

# Public policy analysis in tourism security of Romblon, the Philippines: Potentials, challenges, issues, and constraints of a multi-islands province

Avi Ben P. Andalecio

*College of Tourism and Hospitality, University of Santo Tomas, Philippines  
The Graduate School, University of Santo Tomas, Philippines  
Research Center for Social Sciences and Education, University of Santo Tomas, Philippines*

Corresponding authors' email: [apandalecio@ust.edu.ph](mailto:apandalecio@ust.edu.ph)



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## ABSTRACT

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The Province of Romblon located in the very heart of the Philippines is home to various tourism resources. However, despite the positioning of the province as a destination, public policies like sound tourism master plans are nonexistent to safeguard sustainability in the province and its LGUs. The main objective of study is focused on digging deep into the debates and arguments about CBT trend in the Philippines and examine its potential as a strategy in a multi-island province of Romblon, a province which lacks a localized public policy and strategy regarding Community-Based Tourism ventures. Findings reveal that tourism plays an important role in community development, community engagement, and citizen participation.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism development management and efficient public administration are aspects that eighty-one (81) provinces of the Philippines must capitalize through political will and prioritization. In the Multi-Island Province of Romblon, where the islands are richly endowed with tourism resources that could support a major industry and can earn revenues for the LGUs, there are opportunities to eliminate heavy reliance on national budget by improving public service administration to alleviate poverty and inequality conditions. Thus, this could transform the communities into viable enhancers of living standards and sustainable development. There is a huge opportunity, according to studies, that LGUs could eventually become self-reliant, hence, achieve the legal intent, enshrined policy under the Local Government Code - RA 7160 (autonomous). Despite the abundance of natural and cultural

attractions as tourism resources and a clear need for economic diversification, the tourism industry is still largely undeveloped.

Romblon Province is a cluster of twenty islands lying in the Sibuyan Sea at the center of the Philippine archipelago. It is south of Marinduque, west of Masbate, east of Mindoro, and north of Panay Island. Romblon is also dubbed as the "Marble Country" of the Philippines because of the marble deposits abundant in its islands. The province consists of three main islands: Romblon, Tablas, and Sibuyan. The nature of this multi-island province is the very reason why it is dubbed as the next big thing in the pool of holiday destinations in the Philippines.

On the other hand, the Government's role on Sustainable Tourism Development is a crucial part of managing a destination and tourism in general (Aya-Ay, et al., 2020). Several scholars contend that an efficient administrative method for sustainable tourism development eventually necessitates the involvement and management of the government. The function of governments is primarily to ensure that they act for the general interest of the people; they are theoretically independent exclusive of vested interests; they have the power to make rules and laws to effect positive community transformation; and ultimately, they are not compelled by short-term financial aims. However, there are criticisms that must be addressed by governments like many of its approaches to development. Collaborative Governance and Bottom-up approaches must be considered says many scholars in the field by not solely being independent of their knowledge and resources but by maximizing multi-stakeholder participation (Nair & Hamzah, 2015). Moreover, research plays an important role in tourism planning and development. Likewise, many studies mentioned that governments, both national and local, must create policies grounded on evidence which is brought only by sound research.

This exploratory-evaluative study analyzes the local citizen's views and perceptions on potential adaptation of CBT as a strategic policy for harnessing and developing the rich natural tourism resources in the multi-islands Province of Romblon towards sustainable development of the fastest growing industry in the world, tourism. Thus, this exploratory-evaluative study contributes to further understanding on how the Provincial Government and its LGUs could maximize their potentials in terms of sustainable tourism through CBT. Specifically, the study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the tourism resource potentials of the Romblon Islands?
2. How do the Romblon LGUs manage the productivity of its 17 municipalities' tourism security in terms of the following aspects?
  - 2.1. *Local Governance for tourism administration:*
    - 2.1.1 *Tourism policy formulation and regulation*

*2.1.2 Tourism investment financing*

*2.1.3 Tourism program implementation*

*2.1.4 Tourism management control and information system*

*2.2 Investments performance efficiency in each municipality's tourism activities:*

*2.2.1 Community participation for tourism security:*

*(a) Citizen participation*

*(b) Private sector involvement*

*(c) Politico-administrative engagement*

*(d) Economic considerations*

*(e) Socio-cultural aspects*

*(f) Environmental factors*

3. What are the impediments to productivity of local development investments on tourism security of Romblon Islands?

4. How can the Romblon Islands Provincial Government strengthen its business functions to optimize its resource investments for tourism security?

The study's goal is to provide a contextual understanding and institutional developments of tourism services in the multi-island province of Romblon. The study also seeks to answer how the Romblon province can enhance the Romblomanon's (Locals of Romblon Islands) socio-economic conditions by tapping, developing, and utilizing the abundant local tourism resources of the communities in twenty (20) islands being administered by the 17 LGUs.

The research focuses on the awareness of tourism stakeholders in the multi-island province of Romblon. 17 Local Government Units were included in the study and will be the highlight of the investigation. Specifically involved in the interviews and focus group discussion (FGD) will be the key-stakeholders namely, the local government units headed by the Local Chief Executives and/or Tourism Officers, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), private sector, and household residents.

The study acquired the data limited to the research questions stated previously. Each sustainable development parameter is based on local and international published journal articles and validated with both local and international journals used as reference. The data to be reflected are purely based on stakeholders' views gathered from qualitative approach.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **Design**

The study utilized descriptive research design for an evaluative approach in gathering data with respect to the status of the province as a potential and emerging destination in the

Philippines. The descriptive design explained the state of tourism in the multi-island province of Romblon. This is an evaluative study in Tourism Development and Planning in a complex locality where diverse natural resources ranging from pristine to less-explored assets exist and are waiting for relevant sustainable tourism development. Each municipality poses strong potentials for development that could transform the communities into viable, resilient, and sustainable tourism sites. The study investigated the government's initiatives in harnessing the nature-rich environment as a major source of local income that could be plowed back to improve local livelihoods, employment, and standard of living. Moreover, making the sites tourism-ready could contribute to local resource mobilization beneficial to the population and significantly contribute to the global 17 Sustainable Development Goals (Indrianto et al., 2024).

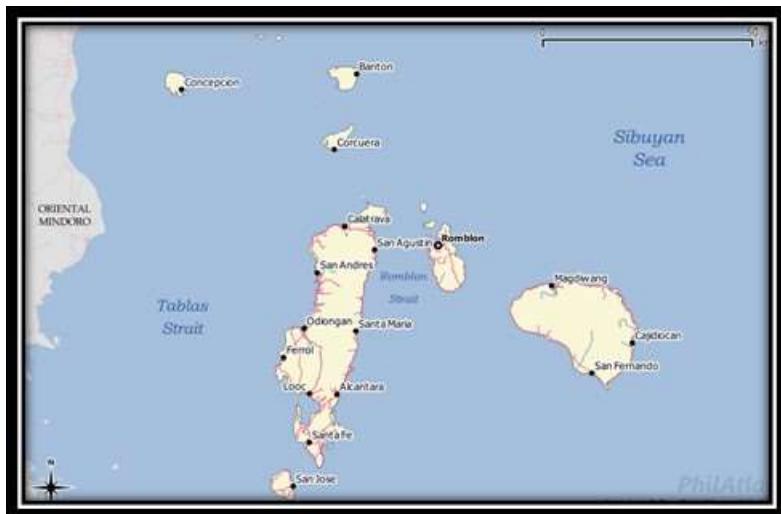
### Subjects and Study Site

The collection of tourism attractions showcased in this study is based on the mapping procedure by the researcher in coordination with the Provincial Government, LGUs, related literature, articles from famous travel sites, and national and international reports and publications.



**Figure 1. Location of Romblon Province within the Philippines**  
Source: PhilAtlas (2015)

Romblon is a province in the Philippines situated in the MIMAROPA region grouped under the Luzon Island group. Its capital is the Municipality of Romblon and is known as the “Marble Capital” of the country because of its rich marble deposits.



**Figure 2. Map of Romblon Province with Its Municipalities**  
Source: PhilAtlas (2015)

The province has a land area of 1,533.45 square kilometers or 592.07 square miles (see figure 2). Its population, as determined by the 2015 Census was 292,781. This represented 9.88% of the total population of the MIMAROPA region, 0.51% of the overall population of the Luzon Island group, or 0.29% of the entire population of the Philippines. Based on these figures, the population density is computed at 191 inhabitants per square kilometer or 495 inhabitants per square mile. These areas were chosen as the loci involved in tourism activities. Data from these destinations were used as basis of the analysis in this study.

### Data Measures

Key-Informant Interview (KII) is one of the most significant qualitative data collection schemes. Interviewing is an important source of data for biographies, phenomenological studies, grounded-theory studies, ethnographic studies, and case-studies. The interview is not a communal contact between two people. The interviewer is expected to guide the situations, topics of conversations, and directions of conversation. The interviewer can obtain portrayals or descriptions of occurrences and can clarify and conclude the outcome throughout the interview session. Engaging in a rational and logical conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee are the main approaches that a researcher can choose from. Researchers can also get emotional descriptions of or reactions to a particular experience or event (Suzuki, 2007).

The interview for each municipality was graced by the Local Chief Executives through their respective Municipal Tourism Officers (MTO). The offices were contacted by the researcher to reserve a slot for the inquiry and to provide them with ample time for preparation. The MTO is the chief priority of the KII because they are the ones who are well-versed and knowledgeable in terms of tourism affairs in the municipality. An open-ended interview was

conducted in each municipal hall. The interview included questions about the facilities, services, tourist arrival, activities, brief history, practices, and their programs to the community. The answers were recorded on the researcher's voice recorder and notes for retrieval.

