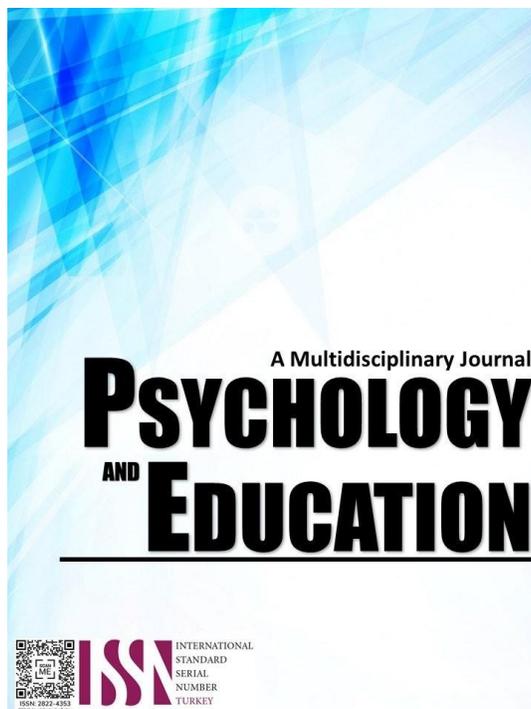


# PERCEIVED EFFECT OF TOURISM IN STA. FE, BANTAYAN ISLAND, CEBU, PHILIPPINES: POLICY IMPLICATIONS



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## Perceived Effect of Tourism in Sta. Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines: Policy Implications

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### Abstract

This study explores the perceived impacts of tourism on the economic, sociocultural, and environmental dimensions of Sta. Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu. Employing a descriptive quantitative research design, the study utilized a structured survey questionnaire, which was administered to a total enumeration of 44 respondents—comprising 12 government tourism officials and 32 tourism sector employees. The questionnaire measured stakeholders' perceptions of tourism's positive and negative effects using a 5-point Likert scale. Results revealed that tourism is perceived to have high positive impacts on employment, business growth, infrastructure, cultural pride, and environmental awareness. However, respondents also noted high to moderate negative effects, particularly in terms of seasonal employment, price inflation, and cultural commodification. These findings highlight the dual nature of tourism's influence on local communities and underscore the need for sustainable tourism strategies that balance development with cultural and environmental preservation.

**Keywords:** *tourism impact, sustainability, cultural preservation, Sta. Fe, Cebu*

### Introduction

Tourism is an important component in the economic development of a country; it provides opportunities that benefit the community through employment and entrepreneurship. A dynamic force, tourism encourages people to travel to discover cultures, meet people, engage with values, experience new customs and events, and explore nature, adventures, wonders, and society. To grow and maintain a tourism sector, tourism development draws travelers to a certain location. Furthermore, environmental sustainability is the future-focused, deliberate endeavor to preserve natural resources and sociocultural legacy to safeguard environmental ecosystems while promoting the health and financial well-being of people (Baloch et al., 2022).

In addition to creating economic advantages like jobs, tourists can also inflict environmental damage and have an impact on the sociocultural aspects of the local community. Accordingly, these metrics are not just sociocultural and economic. A crucial strategic characteristic that enables political actors to assess and comprehend the effects of tourism on the destination is the environmental component of tourist development. It is crucial to give tourist development equal weight and priority, emphasizing its implications on the economy, society, culture, and environment (Sanchez del Rio-Vazquez et al., 2019).

Despite its positive impact on economy, tourism can have negative socioeconomic repercussions if properly managed, it has historically played a good and vital role in society and may do so in the future (Marković and Klarić, 2015).

In addition to boosting employment and the economy, the tourism industry's uncontrolled expansion may result in certain environmental issues. In this regard, the issue of sustainability is also a significant one for the travel and tourist industry (Yıldırım et al., 2023).

This study aims to determine the perceived effect of tourism in Sta. Fe, Bantayan, Cebu Philippines from the perspectives of the government officials and tourism-related employees. Specifically, it looked into the positive and negative effects of tourism in the locality.

