

The Role of Composite Governance Support in Advancing Sustainable Development of Community-Based Tourism in Basilan

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Abstract: Community-based tourism (CBT) has been widely promoted as a strategy for sustainable local development due to its potential to generate livelihoods, preserve cultural heritage, and strengthen community participation. Despite growing interest in tourism governance, limited empirical research has examined how multiple governance actors collectively contribute to the sustainability of community-based tourism initiatives, particularly in geographically peripheral and culturally diverse settings such as Basilan Province. Existing studies frequently focus on individual institutions or specific governance levels, providing insufficient understanding of how collaborative governance arrangements influence sustainable tourism outcomes. This gap limits the development of more integrated and context-responsive tourism governance strategies. This study examined the role of composite governance support in advancing the sustainable development of community-based tourism in selected destinations in Basilan Province. Specifically, it analyzed the contributions and interrelationships of governance actors and examined how composite governance support facilitates sustainable development practices within community-based tourism. A descriptive qualitative research design was employed using key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and structured surveys involving tourism officers, community leaders, government representatives, tourism association members, and partner organizations across four community-based tourism destinations. The findings revealed that sustainable tourism development is strengthened through the collaborative engagement of community organizations, local government units, regional agencies, national institutions, non-government organizations, and development partners. These actors contribute complementary forms of support and maintain interdependent relationships that enable tourism communities to sustain operations, strengthen local capacities, and address development needs. Composite governance support further advances sustainable development by reinforcing environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, community empowerment, and local economic opportunities. Differences in sustainability outcomes across destinations were associated with variations in stakeholder engagement, institutional connectivity, and the continuity of governance support. Tourism governance is a collaborative and interconnected system rather than as the responsibility of individual institutions. Strengthening partnerships, stakeholder coordination, and long-term institutional support can enhance the sustainability and resilience of community-based tourism initiatives in Basilan and similar development contexts.

Keywords: community-based tourism, composite governance support, sustainable development, collaborative governance, stakeholder engagement, Basilan

Introduction

Sustainable development increasingly requires the participation of multiple actors whose responsibilities, expertise, and resources extend beyond the capacity of any single institution. Contemporary development challenges are characterized by social, economic, environmental, and administrative complexities that demand coordinated action across governance levels and sectors. As a result, governance is no longer viewed solely as a function of centralized authority but as a collaborative process involving interconnected stakeholders working toward common goals. Multi-level and collaborative governance arrangements have emerged in response to issues that cannot be effectively addressed through traditional hierarchical systems [1], while distributed decision-making

structures have been found to strengthen development outcomes through improved coordination and institutional alignment [2], [3]. The relevance of such governance arrangements is particularly evident in community-based tourism (CBT), where development outcomes depend on the interaction of local communities, government agencies, civil society organizations, and development partners. Community-based tourism promotes local participation, shared decision-making, and community ownership of tourism initiatives, enabling communities to benefit directly from tourism development while preserving local resources and cultural identity [4], [5]. However, the success of CBT extends beyond community participation alone. Effective tourism initiatives require institutional support, organizational capacity, access to resources, and collaborative relationships that enable communities to sustain tourism activities over time [6], [7].

Sustainability remains a central objective of community-based tourism. Sustainable tourism seeks to balance economic development with environmental stewardship and social well-being, ensuring that tourism benefits are maintained without compromising future generations [8], [9]. Within decentralized governance systems, local governments and communities are provided greater opportunities to participate directly in development processes and tourism management [10]. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of decentralized arrangements depends not only on the transfer of authority but also on the quality of support, coordination, and oversight provided by governance actors. Institutions that provide clear direction, accountability mechanisms, and coordinated interventions contribute significantly to the successful implementation of development initiatives [11], [12].

The growing complexity of tourism development has therefore shifted attention toward governance systems that operate through collaboration rather than isolated institutional action. Previous studies have emphasized that trust, long-term engagement, and shared accountability strengthen stakeholder participation and support sustainable development outcomes [13], [14]. Within community-based tourism, active participation enhances local ownership, empowers communities, and contributes to more equitable and sustainable forms of development [15], [16]. Moreover, tourism initiatives can support cultural preservation, strengthen community identity, and promote social cohesion when local traditions and indigenous knowledge are integrated into tourism activities [17]. The benefits of tourism, however, are strongly influenced by the governance environments in which communities operate. Governance arrangements shape how opportunities, resources, and benefits are distributed among stakeholders, while weak institutional relationships and fragmented responsibilities may constrain community participation and long-term sustainability [18], [19], [20].

Recent scholarship has increasingly recognized that tourism development depends on the combined contributions of multiple governance actors rather than individual institutions. Government agencies, community organizations, civil society groups, and development partners collectively provide technical assistance, policy support, financial resources, capacity-building opportunities, and collaborative networks that influence tourism outcomes [21], [22]. Sustainable tourism is more likely to succeed when communities actively participate in governance processes, when development interventions reflect local priorities, and when tourism benefits are distributed equitably among stakeholders [23], [24], [25]. These conditions highlight the importance of understanding tourism governance as a collective process through which diverse actors contribute to sustainable development.

