

Institutionalizing Fiesta Tourism as a Local Governance Strategy: Community-Based Tourism and Public Administration in Zamboanga City, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Local governments in developing contexts increasingly adopt Community-Based Tourism (CBT) as a strategy for inclusive and sustainable development, contributing to the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). In culturally diverse cities such as Zamboanga City, fiesta tourism has emerged as a prominent manifestation of CBT, grounded in local traditions, collective identity, and long-standing socio-cultural practices. Despite its growing prominence in local development programs, fiesta tourism is often examined primarily as a cultural or economic activity, with limited scholarly attention to its role as a public administration and governance intervention. This study examines how fiesta tourism is institutionalized and implemented as a local governance strategy within the public administration framework of Zamboanga City. Using a mixed-method research design, the study analyzes institutional arrangements, governance mechanisms, administrative capacity, and policy coherence supporting fiesta-based CBT initiatives. Findings indicate that fiesta tourism strengthens community participation, reinforces cultural legitimacy, and generates short-term local economic activity aligned with SDG 8 while contributing to place-based cultural sustainability consistent with SDG 11; however, its long-term sustainability remains constrained by fragmented institutional coordination, limited policy integration, and dependence on political leadership, weakening collaborative governance arrangements envisioned under SDG 17. The study contributes to public administration literature by reframing fiesta tourism as a governance instrument for sustainable development rather than a cultural event alone and underscores the need for stronger institutionalization and policy alignment to ensure continuity beyond episodic celebrations.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development has emerged as a central concern of contemporary public administration, particularly within decentralized governance systems where local governments are tasked with translating national and global development frameworks into context-specific interventions. The Brundtland Commission's articulation of sustainable development as development that meets present needs without compromising future generations continues to influence policy discourse, emphasizing the interdependence of economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection (Brundtland Commission, 1987). In developing countries such as the Philippines, local government units (LGUs) increasingly seek development strategies that not only generate economic opportunities but also strengthen

social cohesion, cultural identity, and participatory governance.

Within this context, Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has gained prominence as a locally grounded development strategy that aligns economic objectives with community empowerment and cultural sustainability. CBT emphasizes local participation, shared benefits, and community control over tourism resources, positioning communities not merely as beneficiaries but as active partners in development processes (Mitchell & Ashley, 2010; Rasul & Thapa, 2019). Studies suggest that CBT can contribute to poverty alleviation, social inclusion, and cultural preservation when supported by appropriate institutional arrangements and governance mechanisms (Goodwin, 2012; Tayeng, et al. 2020). However, the success of CBT initiatives is highly contingent on the capacity of public institutions to design, coordinate, and sustain these programs within broader development frameworks.

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In the Philippine setting, CBT often takes culturally embedded forms, one of the most visible being fiesta tourism. Fiestas occupy a central place in Filipino social life, serving as expressions of religious devotion, historical memory, and communal identity. As tourism attractions, fiestas generate short-term economic activity through visitor spending, local entrepreneurship, and informal employment (Mason, 2008; McCool & Moisey, 2008). In cities such as Zamboanga City, characterized by ethnic diversity and a rich cultural heritage, fiestas have become prominent features of local tourism calendars and are increasingly supported by LGUs as part of their development and cultural promotion programs (Moreno, 2023).

Despite their growing institutional support, fiesta tourism initiatives are often conceptualized narrowly as cultural celebrations or economic events. Much of the existing literature on fiesta tourism focuses on event management, cultural commodification, or tourist experiences, with limited attention to the administrative and governance dimensions that shape how these initiatives are planned, implemented, and sustained (Antolihao, 2014). This tendency risks overlooking the role of public administration in structuring participation, allocating resources, coordinating stakeholders, and ensuring accountability in fiesta-based CBT initiatives.