### Research Questions

### Methodology

#### Research Design

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to examine how government representatives and tourism employees perceive the impacts of tourism in Santa Fe, Bantayan Island. The questionnaire captured stakeholder perceptions of tourism's economic, sociocultural, and environmental effects, making it well-suited for this design. While descriptive research provided valuable insights into these perceptions, it did not establish causation.

#### Respondents

The study utilized a total enumeration sampling method, meaning all identified government officials and tourism employees directly involved in Santa Fe's tourism sector were included as respondents. The target population comprised 44 individuals: 12 tourism government employees engaged in tourism-related policymaking and management, and 32 tourism staff working in hospitality, transportation, and related industries. Since total enumeration ensured comprehensive data collection from the entire population of interest, it minimized sampling bias and enhanced the study's representativeness.

## Instrument

The research instrument, a structured survey questionnaire, was adapted from the study of Arreza and Esguerra (2021), titled *Community Evaluation on The Effects of Tourism in Doot Poktoy, Lanuza*, published in the *Journal of Business on Hospitality and Tourism* 7(1), 39–49). Since the original questionnaire had already undergone validation and reliability testing, and the current study shared a similar context—assessing stakeholder perceptions of tourism impacts in a local Philippine destination—it was deemed appropriate for replication in Santa Fe, Bantayan Island. Minor contextual adjustments were made to reflect the new location, and face validity was confirmed through a review by the research consultant. As the instrument retained its original structure and scale, additional statistical validation was not conducted.

Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

## Procedure

Data collection involved distributing the survey both online and in print, ensuring accessibility for all participants. Respondents were given a week to complete the survey after receiving clear instructions. Ethical considerations were prioritized, with written consent obtained beforehand and assurances of confidentiality and anonymity provided.

The data collection phase began with securing the necessary authorizations from Santa Fe authorities and institutions, followed by the development and validation of survey questions. A literature review was conducted to establish the study's theoretical foundation. Coordination with local government and tourism agencies facilitated participant recruitment. Surveys were distributed in person during official meetings for tourism government employees and online for tourism staff to maximize participation. Support was available for respondents requiring clarification. Descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies, and percentages, were computed to summarize the findings, providing a comprehensive overview of stakeholder perceptions regarding tourism's impact in Santa Fe.

## Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically frequency distributions, and mean scores, to summarize stakeholder perceptions. Descriptive statistics was consistent with the study's exploratory goal—to provide a general understanding of how tourism is perceived rather than to test hypotheses or model relationships. Given the small population size and focus on summarizing community-level perspectives, more advanced inferential methods were not applied. Descriptive analysis allowed for clear and meaningful interpretation aligned with the research design and objectives.

## Results and Discussion

Table 1. *Itemized Results on the Positive Effects of Tourism*

| Positive Effects of Tourism  | Mean | Verbal Description        |
|--|------|---------------------------|
| <i>Economic</i>  |      |                           |
| Tourism in Sta. Fe has brought employment opportunities.   | 4.59 | Strongly Agree            |
| Tourism in Sta. Fe has increased small business opportunities.   | 4.64 | Strongly Agree            |
| Infrastructure in Sta. Fe has been developed due to tourism.   | 4.52 | Strongly Agree            |
| <i>(Economic) Factor mean</i>  | 4.58 | Very High Positive Effect |
| <i>Socio-Cultural</i>  |      |                           |
| We are able to gain knowledge and new culture from tourists in Sta. Fe.  | 3.91 | Agree                     |
| Tourism has aided in promoting our local culture.  | 4.45 | Strongly Agree            |
| Tourism has strengthened the cultivation of our cultural pride and sense of identity.  | 4.16 | Agree                     |
| The preservation and restoration of cultural heritage have been realized because of tourism.   | 4.39 | Strongly Agree            |
| <i>(Socio-Cultural) Factor mean</i>  | 4.23 | Very High Positive Effect |
| <i>Environmental</i>   |      |                           |
| Tourism has led us to understand the fragility and importance of protecting our environment through the government and partners' environmental programs. | 4.55 | Strongly Agree            |
| Tourism has enhanced our environment through ecological enhancement activities initiated by either government or stakeholders' projects.                 | 4.45 | Strongly Agree            |
| Tourism has contributed to the maintenance of the protection and conservation of Sta. Fe's natural resources.  | 4.25 | Strongly Agree            |
| <i>(Environmental) Factor mean</i>   | 4.42 | Very High Positive Effect |
| <i>Overall Mean</i>  | 4.41 | Very High Positive Effect |

