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TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN LIANGA, PHILIPPINES: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND PERCEIVED SOCIOECONOMIC, CULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

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ABSTRACT

Tourism development offers opportunities for local economic growth, cultural preservation, and community development, yet emerging destinations face structural and sustainability challenges. This study assessed the status, challenges, opportunities, and perceived impacts of tourism development in Lianga, Surigao del Sur, Philippines, during the Academic Year 2025-2026. A mixed-methods research design was employed, involving 520 survey respondents comprising 350 tourists, 55 tourism-related business stakeholders, and 115 local government and community representatives. Additionally, 46 participants provided qualitative insights through interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation, while qualitative responses underwent thematic analysis. Findings indicated that tourism development was generally rated good, although limitations persisted in infrastructure, accessibility, marketing, governance, and environmental management. Respondents identified substantial opportunities for investment, employment, cultural promotion, market expansion, and sustainable tourism practices. Tourism's perceived impact was highest on the local economy, while its cultural and environmental impacts were comparatively moderate. Significant but weak positive relationships were found between tourism development status and perceived economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts ($r = .170–.252$, $p \leq .001$). Qualitative findings reinforced concerns regarding infrastructure, stakeholder coordination, and sustainability. The study concluded that Lianga possesses considerable tourism potential but requires coordinated, inclusive, and environmentally responsible development strategies.

Keywords: *tourism development, tourism challenges, development opportunities, socioeconomic impacts, sustainable tourism, Lianga*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism development has become an important strategy for stimulating local economic growth, generating employment, promoting cultural heritage, and improving community livelihoods. However, the expansion of tourism activities does not automatically guarantee sustainable development, particularly in emerging destinations where infrastructure limitations, environmental pressures, and unequal access to economic opportunities may affect long-term outcomes. Shankar and Greenwood (2025), through systematic literature mapping, identified multiple environmental, social, and economic impacts of tourism, emphasizing that poorly managed tourism can threaten biodiversity, natural resources, and community well-being. Their findings highlight the need to assess tourism development beyond economic indicators by considering its implications for local communities, cultural resources, and environmental sustainability. This multidimensional perspective is particularly relevant to developing municipalities seeking to maximize tourism opportunities while minimizing potential adverse consequences.

The current status of tourism development is influenced by several interconnected factors, including the availability of facilities and infrastructure, transportation accessibility, marketing and promotion, income-generating activities, environmental management, and safety and security. These components shape destination attractiveness, visitor experiences, and the capacity of local tourism enterprises to operate competitively. Lasisi et al. (2024) examined the relationship between smart destination competitiveness and economic growth and found that destination-enabling conditions and selected transportation infrastructure factors were associated with tourism's economic contributions. Their findings suggest that tourism competitiveness depends not only on the presence of attractions but also on the supporting conditions that facilitate tourism activities. For emerging destinations, inadequate facilities, transportation networks, and tourism services may therefore limit the opportunities associated with existing natural and cultural resources.

Despite the economic potential of tourism, destinations continue to encounter challenges involving financial resources, infrastructure development, technological adaptation, market competitiveness, and institutional coordination. These constraints may become more pronounced in rural and coastal municipalities where tourism development competes with other public investment priorities. Ferreira and Perks (2025) found that political stability, market positioning, technological integration, and tourism policies were important factors influencing destination competitiveness and sustainability. Their findings emphasize the interconnected nature of tourism development challenges and the importance of coordinated responses involving government institutions, tourism businesses, and other stakeholders. Consequently, evaluating the challenges confronting a local tourism industry requires attention to economic and operational conditions, environmental and social concerns, technological and market limitations, infrastructure deficiencies, and governance arrangements.

Alongside these challenges, tourism development presents opportunities for expanding local enterprises, improving employment prospects, strengthening cultural

identity, attracting investment, and promoting environmental awareness. However, the realization of these opportunities depends on strategic planning and investments that respond to the actual needs of tourism destinations. Wardana et al. (2025), in their investigation of transportation infrastructure development in Indonesia, emphasized that improved accessibility alone does not necessarily generate tourism growth without complementary policies and coordinated development strategies. Their findings underscore the importance of integrating infrastructure improvements with destination management, business development, and stakeholder participation. This suggests that tourism opportunities should be assessed in relation to the institutional and operational conditions necessary to transform potential attractions into sustainable economic and community benefits.