Public administration scholarship underscores that development outcomes are shaped not only by program design but by the quality of governance and institutional capacity that underpin policy implementation (Peters, 2018). The shift from traditional hierarchical government to more networked and collaborative forms of governance has highlighted the importance of partnerships among government agencies, civil society organizations, and local communities (Osborne, 2006; Bryson et al., 2016). Within this framework, cultural and tourism initiatives such as fiesta tourism can be understood as governance instruments that mobilize multiple actors toward shared development goals rather than as isolated sectoral activities.

In decentralized contexts, LGUs play a critical role in mediating between national development priorities and local realities. Zamboanga City, as a highly urbanized city with diverse cultural communities, presents a compelling case for examining how fiesta tourism is governed as part of local development strategy. Prior studies on tourism and governance in the city highlight both the opportunities and challenges associated with CBT initiatives, including issues of coordination, leadership, and policy coherence (Moreno, 2023). These studies point to the need for stronger institutional arrangements to ensure that tourism initiatives contribute meaningfully to local governance and sustainable development.

This study responds to these gaps by examining fiesta tourism not merely as a cultural or economic phenomenon but as a local governance strategy embedded within community-based tourism initiatives in Zamboanga City. Anchored in public administration theory, the study explores how fiesta tourism is institutionalized through policies, administrative structures, and governance

mechanisms, and how these arrangements influence participation, sustainability, and development outcomes. By situating fiesta tourism within the broader discourse on sustainable development and governance, the study aligns with the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 8 on inclusive economic growth, SDG 11 on sustainable and culturally vibrant cities, and SDG 17 on collaborative partnerships. By reframing fiesta tourism as a governance intervention, this paper contributes to public administration literature by expanding the analytical lens through which cultural initiatives are evaluated. It also provides empirical insights for policymakers and local administrators seeking culturally responsive and participatory development strategies that extend beyond episodic events and toward institutionalized, sustainable outcomes.

1.1. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1
Integrated Governance Framework for Sustainable Fiesta Tourism

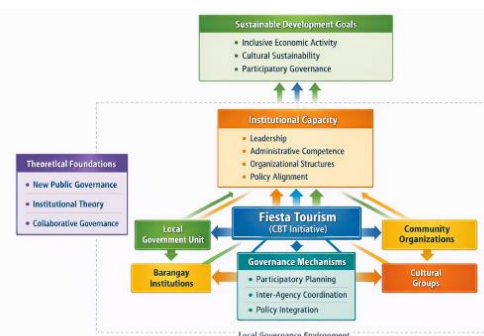


Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework for institutionalizing fiesta tourism as a local governance strategy in Zamboanga City. At its core, Fiesta Tourism (CBT Initiative) is positioned as a governance intervention that integrates cultural celebration with local development and participatory public administration. Rather than being viewed solely as an event or cultural activity, fiesta tourism is conceptualized as a strategic tool that can generate economic, social, and governance outcomes when effectively institutionalized.

Institutional capacity, encompassing leadership, administrative competence, organizational structures, and policy alignment, forms the foundation for successful implementation. Strong capacity enables local governments to integrate fiesta tourism into broader development plans, sustain initiatives beyond political cycles, and ensure policy coherence. Surrounding the central initiative are the primary stakeholders and co-producers: Local Government Units, Barangay Institutions, Community Organizations, and Cultural Groups. These actors engage in collaborative processes guided by governance mechanisms such as participatory planning, inter-agency coordination, and policy

integration, which mediate their involvement in planning, implementing, and sustaining the CBT initiative.

The framework further links the CBT initiative to sustainable development outcomes, including inclusive economic activity, cultural sustainability, and participatory governance. Encapsulating all elements is the local governance environment, providing the contextual backdrop for interactions among stakeholders, governance mechanisms, and institutional capacities. The framework is anchored in the theoretical perspectives of New Public Governance, Institutional Theory, and Collaborative Governance, highlighting how institutional arrangements, collaborative practices, and policy coherence shape the effectiveness of fiesta tourism as a community-based strategy for sustainable development.