Governance actors further influence tourism development by strengthening local capacities and fostering collaborative relationships. Capacity-building initiatives improve knowledge, leadership, organizational competence, and community resilience, enabling tourism stakeholders to respond more effectively to emerging challenges and opportunities [26], [27]. Institutional support and external partnerships likewise provide access to expertise, resources, and development opportunities that enhance local participation and reduce community vulnerabilities [28], [29]. At the same time, collaborative governance has become increasingly important in addressing complex tourism issues that cannot be resolved by individual organizations acting independently. Through collaboration, stakeholders coordinate interventions, align priorities, mobilize resources, and strengthen collective action toward shared development goals [30], [31]. Such collaborative arrangements are reinforced by trust, open communication, and clearly defined institutional roles that facilitate meaningful participation and

sustained engagement among stakeholders [32], [33].

Despite the growing body of literature on tourism governance and community participation, limited empirical attention has been given to how multiple governance actors collectively contribute to the sustainability of community-based tourism, particularly in geographically peripheral and administratively unique contexts such as Basilan Province within the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Existing studies frequently focus on individual institutions, specific governance levels, or isolated forms of support, providing limited understanding of how governance actors interact, collaborate, and collectively influence sustainable tourism outcomes. This gap restricts a more comprehensive understanding of how governance support contributes to the long-term sustainability of community-based tourism initiatives.

Basilan presents a valuable context for addressing this gap. The province possesses significant cultural, historical, and environmental resources that have supported the emergence of community-based tourism initiatives aimed at promoting local livelihoods, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship. However, tourism communities experience varying levels of stakeholder participation, institutional engagement, organizational capacity, and external support, resulting in differences in tourism development outcomes. Understanding how governance actors contribute to and interact within these tourism systems is therefore essential for advancing sustainable community-based tourism development.

Against this backdrop, the present study investigated the role of composite governance support in advancing the sustainable development of community-based tourism in Basilan. Specifically, it sought to:

Analyze the contributions and interrelationships of governance actors—including local government units, regional and national agencies, community organizations, non-government organizations, development partners, and other stakeholders—in supporting and sustaining community-based tourism initiatives.

Examine how composite governance support facilitates the advancement of sustainable development practices within community-based tourism, particularly in relation to environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, community empowerment, and local economic development.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to examine the role of composite governance support in advancing the sustainable development of community-based tourism (CBT) in Basilan Province. The approach was appropriate for exploring stakeholder experiences, institutional interactions, and governance processes within their natural contexts, allowing a deeper understanding of how governance actors collectively support tourism development and sustainability.

Participants, Sampling, and Study Sites

A total of thirty-two (32) participants were involved in the study, including tourism officers, community leaders, tourism operators, barangay officials, representatives from MTIT-BARMM, members of community-based tourism associations, and partner organizations engaged in tourism development. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that they possessed direct knowledge and experience related to tourism governance, stakeholder collaboration, and sustainable tourism development. Purposive sampling strengthens the alignment between participant selection and research objectives, thereby enhancing the credibility of qualitative findings [34].

The study was conducted in four community-based tourism destinations in Basilan Province: Marang-Marang Floating Cottage, Kud Pasangen School of Living Tradition, Lampinigan Beach, and the Bajau Cultural Heritage Center of Tampalan. These sites were selected because they represent diverse tourism settings with varying levels of stakeholder participation, institutional engagement, and governance support.

Data Collection

Data were gathered through key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and structured surveys to facilitate methodological triangulation. Triangulation enhances the validity and comprehensiveness of qualitative inquiry by drawing evidence from multiple sources ^[35]. Key informant interviews were conducted with government officials, tourism officers, community leaders, and partner organizations to explore governance support mechanisms, stakeholder roles, and sustainability initiatives. Focus group discussions were conducted with community members and tourism association participants to examine community experiences, participation processes, and perceptions of governance support. Structured surveys complemented the qualitative data by providing descriptive information regarding stakeholder engagement, access to support mechanisms, and sustainability practices. In qualitative-dominant studies, surveys serve as useful tools for contextualizing and validating qualitative findings ^[36].

Prior to data collection, coordination was undertaken with local authorities and community stakeholders to secure permissions and arrange research activities. Interviews and discussions were audio-recorded with participant consent and supplemented by field notes. Survey responses were compiled and organized for analysis.

