To guarantee coordinated efforts towards sustainability, cultivate partnerships between local government, tourism stakeholders, and communities.

Invest in Staff Training: Give training programs a priority to improve the abilities of tourism staff members, encourage sustainable practices, and provide visitors with top-notch services.

Promote Environmental Conservation: Pass laws to lessen tourism's adverse environmental effects. Emphasize projects like trash reduction, energy savings, and efficient waste management techniques.

Preserve Cultural Legacy: To protect and promote Carmen's rich cultural legacy, start preservation initiatives and offer tourists authentic cultural experiences.

Encourage Community Development: Provide opportunities for local communities to participate in tourism and reap its benefits while maintaining their distinct cultural identity and way of life.

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