Community participation and effective local governance are equally important in ensuring that tourism development responds to the needs and interests of residents. In the Philippine context, tourism initiatives increasingly recognize the importance of involving local communities in destination planning, environmental protection, and the distribution of tourism benefits. Legarde et al. (2025), in their study of sustainable ecotourism on Great Sta. Cruz Island, Philippines, examined community participation and governance as important dimensions of sustainable tourism development. Their work provides a relevant perspective for understanding how stakeholder involvement can support responsible tourism management. For municipalities with significant natural and cultural resources, participatory planning may help strengthen community ownership, encourage conservation, and promote more inclusive tourism-related opportunities.

The Municipality of Lianga in Surigao del Sur, Philippines, possesses natural and cultural resources that provide opportunities for tourism development. Its coastal landscapes, beaches, waterfalls, rivers, and other attractions offer potential for nature-based recreation, ecotourism, and community-oriented tourism enterprises. Among the attractions identified in local tourism development initiatives are Bao-Bao Falls, Andanan River, and coastal tourism destinations. Nevertheless, the municipality continues to face concerns involving tourism infrastructure, transportation accessibility, destination marketing, financial resources, environmental management, and governance. Local policy initiatives, including the establishment of the Municipal Tourism and Cultural Heritage Council, the adoption of the Bao-Bao Falls System Management Plan for 2025–2029, and the proposed development of a food tourism hub, reflect efforts to strengthen tourism governance and sustainable destination development. However, these initiatives also underscore the need for empirical evidence concerning the municipality's existing tourism conditions, development constraints, and opportunities.

Although previous studies have examined tourism competitiveness, infrastructure development, environmental sustainability, and community participation, their findings cannot be assumed to represent the circumstances of every emerging tourism destination. In Lianga, a comprehensive assessment integrating the current status of tourism, development challenges, available opportunities, and perceived impacts on the local economy, people, culture, and environment is necessary to support evidence-informed planning. Furthermore, examining the experiences of tourists, tourism-related business stakeholders, local government representatives, and community members may

provide contextual insights that are not fully captured through quantitative assessments alone. This creates a need for locally grounded research that considers both measurable perceptions and stakeholder experiences within a unified framework for sustainable tourism development.

Accordingly, this study assessed tourism development in the Municipality of Lianga, Surigao del Sur, Philippines, focusing on its current status, challenges, opportunities, and perceived socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental impacts. Specifically, it examined tourism facilities and infrastructure, accessibility and transportation, marketing and promotion, income generation, environmental sustainability, and safety and security. It also investigated economic, operational, environmental, social, technological, infrastructural, and governance challenges; identified potential economic, social, cultural, career, market, and environmental opportunities; and determined the relationships among tourism development conditions, challenges, opportunities, and perceived impacts. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study integrated quantitative survey findings with qualitative stakeholder experiences to develop a comprehensive understanding of tourism development in the municipality. The findings contribute context-specific evidence to the literature on sustainable local tourism and provide an empirical basis for formulating a tourism development action plan that promotes inclusive economic opportunities, cultural preservation, environmental responsibility, and coordinated stakeholder participation.

Research Questions

This study aimed to assess tourism development in the Municipality of Lianga, Surigao del Sur, Philippines, focusing on its current status, challenges, opportunities, and perceived socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental impacts. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the current status of tourism development in Lianga in terms of tourism facilities and infrastructure, accessibility and transportation, marketing and promotion, income generated from tourism, environmental sustainability, and safety and security?
2. To what extent are the challenges confronting tourism development in Lianga experienced in terms of economic and operational, environmental and social, technological and market, infrastructure, and governance factors?
3. What opportunities are available to enhance tourism development in Lianga in terms of economic, social and cultural, career, market growth, and environmental awareness and sustainability opportunities?
4. To what extent are the perceived impacts of tourism development evident in the local economy, people, culture, and environment?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the current status of tourism development and its perceived economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts?

6. Is there a significant relationship between the challenges confronting tourism development and its perceived economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts?
7. Is there a significant relationship between tourism development opportunities and the perceived economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts?
8. What experiences and perspectives do tourism stakeholders share regarding the development of the tourism industry in Lianga?
9. How do the qualitative findings corroborate or complement the quantitative results concerning tourism development in Lianga?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods research design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine tourism development in the Municipality of Lianga, Surigao del Sur, Philippines. The quantitative component utilized descriptive and correlational methods to assess the current status of tourism development, identify challenges and opportunities, determine perceived economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts, and examine significant relationships among the study variables. The qualitative component explored the lived experiences, observations, and perspectives of selected tourism stakeholders through interviews and stakeholder discussions. Integrating quantitative and qualitative findings provided a comprehensive understanding of the conditions influencing tourism development and served as the basis for proposing a sustainable tourism development action plan.

