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Local Community Perceptions and Participation Types for Tourism Development: Inputs for the City's Tourism Plan

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the perceptions and levels of involvement of local communities in tourism development within Dipolog City. It utilized descriptive-causal research, investigating residents residing near prominent tourist attractions, employing quota sampling to select 90 respondents. A validated self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data, with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.81 satisfactory reliability. Weighted means were applied to assess community perceptions regarding the economic, environmental, social, and cultural development of tourism, as well as participation types manipulative, passive, consultative, participation driven by material incentives, functional, interactive, and self-mobilization roles. Univariate statistical tests examined the relationship between community perceptions and their involvement levels. Results found that respondents held predominantly positive perceptions of tourism's potential benefits across multiple domains despite their low income and educational attainment. Although community engagement was primarily described by manipulative, passive, consultative, and functional participation, involvement in interactive, incentive-based, and self-mobilization activities was comparatively low. Pointedly, positive perceptions of tourism development affect the increased participation in passive, functional, interactive, and self-mobilization roles, illustrating the critical role of community attitudes in building active engagement. However, manipulation, consultation, or incentive-based participation was not significantly affected by perceptions suggesting capacity-building initiatives, community empowerment, and inclusive planning are strategies to improve residents' involvement. Building community organizations, working with academic institutions for community-based tourism, and strengthening local participation in decision-making processes need to be in place. A longitudinal and mixed-method research may be conducted to clarify the causal-relationship between perceptions and involvement in tourism development.

INTRODUCTION

Accordingly, many studies have mentioned the importance of the people's perception in tourism development (Peters *et al.*, 2018; Harun *et al.*, 2018; Ali *et al.*, 2017; Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2016). For instance, in the study of Peters *et al.* (2017), it was pointed out that local residents are the main recipients of the socio-cultural, environmental, and economic impacts of tourism development, and a study found a correlation between their attitudes and support action. In the same manner, Ali *et al.* (2017) suggested that the different stakeholders' perceptions in tourism development is an important factor to be considered.

Looking into the Philippine context, existing studies explained the importance of community involvement and perceptions in tourism (Gutierrez, 2022; Cornell *et al.*, 2019; Gier *et al.*, 2017; Jalani, 2012). In fact, according to Gutierrez (2022), it is important to comprehend the awareness of community participation in community-based tourism. The same findings have been concluded by Cornell *et al.* (2019). The quality of life (QoL) of the residents could be enhanced if tourism is developed, and their involvement in it is essential, as it is greatly linked to its economic, social, and environmental impacts.

In the local context. Dipolog City is now considered as one of the most prominent cities in the Zamboanga

Peninsula and beyond because of its tourist destination and experience offerings. This city is also known as Bottled Sardines Capital and the Gateway to Western Mindanao. That is why tourists come and go because of its ambiance and of the hospitality of its local people. Republic Act 9593 also known as National Tourist Act paved the locality's tourism to become the source of employment, investment, and development for residents (Batara & Flora, 2017). However, despite the existing studies about how tourism contributes to economic, social, and environmental, only few studies are available in the context of Southern Philippines, particularly in Dipolog City and few explored on the community involvement to tourism. To fill this research gap, this study focuses on the perception and involvement of local communities towards tourism development in Dipolog City.

This study seeks to ascertain the local communities' contributions to Dipolog City's tourist growth. The study may aid the local community, researchers, the tourism sector, and even the visitors to become more involved in the tourism activities while also being aware of potential developments. As a foundation for their initiatives and strategies to support local communities engaged in tourism development, the LGU Tourism Unit may also benefit from the study's findings. Also,

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the community must be included in the formulation of tourist development policies and decisions.

The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. To know the local communities' perception to the city tourism development considering the economic, social, cultural, and environmental.
2. To determine the level of local communities' involvement in terms of in terms of participation by manipulation, passive, consultation, material incentives, functional, and self-mobilization and connectedness.
3. To determine the effect of community perception on tourism development to their involvement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism affects local communities in various ways, and its development can give greater benefits if managed well. Local community's perception and involvement lies the success of the different tourism initiatives. This review aims to synthesize the previous literature and studies on the perception and involvement of the community in tourism development, focusing on four domains: social, economic, environmental, and cultural. It also examines the different types of community involvement proposed by Pretty (1995).