For the FGD, an online forum was held between the proponent, stakeholders, and the Provincial Government of Romblon. The significance of the forum was to gather information from key informants coming from primary-management related stakeholders. Table 1 presents the scheduled online FGD and the subject key informants/primary stakeholders. The FGD was guided with the conceptualized Aide Memoire, which was evaluated by a panel of evaluators. The aide-memoire is divided into three major topics, namely, the awareness on sustainable tourism development, conservation and safeguarding, the current situation on sustainable tourism development, protection, and safeguarding, and sustainable development in tourism of Romblon Islands. All online FGDs were recorded.

**Table 1. Tabular Representation of the FGD Schedule and the Key Informants/Stakeholders**

<b>Schedule</b>	<b>Key Informants/Stakeholders</b>
May 20 (Friday), 2022	Member of the Provincial Tourism Council, Municipal Tourism Officer of San Jose (Others were interviewed during KIIs due to unavailable schedule) Travel and Tour, Transportation, Adventure and Outdoor Recreation Community (Barangay) Representatives within the Scope of the Attractions, Indigenous Community, Academe, Youth, NGO (Bayay Sibuyan Inc.)

Source: Conceptualized by the Researcher

Published journals on tourism, rural tourism, community-based tourism, and public policy and administration were used as general references in this study. Socio-economic profiles were also utilized to get more comprehensive data about the rural community. The researcher was able to secure pertinent documents and other data generated from tourism projects of each community. The data of each tourism project were analyzed using Documentary Analysis, which is focused on the evaluation of the economic activities of each community and was later used as part of the basis for a Romblon Sustainable Community-Based Tourism Development Matrix. Records on population, tourist arrival, other government statistics, and basic information will be retrieved from the Tourism Offices and the Department of Tourism.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

As part of the Primary Data, the researcher visited the LGU Municipal Halls and gave an orientation with a discussion about the research, including the materials and participants needed in the study. A letter of intent to conduct an interview, a brief description of the study, and a sample of the questions were given to the Municipal Tourism Officer. A follow-up

communication thread was made to confirm the schedule of the actual survey, based on the availability of the participants.

The number of observations that were used in the study was based on the central limit theorem in statistics. The central limit theorem states that as the number of discrete events increases, the function begins to resemble a normal distribution. Cross-sectional data across the selected destination municipalities and the documents and other data were also examined in the study.

The Secondary Data specifically documents related to tourism and other data such as tourist arrivals and the average cost of tourist spending will be gathered from the Local Government Units, NGOs, People's Organizations, and the Barangays. Other relevant documents will be gathered from the facilities of the UST - Miguel de Benavides Library, Romblon State University, local libraries, and other reliable online sources of journals and reports.

### **Ethical Consideration**

The researcher ensured the confidentiality of the data gathered and the anonymity of the participants. This is done to protect the participant's knowledge and to ensure strict adherence to the University of Santo Tomas ethical requirements. The participants were given the privilege and were not obliged to give all details and information to preserve confidentiality and to practice Intellectual Property Rights and Data Privacy. Approval Letters were sent to each local tourism office for proper coordination. Consent Forms were given to the participants to ensure that data can be published and to highlight that all information gathered during the research was used for academic purposes only. Furthermore, the research instrument used in this study was reviewed and approved accordingly by the Philippine Social Science Council - Social Science Ethics Review Board (PSSC-SSERB) in a month-long review process.

### **Mode of Analysis**

The Romblon LGUs with its 17 municipalities, can learn more about their tourism industry and develop more effective strategies related to various business functions and, in turn, leverage resources in a more optimal and insightful manner. This will help the LGU to be closer to their development and public investments objectives and make better decisions. Thematic Analysis was able to be utilized and even produced significant amount of data as basis for the desired output of the study. The researcher utilized Thematic Analysis for the study. Boyatzis, as cited in Braun and Clarke (2006), defined thematic analysis as an approach for identifying, examining, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. It efficiently organizes and defines the data in rich detail. Moreover, it interprets different aspects of the

study. The researcher sought permission for the data gathered from the semi-structured face-to-face interviews from each community to be audio recorded and transcribed thoroughly. The researcher allotted time to do the transcription of the recorded interviews and comprehend the specific responses to find connecting ideas for the emergence of the themes. A theme catches a significant integer about the study and appoints to a level of connecting response or definition within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Quotations from the interview data gathered will be included in the discussions for a better presentation of the findings.

### 3. FINDINGS

This section discusses the results and findings of the study. The connections, relationships, contrasts, and comparisons from the review of the related literature were also highlighted in this chapter. As presented in the introduction, the study's goal is to provide a contextual understanding of Tourism in a multi-island province of Romblon.

#### What are the tourism resource potentials of the Romblon Islands?

Different projects and programs on culture and heritage, adventure, and outdoor recreational activities are currently implemented within the geographical context of the group of islands. Planners from the government, NGO, and the private sector took advantage of Romblon's natural topography and landscape to create activities that encouraged potential and patron tourists and excursionists to visit the area. Based on the available accessible points of Romblon for tourists and excursionists, Tables below display the current inventory of attractions per category developed and maintained by stakeholders:

**Table 2. Tabular Representation of the Current Inventory of Beach Attractions Developed and Maintained by Stakeholders**

Type of Attraction	Town	Attractions
BEACHES	ALCANTARA	1. Aglicay Beach
	BANTON	1. Macat-ang Beach 2. Recodo Beach 3. Togong Beach 4. Mainit Beach 5. Nasunogan Beach 6. Hipit Beach
	CAJIDOCAN	1. Alibagon Beach
	CALATRAVA	1. Lapus-Lapus Beach 2. Paksi Cove 3. Tinagong Dagat
	CONCEPCION	1. Quebrada Beach
	CORCUERA	1. Boton Beach 2. Manaha Beach
	FERRROL	1. Binucot Beach 2. Guin-awayan Beach 3. Atabay Beach
	LOOC	1. Buenavista Beach

Type of Attraction	Town	Attractions
BEACHES	MAGDIWANG	1. Magdiwang Beach
	ODIONGAN	1. Poctoy Beach 2. Gabawan Beach 3. Canduyong Beach
	ROMBLON	1. Talipasak 2. Tiamban 3. Alad 4. Logbon 5. Cobrador 6. Lonos 7. Bonbon
	SAN AGUSTIN	1. Long Beach 2. Kambaye
	SAN ANDRES	1. San Andres Beach 2. Agpudlos Beach
	SAN FERNANDO	1. Cresta de Gallo
	SAN JOSE	1. Nausa Beach 2. Busay Beach 3. Inobahan Beach 4. Lanas Beach
	SANTA FE	1. Puyo 2. Canyayo 3. Guinbirayan
	SANTA MARIA	1. Pebble Beach

Source: Conceptualized by the Provincial Government, Mr. Kim Anthony Faderon and the Researcher

**Table 3. Tabular Representation of the Current Inventory of Dive-Spot Attractions Developed and Maintained by Stakeholders**

Type of Attraction	Town	Attractions
DIVE-SPOT	ALCANTARA	n/a
	BANTON	1. Time Square 2. Bantoncillo Island 3. Northwest Wall
	CAJIDIOCAN	n/a
	CALATRAVA	1. Oregon Rocks 2. Guindawahan Island
	CONCEPCION	n/a
	CORCUERA	1. Ranger Reef 1. Bunsoran MPA
	FERROL	2. Tubigon Fish Sanctuary (with sunken wreck) 3. Hinag-oman Cliffs 4. Hinag-oman Reefs 5. Poblacion Bay
	LOOC	1. Looc Bay Marine Sanctuary 2. Buenavista Islet Marine Sanctuary
	MAGDIWANG	1. Kanto Pating
	ODIONGAN	1. Canduyong Marine Sanctuary
	ROMBLON	1. Cavayan Cave (Lonos) 2. Logbon Marine Sanctuary 3. Logbon Coral Canyon 4. Logbon Broken House 5. Dogu Maru (Logbon) 6. Tobias Corner (Logbon) 7. Logbon Mangroves 8. Saisagan Point (Logbon) 9. Alad Marine Sanctuary (Alad)

Type of Attraction	Town	Attractions
DIVE-SPOT	ROMBLON	10. Alad Sanctuary Island 11. Alad North 12. Alad South 13. Channel of Alad 14. Sunken Island (Takot Reef Santuary)-Cobrador 15. Coral Garden East (Cobrador) 16. Coral Garden West (Cobrador) 17. Naguso Wall (Cobrador) 18. Bang-og Island 19. Telsie's Garden (Lonos) 20. San Pedro Sanctuary (Lonos) 21. Salvo Beach 22. Sammar Sanctuary (Lonos) 23. San Pedro Cliff (Lonos) 24. Phil's Fan Coral Collection (Lonos) 25. Giant Clam Sanctuary (Lonos) 26. Bonbon Sea Grass Valley (Lonos) 27. Bonbon Beach 28. Agpanabat Caves and Canyons 29. Agpanabat Sanctuary 30. Agnay Sanctuary 31. Three P's Dive Resort Beach 32. Lonos Fish Sanctuary 33. The Rope 34. Lunas 35. Staghorn Corazon 36. Treasure's Dream 37. Magnificat 38. Mapula 39. San Pedro Turle Sanctuary 40. Saint Joseph 41. Palje
	SAN AGUSTIN	1. Blue Hole 2. Punta Gorda 3. Carmen Cliff
	SAN ANDRES	n/a
	SAN FERNANDO	1. Cresta de Gallo 1. Lanas Slope Dive 2. West Wall Dive 3. Devil's Boulder Dive 4. Gentle Wall Tunnel Dive 5. Cathedral Dive 6. Cemetery Wall Dive 7. Village Reef Dive 8. Lobster Wall Dive
	SAN JOSE	
	SANTA FE	n/a
	SANTA MARIA	n/a