The study was conducted in the Municipality of Lianga, Surigao del Sur, Philippines, a coastal municipality situated along the eastern coast of Mindanao facing the Philippine Sea. Lianga comprises 13 barangays characterized by coastal landscapes, rivers, waterfalls, forested areas, and other natural attractions with potential for tourism development. The municipality was selected because of its emerging tourism industry, available natural and cultural resources, and continuing challenges involving infrastructure, transportation accessibility, destination promotion, environmental sustainability, and tourism governance. These characteristics provided a relevant setting for examining tourism development from the perspectives of visitors, business operators, local government representatives, and community stakeholders.

The quantitative component involved 520 respondents comprising 350 tourists (67.31%), 55 tourism-related business stakeholders (10.58%), and 115 local government unit (LGU) and community stakeholders (22.11%). Tourist respondents included individuals visiting Lianga during the data collection period from February 20 to March 20, 2026. Business stakeholders consisted of owners and operators of tourism-related establishments, including resorts, accommodation facilities, restaurants, and other visitor-support services. LGU and community respondents included barangay officials, local residents, and individuals involved in or affected by tourism activities. Nonprobability sampling techniques were employed, including purposive, convenience, and selected snowball sampling procedures. Barangay-level coordination facilitated the participation of

tourism-related business owners, while near-total enumeration covered 12 of the municipality's 13 barangay councils. For the qualitative component, 46 participants were selected from the survey respondents based on their knowledge, experiences, availability, and willingness to provide detailed information. These included nine tourists, 13 tourism-related business stakeholders, and 24 LGU and community representatives, including barangay officials and key municipal representatives. Purposive and convenience sampling approaches were used to obtain perspectives from stakeholders directly involved in tourism operations, governance, and community development.

Data were collected using a researcher-developed structured questionnaire and interview questions based on the study objectives, theoretical foundations, and related literature. The survey questionnaire comprised four major parts. The first assessed the current status of tourism development in terms of facilities and infrastructure, accessibility and transportation, marketing and promotion, tourism-generated income, environmental sustainability, and safety and security. The second examined economic and operational, environmental and social, technological and market, infrastructure, and governance challenges. The third assessed potential economic, social and cultural, career, market growth, and environmental sustainability opportunities. The fourth measured respondents' perceptions of tourism's impacts on the local economy, people, culture, and environment. Separate interview questions were prepared to obtain additional insights into stakeholder experiences, development concerns, and possible improvements in the municipality's tourism industry. The questionnaire underwent expert validation by the research adviser and designated validators to assess the relevance, clarity, and alignment of the items with the research objectives. Recommendations from the evaluation were incorporated into the revised instrument. Pilot testing was subsequently conducted among nonrespondents in the neighboring Municipality of Barobo, Surigao del Sur, to identify ambiguous statements, potential response difficulties, and other instrument-related concerns. The questionnaire was refined before its administration to the actual respondents.

Before data collection, the researcher prepared a formal request for permission to conduct the study, endorsed by the Dean of the Graduate School of Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc., and submitted it to the Municipal Mayor of Lianga for approval and endorsement. Following authorization, the finalized questionnaires were administered to the selected respondents. The researcher explained the study's purpose and provided instructions for completing the survey, allowing sufficient time for participants to answer voluntarily. Accomplished questionnaires were collected, reviewed for completeness, organized, and encoded for statistical analysis. Qualitative information was obtained through interviews with selected tourists, business stakeholders, and LGU and community representatives. Some stakeholder discussions were conducted in small groups to gather additional insights into tourism conditions, development challenges, governance practices, and potential opportunities. The qualitative responses were subsequently organized for thematic interpretation.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Weighted means and grand means were computed to determine the respondents' overall assessments of tourism development status, challenges,

opportunities, and perceived impacts. Ranking was employed to identify the relative strengths and weaknesses of the assessed indicators. A five-point Likert scale with corresponding verbal interpretations was used to classify the responses across the study variables. Pearson product–moment correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the relationships between tourism development status and perceived impacts, tourism challenges and perceived impacts, and tourism opportunities and perceived impacts. Statistical significance was evaluated at the .05 level. Qualitative responses from interviews and open-ended questions were examined through thematic analysis to identify recurring experiences, concerns, and stakeholder perspectives. The qualitative findings were then compared with the quantitative results to identify areas of convergence, divergence, and complementary understanding.