1.2 Review of Relevant Literature (RRL)

Community-Based Tourism and Sustainable Development

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) has been widely advanced as an alternative tourism development approach that aligns economic objectives with social inclusion and environmental sustainability. Rooted in participatory development principles, CBT emphasizes community ownership, local control over resources, and equitable benefit distribution (Mitchell & Ashley, 2010; Rasul & Thapa, 2019). In developing country contexts, CBT is often promoted as a mechanism for poverty reduction, livelihood diversification, and cultural preservation, particularly in areas marginalized from mainstream tourism circuits (Goodwin, 2012).

From a sustainable development perspective, CBT reflects the multidimensional framework articulated by the Brundtland Commission (1987), which underscores the interdependence of economic growth, social equity, and environmental stewardship. Tourism initiatives that engage communities as active partners rather than passive beneficiaries are more likely to generate socially legitimate and environmentally responsible outcomes (McCool & Moisey, 2008). However, the literature also cautions that CBT does not automatically produce sustainable outcomes; rather, its effectiveness depends heavily on governance structures, institutional capacity, and policy coherence (Rasul & Thapa, 2019).

In the Philippine context, CBT has been increasingly incorporated into local development strategies, particularly in culturally rich and geographically diverse areas. Tayeng, et al. (2020) note that while CBT initiatives in the Philippines demonstrate strong potential for community empowerment, they are often constrained by limited administrative capacity, fragmented coordination, and weak institutional support. These challenges underscore the need to examine CBT not only as a development model but as a public administration intervention embedded within local governance systems.

Fiesta Tourism as a Community-Based Tourism Modality

Fiesta tourism represents a culturally embedded form of CBT that draws on local festivals, religious celebrations, and communal rituals as tourism attractions. In the Philippines, fiestas serve as expressions of collective identity, historical continuity, and social cohesion, making them particularly suitable platforms for community participation (Moreno, 2023). As tourism products, fiestas generate short-term economic activity through visitor spending, informal enterprises, and cultural performances, contributing to local livelihoods and place branding (Mason, 2008).

Existing scholarship on fiesta tourism largely focuses on cultural representation, commodification, and event management. Antolihao (2014) highlights that festival-based tourism can enhance destination attractiveness and cultural visibility but also risks reducing complex cultural practices into consumable spectacles. Similarly, McCool and Moisey (2008) caution that without careful planning, tourism-driven cultural events may prioritize visitor expectations over community values.

What remains underexplored in this body of literature is the role of public administration in shaping fiesta tourism outcomes. While fiestas are often portrayed as spontaneous or community-driven events, their transformation into tourism initiatives frequently involves public funding, regulatory oversight, and institutional coordination by local governments. Moreno (2023) observes that in Zamboanga City, fiesta tourism initiatives increasingly rely on LGU support, raising important questions about governance, accountability, and sustainability that extend beyond cultural or economic analysis.

Governance, Participation, and Institutional Capacity

Public administration scholarship emphasizes that development outcomes are deeply influenced by governance arrangements and institutional capacity. The shift toward decentralized governance in many developing countries has expanded the responsibilities of local governments, positioning them as key actors in development planning, service delivery, and stakeholder coordination (Peters, 2018). Within this context, tourism initiatives such as CBT require not only community engagement but also effective administrative systems to ensure coherence and sustainability.

Participation is a central theme in CBT literature, yet scholars caution against assuming that participation is inherently inclusive or empowering. Tosun (2000) identifies structural, operational, and cultural barriers that limit meaningful community participation in tourism development, particularly in developing countries. These barriers include centralized decision-making, limited access to information, and power imbalances between government actors and local communities. Scheyvens (2002) further argues that participation must be assessed in terms of actual empowerment outcomes, including

decision-making authority and control over resources, rather than symbolic involvement.