Source: Conceptualized by the Provincial Government, Mr. Kim Anthony Faderon and the Researcher

**Table 4. Tabular Representation of the Current Inventory of Marine Sanctuary Attractions Developed and Maintained by Stakeholders**

Type of Attraction	Town	Attractions
MARINE-SANCTUARY	ALCANTARA	n/a
	BANTON	n/a
	CAJIDIOCAN	1. Sugod Fish Sanctuary
	CALATRAVA	n/a

Type of Attraction	Town	Attractions
MARINE-SANCTUARY	CONCEPCION	n/a
	CORCUERA	n/a
	FERROL	1. Ferrol Marine Park
	LOOC	1. Looc Marine & Refuge Sanctuary
	MAGDIWANG	n/a
	ODIONGAN	1. Canduyong Marine Sanctuary
	ROMBLON	1. Romblon Sanctuary 2. Pawikan
	SAN AGUSTIN	n/a
	SAN ANDRES	n/a
	SAN FERNANDO	n/a
	SAN JOSE	n/a
	SANTA FE	n/a
	SANTA MARIA	n/a

Source: Conceptualized by the Provincial Government, Mr. Kim Anthony Faderon and the Researcher

**Table 5. Tabular Representation of the Current Inventory of Lake and River Attractions Developed and Maintained by Stakeholders**

Type of Attraction	Town	Attractions
LAKE AND RIVER	ALCANTARA	n/a
	BANTON	n/a
	CAJIDIOCAN	n/a
	CALATRAVA	1. Tinagong Dagat
	CONCEPCION	n/a
	CORCUERA	1. Suba Bay Lagoon
	FERROL	n/a
	LOOC	n/a
	MAGDIWANG	1. Dalipi River 2. Gaong River 3. Pawala River
	ODIONGAN	1. Tumataboba River
	ROMBLON	n/a
	SAN AGUSTIN	n/a
	SAN ANDRES	1. Parpaguha River
	SAN FERNANDO	1. Cantingas River
	SAN JOSE	n/a
	SANTA FE	n/a
	SANTA MARIA	n/a

Source: Conceptualized by the Provincial Government, Mr. Kim Anthony Faderon and the Researcher

**Table 6. Tabular Representation of the Current inventory of Waterfalls Attractions Developed and Maintained by Stakeholders**

Type of Attraction	Town	Attractions
WATERFALLS	ALCANTARA	n/a
	BANTON	n/a
	CAJIDIOCAN	1. Cawa-Cawa Falls 2. Little Baguio Falls 3. Gomot Falls 4. Kabit-tubi Falls
	CALATRAVA	n/a
	CONCEPCION	1. Tinigban Falls
	CORCUERA	n/a
	FERROL	n/a
	LOOC	1. Lumbia Falls
	MAGDIWANG	1. Lambingan Falls

Type of Attraction	Town	Attractions
WATERFALLS	ODIONGAN	1. Mainit Falls 2. Garing Falls 3. Tuburan Falls
	ROMBLON	1. Agpanabat Falls 2. Sablayan Falls 3. Ginowaan Falls
	SAN AGUSTIN	1. Dubduban Falls 2. Bita Falls
	SAN ANDRES	1. Mablaran Falls 2. Bal-ong Falls 3. Pag-Alad Falls 4. Twin Falls
	SAN FERNANDO	1. Lagting Falls (Barangay Taclobo) 2. Busay (Panangcalan) 3. Dagubdob (Cross Country) 4. Pinatiminan Falls 5. Bila-Bila Falls (Canjalon)
	SAN JOSE	n/a
	SANTA FE	n/a
	SANTA MARIA	1. Tuburan Falls 2. Pinay Falls

Source: Conceptualized by the Provincial Government, Mr. Kim Anthony Faderon and the Researcher

**Table 7. Tabular Representation of the Current Inventory of Cave Attractions Developed and maintained by Stakeholders**

Type of Attraction	Town	Attractions
CAVE	ALCANTARA	n/a
	BANTON	1. Guyangan Cave 2. Cathedral Cave 3. Wall Cave 4. Tigpuyo Cave 5. Slide Cave 6. De Campo Cave 7. Silak Cave 8. Ipot Cave
	CAJIDIOCAN	n/a
	CALATRAVA	1. Talisay Cave
	CONCEPCION	n/a
	CORCUERA	1. Guin-iwagan Cave 2. Lis-Ong Cave
	FERROL	1. Mabaho Cave 2. Burobinatana Cave
	LOOC	1. Bongan-bongan Cave 2. Santo Niño Cave
	MAGDIWANG	n/a
	ODIONGAN	1. Tuburan Cave
	ROMBLON	1. Nagoso Cave
	SAN AGUSTIN	n/a
	SAN ANDRES	1. Cajil Cave
	SAN FERNANDO	n/a
	SAN JOSE	1. Ngiriton Cave 2. Bunayag Cave 3. Angas Cave
	SANTA FE	n/a
	SANTA MARIA	n/a

Source: Conceptualized by the Provincial Government, Mr. Kim Anthony Faderon and the Researcher

**Table 8. Tabular Representation of the Current Inventory of Mountain and Hill Attractions Developed and Maintained by Stakeholders**

Type of Attraction	Town	Attractions
MOUNTAIN / HILL	ALCANTARA	n/a
	BANTON	n/a
	CAJIDIOCAN	1. Mount Guiting-Guiting
	CALATRAVA	1. Balogo Watershed
	CONCEPCION	n/a
	CORCUERA	1. Bayani / Tamaraw Hill 2. Byagas Hills 3. Bantadan Hills
	FERROL	n/a
	LOOC	1. Mount Malbog
	MAGDIWANG	1. Mount Guiting-Guiting
	ODIONGAN	n/a
	ROMBLON	n/a
	SAN AGUSTIN	1. Mount Payapao
	SAN ANDRES	n/a
	SAN FERNANDO	1. Mount Guiting-Guiting
	SAN JOSE	n/a
	SANTA FE	n/a
	SANTA MARIA	1. Triple Peak

Source: Conceptualized by the Provincial Government, Mr. Kim Anthony Faderon and the Researcher

**Table 9. Tabular Representation of the Current Inventory of Islets and Rock Formation Attractions Developed and Maintained by Stakeholders**

Type of Attraction	Town	Attractions
ISLETS AND ROCK FORMATION	ALCANTARA	n/a
	BANTON	1. Bantoncillo Island 2. Isabel Island 3. Carlota Island
	CAJIDIOCAN	n/a
	CALATRAVA	1. Oregon Rock 2. Guindawahan Island
	CONCEPCION	n/a
	CORCUERA	n/a
	FERROL	1. Binucot Islet
	LOOC	1. Buenavista Islet
	MAGDIWANG	n/a
	ODIONGAN	1. Panique Rock 2. Bagulayag Rock
	ROMBLON	1. Bang-og Island 2. Alad Island 3. Cobrador Island 4. Logbon Island
	SAN AGUSTIN	1. Bairingan Islet
	SAN ANDRES	1. Sapatos Island 2. Bangko-Bangko
	SAN FERNANDO	1. Cresta de Gallo Island
	SAN JOSE	n/a
	SANTA FE	1. Japar Islet 2. Cabangahan Island
	SANTA MARIA	n/a

Source: Conceptualized by the Provincial Government, Mr. Kim Anthony Faderon and the Researcher

**Table 10. Tabular Representation of the Current Inventory of Treks, Lighthouse & Vista Points Attractions Developed and Maintained by Stakeholders**

Type of Attraction	Town	Attractions
TREKS, Lighthouse AND VISTA POINTS	ALCANTARA	1. Aglicay
	BANTON	1. Manamyaw Viewdeck
	CAJIDIOCAN	2. Punta Matagar Lighthouse
	CALATRAVA	1. Cajidiocan Lighthouse
	CONCEPCION	1. Paksi Cove Trail
	CORCUERA	2. Tinagong Dagat Trail
		n/a
		1. Cotta Tower
		2. Panorama Point
		3. Battle of Tanruaw Park Viewing Deck
	FERROL	n/a
	LOOC	1. Looc Bay Lighthouse
	MAGDIWANG	n/a
	ODIONGAN	1. DIWA – Bato ni Jimmy
		1. Provincial Training Center Viewing Deck
		2. Provincial Tree Park
	ROMBLON	1. Fort San Andres
		2. Catedral de San Jose Belfry
		3. Apunan (Agpanabat) Lighthouse
		4. Cagbalogo Lighthouse
	SAN AGUSTIN	1. Punta Gorda Stairways
		2. Carmen Bay Viewing Deck
		3. Biaringan Island Lighthouse
	SAN ANDRES	1. Sapatos Point Lighthouse
		2. Bangko-Bangko Point
	SAN FERNANDO	1. Cauit Point Lighthouse (Espana)
	SAN JOSE	1. Tagaytay Point
		2. Angas Point
		3. Kuding-Kuding
	SANTA FE	1. Santa Fe Trail
		2. Cabalian Point Lighthouse
	SANTA MARIA	n/a

Source: Conceptualized by the Provincial Government, Mr. Kim Anthony Faderon and the Researcher

**Table 11. Tabular Representation of the Current Inventory of Farms / Industrial Area Attractions Developed and Maintained by Stakeholders**

Type of Attraction	Town	Attractions
FARMS / INDUSTRIAL AREAS OPEN FOR TOURISTS	ALCANTARA	n/a
	BANTON	n/a
	CAJIDIOCAN	n/a
	CALATRAVA	n/a
	CONCEPCION	n/a
	CORCUERA	n/a
	FERROL	n/a
	LOOC	n/a
	MAGDIWANG	n/a
	ODIONGAN	1. Provincial Breeding and Hatchery
		2. Provincial Breeding Station
	ROMBLON	1. Marble Plants
		2. Marble Quarries
	SAN AGUSTIN	n/a
	SAN ANDRES	1. Pili Nut Farm
		2. Fondevilla Farms
		3. Sunflower Farm