The study observed ethical principles relating to informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and respect for participants. Before administering the instruments, institutional permission was sought from the appropriate local authorities. Respondents were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study and their right to withdraw without penalty. Personal identifiers were not disclosed, and quantitative findings were presented in aggregate form to protect participants' privacy. The information collected was used exclusively for academic research purposes and handled with appropriate confidentiality. Data collection procedures were designed to minimize inconvenience, coercion, and potential discomfort among participants.

RESULTS

Table 1

Current Status of Tourism Development in Lianga

Indicators	Tourists	Business Stakeholders	LGU and Community	Grand Mean	Rank
Tourism facilities and infrastructure	3.31	3.35	3.27	3.31	1
Accessibility and transportation	2.87	3.24	2.86	2.99	6
Marketing and promotion	3.03	3.22	2.98	3.08	3
Income generated from tourism	3.04	2.95	3.20	3.06	5
Environmental sustainability	3.07	2.65	3.35	3.02	4
Safety and security	3.15	3.03	3.50	3.23	2
Overall mean	**3.06**	**3.07**	**3.19**	**3.11**	

Note. All grand means were classified as Good. Scale: 4.20–5.00 = Excellent; 3.40–4.19 = Very Good; 2.60–3.39 = Good; 1.80–2.59 = Fair; 1.00–1.79 = Poor.

Table 2
Challenges Confronting Tourism Development in Lianga

Indicators	Tourists	Business Stakeholders	LGU and Community	Grand Mean	Rank
Economic and operational challenges	4.11	3.53	3.78	3.81	1
Environmental and social challenges	3.69	3.50	3.49	3.56	5
Technological and market challenges	4.07	3.30	3.70	3.69	3
Infrastructure challenges	3.90	3.42	3.50	3.61	4
Governance challenges	4.10	3.63	3.52	3.75	2
Overall mean	**3.98**	**3.58**	**3.58**	**3.68**	

Note. All grand means were classified as Challenging. Scale: 4.20–5.00 = Very Challenging; 3.40–4.19 = Challenging; 2.60–3.39 = Less Challenging; 1.80–2.59 = Least Challenging; 1.00–1.79 = Not a Challenge.

Table 3
Opportunities for Tourism Development in Lianga

Indicators	Tourists	Business Stakeholders	LGU and Community	Grand Mean	Rank
Economic opportunities	4.20	4.12	3.91	4.08	1
Social and cultural opportunities	4.09	3.70	3.81	3.87	5
Career opportunities	4.13	4.04	3.75	3.97	3
Market growth opportunities	4.19	3.73	3.86	3.93	4
Environmental awareness and sustainability	4.38	3.75	3.86	4.00	2
Overall mean	4.20	3.87	3.84	3.97	

Note. All grand means were classified as High. Scale: 4.20–5.00 = Very High; 3.40–4.19 = High; 2.60–3.39 = Moderate; 1.80–2.59 = Low; 1.00–1.79 = Very Low.

Table 4
Perceived Impacts of Tourism Development in Lianga

Indicators	Tourists	Business Stakeholders	LGU and Community	Grand Mean	Interpretation
Local economy	4.04	3.46	3.43	3.64	High Impact

People	3.46	3.51	3.41	3.46	High Impact
Culture	3.29	3.21	3.12	3.21	Moderate Impact
Environment	3.46	2.60	3.35	3.14	Moderate Impact
Overall mean	3.56	3.19	3.33	3.36	Moderate Impact

Note. Scale: 4.20–5.00 = Very High Impact; 3.40–4.19 = High Impact; 2.60–3.39 = Moderate Impact; 1.80–2.59 = Low Impact; 1.00–1.79 = Very Low Impact.

Table 5

Significant Relationship Between the Current Status of Tourism Development and Its Perceived Impacts in Lianga

Perceived Tourism Impacts	Pearson's r	p	Decision on H_0	Interpretation
Local economy	.170	.001	Reject H_0	Significant
People	.213	< .001	Reject H_0	Significant
Culture	.252	< .001	Reject H_0	Significant
Environment	.244	< .001	Reject H_0	Significant

Note. The predictor variable was the current status of tourism development. Pearson's r = Pearson product–moment correlation coefficient; p = probability value; H_0 = null hypothesis. Relationships were tested at the .05 level of significance. All correlations were weak and positive.

Table 6

Relationship Between Challenges Confronting Tourism Development and Perceived Tourism Impacts in Lianga

Variables	Pearson's r	p	Decision
Challenges and local economy	.045	.406	Not significant
Challenges and people	−.049	.357	Not significant
Challenges and culture	−.099	.063	Not significant
Challenges and environment	−.050	.351	Not significant

Note. α = .05. Statistical significance was determined using Pearson's product–moment correlation.