As mentioned, tourism development influenced community's social, economic, and environmental aspects. For example, tourism can bring positive social changes, such as cultural modification (Travis, 2007), reconstruction of local culture (Ap & Crompton, 1998), and development of public services and amenities (Gursoy *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, tourism can create jobs and stimulate local economies, which can lead to increased income and improved living standards (Franzidis & Yau, 2018; Lee, 2013). For instance, Haralambopoulos and Pizma (1996) found that the community who were directly or indirectly dependent on tourism for their livelihood were more accepting and positive of tourism development.

Another impact of tourism, as cited by Comerio and Strozzi (2019), is the economic impact of tourism. Three of the economic contributions of tourism are provision of jobs, generation of income, and taxes for public services. All these greatly contribute to local and national economic growth and development. However, the benefits of tourism must be balanced with environmental concerns. The topographic environment of the area of the destination (Swarbrooke, 1999), infrastructure, support facilities, wildlife, and natural resources are crucial determining factors of the negative perception of tourism among local inhabitants (Afthanorhan *et al.*, 2017). The intensity of the environmental risks and damage are caused by the unsustainable activities of tourism firms and other organizations. Some of these activities are misuse of land, urbanization or modernization, advancement in technology, and sudden growth of visitors' and their unsustainable actions (Çelik Uğuz *et al.*, 2022). It cannot be denied that the cost and benefits that tourism development has for the environment should

also be considered. This is for the reason to protect and sustain the well-being of the local communities.

Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Typology of Community Participation are two important foundational concepts the study was anchored. Looking into the social exchange theory, it proposes that people respond in ways that they believe will give them more benefit than harm. If Dipolog City residents believe and experience tourism development that would result in positive outcomes like more job opportunities, better infrastructure, or cultural preservation, they may be more inclined to support it. Otherwise, if people see and experience negative outcomes of tourism development like deterioration of the environment, appropriation of traditional practices, or increased living expenses, they may be against it. The study also included evaluation of community's perceptions on the possible costs and benefits of tourist development to help explain why they are in favor of or against it.

Community involvement is categorized into different degrees by the typology of community participation, which goes from passive awareness to active involvement in decision-making and implementation. The forms and degrees of community involvement in Dipolog City's tourist development can be examined by the study. According to Pretty (1995), these could involve manipulative involvement, passive participation, consultation-based participation, material incentive-based participation, functional participation, interactive participation, self-mobilization, and connectedness.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used a descriptive and causal research design to describe the local communities' perception, and how their perception affects their type of involvement towards tourism development in Dipolog City. Selected locals in the barangay near the tourist attractions of the city were the respondents of the study. Through the application of quota sampling technique, each local tourist attraction would have a minimum target respondent of 15 households. There was only one (1) respondent per household leading to 90 sample respondents who willingly participated in the survey. The selected respondents were asked to answer the self-made survey questionnaire pertaining to their perception and their involvement type towards tourism development. The self-made questionnaire was validated by three (3) experts of the field and was pilot tested to 30 non-actual respondents. It yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.81 which could be interpreted as reliable for use.

For data analysis, weighted mean was used to determine the perception of the local communities towards the impact of tourism development in terms of economic, environmental, social and cultural and the extent do communities involve toward tourism development in terms of manipulative participation, passive participation, participation by consultation, participation for

material incentives, functional participation, interactive participation, self – mobilization and connectedness. To evaluate if there is a significant effect of the local community’s perception of tourism development on

their involvement or participation type in the Dipolog city tourism activities, MANCOVA was then applied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Respondent’s Demographic Profile, n=90

Age	f (%)	Educational Attainment	f (%)	Monthly Income	f (%)
18-25 years old	8 (9%)	No formal schooling	12 (13%)	Less than P20, 000	86 (96%)
26-33 years old	17 (19%)	High school or lower	48 (53%)	P20, 000 – P50, 000	4 (4%)
34-41 years old	21 (23%)	College level	19 (21%)		
42-49 years old	21 (23%)	Bachelor’s degree	11 (12%)		
50 years old and above	23 (26%)				
50 years old and above	23 (26%)				

Table 1 shows the 90 respondents’ profile. Looking into the age-data, the age range of 50 years old and above dominates their participation in the survey which can be implied that the people within this age range have significant experience of tourism development in the

area. Another significant finding found in the table is the respondents’ educational attainment of which most of them are within the high school level and have a monthly income of less than Php20,000.