Type of Attraction	Town	Attractions
FARMS / INDUSTRIAL AREAS OPEN FOR TOURISTS	SAN ANDRES	4. Provincial Hatchery 5. Bamboo Plantation
	SAN FERNANDO	n/a
	SAN JOSE	n/a
	SANTA FE	1. Bangus Fish Cages
	SANTA MARIA	n/a

Source: Conceptualized by the Provincial Government, Mr. Kim Anthony Faderon and the Researcher

**Table 12. Tabular Representation of the Current Inventory of Local Markets / Specialty Shops / Pasalubong Shops Attractions Developed and Maintained by Stakeholders**

Type of Attraction	Town	Attractions
LOCAL MARKETS / SPECIALTY SHOPS / PASALUBONG SHOPS	ALCANTARA	1. Lechon Grill (Airport)
	BANTON	n/a
	CAJIDIOCAN	n/a
	CALATRAVA	n/a
	CONCEPCION	n/a
	CORCUERA	n/a
	FERROL	n/a
	LOOC	1. KOICA Hall – Pasalubong Shop
	MAGDIWANG	1. Nature's Inn – Pasalubong Shop 2. Sanctuary Garden – Pasalubong Shop 3. Wild Honey – Public Market
	ODIONGAN	1. Pasalubong Center 2. Odiongan Public Market (Dry and Wet) 3. Marble Shops (Odiongan Port) 4. ACF Bakeshop (Packed Baked Breads)
ROMBLON	ROMBLON	1. Romblon Shopping Center (Marble) 2. Romblon Public Market (Dry and Wet) 3. Boknoy's Siopao 4. Romblon T-Shirt Shop (Near Tourism Office)
	SAN AGUSTIN	n/a
	SAN ANDRES	n/a
	SAN FERNANDO	n/a
	SAN JOSE	1. Tourism Building Shop
	SANTA FE	n/a
	SANTA MARIA	n/a

Source: Conceptualized by the Provincial Government, Mr. Kim Anthony Faderon and the Researcher

**Table 13. Tabular Representation of the Current Inventory of Cultural, Religious and Historical Attractions Developed and Maintained by Stakeholders**

Type of Attraction	Town	Attractions
CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS AND HISTORICAL SITES	ALCANTARA	1. Battle of Sibuyan Sea Marker
	BANTON	1. San Nicolas Church 2. Museo de San Nicolas 3. Fort San Nicolas 4. Ugat-Faigao Museum
	CAJIDIOCAN	n/a
	CALATRAVA	1. Calatrava Museum
	CONCEPCION	n/a
	CORCUERA	1. Battle of Tanruaw Friendship Park 2. Cota Fort 3. Tigad Cross
	FERROL	n/a
	LOOC	1. Looc Bay Lighthouse

Type of Attraction	Town	Attractions
CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS AND HISTORICAL SITES	LOOC	2. Looc Old Houses 3. Old Municipal Building
	MAGDIWANG	1. Paseo de Magdiwang
	ODIONGAN	1. San Lorenzo Ruiz Seminary 2. Catholic Church 3. IFI Catheral 4. Baywalk Lighthouse 5. Odiongan Public Market
	ROMBLON	1. Catedral de San Jose 2. Fort San Andres 3. Traida de Aguas – Fuente de Belen 4. Old Municipal Building 5. Villa del Mar 6. Palje Retreat Center
	SAN AGUSTIN	1. Trangkalan Grotto 2. Station of the Cross 3. Punta Gorda
	SAN ANDRES	n/a
	SAN FERNANDO	1. Camp Christ in the Mountain 2. Azagra Candelaria Chapel
	SAN JOSE	n/a
	SANTA FE	n/a
	SANTA MARIA	n/a

Source: Conceptualized by the Provincial Government, Mr. Kim Anthony Faderon and the Researcher

**Table 14. Tabular Representation of the Current Inventory of Local Cultural Properties Developed and Maintained by Stakeholders**

Category	Property	Location	Significance	Type
NATIONAL CULTURAL TREASURES	Twin Forts of Romblon Island, Fuerza de San Andres and Fuerza de Santiago	Romblon, Romblon	<i>National Cultural Treasure (NCCA)</i> The forts played a significant role in the defense of the island from Moro and Dutch Pirates during the Spanish period. Strategically located on top of San Antonio and Cavalry Hills overlooking the whole town of Romblon, the twin towers- made of coral blocks, is a testament to fusion of an ingenuous engineering and construction styles of development without harmful consequences to the natural environment.	Tangible
	Catedral de San Jose	Romblon, Romblon	<i>National Cultural Treasure (NCCA)</i> Catedral de San Jose is the oldest Catholic Church in Romblon province. It was declared a National Cultural Treasure in 2001. Among Spanish churches in the country, the cathedral stands out because of its copper bell, which sits on top of the reconstructed tower. Catedral de San Jose was built by Recollect Fathers in the 15th century, following a cruciform design. Its unique features include its marble retablos, religious paintings, antique icons, and coral- bricked walls. The stained-glass windows and	Tangible

Category	Property	Location	Significance	Type
NATIONAL CULTURAL TREASURES	Ikat Burial Cloth	Banton, Romblon (Displayed in National Museum)	Byzantine altar house the Señor Sto. Niño de Romblon, which went missing for 22 years until 2013. <i>National Cultural Treasure (NCCA)</i>	Tangible
	Casa del San Fernando	Poblacion, San Fernando, Romblon	Among the artifacts in the Guyangan Cave System was the Banton Cloth, a piece of a traditional burial cloth found in one of the wooden coffins. It is estimated to be 400 years old, making it the earliest known warp ikat (tie-resist dyeing) textile in the Philippines and Southeast Asia. These artifacts are now preserved at the National Museum of Anthropology in Manila. <i>Important Cultural Property (NCCA)</i>	Tangible
IMPORTANT CULTURAL PROPERTIES	Spanish Colonial Era Bridges	Romblon, Romblon	Casa de San Fernando located in Sibuyan Island is a Spanish Cuartel built of stone coral blocks with wooden beams. The structure is a unique built- heritage as a watchtower stood majestically at the back of the residence structure believed to have been built for the purpose by then Don Pedro Sanz, a Spanish Gobernadorcillo. <i>Important Cultural Property (NCCA)</i>	Tangible
	Spanish Colonial Era Municipal Building	Romblon, Romblon	Spanish Colonial Era Bridges – Fuente de Fetalvero, Fuente de Belen, and Fuente de la Paz, spanning the street of Madronal. They paved the way for the evolution of the province's commerce, communication, and transportation. <i>Important Cultural Property (NCCA)</i>	Tangible
	Traida de Aguas	Romblon, Romblon	Erected during the occupation of Spanish Rulers. It shows the influence of the Spanish culture in the Philippines. <i>Important Cultural Property (NCCA)</i>	Tangible
	Guyangan Cave System	Banton, Romblon	Built in the 19th century is an old fountain located at the town center and served as freshwater source for the whole town during the Spanish colonial period. <i>Important Cultural Property (NCCA)</i>	Tangible
			An important heritage resource of the Romblon Province continues to serve the archeological activities that contributed greatly to the scientific knowledge of Romblon's and the Philippines in general of its pre-history. With significant archeological finds such as the Banton Cloth, a National Cultural Treasure, and the pre-historic practice of deforming the skull of an infant, the system continues to yield earthenware, shards, glazed	Tangible

Category	Property	Location	Significance	Type
IMPORTANT CULTURAL PROPERTIES			vessels, wooden coffins, teeth, artifacts made of shells and Chinese ceramics attributed to Sung, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties. Indeed, a valuable area for archeological studies, particularly on the pre-Spanish burial practices in the Philippines.	
OTHER CULTURAL PROPERTIES	Banton Church (San Nicolas de Tolentino Church)	Banton, Romblon	It is one of the oldest churches in the country, constructed between 1644-1650 during the Spanish colonial period. Fray Agustin de San Pedro or known as El Padre Capitan constructed this church and convent then the walls that encircle the complex.	Tangible
	Fuerza de San Jose	Banton, Romblon	El Padre Capital also constructed a fort. In every corner of the walls, he put towers for watching approaching enemies. A deep well and other important facilities were constructed for the needs of the evacuees in case there is a threat of Muslim attacks. He built a watchtower on the top of Onti Hill that has a commanding view of the entire Sibuyan Sea and the exit points of the vessels from the Port of Romblon as well as the ships going toward the south of the archipelago. The fort was named "Fuerza de San Jose" (Fort San Jose) in honor of Saint Joseph. In 1870, the details and the condition of the fortress church were mentioned in Memoria de Panay: "The fort is in the form of isosceles triangle. The walls measure 111.17 meters long, 2.08 meters thick and 4.58 meters high. On the top of the walls have 12 cannons with different calibers."	Tangible
	Cotta Tower (Ruins)	Corcuera, Romblon	This tower is what remains of a Spanish fort constructed between 1860 and 1865 by Fr. Agustin de San Pedro, also known as El Padre Capitan, to ward off Muslim pirates. It is situated on a hill overlooking Brgy. Poblacion and is an easy 150-meter hike from the town plaza.	Tangible
	Cota ng Odiongan (Ruins)	Odiongan, Romblon	In early 1800s, a group of Bantoanons landed in Odiongan in search for a place suited for agriculture. After settling in the place, they found out that it was prone to attacks by Moro pirates. In 1840, another group of Bantoanons came to Odiongan but this time they built a "cota" or a fort, which helped protect the settlers from raids.	Tangible