Table 7

Relationship Between Tourism Development Opportunities and Perceived Tourism Impacts in Lianga

Variables	Pearson's r	p	Decision
Opportunities and local economy	.142	.008	Significant

Opportunities and people	.076	.154	Not significant
Opportunities and culture	.101	.058	Not significant
Opportunities and environment	.098	.067	Not significant

Note. α = .05. Statistical significance was determined using Pearson's product–moment correlation.

Table 8

Emergent Themes from the Lived Experiences of Tourism Stakeholders in Lianga

Emergent Themes	Qualitative Findings
Governance, policy, and stakeholder engagement	Visible safety measures; inconsistent government support; stakeholder coordination concerns
Tourism market and promotion	Reliance on social media, personal recommendations, and visitor-generated promotional content
Infrastructure and accessibility	Availability of basic tourism facilities; limitations in transportation and destination accessibility
Economic and livelihood dynamics	Tourism-related livelihood opportunities; seasonal demand and dependence on visitor volume
Community well-being	Community participation, cultural promotion, and opportunities for inclusive tourism activities
Environmental sustainability and resource management	Waste management concerns, environmental conservation needs, and visitor-related environmental pressures

Table 9

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings on Tourism Development in Lianga

Dimensions	Quantitative Results	Qualitative Findings	Integration
Tourism development status	M = 3.11 (Good)	Existing attractions and basic services; operational limitations	Convergence
Tourism challenges	M = 3.68 (Challenging)	Financial, operational, governance, and infrastructure constraints	Convergence
Tourism opportunities	M = 3.97 (High)	Business expansion, destination promotion, and environmental initiatives	Convergence
Tourism impacts	M = 3.36 (Moderate Impact)	Livelihood benefits; cultural and environmental concerns	Convergence

Governance and coordination	M = 3.75 (Challenging)	Inconsistent institutional coordination; visible safety arrangements	Complementarity and divergence
Marketing and promotion	M = 3.08 (Good)	Informal promotion and social media dependence	Complementarity
Infrastructure and accessibility	M = 2.99 (Good)	Transportation and accessibility limitations	Convergence
Environmental sustainability	M = 3.14 (Moderate Impact)	Waste management and environmental conservation concerns	Complementarity

DISCUSSION

The study examined the current status, challenges, opportunities, and perceived impacts of tourism development in the Municipality of Lianga, Surigao del Sur. It also investigated the relationships among tourism development status, challenges, opportunities, and perceived economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts. The qualitative component explored stakeholders' experiences and provided additional perspectives on the quantitative findings. The discussion highlights the municipality's tourism potential, existing development constraints, and the importance of coordinated strategies for sustainable and inclusive tourism development.

Current Status of Tourism Development in Lianga

The findings revealed that tourism development in Lianga was generally assessed as Good, with an overall mean of 3.11. Among the six indicators, tourism facilities and infrastructure received the highest mean (M = 3.31), followed by safety and security (M = 3.23), marketing and promotion (M = 3.08), income generated from tourism (M = 3.06), environmental sustainability (M = 3.02), and accessibility and transportation (M = 2.99). Although all indicators were classified as Good, the results indicated differences in the perceived level of development across tourism components. The relatively higher ratings for facilities and safety suggested that basic tourism services and security arrangements were recognized by respondents. Conversely, the lowest rating for accessibility and transportation indicated that connectivity and travel convenience remained important development concerns.

These findings are consistent with the study of Abad (2025), which examined tourism management practices among local government units in Nueva Ecija, Philippines. The study identified gaps in infrastructure, marketing, and community involvement despite the presence of tourism attractions and facilities. Similarly, the findings in Lianga indicated that having natural attractions and basic tourism facilities did not necessarily imply that all components of destination development were equally established. The relatively lower assessments of accessibility, environmental sustainability, and destination promotion suggested the need for more integrated tourism planning. These findings underscore the

importance of evaluating tourism development through several interrelated dimensions rather than focusing exclusively on the availability of attractions or physical facilities.

Challenges Confronting Tourism Development

The findings indicated that tourism development in Lianga faced considerable challenges, with an overall mean of 3.68, interpreted as Challenging. Economic and operational challenges ranked highest (M = 3.81), followed by governance challenges (M = 3.75), technological and market challenges (M = 3.69), infrastructure challenges (M = 3.61), and environmental and social challenges (M = 3.56). The ranking suggested that financial and operational difficulties, together with governance-related concerns, were the most prominent challenges identified by respondents. Although environmental and social challenges received the lowest mean, they remained within the Challenging category.