Legend: 1.00–1.80 (Very Low/No Effect), 1.81–2.60 (Low Effect), 2.61–3.40 (Moderate Effect), 3.41–4.20 (High Positive Effect), 4.21–5.00 (Very High Positive Effect).

The study's findings reveal that tourism in Sta. Fe is perceived to have significant positive impacts across economic, sociocultural, and environmental dimensions. In terms of the economic impact, tourism is perceived to contribute positively, with an overall mean of 4.58. Respondents indicated that tourism has led to the development of infrastructure (Mean = 4.52), growth in small businesses (Mean

= 4.64), and increased job opportunities (Mean = 4.59). These perceived benefits suggest that tourism is seen as a major driver of economic growth, improving local infrastructure, supporting small enterprises, and creating jobs in the community.

On the sociocultural impact, tourism is also perceived to have a strong positive influence, with a mean score of 4.23. Respondents indicated that tourism has promoted local culture (Mean = 4.45), increased cultural pride (Mean = 4.16), and helped preserve heritage (Mean = 4.39). These perceptions point to tourism as playing a key role in strengthening cultural identity, fostering pride in local traditions, and supporting cultural preservation efforts.

Regarding the environmental impact, tourism is perceived to have a positive effect, with a mean of 4.42. The perceived benefits include increased environmental awareness (Mean = 4.55), enhanced ecological conservation efforts (Mean = 4.45), and better management of natural resources (Mean = 4.25). These findings suggest that tourism is viewed as having a significant role in raising environmental consciousness and supporting conservation initiatives in the region.

The study shows that tourism is perceived to have contributed positively to the local economy, culture, and environment in Sta. Fe, highlighting the perceived benefits and the potential for sustainable development.

Table 2. *Itemized Results on the Negative Effects of Tourism*

| Negative Effects of Tourism  | Mean | Verbal Description   |
|--|------|----------------------|
| <i>Economic</i>  |      |                      |
| The occurrence of tourism in Sta. Fe has increased the prices of goods and other commodities.                              | 3.84 | Agree                |
| The manifestation of tourism in Sta. Fe has caused an increase in land values, especially in prime tourist spots.          | 4.00 | Agree                |
| The work available in the field of tourism and hospitality is mostly affected by seasonality.                              | 4.11 | Agree                |
| <i>(Economic) Factor mean</i>  | 3.98 | High Negative Effect |
| <i>Socio-Cultural</i>  |      |                      |
| The existence of tourism in Sta. Fe has commodified the local culture of the residents.                                    | 3.64 | Agree                |
| Tourist growth in Sta. Fe has led to the loss of land of native residents.   | 3.30 | Neutral              |
| The residents in Sta. Fe have acquired many new traits and behaviors that may result in our culture's disappearance.       | 3.34 | Neutral              |
| Tourism in Sta. Fe has amplified the rate of crime. such as prostitution and drug use.                                     | 3.00 | Neutral              |
| <i>(Socio-Cultural) Factor mean</i>  | 3.32 | Moderate Effect      |
| <i>Environmental</i>   |      |                      |
| There have been tourist sites that have been maltreated by tourists and inappropriately developed as tourist destinations. | 3.32 | Neutral              |
| The tourist sites in Sta. Fe are suffering from pollution such as solid waste, overcrowding, etc.                          | 3.05 | Neutral              |
| Tourist development in Sta. Fe has led to the loss of the natural habitat of wildlife.                                     | 2.70 | Neutral              |
| <i>(Environmental) Factor mean</i>   | 3.02 | Neutral              |
| <i>Overall Mean</i>  | 3.44 | High Negative Effect |

Legend: 1.00–1.80 (Very Low/No Effect), 1.81–2.60 (Low Effect), 2.61–3.40 (Moderate Effect), 3.41–4.20 (High Positive Effect), 4.21–5.00 (Very High Positive Effect).