Institutional capacity plays a critical role in mediating participation outcomes. Klijn and Teisman (2003) note that collaborative initiatives often falter due to unclear roles, weak coordination mechanisms, and conflicting institutional mandates. In the absence of strong governance frameworks, CBT initiatives risk becoming fragmented, short-lived, or dependent on individual political leaders rather than embedded within organizational routines.

Public Administration, Collaborative Governance, and Tourism

The emergence of New Public Governance has reframed the role of public administration in development processes, emphasizing collaboration, networks, and co-production of public value (Osborne, 2006). Rather than acting solely as service providers, public institutions are increasingly viewed as facilitators of collective action among diverse stakeholders (Bryson et al., 2016). This perspective is particularly relevant to CBT and fiesta tourism, which inherently involve interactions among LGUs, barangay institutions, cultural organizations, and community members.

Bryson et al. (2016) argue that successful collaborative governance requires clear institutional arrangements, shared goals, and sustained leadership. Applied to tourism governance, this suggests that fiesta tourism initiatives are more likely to contribute to sustainable development when they are integrated into formal policies, supported by administrative capacity, and guided by participatory planning processes. Conversely, weak collaboration and policy fragmentation undermine the ability of tourism initiatives to deliver long-term public value.

Empirical studies in the Philippine context reinforce these insights. Moreno (2023) demonstrates that CBT initiatives in Zamboanga City positively influence local governance outcomes when supported by institutionalized participation mechanisms and inter-agency coordination. However, the study also highlights persistent challenges related to political turnover, limited technical capacity, and inconsistent policy support, which constrain sustainability.

Synthesis and Research Gap

The reviewed literature underscores that while CBT and fiesta tourism offer significant potential for sustainable and inclusive development, their success is contingent on governance quality and institutional capacity. Existing studies provide valuable insights into economic, cultural, and participatory dimensions of CBT but often treat governance as a contextual factor rather than a central analytical focus. In particular, fiesta tourism remains under-theorized as a public administration and governance intervention, despite its growing integration into local development programs.

This study addresses this gap by explicitly examining fiesta tourism through a public administration lens, focusing on institutional arrangements, governance mechanisms, and policy coherence within the local government system of Zamboanga City. By situating fiesta tourism within the broader discourse on collaborative governance and sustainable development, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how culturally grounded tourism initiatives can function as instruments of local governance rather than isolated cultural events.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design and Approach

This study employed a mixed-method research design to examine the institutionalization of fiesta tourism as a local governance strategy within community-based tourism initiatives in Zamboanga City. The mixed-method approach was deemed appropriate given the study's focus on governance mechanisms, institutional capacity, and policy coherence, which require both empirical measurement and contextual interpretation. Qualitative data provided in-depth insights into administrative processes and stakeholder experiences, while quantitative data offered empirical grounding to assess prevailing perceptions related to governance effectiveness and institutional support.

The analysis presented in this paper draws from a broader mixed-method study on community-based tourism in Zamboanga City. For the purposes of this paper, data were selectively analyzed to focus on fiesta tourism-related initiatives supported or facilitated by local government units, ensuring thematic alignment with the study's governance-oriented objectives.

2.2 Data Collection Methods and Procedures

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured key informant interviews involving city-level tourism and cultural affairs officials, barangay leaders, and community organizers directly engaged in fiesta tourism initiatives. A substantial proportion of interview participants had direct administrative or coordinating roles in planning and implementing local fiestas, allowing for informed discussion of institutional arrangements, coordination mechanisms, and governance challenges. Interviews were conducted until thematic saturation was achieved, as indicated by recurring patterns in responses related to institutional coordination, leadership dependence, and community participation.

Quantitative data were obtained from selected survey items included in the broader CBT study. These items focused on respondents' perceptions of governance effectiveness, administrative support, and inter-agency coordination related to fiesta tourism initiatives. Survey responses were drawn from a majority of participants who had either participated in or directly observed fiesta-

related tourism activities within their communities, ensuring relevance to the study's analytical focus.