The prominence of governance challenges is particularly important because tourism development requires coordination among local government institutions, tourism enterprises, and communities. Panagiotopoulou and Skoultsos (2025), in their systematic review of stakeholder involvement in sustainable destination management, examined collaborative frameworks and approaches for coordinating stakeholders in tourism development. Their work supports the relevance of multi-stakeholder participation in addressing complex destination management concerns. In Lianga, the high ratings for economic, operational, and governance challenges suggested that development constraints were interconnected rather than isolated. Consequently, improving tourism facilities alone may not be sufficient without corresponding improvements in institutional coordination, investment support, market development, and operational management.

Opportunities for Tourism Development

The findings showed that tourism development opportunities in Lianga were generally rated High, with an overall mean of 3.97. Economic opportunities ranked first (M = 4.08), followed by environmental awareness and sustainability (M = 4.00), career opportunities (M = 3.97), market growth opportunities (M = 3.93), and social and cultural opportunities (M = 3.87). These results indicated that respondents recognized considerable potential for tourism to contribute to business activity, livelihood generation, employment, environmental initiatives, and destination expansion. The relatively high assessment of economic opportunities suggested that tourism was perceived as a promising avenue for strengthening local economic activities.

The importance of economic opportunities is supported by Elgin and Elveren (2024), who examined the relationship between tourism's economic contributions and sustainable development. Their study emphasized the multidimensional nature of tourism's relationship with development, indicating that economic outcomes should be considered alongside broader sustainability concerns. In Lianga, the high ratings for economic opportunities and environmental sustainability suggested that respondents recognized both commercial and environmental possibilities. However, these ratings reflected perceived potential rather than demonstrated future economic growth. The findings therefore point toward the importance of development initiatives that can

translate identified opportunities into viable enterprises, employment, environmental protection, and community benefits.

Perceived Impacts of Tourism Development

The findings revealed that the overall perceived impact of tourism development in Lianga was Moderate (M = 3.36). The local economy received the highest rating (M = 3.64), followed by people (M = 3.46), culture (M = 3.21), and environment (M = 3.14). The economic and people-related dimensions were classified as High Impact, whereas cultural and environmental impacts were rated Moderate. These results indicated that respondents perceived tourism's contributions to local economic activity and community welfare more strongly than its cultural and environmental effects.

This pattern is relevant to the findings of Elgin and Elveren (2024), whose research highlighted the need to examine tourism's development effects through multiple dimensions. Tourism's perceived economic contributions do not automatically establish equivalent social, cultural, or environmental outcomes. In Lianga, the comparatively lower cultural and environmental ratings suggested that the benefits associated with tourism may not have been equally evident across all development dimensions. This distinction is important because a destination can experience economic activity while still requiring stronger cultural preservation initiatives, environmental management, and community-based programs. Thus, the results support a balanced approach in which economic development is pursued alongside social inclusion, cultural promotion, and environmental responsibility.

Relationship Between Tourism Development Status and Perceived Impacts

The correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between the current status of tourism development and all four perceived impact dimensions. The relationship was strongest for culture ($r = .252$, $p < .001$), followed by environment ($r = .244$, $p < .001$), people ($r = .213$, $p < .001$), and the local economy ($r = .170$, $p = .001$). All relationships were weak, indicating that higher assessments of tourism development status were associated with higher perceived impacts, although the magnitude of these associations was limited. Accordingly, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship was rejected for all four dimensions.

The positive relationships suggested that respondents who assessed tourism development more favorably also tended to perceive stronger tourism-related benefits. Nevertheless, the weak correlation coefficients indicated that tourism development status alone did not strongly account for variations in perceived impacts. This finding can be considered alongside the study of Abad (2025), which emphasized the interconnected roles of infrastructure, marketing, community engagement, governance, and sustainability in local tourism management. The results in Lianga suggest that tourism development is associated with broader perceived outcomes, but the relationships should not be interpreted as evidence of causation. Other conditions, including stakeholder participation, resource management, and the distribution of tourism benefits, may also be relevant to how tourism impacts are experienced and perceived.

Relationship Between Tourism Challenges and Perceived Impacts

The findings revealed no statistically significant relationships between tourism development challenges and perceived impacts on the local economy ($r = .045$, $p = .406$), people ($r = -.049$, $p = .357$), culture ($r = -.099$, $p = .063$), and environment ($r = -.050$, $p = .351$). All correlation coefficients were very weak, and their corresponding probability values exceeded the .05 significance level. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected for any of the four impact dimensions.