Data Analysis

The study utilized thematic analysis to examine qualitative data obtained from interviews and focus group discussions. Transcripts were reviewed repeatedly to achieve data familiarization, followed by coding and the identification of recurring patterns related to governance support, stakeholder collaboration, community participation, and sustainable tourism development. Related codes were grouped into broader themes, which were subsequently compared across the four study sites. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize survey responses and support qualitative interpretations.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was secured from all respondents. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through the use of coded identifiers, while all research records were stored securely and accessed only by the researcher. These procedures ensured adherence to ethical standards and promoted transparency and rigor throughout the research process ^[37].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Objective 2: Analyze the contributions and interrelationships of governance actors—including local government units, regional and national agencies, community organizations, non-government organizations, development partners, and other stakeholders—in supporting and sustaining community-based tourism initiatives.

Table 1. Cross-Site Comparison of Composite Governance Support Across Selected Community-Based Tourism Destinations in Basilan

Governance Support Dimension	Marang-Marang Floating Cottage	Kud Pasangen School of Living Tradition	Lampinigan Beach	Bajau Cultural Heritage Center of Tampalan
Policy and Regulatory Support	Strongly institutionalized; established operational guidelines and visitor management systems	Supported through cultural preservation policies and heritage programs	Locally implemented tourism and environmental regulations	Primarily community-led with project-based guidance

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Governance Support Dimension	Marang-Marang Floating Cottage	Kud Pasangen School of Living Tradition	Lampinigan Beach	Bajau Cultural Heritage Center of Tampalan
Capacity-Building Initiatives	Regular training and organizational development activities	Extensive cultural education, weaving training, and heritage transmission programs	Occasional tourism-related capacity development activities	Limited but supported through cultural preservation initiatives
Resource Mobilization	Access to LGU support, national agency assistance, and livelihood resources	Strong access to provincial, regional, and national cultural support programs	Relies largely on local resources and seasonal tourism revenues	Dependent on project-based support and external cultural initiatives
Stakeholder Collaboration	Active collaboration among associations, LGUs, NGOs, and partner agencies	Strong partnerships among cultural institutions, government agencies, and community groups	Collaboration primarily concentrated at barangay and municipal levels	Collaboration sustained through community networks and local partnerships
Monitoring and Accountability Mechanisms	Formal monitoring systems, visitor logs, and regular compliance checks	Structured reporting and program monitoring mechanisms	Environmental monitoring and caretaker supervision practices	Informal monitoring processes largely dependent on community volunteers
Institutional Linkages	Extensive connections with provincial, regional, and national institutions	Strong institutional networks supporting cultural preservation and tourism development	Moderate institutional engagement with limited external partnerships	Emerging institutional linkages with fewer external support channels
Community Participation	Highly active and organized community association with expanding membership	Strong community involvement in cultural preservation and tourism activities	Active participation in tourism operations and environmental management	Strong community ownership despite limited external support
Overall Composite Governance Support	High	High	Moderate	Moderate

The findings presented in Table 1 reveal notable variations in the configuration and depth of composite governance support across the four community-based tourism destinations. Marang-Marang Floating Cottage and Kud Pasangen School of Living Tradition demonstrated the most comprehensive support systems, characterized by strong stakeholder collaboration, diverse institutional partnerships, access to external resources, structured monitoring mechanisms, and sustained capacity-building opportunities. These destinations benefited from the collective contributions of local government units, community organizations, regional agencies, national institutions, and development partners, creating a supportive environment for tourism development and organizational growth.

The findings suggest that the effectiveness of tourism development initiatives is not determined by the presence of individual governance actors alone but by the extent to which different stakeholders contribute complementary forms of support. In both Marang-Marang and Kud Pasangen, governance support was reinforced through continuous interaction among community associations, local governments, cultural institutions, and external partners. These relationships facilitated access to training opportunities, technical assistance, tourism promotion programs, and livelihood resources. Palingkod et al. ^[38] emphasized that effective governance systems rely on clear communication channels and structured stakeholder engagement mechanisms. This observation was reflected in the regular consultations, organizational meetings, and collaborative planning activities reported in the two destinations.

Community participation likewise emerged as a critical element in strengthening governance support systems. Panagiotopoulou and Skoultos ^[39] argued that sustainable tourism development is enhanced when communities actively participate in decision-making and development processes. The strong involvement of community associations, cultural practitioners, youth groups, and local leaders in Marang-Marang and Kud Pasangen contributed to greater organizational cohesion and stronger ownership of tourism initiatives. These destinations demonstrated that governance support becomes more effective when external assistance complements, rather than replaces, local participation and community leadership.

The findings further indicate that stakeholder collaboration functions as a mechanism through which different forms of governance support are integrated and mobilized. Community organizations served as operational anchors, while government agencies provided technical guidance, regulatory support, and access to development programs. Provincial and national institutions contributed resources and specialized assistance, particularly in cultural preservation and tourism promotion initiatives. The interaction among these actors created a support ecosystem that strengthened tourism operations and expanded development opportunities. Consistent with Dredge's perspective, governance effectiveness increases when institutional actors and community organizations work collaboratively toward shared objectives, resulting in greater administrative coherence and sustainability.