Category	Property	Location	Significance	Type
OTHER CULTURAL PROPERTIES	Cota Payong-Payong	San Agustin, Romblon	The ruins of an old Spanish cotta or fort which was built by the natives to serve as a watch post for raiding Moro pirates. Perched on Payong-Payong Hill in Barangay Cagboaya, the remaining limestone walls of the cotta serve as a mute testimony to the town's rich historic past.	Tangible

Source: Conceptualized by the Provincial Government, Mr. Kim Anthony Faderon and the Researcher

## **How do the Romblon LGUs manage the productivity of its 17 municipalities' tourism security in terms of the following aspects?**

### ***Local Governance for Tourism Administration***

The Provincial Government of Romblon created a Provincial Tourism Office that oversees all industry-related tasks, projects, and programs from the Regional Office which are properly disseminated to its 17 municipalities as basis for tourism policies. Although the Municipal Tourism Office (MTO) has the autonomy to create their own policies, the Provincial Tourism Office (PTO) and the MTO work together to develop and enhance the visitor facilities of the province and each town which aim to stimulate tourism growth in order to produce local economic benefits. They are often regarded as the chief local authorities but may also work with private companies or other public sector agencies. The Provincial Tourism Office, however, has no direct power to control each LGU's priority projects and programs because these specific directions vis-à-vis tourism development are still under the prioritization of the LGUs as reflected in the Local Government Autonomy. The following themes of discussion will clearly lay-down the realities of the LGUs in terms of tourism policy formulation and regulation; tourism investment financing; tourism program implementation; and tourism management control and information system.

### ***Tourism Policy Formulation and Regulation: Prioritization***

The government's political will alone can result in developments in sustainable tourism movements, which are mostly lobbied by non-state actors. Several examples taken from the results of this study will give clearer understanding of how vital prioritization is to all levels of the government from the national to local context, specifically in the Province of Romblon. It is explicitly stated in the Tourism Act of 2009 or the R.A. 9593 that the State declares tourism as an indispensable element of the national economy and an industry of national interest and importance, which must be harnessed as an engine of socio-economic growth and cultural affirmation to generate investment, foreign exchange, and employment, and to continue to mold an enhanced sense of national pride for all Filipinos (Sec. 2, R.A. 9593). In the province, the government has a Provincial Tourism Office that influences and coordinates the tourism

activities and thrusts of each municipality to the DOT MIMAROPA. While it is correct that these LGUs have the autonomy given by state, the provincial government still has the power to influence the thrusts of each municipal tourism office. Regular meetings are implemented and monitoring of projects and programs of each LGU is accomplished by the provincial tourism office. One informant stated: "Actually we have regular meetings with the LGUs and their respective tourism officers are very much active and willing to align their projects and programs with the provincial thrust." During the interview with the representatives from the provincial government, they gave emphasis on the importance of the Tourism Master Plan to guide them to fully implement their projects and programs for the province. However, it was also revealed that important blueprints such as the Comprehensive Development Plans, Tourism Master Plans, and Tourism Development Plans are still yet to be approved. They continued that: "We are relying on the thrusts and movements of the Department of Tourism MIMAROPA for our directions while waiting for the Third-Party provider to finish our Tourism Plans." This is a challenge and an impediment for the implementation of tourism development programs in line with sustainability. Both the literature and experiences of local communities around the Philippines are manifestations that conducting tourism activities in a bigger scope and level without concrete plans make the government blind and visionless in terms of directions which can yield more adverse impacts than benefits. As stated by one of the informants: "But the province especially the Congressman is very much willing to capitalize on Romblon's tourism resources as an alternative to extractive industries such as mining." The province has been surrounded by issues of mining in the past decade and, due to the outcry of the people, the provincial government made tourism as an alternative to conserve, preserve, and promote the beauty of the province.

### ***Tourism Policy Formulation and Regulation: Legislation***

As the legislative body of the Provincial Government of Romblon, the Sangguniang Panlalawigan is mandated to enact ordinances and pass resolutions for the general welfare of the people at the provincial level. The powers, duties, and functions of the Sanggunian, are outlined in Section 468 of the Local Government Code of 1991. The legislative body is tasked in general with enacting ordinances, approving resolutions and appropriating funds for tourism and for the general welfare and development of the province and its inhabitants. It is also mandated to perform the proper exercise of the corporate powers of the province (Local Government Code of 1991). On the other hand, under the R.A. 7160, an LGU councilor is a member of a local council that is the legislative body of the local government unit. The local legislative branch of the LGUs in the Philippines is responsible for passing tourism-related and general ordinances and resolutions for the administration of a municipality. A tourism

ordinance passed by the Sangguniang Bayan is sent to the Municipal Mayor for approval. Once approved, it is transmitted to the Sangguniang Panlalawigan of the province to which the municipality belongs, for compliance review. The Sangguniang Panlalawigan may declare an ordinance or portions of it invalid should it be found to be inconsistent with existing laws, or it goes beyond the authority of the Sangguniang Bayan may actually exercise. But if no action is taken by the Sangguniang Panlalawigan within 30 days, it is presumed to be compliant and deemed valid, and thus takes effect within the concerned town. Tourism legislations are commonly present in LGUs. Currently, the MTOs in the province which have the itemized or permanent position are Cajidiocan, San Fernando, and San Jose.

### ***Tourism Policy Formulation and Regulation: Execution***

The Local Chief Executives, through the Municipal Tourism Office (MTO), plan the projects and programs intended for the tourism development of each town. This is headed by the Municipal Tourism Officers, who serve as the main think-tank of the office. Many MTOs in the province prioritize tourism through their natural attractions such as Magdiwang, San Fernando, and Cajidiocan in the Sibuyan Island. This is also similar to the whole Romblon and Tablas Island's towns, but the town of Looc capitalizes on their arts and cultural assets. Romblon, the capital, also boasts of its rich historical and cultural tourism resources, as depicted at the beginning of this chapter. The researcher interviewed all tourism officers of the province and agreed that the decision-making regarding tourism affairs of each town is controlled by the MTOs. However, nine (9) tourism officers admitted that they are still under the Office of the Mayor and no existing tourism office. Only the towns of Cajidiocan, Magdiwang, San Fernando, San Jose, Looc, Odiongan, San Andres, and Romblon have their own offices and staff. This is a manifestation that there is a growing need to institutionalize a solid organizational structure for tourism offices coming from the provincial office to perform better at the municipality level.

### ***Tourism Policy Formulation and Regulation: Monitoring and Evaluation***

Monitoring and evaluation of projects and programs of the province and each LGU are in the direct control of the provincial tourism and municipal tourism offices respectively. These practices are sometimes partnered with the People's Organization (POs) and the local communities through the barangay leadership. Since tourism is just starting to develop in the province, most of the respondents and informants are optimistic about the benefits coming from tourism but are still unaware of the costs if not managed in a sustainable manner. Planning and implementation are two separates yet equally important parts of the whole process of management. However, monitoring and evaluation of programs are crucial in

completing the whole cycle of the management process. Thus, the UNWTO International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO) suggests generic elements of importance to guide the primary stakeholders in rural destinations to practice and observe sustainability in every undertaking that they will partake in. It is a network of tourism observatories monitoring the economic, environmental, and social impact of tourism at the destination level. The initiative is based on UNWTO's long-standing commitment to the sustainable and resilient growth of the sector through measurement and monitoring, supporting the evidence-based management of tourism (UNWTO, n.d.). The researcher suggests that the province follow the standards set by the UNWTO on evaluation and monitoring. There are 11 mandatory issue areas that INSTO Observatories are required to monitor. These issue areas are crucial in the administrative management of destinations from planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting. These are tourism seasonality; employment; destination economic benefits; energy management; water management; waste water management (sewage); solid waste management; climate action; accessibility; local satisfaction; and governance.

Seasonality in tourism is a phase where destinations experience low tourist arrivals. Thus, the flow of income to a destination is much weaker. The province must ensure that safeguarding community resiliency is a priority to protect and diversify the livelihood of communities. This is connected to Employment wherein the province must ensure the quality of jobs offered to the locals in terms of frontline services in the accommodation, transportation, attraction management, and other operating sectors of the tourism industry. This will ultimately affect the Destination economic benefits by making sure of income security for the locals or tourism frontliners. Energy management, Water management; Waste water management (sewage), Solid waste management must also be at the top of the priority list of the province since tourism is considered to be affecting the above mentioned concerns to better approach Climate action. Most of the operating sectors in tourism affect the environment due to pollution among others. Transportation and accommodation sectors are some of the contributory factors for environmental concerns. Accessibility on the other hand also plays an important role, as it indicates the feasibility of an industry vis-à-vis tourist willingness to travel despite the distance. Local satisfaction is a significant factor in making sure that tourism functions in accordance with its purpose to serve the communities by improving their quality of life. Lastly, Governance in tourism plays a crucial role in making sure that local administration provides an enabling environment for tourism enterprises to thrive and serve the above mentioned targets.

## **Tourism Investment Financing**

### ***Local Investments***

Investors in the province and municipality level are all local businesses. This is listed and discussed in the inventory part of the paper. This is quite good in a sense, for it basically supports local manpower and knowledge. Most of the businesses are related to attractions, transportation, accommodation, and the food and beverage sectors. In the case of Odiongan, a giant fast-food chain was opened and has been catering to the whole province ever since. Other supporting or allied industries also benefit from the development of tourism in the province from fishing, farming, and quarrying.