These findings indicated that respondents' assessments of tourism challenges were not significantly associated with their perceptions of tourism impacts in the study sample. This result did not establish that economic, governance, infrastructure, or environmental challenges were unimportant. Rather, it showed that the measured challenge scores did not demonstrate statistically significant linear relationships with the perceived impact scores. Panagiotopoulou and Skoultsos (2025) highlighted the complexity of stakeholder involvement and collaborative arrangements in destination management. Their review provides a useful perspective for understanding why tourism outcomes may depend on several interacting conditions rather than on the severity of challenges alone. In Lianga, the absence of significant relationships suggests that tourism challenges and perceived impacts should be examined as distinct but potentially interconnected dimensions of destination development.

Relationship Between Tourism Opportunities and Perceived Impacts

The correlation analysis showed a statistically significant but weak positive relationship between tourism development opportunities and perceived impacts on the local economy ($r = .142$, $p = .008$). However, the relationships between tourism opportunities and perceived impacts on people ($r = .076$, $p = .154$), culture ($r = .101$, $p = .058$), and environment ($r = .098$, $p = .067$) were not statistically significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected only for the local economy and was not rejected for the remaining dimensions.

These findings suggested that respondents who perceived greater tourism development opportunities also tended to report slightly stronger economic impacts. However, the absence of significant relationships with people, culture, and environment indicated that perceived opportunities were not consistently associated with all development outcomes. Elgin and Elveren (2024) emphasized that the relationship between tourism and sustainable development is multidimensional. This perspective helps contextualize the findings in Lianga, where perceived tourism opportunities were associated with economic impacts but not significantly with the other measured dimensions. The results suggest that identifying tourism opportunities is different from realizing broader community, cultural, and environmental benefits. The findings therefore highlight the importance of examining how tourism opportunities may be translated into measurable and inclusive development outcomes.

Lived Experiences and Perspectives of Tourism Stakeholders

The qualitative findings revealed recurring themes involving governance and stakeholder engagement, tourism marketing, infrastructure and accessibility, economic and livelihood activities, community well-being, and environmental sustainability. Respondents recognized existing tourism attractions, basic services, and livelihood opportunities while describing concerns related to transportation, promotional limitations, institutional coordination, seasonal demand, and environmental management. These accounts provided additional context for understanding the municipality's tourism development conditions.

The findings concerning destination promotion are consistent with Meek and Wilk (2025), who examined the role of social media in forming regional tourism destination brand identity. Their mixed-methods research demonstrated the relevance of social media content and visitor perceptions in shaping destination branding. In Lianga, stakeholder accounts indicated considerable reliance on social media, personal recommendations, and visitor-generated content. These practices provided promotional opportunities but also suggested the need for more coordinated destination branding and marketing activities. Similarly, stakeholder concerns about governance and community participation reflected the importance of collaborative arrangements in tourism management (Panagiotopoulou & Skoultsos, 2025).

The qualitative findings also emphasized the importance of local participation in sustaining tourism initiatives. Jacot et al. (2025), in their examination of community collaboration and sustainable staycation tourism in Cebu and Bohol, Philippines, highlighted the need to place community agency at the center of tourism planning and decision-making. Their findings are relevant to Lianga because the stakeholder accounts identified both the potential benefits of tourism and the need for stronger coordination among local institutions, enterprises, and residents. These observations suggest that sustainable tourism development requires not only physical infrastructure and market promotion but also meaningful participation in planning, implementation, and resource management.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrated substantial convergence across the major dimensions of tourism development. The quantitative assessment classified tourism development status as Good (M = 3.11), while qualitative participants recognized existing attractions and basic services alongside operational limitations. Tourism challenges were rated Challenging (M = 3.68), consistent with stakeholder accounts of financial, governance, infrastructure, and marketing constraints. Similarly, the High assessment of tourism opportunities (M = 3.97) was complemented by qualitative accounts identifying possibilities for business development, destination promotion, employment, and environmental initiatives.

The integrated findings also demonstrated complementarity in explaining tourism impacts. Quantitative results indicated an overall Moderate Impact (M = 3.36), with economic impacts receiving the highest rating. Qualitative accounts provided additional

context by describing livelihood benefits while identifying cultural and environmental concerns. These patterns are consistent with the multidimensional perspective advanced by Elgin and Elveren (2024), which recognizes that tourism-related development outcomes extend beyond economic activity. Furthermore, the stakeholder experiences reinforced the relevance of community participation and collaborative governance emphasized by Jacot et al. (2025).