In contrast, Lampinigan Beach and the Bajau Cultural Heritage Center of Tampalan exhibited foundational but comparatively less comprehensive governance support systems. While both destinations demonstrated active community participation, localized stakeholder engagement, and basic organizational structures, they reported fewer institutional linkages, limited access to external resources, and less structured monitoring mechanisms. These findings suggest that tourism development in these sites relies more heavily on local initiative and community commitment than on sustained external support. The observed differences reflect variations in the reach and intensity of composite governance support rather than differences in community commitment. Shin et al. ^[40] noted that emerging tourism destinations often possess functional governance practices but have yet to establish the broader institutional networks necessary for sustained development. This observation is evident in Lampinigan and Tampalan, where community cohesion remains strong despite more limited engagement from external partners and support institutions. In particular, Tampalan demonstrated strong internal solidarity and stakeholder cooperation, illustrating how social capital can partially compensate for limited institutional support.

The findings also highlight the importance of expanding partnerships and strengthening institutional linkages in emerging tourism destinations. According to Mair et al. ^[41], governance support systems become more effective when communities are connected to broader networks that facilitate learning, resource sharing, and collaborative development. Strengthening access to capacity-building programs, technical assistance, and external partnerships may therefore enhance the ability of Lampinigan and Tampalan to advance tourism development and sustainability objectives. Overall, the findings indicate that community-based tourism development in Basilan is influenced not only by the presence of governance actors but also by the quality, diversity, and interconnectedness of the support systems they collectively provide.

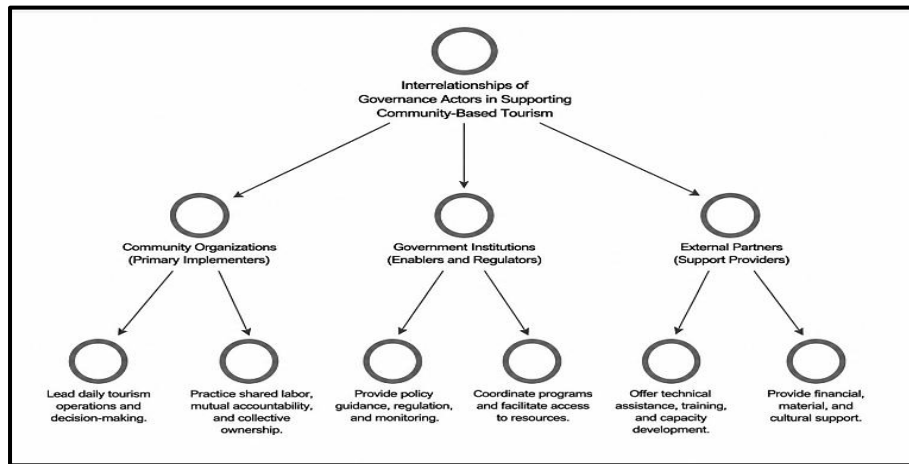


Figure 1: Interrelationships of Governance Actors in Supporting Community-based tourism

Figure 1 illustrates the interconnected roles and relationships among governance actors that collectively sustain community-based tourism (CBT) initiatives in Basilan. The findings revealed that tourism development is not driven by a single institution or stakeholder group but emerges from the coordinated contributions of communities, local government units, regional agencies, national institutions, civil society organizations, and development partners. Across all four study sites, participants consistently described tourism as a shared undertaking that depends on cooperation, mutual support, and collective responsibility. Rather than viewing tourism as an individual economic activity, respondents emphasized that successful tourism initiatives are sustained through collaborative effort and continuous engagement among stakeholders.

Community organizations emerged as the primary actors responsible for the day-to-day implementation of tourism activities. Participants repeatedly highlighted the importance of collective action in maintaining tourism operations, organizing community participation, and ensuring the continuity of livelihood activities. One respondent explained that tourism initiatives become possible only when there are “people behind you” providing support and cooperation, while operating independently was viewed as difficult and unsustainable. This finding supports the work of Okazaki ^[42], who argued that community-based tourism is most effective when tourism is regarded as a collective endeavor rather than an individual enterprise. Across the study sites, tourism activities were embedded within community associations, shared labor arrangements, and participatory decision-making structures that reinforced a sense of collective ownership and accountability.

The contribution of community organizations was particularly evident in Marang-Marang Floating Cottage, where tourism operations relied on an integrated community-based seafood value chain. Community members participated in harvesting, processing, preparing, and serving seafood products to visitors, creating a system in which responsibilities were distributed across households and association members. Family members, including spouses and children, actively contributed to tourism-related activities, demonstrating the depth of community involvement in sustaining local enterprises. The association leader's statement that their “only capital” was themselves reflects the central role of community effort, cooperation, and human resources in supporting tourism development. Kirby ^[43] similarly noted that shared responsibilities strengthen organizational resilience by distributing risks, workloads, and operational obligations among participants. The findings suggest

that community organizations function not only as tourism operators but also as mechanisms through which collective capacity and social capital are mobilized.