2.3 Data Analysis

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interview transcripts were coded to identify recurring themes related to governance mechanisms, institutional capacity, policy integration, and sustainability challenges. Patterns that appeared consistently across a majority of interviews were treated as analytically significant and were used to inform the interpretation of governance dynamics underlying fiesta tourism initiatives.

Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively to complement qualitative findings. Responses generally clustered around mid-range to moderately positive assessments of governance support and administrative coordination, reinforcing qualitative observations regarding uneven institutional capacity and fragmented coordination. These descriptive patterns were used to triangulate qualitative insights rather than to establish causal relationships.

2.4 Ethical Procedures

The study adhered to established ethical standards for social science research. Participation in interviews and surveys was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing participant identities and removing any identifying information from transcripts and survey datasets. Data were used exclusively for academic purposes, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage.

2.5 The Research Instruments

The primary qualitative instrument consisted of a semi-structured interview guide designed to elicit detailed accounts of governance arrangements, institutional roles, and administrative challenges related to fiesta tourism initiatives. Questions were open-ended to allow respondents to elaborate on experiences and perceptions, while still maintaining alignment with the study's conceptual framework.

The quantitative instrument comprised a structured survey questionnaire with Likert-scale items measuring perceptions of governance effectiveness, institutional support, and coordination among local government units and community actors. Selected items from the instrument were utilized in this paper to support governance-related analysis, ensuring methodological consistency with the broader CBT study.

3. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

This section presents the key findings of the study based on the research focus on institutional arrangements, governance mechanisms, administrative capacity, and

policy integration underpinning fiesta tourism initiatives in Zamboanga City. Results are drawn from both qualitative interviews and descriptive survey data and are organized according to the core governance dimensions examined in the study.

3.1 Institutional Arrangements for Fiesta Tourism

Findings indicate that fiesta tourism initiatives in Zamboanga City are primarily coordinated by the city government through its tourism and cultural affairs offices, with varying degrees of barangay-level involvement. A majority of key informants described the city government as the principal initiator and facilitator of fiesta-related activities, particularly in terms of funding support, program endorsement, and promotional activities.

However, the degree of formal institutionalization varied across cases. While some fiesta tourism initiatives were supported by formal resolutions, memoranda, or regular budgetary allocations, a substantial proportion relied on informal arrangements and community initiatives coordinated at the barangay level. These informal arrangements were often sustained through personal networks, volunteerism, and ad hoc coordination rather than through standardized administrative procedures. Such variability reflects uneven institutional embedding of fiesta tourism within the local governance framework.

3.2 Governance Mechanisms and Administrative Capacity

Governance effectiveness emerged as closely linked to administrative capacity and leadership at the barangay level. A significant number of respondents emphasized that barangays with clear organizational structures, designated tourism or cultural committees, and active coordination with city offices demonstrated more consistent planning and implementation of fiesta tourism initiatives.

Conversely, many participants noted that limited administrative capacity constrained effective governance. In particular, respondents frequently cited unclear role delineation, limited technical expertise, and dependence on individual leaders as recurring challenges. Survey responses generally clustered around moderate assessments of governance support and coordination, suggesting that while basic mechanisms were in place, their effectiveness varied considerably across barangays.

3.3 Community Participation and Collaborative Governance

Community participation was consistently identified as a central strength of fiesta tourism initiatives. Most respondents reported high levels of community involvement during the implementation phase, particularly in preparation activities, cultural performances, and logistical support. This operational

participation contributed to a strong sense of ownership and cultural legitimacy surrounding fiesta tourism events.

However, findings also indicate that participation was largely concentrated at the execution stage. A majority of key informants observed that community members were less frequently involved in agenda-setting, planning, or evaluation processes. As a result, collaborative governance arrangements remained limited in scope, with decision-making authority primarily retained by local officials and organizing committees.