Tourism in Sta. Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu, has also been perceived to have negative consequences, though these vary in intensity across economic, sociocultural, and environmental aspects. In the economic sector, tourism has been associated with issues such as seasonal employment (Mean = 4.11), rising land values in desirable areas (Mean = 4.00), and increasing costs of goods (Mean = 3.84). These factors contributed to an economic factor mean of 3.98, which is classified as having a high negative effect.

Regarding sociocultural impacts, the perceived negative effects were generally neutral, with a sociocultural factor mean of 3.32. One concern is the commodification of local culture (Mean = 3.64), while other factors, such as the loss of land among native residents (Mean = 3.30), cultural dilution (Mean = 3.34), and increased crime rates (Mean = 3.00), were rated as neutral. These findings suggest that, while there are some concerns related to cultural identity and social stability, these issues are not overwhelmingly negative according to respondents.

In terms of the environmental impact, the perceived negative effects were also neutral, with an environmental factor mean of 3.02. Environmental challenges such as pollution and overcrowding (Mean = 3.05), loss of natural habitats (Mean = 2.70), and degradation of tourist sites (Mean = 3.32) were noted, but the intensity of these issues was not as high as other concerns. The overall mean of 3.44 indicates that while there are significant concerns, they are generally mild to neutral across the economic, sociocultural, and environmental dimensions.

Although tourism brings important economic benefits, poor management could lead to severe negative effects on the culture and environment of Sta. Fe. Unchecked tourism growth can undermine the cultural identity of local communities, leading to cultural loss rather than preservation. In the economic realm, tourism is often linked to seasonal, low-wage jobs and suffers from economic leakage,

where profits flow to foreign-owned businesses, leaving local communities with limited financial benefits. Additionally, tourism's environmental toll—through waste, pollution, and the disruption of natural habitats—can have lasting consequences if not managed properly. Social tensions between locals and tourists can also arise, contributing to a risk of cultural erosion.

These findings suggest the need for policy interventions and the implementation of sustainable tourism practices to minimize the negative effects while maximizing the benefits of tourism. To achieve a more balanced and responsible approach, Sta. Fe can address issues like price inflation, ensure equitable land use, implement cultural preservation programs, and strengthen environmental regulations. These actions will help foster a more sustainable and beneficial tourism environment.

## Conclusions

Tourism in Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, has brought both positive and negative impacts. On the one hand, it has contributed to job creation, business growth, and improved infrastructure. On the other hand, there are negative effects, particularly in the economic sphere, such as rising costs and seasonal employment. While the economic benefits of tourism are significant, the challenges associated with it, like inflation and price increases, also need to be addressed. These mixed effects highlight the need for careful management to ensure that the benefits of tourism are sustained while mitigating the negative impacts.

To address these challenges and support sustainable tourism, the following steps are recommended: Implement zoning laws to control overcrowding and protect natural areas. Ensure all tourism businesses are registered and comply with environmental guidelines. Work closely with local officials to monitor and manage tourist numbers during peak seasons. Create a plan to protect local traditions and cultural heritage. Support tourism that highlights authentic local experiences. Provide cultural training for tourism workers to reduce cultural commodification. Enforce better waste management practices and encourage businesses to recycle. Limit the number of tourists in sensitive areas and promote eco-friendly activities. Encourage tourism businesses to adopt sustainable practices, such as using less water and energy.

The views of government tourism authorities and staff are the only stakeholders included in this study; visitors and locals are not included. The reliability and generalizability of the results may potentially be impacted by the use of self-reported survey data and the limited sample size ( $n = 44$ ). Furthermore, examining more complex causal links is restricted when descriptive statistics are the only ones used. Nevertheless, the study offers valuable information about the effects of local tourism.

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