Local government units (LGUs) were identified as critical governance actors that provide regulatory guidance, institutional legitimacy, and operational support for tourism initiatives. Across the study sites, participants consistently expressed trust in local government institutions and viewed them as important partners in tourism development. In Kud Pasangen, participants reported that community members generally comply with tourism-related policies and directives communicated by government officials, while respondents in Marang-Marang emphasized their willingness to follow local regulations concerning visitor safety, environmental management, and tourism operations. These findings align with Witchayakawin et al. ^[44], who emphasized that community-based tourism becomes more sustainable when government institutions and local communities function as collaborative partners rather than isolated actors. Cooper and Knotts ^[45] further argued that trust in government institutions strengthens compliance, facilitates coordination, and improves policy implementation outcomes. The findings demonstrate that LGUs contribute to tourism development not only through regulation but also by providing leadership, coordination, and institutional support that strengthens local initiatives.

The relationship between communities and government institutions was characterized by mutual dependence rather than unilateral authority. Tourism operators frequently highlighted the importance of maintaining strong working relationships with local officials to access development programs, address operational concerns, and secure institutional assistance when needed. Sustained engagement from government actors was viewed as particularly important in communities with limited financial and organizational resources. Consistent with previous studies ^[46], the findings suggest that continuous institutional involvement enhances the long-term viability of community-based tourism initiatives by providing communities with access to resources, technical guidance, and governance support.

The findings also revealed variations in how governance roles were organized and enacted across the four destinations. In Lampinigan Island, tourism-related responsibilities were largely linked to formal governance positions, with barangay officials actively participating in tourism management because they clearly understood their designated functions. In Kud Pasangen, participants described how youth members developed an awareness of their responsibilities through involvement in cultural preservation and tourism activities, demonstrating the intergenerational transfer of leadership and organizational roles. Marang-Marang exhibited strong labor-based interdependence rooted in association membership and shared economic activities, while Tampalan relied heavily on community leaders and cultural practitioners involved in heritage preservation initiatives. Although the forms of participation differed, all four sites demonstrated the presence of clearly defined responsibilities and collaborative relationships among stakeholders.

Regional and national institutions contributed primarily through technical assistance, policy guidance, capacity-building programs, and access to development resources. However, participants emphasized that these institutions generally operated in partnership with local governments rather than independently. Representatives from MTIT-BARMM consistently highlighted the importance of respecting local jurisdiction and coordinating interventions through local government channels. According to one officer, tourism programs could not be implemented without engaging municipal tourism offices, barangay officials, and local government leaders because tourism initiatives ultimately operate within local governance contexts. This finding illustrates how governance actors maintain complementary rather than competing roles within the broader tourism development system.

Overall, Figure 3 demonstrates that community-based tourism development in Basilan is sustained through a network of interdependent governance actors whose contributions extend beyond their individual mandates. Communities provide operational leadership and local participation, local government units offer regulatory and organizational support, while regional and national institutions contribute technical expertise, resources, and developmental assistance. The effectiveness of community-based tourism therefore depends not only on the presence of governance actors but also on the quality of their relationships, the clarity of their roles, and their capacity to collaborate toward

shared development objectives. These findings underscore that composite governance support is fundamentally relational, emerging from the interaction of multiple stakeholders whose combined efforts strengthen the sustainability and resilience of tourism initiatives.

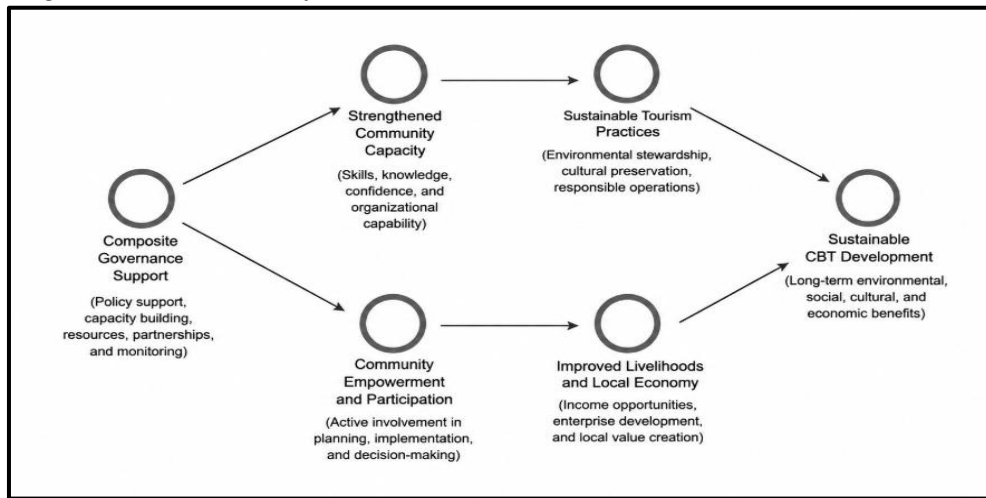


Figure 2: Composite Governance Support and Sustainable Development Outcomes

Figure 2 illustrates how composite governance support contributes to the advancement of sustainable development practices across the four community-based tourism (CBT) destinations in Basilan. The findings revealed that sustainability was not pursued as a separate tourism objective but was embedded within the collective actions of governance actors, community organizations, and support institutions. Across the study sites, sustainability was advanced through four interconnected dimensions: environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, community empowerment, and local economic development. These dimensions were strengthened through the combined contributions of government agencies, community associations, cultural organizations, and development partners that collectively shaped tourism planning, implementation, and resource management practices.