3.4 Policy Integration and Sustainability Constraints

Despite positive short-term outcomes, the long-term sustainability of fiesta tourism initiatives was constrained by limited policy integration. A substantial proportion of respondents indicated that fiesta tourism activities were not consistently embedded within formal tourism development plans or broader local development frameworks. Instead, initiatives were often treated as annual or episodic events rather than as components of sustained development strategies.

Dependence on political leadership further emerged as a critical constraint. Many informants noted that the continuity and scale of fiesta tourism initiatives were closely tied to the priorities of incumbent leaders, making programs vulnerable to leadership changes and shifting political agendas. Survey responses reflected cautious optimism regarding sustainability, with perceptions generally clustering around mid-range evaluations of long-term institutional support.

4. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This section analyzes and interprets the findings of the study through the lens of public administration and governance theories, particularly New Public Governance, Institutional Theory, and Collaborative Governance. The discussion situates fiesta tourism within the broader discourse on sustainable development and local governance, emphasizing its potential and limitations as a community-based tourism strategy.

4.1 Discussion and Interpretation of Results

The findings demonstrate that fiesta tourism in Zamboanga City functions as more than a cultural or economic activity; it operates as a localized governance mechanism that mobilizes public institutions, community actors, and cultural organizations toward shared development objectives. From a New Public Governance perspective, the collaborative nature of fiesta tourism initiatives reflects a shift away from hierarchical governance toward network-based arrangements involving multiple stakeholders (Osborne, 2006). The active involvement of barangay institutions, community groups, and cultural organizations illustrates co-production of tourism outcomes, a defining feature of contemporary public administration.

However, the effectiveness of these collaborative arrangements is uneven, largely due to variations in institutional capacity and governance structures. While some barangays demonstrate strong coordination and leadership, others rely on informal arrangements that lack continuity and administrative stability. Institutional Theory helps explain this variation by highlighting the role of formal rules, policies, and organizational routines in shaping governance outcomes (Peters, 2018). Where fiesta tourism initiatives are supported by formal resolutions, clear mandates, and documented procedures, they are more likely to be sustained across political cycles. In contrast, reliance on informal practices and individual leadership exposes initiatives to disruption and fragmentation.

The findings also reveal that coordination challenges among city offices and barangay institutions constrain the full realization of fiesta tourism's developmental potential. These challenges align with observations by Klijn and Teisman (2003), who note that collaborative initiatives often falter due to unclear role delineation and weak coordination mechanisms. Although fiesta tourism initiatives benefit from broad participation during implementation, the absence of structured coordination frameworks limits policy coherence and reduces administrative efficiency.

Community participation, a core principle of CBT, emerged as both a strength and a limitation of fiesta tourism governance. High levels of participation in implementation activities underscore the communal character of fiestas and their cultural legitimacy. However, limited involvement in planning and decision-making processes reflects the constraints identified by Tosun (2000), who argues that participation in developing country contexts is often operational rather than strategic. From a governance standpoint, this suggests that while fiesta tourism promotes social inclusion at the activity level, it falls short of fostering deeper forms of participatory governance that empower communities in policy formulation and resource allocation.

The partial integration of fiesta tourism into formal development plans further constrains sustainability. Although fiestas contribute to short-term economic activity and cultural visibility, their treatment as annual events rather than institutionalized programs weakens their alignment with long-term development objectives. This finding resonates with studies emphasizing that CBT initiatives require policy coherence and administrative support to generate sustained development outcomes (Goodwin, 2012; Rasul & Thapa, 2019). Without explicit integration into local development frameworks, fiesta tourism remains vulnerable to political turnover and shifting priorities.

From a sustainable development perspective, fiesta tourism contributes most visibly to SDG 8 through temporary livelihood opportunities and local economic stimulation. Its role in preserving cultural identity and reinforcing place-based development aligns with SDG 11, particularly in promoting culturally vibrant and inclusive cities. However, the limited institutionalization and

fragmented collaboration observed in the study weaken alignment with SDG 17, which emphasizes durable partnerships and coordinated governance. Strengthening collaborative governance mechanisms is therefore essential to enhancing the long-term development impact of fiesta tourism initiatives.