### ***Program Funding through Non-State Actors***

There are several Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) that fund important nature-based attractions in the province. In the case of Romblon in the capitol, the Ginablan Wildlife, Mangrove and Bird Sanctuary was funded and supported by the joint cooperation of the Romblon Municipal Government, Ginablan Fisherfolks Association, and the U.S. Peace Corps in 2014. The partnership has produced booklets supplemental to those in the original Romblon Island Bird Identification Guide. This ecotourism attraction has a great potential to educate students and tourists alike especially in the preservation of the environment and the importance of endemic bird species found in the town. In the case of San Jose, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) provides technical cooperation and other forms of aid promoting economic and social development in the town specifically the construction of the small port which caters to small passenger boats and fishing boats. In the town of Looc, the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) has funded the town's tourism office and, at the same time, a fisherfolk office to support the livelihood of the locals and empower them through tourism development and capacity building. In the town of Magdiwang which boasts the infamous Mt. Guiting-Guiting, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Commission have funded several projects centered on environmental protection and preservation. Majority of the towns in the province also had recent local partnerships and funding received from the Bayay Sibuyan Inc. and ABS-CBN Foundation Bantay Kalikasan for ecotourism promotion and development and the Evelio Javier Foundation for biodiversity management and livelihood assistance. These local non-state actors are present in the towns of Magdiwang and San Fernando in the island of Sibuyan.

### ***Government Initiative***

National government agencies basically have supervision over the natural attractions, especially those situated in protected areas in the province, such as the Department of

Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), which controls and regulates tourism in Mt. Guiting-Guiting in cooperation with the LGUs of Magdiwang and San Fernando in the island of Sibuyan. Department of Science and Technology (DOST) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) also have a hand in the development of local products of communities in the entire province. In the town of Odiongan, for instance, the development of peanut butter and local rice cakes has received technical support from the agency, which benefitted many local entrepreneurs in the town. These local products have become souvenir items sold all over the country and has reached international demand.

### **Tourism Program Implementation**

#### ***Provincial Government Initiative***

The Provincial Government of Romblon, through the Provincial Tourism Office, implemented several initiatives to unite and centralize the thrusts of the entire islands of the lone district. Regular meetings and close monitoring are rendered and coordination from each office is achieved. As of July 2022, the Congressman declared Romblon as a tourism province and appointed a tourism czar in the person of the current Vice-Governor. This is a manifestation that the province, through the leadership and political will, can steer the thrusts on sustainable tourism.

#### ***Local Government Initiative***

The 17 Local Government Units (LGUs) of the province collaborate with each other. One tourism officer mentioned during the interview that coordination and collaboration are present among the tourism officers. "As a matter of fact, coordination with other neighboring towns has already been practiced to ensure quality guest experience.". This is a manifestation that cooperation between towns is achievable and is a good sign of centralized potentials of tourism resources in the province. One of the good practices that the province might adopt is the creation of a tourism circuit. The province has not yet adopted this kind of strategy to maximize the potentials of not just one town but a series of towns which features a number of tourism resources from culture and heritage attractions, nature-based attractions, historical attractions, and activities related to tourism. Despite the lack of institutionalized tourism master plans, the province and the 17 towns are very much active in the tourism promotion in social media. One informant stated: "We are very much active in social media, specifically Facebook because most of our audience, our fellow Romblomanons are active there. Including the majority of the Filipinos. They are our target market." The Provincial Government and the LGUs are also active in the promotion of the province and towns through their festivals. One of the most sought-after festivals in the province is the Biniray Festival in the capital Romblon

in celebration of the feast of Sto. Nino de Romblon. Thus, fiestas and festivals like Biniray are the heart and soul of tourism in the whole province and towns, as they take pride in their culture and heritage as manifested in the participation of the whole community.

### ***Multi-Stakeholder Approach***

Partnerships with all sectors of the industry are important in the province. However, all the towns have small programs involving the local community in the development of their resources related to tourism and livelihood. This is a perfect timing for the new set of local governments to gear up and position their focus on community participation to make development more holistic in approach. One of the beneficial methodologies for growing and developing a level of tourism that is sustainable and enhances the totality of local and regional environments is a multi-stakeholder approach to tourism development. The exploration of the methods by which sustainable rural development takes an integrated approach in terms of start-up, implementation and development, and how it is supported by and benefits from the notion of a core of multiple stakeholders. It is thus crucial for LGUs in the province to reflect the essence of participatory governance in their future tourism master plans. Most of the programs in the majority of LGUs are focused on the traditional dole out service which essentially defeats the purpose of capacity building through sustainable tourism and sustainable community development.

### **Tourism Management Control and Information System**

#### ***Regional and Provincial Government Initiatives***

The DOT MIMAROPA and the Provincial Government of Romblon, through the Provincial Tourism Office, have implemented several Information and Communications Technology (ICT) initiatives to streamline the tourism services of the lone district with the help of the DOT MIMAROPA, they are implementing and utilizing the application TourLISTA. This project, also known as the Tourism Live-Inventory and Statistics of Tourist Arrivals of DOT-MIMAROPA and DOST, is a web-based information system that functions to consolidate the database of all tourist arrivals from Accommodation Establishments (AEs) and Tourist Attractions (TAs) in the MIMAROPA region. Also, TourLISTA is armed with a geographical information system which can indicate the location of all registered Accommodation Establishments (AEs) and Tourist Attractions (TAs) in the area. To ease the analysis of data, TourLISTA is also capable of analyzing the statistics of the encoded data and can easily generate reports based on the requirements of the Department of Tourism (DOT).

### ***Local Government Initiative***

The LGUs, in cooperation with the DOT MIMAROPA and the Provincial Government, utilize TourLISTA application that is aimed to streamline tourism data towards convenience, efficiency, and innovativeness for Accommodation Establishments (AEs) and Tourist Attractions (TAs) coordinators, eradicating the tourism reporting difficulties wherein it can also provide accuracy and reliability of data. Thus, the Department of Tourism MIMAROPA, is highly encouraging the Accommodation Establishments (AEs) and Tourist Attractions (TAs) to support and begin to use the application as it can possibly create a massive change to the tourism industry. Furthermore, the Municipal Tourism Offices continue to facilitate the project particularly to non-DOT Accredited Accommodation Establishments (AEs) and Tourist Attractions (TAs) in order to provide assistance and raise awareness about the integration of technology into the business and tourism industry.

### **Investments Performance Efficiency in Each Municipality's Tourism Activities: Community Participation for Tourism Security: Citizen Participation *Tourism Openness***

The local communities are open to tourism development in their respective towns and the whole province. Romblomanons are innate travelers because the province is an archipelago; thus, island-to-island travel is mandatory for everyone who wishes to transact business to another island. This movement and the benefits coming from tourism activities influences the citizens' participation. The results in the quantitative analysis support this claim and the highest factor that influence the community to actively participate in community activities is because of environmental effects in tourism. The least influential is political implications, which means that out of the four indicators, politico-administrative impacts contribute least to residents' willingness to participate in tourism. The overall results of the survey show that all aspects of tourism positively influence and encourage citizen participation. One informant stated: "Tourism helps us to earn income and diversify our livelihood. It is a big help for the community.". The Romblomanons' openness in tourism development can be a catalyst to create tourism plans, projects, and programs centered on community development, products development, cultural and environmental preservation among others. All informants are optimistic and quite excited to once again open the borders for tourism.

### ***Innate Hospitality***

Romblomanons are innately hospitable and one of the main advantages is that there is no apparent language barrier in communications. Many expatriates have already retired in the province and have started their families. One of the goals of the DOT is to invite foreigners to

retire in the country. Romblon, in the past decade, has seen an increase in foreign retirees, specifically in Sibuyan Island where the towns of Magdiwang, Cajidiocan, and San Fernando are located. The locals are very much willing to engage and participate in tourism activities, especially during fiestas and festivals, as they take pride in their culture and heritage.

### **Investments Performance Efficiency in Each Municipality's Tourism Activities: Community Participation for Tourism Security: Private Sector Involvement Prosperity**

One of the main motivations of the business sector in the province is profit-making. Thus, tourism can be a lucrative business, yet at the same time can influence changes in the community and create both positive and negative impacts. Many business owners, especially resorts and accommodation establishments, are optimistic that tourism will develop the business environment of their towns and to some extent, change the livelihood patterns of the local communities from agriculture and fishing to joining the tourism industry as it essentially diversifies their income stream. The business sector is very much willing to participate in governmental efforts to strengthen the tourism business environment.

#### **Potentiality**

The potentials of tourism are undeniable in the lenses of the private sector. However, they are hopeful that the government will create clear-cut policies that will control the business environment and streamline the processes on business licenses and registration to taxation. Small and medium scale businesses form an essential part of any economy and therefore influenced by various factors that are either internal or external to the business. The problems, however, that small and medium scale enterprises face in conducting successful business in Romblon are external (or macro) or internal (micro) environments based on their origin. Successful businesses in Romblon are those that can fit into the opportunities and constraints inherent in the town or environment in which they operate. Commonly, however, business failures in the province resulted from the fact that such businesses were started on unrealistic assumptions, that they lacked vital business relations or that they were unable to organize or mobilize their resources efficiently.

The creation of an enabling environment for tourism investment in Romblon is crucial in enhancing the participation of the poor and marginalized in the tourism business. Many scholars agree to the statements of the informants including Spenceley and Seif (2002), who noted that tourism has to be integrated into national policies if it is to develop on a sustainable basis. Policies should always be meant to create a favorable socio-economic environment for the poor (Andalecio & Martin). These include, among others, the creation of enabling

legislative and financial frameworks for tourism, strengthening the effectiveness of counseling services to the rural poor, sharing with them technical knowledge and production experiences, and generating jobs as well as creating business opportunities for them to increase their income. These policies can be fulfilled with a view that tourism must be fast and sustainable so as to enable the poor to benefit.