One of the most prominent findings was the integration of sustainability principles into tourism planning and development initiatives. Participants consistently emphasized that tourism programs were designed to complement broader community and provincial development priorities rather than function as isolated economic projects. Representatives from the Ministry of Trade, Investments and Tourism (MTIT-BARMM) explained that tourism initiatives were expected to align with existing development programs and contribute to wider social, cultural, and economic goals. This approach reflects the perspective of Bramwell and Lane ^[47], who argued that sustainable tourism is achieved when tourism activities are integrated into broader development frameworks rather than pursued independently. The findings suggest that composite governance support facilitates sustainability by encouraging collaboration among institutions and ensuring that tourism initiatives contribute to long-term community development objectives.

Institutional collaboration also strengthened sustainability by promoting coherence among tourism, cultural, and community development programs. Participants described how government agencies, local governments, and community organizations worked collectively to ensure that tourism activities remained consistent with local priorities and cultural values. Rather than competing for influence, governance actors sought to align their efforts in support of shared development goals. According to Nicholls ^[48], tourism initiatives are more likely to achieve long-term sustainability when they are embedded within broader development agendas and supported by coordinated institutional action. The findings demonstrate that composite governance support creates opportunities for stakeholders to pursue sustainability through collaborative planning, resource sharing, and coordinated implementation.

The preservation of cultural heritage emerged as a significant sustainability outcome facilitated by governance support. Across the study sites, tourism initiatives were closely linked to the protection and promotion of local traditions, indigenous knowledge systems, and cultural practices. Programs

such as the Schools of Living Tradition, weaving initiatives, and community-based cultural demonstrations served not only as tourism attractions but also as mechanisms for safeguarding cultural identity. Kasmin ^[49] emphasized that tourism contributes more effectively to sustainable development when it supports cultural preservation and community empowerment rather than focusing solely on economic growth. The findings indicate that governance actors strengthened cultural sustainability by providing technical assistance, organizational support, and institutional recognition for heritage-based tourism initiatives.

Environmental stewardship was likewise embedded within tourism operations through community-driven conservation practices and environmental management initiatives. Marang-Marang Floating Cottage demonstrated particularly strong environmental integration through the incorporation of mangrove planting activities into tourism experiences. Visitors were encouraged to participate in conservation efforts, transforming environmental protection into a shared responsibility between communities and tourists. This practice reflects the observations of Cutillas et al. ^[50], who argued that sustainability initiatives become more effective when local stakeholders actively participate in environmental stewardship. Similarly, Suparak et al. ^[51] noted that community-led conservation efforts strengthen ownership of natural resources and encourage long-term environmental responsibility.

Other tourism destinations implemented sustainability practices suited to their local contexts. In Lampinigan Beach, environmental management was supported through caretaker systems responsible for maintaining cleanliness, monitoring waste disposal, and ensuring the upkeep of tourism facilities. Although the scale and intensity of environmental programs differed across destinations, the findings suggest that sustainability was advanced through locally appropriate practices supported by both community participation and institutional guidance. These initiatives demonstrate how composite governance support facilitates environmental sustainability by combining community action, technical assistance, and policy support.

The findings further revealed that governance actors deliberately promoted development approaches that balanced economic opportunities with environmental and cultural protection. Provincial stakeholders consistently emphasized the importance of avoiding extractive forms of tourism development that prioritize short-term gains at the expense of local resources and community well-being. Instead, tourism was positioned as a vehicle for livelihood enhancement, cultural revitalization, and responsible resource management. Xia ^[52] argued that destinations become more sustainable when governance systems prioritize environmental stewardship and cultural integrity alongside economic development. This perspective was evident in Basilan's emphasis on cultural assets, natural landscapes, and community experiences as the foundation of tourism development.

Community empowerment emerged as another important outcome facilitated by composite governance support. Through participation in tourism associations, cultural programs, capacity-building initiatives, and collaborative decision-making processes, community members gained opportunities to contribute directly to tourism development. These experiences strengthened local ownership, enhanced organizational capacity, and increased confidence in managing tourism-related activities. Governance support therefore extended beyond resource provision and regulatory assistance to include the creation of opportunities for meaningful community participation and leadership.