Overall, the analysis underscores that governance quality, rather than cultural richness alone, determines the effectiveness of fiesta tourism as a community-based tourism strategy. The findings affirm that culturally grounded initiatives can contribute meaningfully to sustainable development when embedded within coherent institutional frameworks and supported by participatory governance arrangements.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined fiesta tourism as a local governance strategy embedded within community-based tourism initiatives in Zamboanga City, situating it within the broader discourse of public administration, governance, and sustainable development. By reframing fiesta tourism as a governance intervention rather than merely a cultural or economic activity, the study addressed an important gap in the literature on community-based tourism and local development. Anchored in New Public Governance, Institutional Theory, and Collaborative Governance, the analysis demonstrated that the effectiveness and sustainability of fiesta tourism initiatives are shaped less by cultural vibrancy alone and more by the quality of institutional arrangements and governance mechanisms that support them.

The findings reveal that fiesta tourism contributes positively to community participation, cultural legitimacy, and short-term local economic activity. These outcomes align with the objectives of inclusive growth and cultural sustainability articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 8 and SDG 11. High levels of community involvement in implementation activities underscore the potential of fiesta tourism to mobilize local actors and reinforce social cohesion. However, the study also found that participation remains largely operational, with limited involvement of community members in strategic decision-making and planning processes. This constrains the transformative potential of fiesta tourism as a mechanism for participatory governance.

A central conclusion of the study is that the sustainability of fiesta tourism initiatives is undermined by weak institutionalization. Fragmented coordination among local government offices, uneven administrative capacity at the barangay level, and limited integration of fiesta tourism into formal development plans restrict continuity and long-term impact. The reliance on political leadership and discretionary support further exposes these initiatives to disruption during leadership transitions. These findings affirm public administration scholarship emphasizing that development initiatives require coherent

policies, clear mandates, and durable institutional support to generate sustained public value.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study contributes to public administration literature by extending the application of governance frameworks to culturally grounded tourism initiatives. It demonstrates that fiesta tourism can function as a governance instrument that advances sustainable development objectives when embedded within collaborative and institutionalized governance systems. This contribution responds to calls for more context-sensitive and interdisciplinary approaches to public administration research in developing settings.

6. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, several policy recommendations are proposed to strengthen fiesta tourism as a local governance strategy:

First, local governments should formally institutionalize fiesta tourism within local development and tourism plans. Explicit policy recognition, supported by ordinances and budgetary allocations, can transform fiestas from episodic events into sustained development programs aligned with broader economic and cultural objectives.

Second, LGUs should strengthen inter-agency coordination mechanisms by establishing clear roles, joint planning processes, and regular coordination forums among tourism, cultural, and planning offices. Formal collaboration frameworks can reduce overlaps, enhance efficiency, and improve policy coherence.

Third, capacity-building initiatives should be prioritized at the barangay level. Training programs focusing on planning, documentation, financial management, and monitoring can enhance administrative capacity and reduce dependence on individual leaders. Technical assistance from city-level offices can further support barangays with limited resources.

Fourth, mechanisms for deeper community participation should be institutionalized. Participatory planning sessions, consultative councils, and feedback mechanisms can expand community involvement beyond implementation toward meaningful engagement in decision-making and evaluation processes.

Finally, monitoring and evaluation systems should be developed to assess the long-term development impacts of fiesta tourism initiatives. Indicators related to livelihood generation, cultural preservation, and governance outcomes can inform evidence-based policy adjustments and enhance accountability.

In conclusion, fiesta tourism holds significant promise as a culturally responsive and participatory development strategy. Its realization as a sustainable local governance instrument, however, depends on deliberate institutionalization, collaborative governance, and policy integration. By strengthening these dimensions, local governments can harness fiesta tourism not only as a celebration of culture but as a strategic pathway toward inclusive and sustainable development.

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