### **Investments Performance Efficiency in Each Municipality's Tourism Activities: Community Participation for Tourism Security: Politico-Administrative Engagement Economic-Centered**

Most of the policies of the Provincial Government and LGUs are focused on the economy and use the tourism narrative to enhance their economic development without taking consideration of the adverse effect that tourism might incur in the long run. Many of these LGUs have no actual planning practices and do not even have tourism master plans to guide them in the tourism development in their respective localities. This is a very dangerous situation that needs to be addressed by the present local administrations by creating and enacting local policies through ordinances to control the industry. Many attractions in the province have already been affected by too much tourists' litter and pollution. An example of this is the Cantingas River in San Fernando, Sibuyan Island. Cantingas River is known to be the cleanest inland body of water in the Philippines. Ironically, many local tourists still do not know its significance and still need to be educated and oriented to practice responsible tourism which the LGU can impose through policies.

### ***Holistic Approach***

Both the tourism officers and the local communities still believe that tourism is a tool for development and should be developed in a manner that will benefit all stakeholders. The local economic benefits coming from tourism must be balanced with the environmental integrity and socio-cultural authenticity so that future generations will also be taken care of. The Provincial Government also supports the Provincial Tourism Council that serves as a third-party consultancy aside from the authority of the Provincial Tourism Office. An informant claimed that community-based tourism bridged the gap between those who live in hotels or resorts and the village or local populace of the area, "It enhances participation, livelihood and promotes partnerships. Community-Based Tourism has brought back people to the center stage. Sustainability should be the outcome of any effort and not an objective. That's what will promote the future of these people through CBT intervention.". This is a testament that people from the government, NGOs, POs, the business sector, and the local communities in the province are beginning to understand the wisdom behind community-based tourism.

### ***Finding Balance***

For the development of community-based tourism in Romblon, it is necessary to take the best examples from around the country and imitate them. There is nothing wrong with benchmarking and adopting the best practices of other neighboring provinces if it is for the benefit of the people. This also involves bringing about change in the way things function in the province. An informant stated, "For tourism, it is essential to have well managed attractions. We look for the best practices in the neighboring provinces like Palawan. Their CBT products are great examples for us." With this, the support of local communities is vital. The informant shared about how the CBT model in Puerto Princesa City in Palawan influenced their strategy. Ecologically sensitive ecosystems in the province have witnessed conflict between interested parties from the government to local communities to conservation experts and tourism people. A local NGO pointed out how they promote and practice safe and environmentally responsible travel to Mt. Guiting-Guiting Natural Park and the whole island of Sibuyan. The NGO has strict guidelines for all ships and visitors. Everybody has to coordinate through the Provincial Government and LGUs, which has the overriding authority. In the province, it is each LGU that has guidelines for tourism in their jurisdiction with the NGOs, provincial government, and the DOT as the driving forces.

### **Investments Performance Efficiency in Each Municipality's Tourism Activities: Community Participation for Tourism Security: Economic Considerations**

#### ***Diversification***

The main reason why the people of the province are optimistic about tourism development is diversified livelihood. Many locals prefer to have more jobs aside from their main sources of income, which can be agriculture and fishing. Most of them are parents and have kids in school; others are students, and middle-aged groups that essentially find an extra income to be added in their cash flow. Tourism, according to one of the informants, creates opportunity for these people to explore more about other income generating strategies that will benefit not only their finances but will also create positive impacts on their environment and culture, like preservation and protection of natural and cultural assets.

#### ***Entrepreneurial Approach***

As mentioned above, tourism can be a lucrative business, yet at the same time, can influence changes in the community and create both positive and negative impacts. Many local Small-Medium Entrepreneurs (SMEs) and business owners, especially resorts and accommodation establishments, are optimistic that tourism will develop the business environment of their towns, and to some extent, change the livelihood patterns of the local

communities from agriculture and fishing to joining the tourism industry as it essentially diversifies their income stream. The business sector is very much willing to participate in governmental efforts to strengthen the tourism business environment.

### **Investments Performance Efficiency in Each Municipality's Tourism Activities: Community Participation for Tourism Security: Socio-Cultural Aspects**

#### ***Preservation and Conservation***

The social cohesiveness with giving importance to culture and heritage is one of the province's innate assets. Stakeholders are proud of the manifestations of their culture and are willing to preserve and protect these tourism resources. One informant shared that "our culture is our identity and we hope that through tourism development, we can further preserve this for our children. Many tourists visit our town because of their curiosity about natural attractions and cultural treasures.". Both the government and the local communities are willing to capitalize on tourism to promote and at the same time, preserve their cultural resources which also benefit from tourism. In the municipality of Looc, culture and heritage are integrated in the tourism office; thus, the creation of their Office for Tourism, Culture, and Arts through the Executive Order 022-2019, which aims to oversee the tourism and cultural affairs of the town. Many towns in the province have unique cultural attractions, as presented in the first part of this chapter. Some of these attractions are categorized by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) as National Cultural Treasures (NCT), Important Cultural Properties (ICP), and Other Cultural Properties which represent and manifest the rich history and heritage of these towns.

#### ***Education***

Awareness through education is something that cannot be taken away from the communities and tourists alike. One informant stated that "Tourism can be a tool to preserve and protect our culture. Through the visits paid by the tourists, we were able to share our heritage and share with them its significance. Our way of life is something that we want to share with the visitors." However, unlike many provinces around the country, it has already integrated in their curriculum their local cultural identities, thus creating proper dissemination of local culture and heritage for future generations. This is one of the aims of majority of the provinces to really preserve and protect the culture and heritage in its towns. One of the informants shared during the Focus Group Discussion that "Our language is also a tool for tourism development and cultural promotion and protection. Romblon has 3 major languages namely: Asi, Onhan, and Romblomanon. These are all considered languages, as it manifests unique characteristics which differ from other languages or dialects. Many researchers are

showing interest in making further studies in this area. This is part of tourism. This is educational tourism in fact.”. According to the participants, tourism can be capitalized to disseminate and preserve the province and each town’s unique identity through education. One participant shared that “We hope that tourism can be a tool to protect our identity. We have unique language and other cultural manifestations, not just our nature, which is the primary motivation of our visitors. I hope the government and the tourists will see its potentials too.”. Many participants agree that tourism is a tool for cultural preservation and protection for future generations of Romblomanons.

### ***Women and Youth Empowerment***

The results of the survey, key informant interviews, and FGD are consistent as they agreed that tourism created opportunities for the women and the youth in involving them to tourism activities. Many women, formerly housewives, have become the cornerstone of a town’s arts and crafts through the development of One Town One Product (OTOP) of the Department of Trade and Industry. OTOP is an international program that originated from Japan’s One Village, One Product. The different versions and iterations in numerous countries are proofs that it is a viable branding and stimulus program for MSMEs. In the province, it has been in existence for quite some time. This was further powered through the promulgation of Executive Order 176 by then President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in February 2003. After a decade and a half of combined gains and challenges, OTOP remains to be a strategic tool that provides an ecosystem of assistance from local government units, national government agencies, the private sector, and the local communities including the women and the youth to showcase their craftsmanship and talents. Among the products produced by the province are centered on Processed Food; Arts and Crafts; and Home, Fashion, and Creative Artisanal. In coordination with the Romblon LGUs, OTOP became part of an ecosystem of current entrepreneurship programs intended as a branding and marketing platform and with product development as its primary instrument of assistance. It offers a comprehensive assistance package through a convergence of services from local government units (LGUs), national government agencies (NGAs), and the private sector with the end in mind of alleviating poverty and promoting profitable goods and services, thereby developing MSMEs, creating jobs, and stimulating both local and international trade.

## **Investments Performance Efficiency in Each Municipality's Tourism Activities: Community Participation for Tourism Security: Environmental Factors**

### ***Preservation and Conservation***

All towns in the province agreed that tourism is a tool to preserve and conserve their natural resources. They believe that this industry is non-extractive that is why they prefer this industry. One participant mentioned that "Tourism is a great alternative for earning income, while at the same time preserving the integrity of our environment. Before, small scale mining was rampant and has destroyed many natural areas including those in protected areas." Participants from the government side and the local community all agreed that extractive industries must be put to a halt and capitalize on tourism instead to achieve sustainable development. One participant stated that "We do agree that development needs to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs as defined by the Brundtland Commission. We need to institutionalize this in our local policies." This is a manifestation that all stakeholders are optimistic that capitalizing on tourism can bring slow yet significant change and value in their communities.

### ***Non-Extractive Alternative***

As previously stated by FGD participants, all attendees agreed that tourism is a non-extractive alternative for development. They earn income while at the same time give value and significance to nature. One participant stated that "We need to institutionalize sustainability in our local policies, and that should include tourism as this industry if not controlled in a sustainable manner will eventually destroy not just the environment but also could threaten our culture and heritage resources.". This is a manifestation that all stakeholders are optimistic that capitalizing on tourism can bring slow yet significant change and value in their communities. For the development of community-based tourism in Romblon, it is necessary to take the best examples from around the country and imitate. There is nothing wrong with benchmarking and adopting the best practices of other neighboring provinces if it is for the benefit of the people. This also involves bringing about change in the way things function in the province. An informant stated, "For tourism as an alternative to mining, it is essential to have well- managed attractions. We look for the best practices in the neighboring provinces like Palawan. Their CBT products are great examples for us.". With this, the support of local communities is vital. The informant shared about how the CBT model in Puerto Prinsesa City in Palawan influenced their strategy and how the government refuses to entertain mining companies in the province.