The findings also indicate that sustainability was reinforced through local economic development opportunities generated by tourism activities. Community-managed enterprises, cultural tourism programs, seafood-based livelihood initiatives, and tourism-related services provided supplementary income for participating households while supporting broader community development goals. Consistent with Reamico et al. ^[53], sustainable tourism outcomes were strengthened when tourism offerings reflected local strengths, community identity, and visitor expectations. By supporting locally driven tourism enterprises, governance actors contributed to economic opportunities that remained closely connected to community needs and priorities.

Overall, Figure 4 demonstrates that sustainability within Basilan's community-based tourism sector is facilitated through an integrated system of composite governance support. Environmental

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stewardship, cultural preservation, community empowerment, and local economic development were not achieved through isolated interventions but through the collective efforts of multiple stakeholders working toward shared development objectives. The findings suggest that the effectiveness of sustainable tourism development depends on the ability of governance actors to mobilize resources, strengthen partnerships, support community participation, and align tourism initiatives with broader social, cultural, and environmental goals.

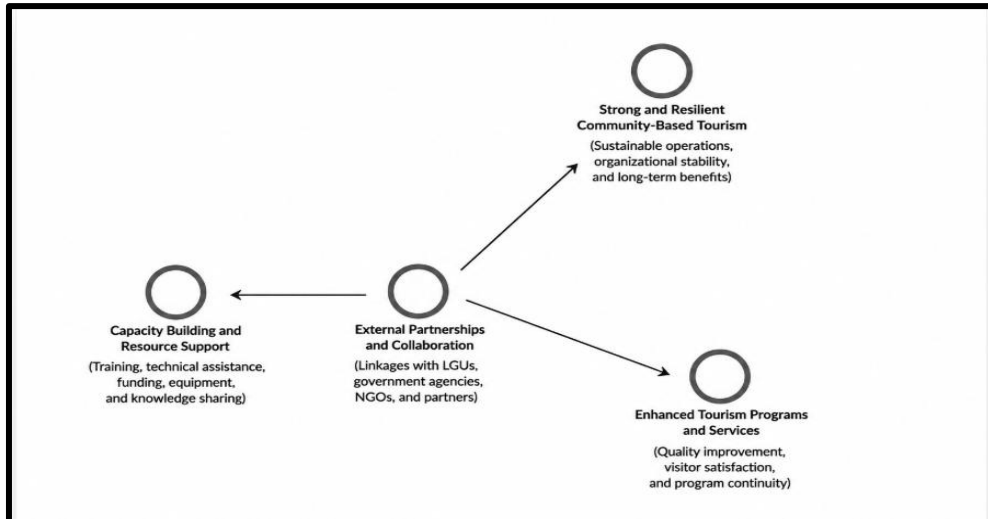


Figure 3: Capacity Building and External Support Leading to Sustainable Community-Based Tourism

The findings further revealed that capacity-building support and strategic partnerships constitute critical mechanisms through which composite governance support advances sustainable community-based tourism (CBT) development in Basilan. Figure 3 illustrates the network of institutional relationships that provide communities with access to training opportunities, technical assistance, financial resources, cultural programming, and organizational development support. Rather than relying solely on internal community capacities, tourism destinations benefited from the combined contributions of local government units, regional agencies, national institutions, non-government organizations (NGOs), and development partners. These interconnected forms of support strengthened community capabilities and enhanced the capacity of local organizations to sustain tourism initiatives over time.

Across the four study sites, participants consistently emphasized that tourism development requires continuous access to knowledge, skills enhancement, and institutional assistance. Community leaders acknowledged that local initiatives alone were often insufficient to address operational requirements, regulatory compliance, organizational development needs, and emerging tourism challenges. A leader from Kud Pasangen School of Living Tradition explained that they “cannot easily provide or conduct trainings, seminars, capability building, [or] capacity building without their support,” while a representative from Marang-Marang Floating Cottage stated that “if we don’t have support from our partners, it becomes useless.” These accounts suggest that capacity-building support is not merely supplementary but functions as an essential component of sustainable tourism development. Consistent with the findings of Tamtik and Colorado ^[54], effective development initiatives often depend on collaborative arrangements that allow communities to access expertise, training opportunities, and institutional resources beyond their immediate capacities.

The findings indicate that governance actors contributed to community development not by replacing local leadership but by strengthening local capabilities. Government agencies, tourism offices, and partner organizations facilitated training programs, technical consultations, compliance guidance, and organizational development activities that enabled communities to improve tourism operations and management practices. Such interventions enhanced community confidence, strengthened administrative competence, and improved the ability of tourism organizations to respond

to changing development demands. These observations support the argument of Kumar et al. ^[55], who emphasized that external partnerships become particularly important when communities possess valuable cultural and tourism assets but have limited access to technical expertise and financial resources.