Overall, the findings indicate that Lianga possesses tourism development potential supported by its natural attractions, existing tourism services, and perceived economic opportunities. However, the results also identify continuing challenges involving accessibility, operational capacity, governance, destination promotion, and environmental sustainability. The significant but weak relationships between tourism development status and perceived impacts, together with the limited significant relationships involving challenges and opportunities, demonstrate that the assessed dimensions are not uniformly associated with tourism outcomes. The integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence therefore supports the development of a coordinated tourism action plan that addresses infrastructure, stakeholder collaboration, destination marketing, community participation, and sustainable resource management.

Conclusions

The study concluded that tourism development in the Municipality of Lianga, Surigao del Sur, Philippines, demonstrated considerable potential for local economic growth, livelihood generation, and sustainable community development, although its overall status remained moderately developed. Existing tourism facilities, natural attractions, and safety measures provided a foundation for further development, while limitations in accessibility, transportation, marketing, environmental management, and institutional coordination continued to constrain the municipality's tourism competitiveness. Economic and operational challenges, together with governance-related concerns, emerged as the most prominent barriers, despite the high potential identified for economic expansion, employment, market growth, and environmental sustainability.

Tourism development was perceived to have stronger impacts on the local economy and people than on culture and the environment. Significant but weak positive relationships were established between tourism development status and its perceived economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts. In contrast, tourism challenges showed no significant relationships with the perceived impacts, while tourism development opportunities were significantly associated only with economic impacts. These findings indicated that favorable tourism conditions and perceived development opportunities were not necessarily accompanied by equally strong outcomes across all dimensions of sustainable development.

The qualitative findings reinforced the quantitative results by highlighting the importance of infrastructure improvement, effective destination promotion, stakeholder collaboration, community participation, and environmental protection. Overall, the study established that Lianga's tourism potential requires coordinated, inclusive, and

environmentally responsible development strategies to translate existing opportunities into broader and more sustainable benefits. The study contributes localized empirical evidence on tourism development in an emerging Philippine destination and provides a basis for evidence-informed tourism planning, policy formulation, and sustainable destination management.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, it is recommended that the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Lianga, in collaboration with tourism stakeholders, develop and implement a comprehensive Sustainable Tourism Development Action Plan that addresses the identified challenges and maximizes existing tourism opportunities. Priority should be given to improving tourism infrastructure, transportation accessibility, visitor facilities, and essential services to enhance destination accessibility, visitor satisfaction, and overall tourism competitiveness.

The Municipal Tourism Office should strengthen destination marketing and promotion through coordinated digital campaigns, an official tourism information platform, and partnerships with local businesses and tourism organizations. These initiatives should highlight Lianga's natural attractions, cultural heritage, and community-based tourism experiences while expanding its visibility among domestic and potential international visitors. Furthermore, the LGU should establish stronger coordination mechanisms among government agencies, tourism enterprises, community organizations, and residents to promote participatory decision-making, transparent tourism governance, and effective implementation of development programs.

To maximize the perceived economic opportunities of tourism, the LGU and relevant government agencies should support local entrepreneurship, livelihood diversification, skills training, and tourism-related employment. Particular attention should be given to empowering local residents, small business owners, women, and youth to participate meaningfully in tourism activities and benefit from tourism-generated income. At the same time, environmental sustainability should be integrated into tourism planning through improved waste management, conservation initiatives, responsible visitor practices, and regular monitoring of tourism activities to minimize potential ecological impacts.

Moreover, tourism development programs should strengthen cultural preservation, community engagement, and the equitable distribution of tourism benefits. Periodic assessments of tourism facilities, stakeholder satisfaction, visitor experiences, and socioeconomic, cultural, and environmental outcomes should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of implemented initiatives and guide evidence-based policy adjustments. Future researchers are encouraged to undertake longitudinal and comparative studies involving other emerging tourism destinations, incorporate objective economic and environmental indicators, and examine additional factors influencing tourism development outcomes. These initiatives may contribute to a more inclusive, competitive, resilient, and sustainable tourism sector in Lianga, Surigao del Sur.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The study adhered to established ethical principles governing research involving human participants. Prior to data collection, permission to conduct the study was sought from the Municipal Mayor of Lianga, Surigao del Sur, through a formal request endorsed by the Dean of the Graduate School of Saint Theresa College of Tandag, Inc. Informed consent was obtained from all participants after they were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaires without pressure or coercion. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by withholding personal identifiers and presenting quantitative findings in aggregate form. Information collected through surveys and interviews was used solely for academic purposes and handled with care to protect participants' privacy. Data collection was conducted respectfully and non-intrusively to minimize potential harm or discomfort. These measures upheld the principles of voluntary participation, informed consent, privacy, confidentiality, and respect for research participants.

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