Table 2: Local Community’s Perceptions on Tourism Development

Domains of Perception on Tourism Development	Mean	Interpretation
Economic Development	4.33	Major development
Environmental Development	4.51	Major development
Social Development	4.32	Major development
Cultural Development	4.40	Major development

Table 2 presents the locals’ perception of tourism development. Data revealed that it has consistent results. This can be implied that the locals perceived that tourism contributes to major development in terms economic, environment, social, and cultural. In terms of economic development, respondents strongly agreed that tourism provides employment opportunities which would lead to an increase of the local community’s economic growth, and an improvement of their quality of life (QoL). They also agree that tourism provides income-generating programs and training. This is consistent with other research showing that communities occasionally viewed tourism as a potential engine of job creation, economic growth, and cross-cultural inter-change (Gursoy *et al.*, 2018). However, respondents noted that there was a moderate development when it comes to supporting new and existing businesses near the tourism destination. In the dimension of environmental development, local communities strongly agreed that there was a major development in this aspect as such the implementation of various environmental programs such as tree and mangrove planting activities, coastal clean-up and community clean – up drive and among others, maintaining the natural or organic form of the tourism sites, the practice of proper segregation as implemented by the local government ordinances. This could be because of hopes for better waste management, infrastructure, or conservation

programs linked to the growth of the tourism industry. The findings of Tupas and Cacho (2020) indicated that Local Government Units (LGUs) initiated different programs/projects, activities and policies and ordinances that protect, conserve, and preserve the natural resources. In addition, Pacatang (2020) states that in accordance with the Solid Waste Management Act of 2000, Dipolog City Ordinance No. 13-245 was enacted which regulates the sale, distribution, or use of non-compostable plastic bags including Styrofoam products, thus limiting the use of plastic. This ordinance is in line with the Garbage Collection and Environmental Health Protection and Sanitation Code of 1998 for the city. In terms of social development, there was a major development as perceived by the locals. This can be implied that tourism improves the social development of the community because of the health and safety programs, synergic relationship between local communities, government and the general public (Olobia, 2024), practical training for tourism and hospitality development for the community, and the community’s willingness to participate and motivate local community to be involved and responsible for tourism development. In the same manner, there was a major development in the aspect of cultural where the locals strongly agreed that there is a tourism development in terms of promotion of locally produced goods and services, preservation of the

traditional activities for the local population, protection of local community's cultural traditions, promotion of community's culture and tradition through tourism events and help in protecting and promoting intangible cultural heritage like language, expressions, rituals, social practices, etc. This is consistent with research that supports culturally aware tourism that honors and uplifts the communities where it occurs (Timothy, 2011). Indeed, it is evident that the local communities in Dipolog

city specifically those who live near the destination felt the socio-cultural, environment, and economic effect of the tourism development, and this is consistent in the study of Peters *et al.* (2018). The same conclusion has been revealed by Halim *et al.* (2022) citing that the impact of tourism on the economy, environment, and social conditions improves the standard of living in communities, thereby demonstrating their support for tourism.

Table 3: Local Community's Level of Involvement to Tourism Development

Domains of Local Communities' Involvement	Mean	Interpretation
Manipulative Participation	4.25	Always
Passive Participation	4.31	Always
Participation by consultation	4.27	Always
Participation for Material Incentives	4.15	Often
Functional Participation	4.26	Always
Interactive Participation	4.17	Often
Self-mobilization and connectedness	4.16	Often

Table 3 illustrates the involvement of the locals toward tourism development. Data revealed that local communities are always involved in the tourism development and manifest a manipulative, passive, consultative and functional participation. Moreover, locals are oftentimes involved when it comes to participation for material incentives, self-mobilization and connectedness, and interactive participation.