Cross-site comparisons revealed notable differences in the depth and continuity of capacity-building support. Marang-Marang Floating Cottage and Kud Pasangen School of Living Tradition reported more frequent participation in training programs, tourism workshops, cultural development initiatives, and technical assistance activities facilitated by provincial tourism offices, MTIT-BARMM, and various partner organizations. These experiences contributed to stronger organizational structures, greater institutional confidence, and improved access to tourism development opportunities. In contrast, Lampinigan Beach and the Bajau Cultural Heritage Center of Tampalan reported fewer structured training opportunities and relied more heavily on localized initiatives and project-based interventions. While community commitment remained strong across all sites, differences in access to capacity-building resources created variations in organizational preparedness and development opportunities.

The findings further highlight the importance of partnerships as sources of institutional and developmental support. Non-government organizations emerged as particularly significant contributors to community-based tourism initiatives by providing targeted financial assistance, technical expertise, and programmatic support. Unlike large-scale infrastructure investments, NGO interventions frequently addressed specific operational and organizational needs identified by community stakeholders. In Marang-Marang, for example, support from JCI Quezon City provided financial assistance to address equipment storage concerns, while the Asia Foundation contributed both financial resources and technical development support. These interventions enabled communities to improve operational efficiency, strengthen service delivery, and address practical challenges affecting tourism activities.

Similarly, NGOs contributed to cultural sustainability and community development in other destinations. In Kud Pasangen, the World Association of Muslim Youth supported the construction of a masjid, contributing both to community development and visitor accommodation needs. In Tampalan, the “Lumah Ma Dilaut” initiative provided support for the continuation of the School of Living Tradition, reinforcing efforts to preserve and promote Bajau cultural heritage. These examples demonstrate that external partnerships contributed not only to economic and organizational development but also to the preservation of cultural identity and community values. The findings suggest that effective governance support extends beyond tourism operations and encompasses broader social and cultural dimensions of sustainable development.

Participants also described partner organizations as important channels for information sharing, knowledge dissemination, and network expansion. Community leaders noted that NGOs frequently served as intermediaries that connected tourism destinations to funding opportunities, development programs, tourism events, and policy updates. Through these informational and networking functions, partner organizations reduced the isolation of peripheral communities and expanded their access to institutional opportunities. Destinations characterized by stronger partnerships, particularly Marang-Marang and Kud Pasangen, demonstrated greater continuity in program implementation and broader engagement with external support systems. Conversely, communities with fewer partnership connections often relied more heavily on local coordination and internal resource mobilization.

The findings suggest that capacity-building support and external partnerships operate as interconnected dimensions of composite governance support. Local government units facilitated participant mobilization and logistical coordination, regional agencies provided technical guidance and standards-related assistance, national institutions contributed sector-specific resources, while NGOs supplied flexible financial and developmental support. Collectively, these actors created an enabling environment that strengthened community capabilities, enhanced organizational resilience, and expanded opportunities for sustainable tourism development.

Overall, Figure 5 demonstrates that sustainable community-based tourism development in

Basilan is supported by a capacity-building ecosystem grounded in collaboration, partnership, and institutional support. While communities remain the primary drivers of tourism initiatives, their ability to sustain environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, community empowerment, and local economic development is significantly strengthened through access to training opportunities, external partnerships, technical assistance, and organizational development support. The findings underscore that composite governance support advances sustainability not only through policies and regulations but also through investments in people, institutions, and community capabilities.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Sustainable community-based tourism in Basilan is shaped by the collective contributions and interrelationships of governance actors operating across community, local, regional, national, and external stakeholder levels. Rather than functioning independently, these actors form an interconnected support system in which responsibilities, resources, and expertise are shared to sustain tourism initiatives and address local development needs. Community organizations provide local leadership and participation, while government agencies, non-government organizations, and development partners contribute technical assistance, institutional support, and opportunities that strengthen tourism development efforts.

The findings highlight that the effectiveness of community-based tourism depends not only on the presence of governance actors but also on the quality of collaboration and coordination among them. Stronger institutional linkages, sustained stakeholder engagement, and complementary forms of support contribute to more resilient tourism systems capable of preserving cultural heritage, strengthening community participation, and enhancing local livelihoods. Conversely, communities with more limited external engagement rely heavily on local initiative and social cohesion, often facing greater constraints in sustaining development activities over time.

Sustainable development within community-based tourism emerges through continuous interaction among stakeholders who collectively facilitate environmental stewardship, cultural preservation, community empowerment, and local economic development. These outcomes are strengthened when governance actors work collaboratively toward shared objectives and maintain long-term commitment to community needs. The experiences of the tourism destinations examined demonstrate that sustainability is not achieved through isolated interventions but through enduring partnerships and coordinated action across multiple levels of governance.

The Basilan experience underscores the importance of composite governance support as a catalyst for sustainable tourism development. Strengthening collaborative relationships, institutional connectivity, and stakeholder participation can enhance the capacity of tourism communities to sustain development gains while preserving the social, cultural, and environmental resources upon which community-based tourism depends.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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