In the manipulative participation, locals firmly agreed that they were always involved in promoting tourism development, adhering to the local government's development plan, and coming up with various initiatives that would be extremely beneficial. However, the communities were frequently shown to be active specifically when receiving information about the development and administration of the tourist attraction and apply efficient regulations to manage the destination. For passive participation, communities have always been involved in the development of tourism by helping the local government make decisions about local tourist attractions' policies and taking part in activities that the local government has decided or determined and including the community as recipients of one-way communication. As to participation by consultation, communities have always been engaged in the growth of the tourism industry through educational activities for the community, providing input when tourism policy is made, and sharing opinions to influence final decisions on tourism development. However, communities showed low level of involvement it came to consulting them on management and development of attractions and consultation on the provision of supporting infrastructure. And for the functional participation, communities have consistently contributed to the growth of tourism by taking part in ventures such after significant decisions have been taken by tourism consultants, create and develop

new occupations with outside parties for employment prospects and partner with local government for tourism management. Examples include cleaning and restoration, tour guiding, and others. However, communities were frequently involved in tourism development on the front of actively taking part in the decision-making process for the industry and participating in joint meetings with outside parties to build strategies to manage and develop natural attractions.

The results of the study are supported by different authors. Studies found that for local to be participative in tourism planning and management, government units may enact regulations and policies that show concern for local wisdom (Marpaung *et al.*, 2021; Soares *et al.*, 2021). In addition, Wang *et al.* (2021) and Jiang (2021) suggest that they should encourage participation from the residents specifically in the decision-making stages of tourism development because their involvement can enhance sense of being a host and stimulate their supportive attitude towards tourism development.

For participation by material incentives, the communities were frequently involved in the development of the tourism industry by taking part in tourism-related activities if offered incentives in the form of money, goods, or technology, and by contributing resources and human resources to manage tourist destinations. Similarly, in interactive participation and self-mobilization and connectedness, the communities were frequently involved in tourism development to take control in deciding how resources are to be used, develop a practical plan for establishing and strengthening local government, and take control over local decisions. As a result, people have a stake in upholding structures or practices and contributing to planning for tourism development. The communities were frequently involved in the management and development of existing tourist destinations,

developed relationships with outside organizations for advice and resources, attended tourism-related seminars, conferences, workshops, etc., and took the initiative as leaders in the industry. This is aligned with the existing studies that consistently confirmed that residents should participate in decision-making processes to promote sustainable tourism development and preserve traditional lifestyle and values (Khalid *et al.*, 2019; Wang *et al.*, 2021). The trend nowadays in tourism industry is the community-based tourism which is now regarded as an essential tool

for attaining sustainable development. An additional evidence published by Chili and Ngxongo (2017) and Khalid (2019) support the findings by putting emphasis on the significance of local community involvement in the tourism industry, this is because its constituents are viewed as one of the industry's products and their input in decision-making processes should be a priority. This means that high levels of community empowerment encourage local support for tourism and then in turn promotes sustainable tourism growth.

Table 4: Univariate Test of Local's Perception on Tourism Development and their Involvement

	Dependent Variable	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Perception on Tourism Development	Manipulative Participation	2.26e-4	1	2.26e-4	0.0291	0.865
	Passive Participation	0.0108	1	0.01084	5.9450	0.017
	Participation by Consultation	0.0398	1	0.03976	3.4395	0.067
	Participation for Material Incentives	0.0458	1	0.04576	0.6682	0.416
	Functional Participation	0.1367	1	0.13670	5.9285	0.017
	Interactive Participation	0.0111	1	0.01113	7.9269	0.006
	Self-mobilization and Connectedness	0.0235	1	0.02354	4.6391	0.034
Residuals	Manipulative Participation	0.6838	88	0.00777		
	Passive Participation	0.1605	88	0.00182		
	Participation by Consultation	1.0172	88	0.01156		
	Participation for Material Incentives	6.0260	88	0.06848		
	Functional Participation	2.0291	88	0.02306		
	Interactive Participation	0.1235	88	0.00140		
	Self-mobilization and Connectedness	0.4466	88	0.00508		

Table 4 presents the significant influence of local's perception of tourism development on their type of involvement. Perception on tourism development was statistically significant in influencing passive participation ($F(1, 88) = 5.945, p = 0.017$). This means that local's views on tourism development are significantly associated with their engagement in passive type of participation. This is consistent with the existing literature suggesting that even without active decision-making roles, community members' attitudes can shape their passive acceptance or support of development initiatives (Wang *et al.*, 2021). Another similar finding observed was on Functional Participation. It showed a significant relationship with perception on tourism development ($F(1, 88) = 5.928, p = 0.017$). This indicates that perception of tourism development, either positive or negative, can significantly influence the community's willingness to engage in tasks, roles, or activities that contribute directly to the functioning of tourism activities. This finding shows the importance of building and enhancing positive community perceptions for them to be encouraged in a manner of practical and supportive involvement in local development efforts. Interestingly, Interactive participation also emerged with the strongest statistical significance ($F(1, 88) = 7.927, p = 0.006$). This highly significant influence suggests that community members'

perception of tourism development greatly affects their engagement in interactive processes. These interactive processes are in the forms of dialogues, joint problem-solving, and collaborative planning. The results illustrate the essential role of perception in facilitating genuine partnerships and shared governance within tourism initiatives. Self-mobilization and Connectedness also demonstrated a significant link to perception on tourism development ($F(1, 88) = 4.639, p = 0.034$). This implies that community residents' perceptions are influential in their intrinsic motivation to organize themselves and connect with others for the betterment of tourism development. This highlights the capacity of positive perceptions to catalyze organic, bottom-up participation. These findings strongly corroborate De Guzman (2024) and Escamis and Hinlayagan (2024) which explain that active community participation and stakeholder engagement are key for guaranteeing the sustainable development of growing tourism sectors. Hateftabar and Chapuis (2020) support this finding by pointing to the fact that local communities are one of the most precious assets for a tourist location making their perceptions and opinions of tourism form a critical pillar when crafting tourism development plans. This study investigates what influences locals' perceptions of tourism and their readiness to support it. This result is consistent with recent studies showing how important

it is for the community to have favorable attitudes to promote meaningful participation in tourist planning and management (Moscardo, 2022; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2025). Locals are more likely to feel driven to contribute to and take part in determining the course of tourism when they believe it has the potential to bring about positive outcomes like economic growth, environmental protection, or cultural promotion. In contrast, the analyses did not yield statistically significant evidence to support an influence of perception on tourism development on Manipulative Participation ($F(1, 88) = 0.029$, $p = 0.865$), Participation by Consultation ($F(1, 88) = 3.440$, $p = 0.067$), or Participation for Material Incentives ($F(1, 88) = 0.668$, $p = 0.416$). The non-significant finding for “Participation by Consultation,” despite its proximity to the conventional significance threshold, suggests that while perceptions might trend towards influencing consultation, the evidence does not definitively establish a direct statistical link at the 0.05 alpha level. This could imply that formal consultative processes might be less directly sensitive to broader community perceptions, or that other factors exert a stronger influence on these specific participation types (e.g., policy frameworks, specific incentive structures, or existing power dynamics). These non-significant findings underscore that while perception is vital for active, integrated forms of participation, other structural, informational, and capacity-related factors play a dominant role in shaping more formal, incentive-based, or less empowering forms of participation (De Guzman, 2024).

CONCLUSIONS

This study strongly demonstrates that positive perceptions correlate strongly with increased engagement specifically in interactive, passive, and functional participation. They display a greater willingness to participate in collaborative decision-making and contribute actively to tourism projects as community members view tourism development favorably. This supports the claim that enhancing and building such perceptions is essential for strengthening and improving community involvement. The analysis reveals that manipulative participation and consultation processes did not show significant influences from perceptions, yet it reveals that there is a need for further exploration of structural and policy-related factors affecting these participation types. This proposes that systemic frameworks and incentives also play an important role. The findings conclude the importance of cultivating positive perceptions among local communities because it can promote meaningful participation in tourism development. As communities recognize the greater benefits of tourism, may it be in economic, environmental, social, and cultural, then they are more inclined to engage proactively in initiatives that contribute to their well-being and sustainable tourism practices. Furthermore, the study recommends targeted strategies that prioritize community perceptions as a core

element in tourism planning and development that would ensure that local voices and interests are considered in the tourism narrative.

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