## What are the Impediments to Productivity of Local Development Investments on Tourism Security of Romblon Islands?

### ***Challenges on Prioritization and Political Will***

Elected officials as the primary policymakers in the province play a crucial role in tourism development. Sheer political will of the people in power can yield developments on advocacy movements mostly lobbied by non-state actors. Several examples taken from the results of this research will give contextual understanding on how significant prioritization is to all levels of the government from the national to the local context, specifically in Romblon Province. However, majority of the LGUs in the province and their exercise of local autonomy as enshrined in the constitution greatly influences the quality of tourism development efforts. Knowledge and awareness are crucial to understand why these local executives continue to disregard the significance of sustainable tourism development in their jurisdiction as these variables influence their decision making. Majority of these people in power have no idea of what sustainable tourism is or its importance. Hence, prioritization is focused on other socio-economic needs of their constituencies. It is obvious that majority of the politicians only pay attention on what seems to be a neoliberal agenda. Only those things that would involve money and economic growth are the priority of LGUs as manifested in the correspondence involved in the study. Ultimately, there are politicians that go beyond the call of duty and look for rooms to be improved on. The technocratic and the non-traditional approach of these politicians has helped the efforts of conservation groups to fight for intangible food heritage and heritage conservation in general. Proactivity is indeed the key for these policymakers to counter the adverse implications of globalization.

### ***Gaps on Awareness and Knowledge***

As mentioned in the preceding discussion, knowledge and sense of awareness are crucial in a policymaker's decision-making. Their background and approach to governance influences the policy-making process and the stance of the overall administration whether local or national. The politicians' level of perception ultimately steers their LGUs approach based on their a-priori or a-posteriori plans or policies. Most of the local executives in Romblon have no prior background on conservation and sustainable tourism management. Qualifications for the tourism officer's position mostly depend on trust, confidence, and in some cases, nepotism. Hence, defeating the purpose of bureaucracy. Most of the LGUs have no tourism offices and are normally placed under the Office of the Mayor and Planning and Development Office. This kind of administrative structure is not an ideal model for serious sustainable tourism advocacies since decisions basically comes from people not capable nor qualified for tourism management let alone tourism product development. Generally, this has been one of

the common issues in Philippine Local Government Administration since it is explicitly stated in the 1987 Constitution that anyone can run for public office as long as they can read and write. What lacks in the law of the land is the emphasis on qualification especially for important positions? Although almost the entire key informant pool had college degrees and graduate schooling qualifications, most of the researchers' inquiry resulted to lack of proper knowledge and awareness on sustainable tourism management. Thus, supporting the result of the mapping method completed by the researchers.

### ***Challenges on Readiness and Openness***

Proactivity rather than reactivity is ideally the best approach that a certain LGU must practice on its jurisdiction. However, this has also been a major issue on the part of the majority of local chief executives. Rooting from the previous discussion, awareness plays an important role in leadership along with the readiness and openness by practicing anticipatory approaches. Being proactive is foreseeing what is likely to happen in the future and as a leader, this must be a practice in heritage conservation. However, majority of the Romblon LGUs have been practicing the traditional politics and governance which lack the anticipatory measures on key aspects of public administration specifically on addressing sustainable tourism issues and concerns. Readiness and openness as practiced by several LGUs in the study have paved the way for exemplifying good practice of governance or as the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) puts it, worthy of receiving the Seal of Good Housekeeping (SGH). This program is a good way of encouraging more LGUs to perform better and achieve more positive outcomes especially on tourism development and other sustainable development practices in their jurisdiction's tourism resources. The LGUs of San Fernando and San Jose are good examples of this good practice. These LGUs created and institutionalized permanent positions that ensures their very own sustainable tourism thrusts which has become a symbol of their respective towns which facilitated better tourism growth.

### ***Impediments on Institutionalization of Sustainable Tourism***

Sustainable Tourism practices within LGUs have become a trend in the province's tourism management. Both the Provincial Government, Local Chief Executives, and Local Policymakers began to adopt the principle and immersed themselves into this academic theory turning into real-life practice. Community-Based Tourism is one of the aspects that respects sustainable approaches for future generations. Hence, LGUs must live up to the challenge and push further to achieve its objectives. Knowledge and awareness are keys to this for the implementation of policies of LGUs. Policymakers must have the readiness and openness to adapt to change and new trends in the world of governance especially in facing challenges in

their jurisdictions. However, tourism development discourse especially on sustainability aspects has always been neglected by the LGUs because of the lack of the basic things that they must possess: political will through knowledge, awareness, readiness, and openness as previously discussed. Majority of the LGUs are struggling with the negative effects of local politics and other priorities not aligned with the principles of sustainability from the system and political climate to prioritization of plans. In line with this, it is difficult for sustainable tourism planners and conservation groups to penetrate the political spectrum without the support from the LGU. LGUs have often neglected the importance of having long-term plans for their jurisdiction because of the system. As a matter of fact, most LGUs have no finalized version of their Comprehensive Land Use Plans (CLUP) which are needed in creating a Tourism Master Plan (TMP). Thus, majority of the LGUs in the province have no Tourism Master Plans that guides their tourism industry's sustainability. This is quite problematic because majority of the LGUs utilize tourism as the main economic source of the locals; however, the single most important blueprint for tourism development is non-existent. This is the most alarming revelation that this study exposed. Nevertheless, hope is still present if plans prepared by the incoming administrations shall be focused on CLUP and TMP creation. This will bring us back to the questions of prioritization and political will, level of knowledge and awareness, degree of openness and readiness, and lastly the willingness of the LGU to engage and participate as the primary mover.

### ***Concerns on Engagement and Participation***

The willingness of all stakeholders, especially the local communities is crucial for holistic engagement and participation which will be the turning point and important foundation of sustainable tourism. However, most of the local community members are not fully informed about tourism's role in the locality and is forced to act independently in serving visitors. Most of them are tricycle drivers and boatmen becoming tour guides. Most of them are not accredited by the LGU's Tourism Office. Even accommodation facilities face this kind of problem as some of the hotels and resorts in the province are not even accredited by their respective LGUs. This is problematic and will cause more challenges especially in the discourse of sustainability. As for the local community, they are in the frontline of tourism activities yet most of them have limited or no representation in decision-making and a voice to lobby change in their communities at all. As discussed at the start of the paper, in the field of tourism, local communities are perceived to have a significant role when it comes to decision-making, as these individuals are critical stakeholders who constitutionally and personally benefit from tourism development. The towns of San Fernando, San Jose, San Andres, Looc, and Banton are worthy of mentioning for their great works in recognizing their respective

tourism resources by means of recognition. There are even efforts of creating ordinances and local policies just to protect their town's sustainability in tourism through the creation of permanent positions for the tourism office. Thus, it is commendable what these LGUs have done to propagate and promote the value and significance of their tourism industry geared towards sustainable tourism which the future generation will benefit and learn from. These LGUs and their local population have chosen to engage. The degree of participatory engagement of both the LGUs and the people is worthy of praise and admiration. By engaging and participating on conservation efforts as stated by the informants during interviews, they have secured their future and their identity as manifested by their culture and heritage.

## **How Can the Romblon Islands Provincial Government Strengthen Its Business Functions to Optimize Its Resource Investments for Tourism Security?**

### ***Bottom-Up Approach to Development***

Bottom-up approaches emphasize that the participation of the local community in development initiatives must be prioritized by the LGUs so that these local communities can select their own goals and the means of achieving them. One participant mentioned that "Tourism through the government must also ensure community ownership, and commitment and accountability to the development project as it seeks development from below.". On the other hand, top-down approaches as the typical approach, are considered as development planned by experts at the top, who also leads the process. They provide little opportunity for people's participation in the total development efforts, who are, thus, marginalized.

Top-down innovators think that they have the solution to poverty by framing it as an "engineering problem" that can be solved, while at the same time believing that as outsiders, they possess the knowledge to provide a solution with a "Big Push." Top-down planners look for solutions rather than focus on specific problems of the poor. They keep trying to achieve the same objectives using the same plan year after year, even though they failed several times. Top-down planners often want to achieve that which is beyond their capacity rather than that which they can achieve.

Sustainable Tourism Development projects must be initiated with the participation of the poor as bottom-up approaches ensure that the projects are cost effective, sustainable and replicable. The success of sustainable tourism development programs largely depends on the acceptance by the local people and their willingness to participate in them. Most of the people in the rural areas, specifically in the province of Romblon, are out of the formal economic sector. They make their living through self-employment both in rural and urban areas because of limited employment opportunities in the formal economy.

Rather than being a street vendor, petty trader, or small shop owner, they could change their lives. In order to facilitate this, the bottom-up microfinance approach provides small amounts of financial capital which they struggle to get from formal economic institutions like banks. The local economy, as a result of top-down planning, creates opportunities, but they are not equitable and poor people do not benefit.

However, bottom-up efforts also have some limitations according to one of the participants. "Sometimes development projects with bottom-up approaches are dominated by the elite.". They underscore the need for an "enabling institutional environment" for the sustainability of bottom-up community-based initiatives. Bottom-up development in the form of "alternative development" does not generate a "coherent body of theory" because of its dispersed nature. The participatory bottom-up approach is successful in small-scale local community projects, while big projects like road construction, tertiary education and other national projects need more complex technology and decisions where participation with direct control by local people is virtually impossible.

Bottom-up institutions like NGOs have become major channels of development cooperation, and in some towns like Romblon, Magdiwang, Cajidiocan, and San Fernando, the resources of NGOs, both domestic and international, exceed those at the disposal of government. Another bottom-up effort to eradicate poverty is microfinance, which has proved to be particularly applicable in developing countries. Over the years, NGOs have contributed significantly to change the lives of poor with their widespread network across the globe. From the bottom, they have been fighting against poverty in silence in the midst of secular development dominance. Religion and development are no longer separate spheres. The creation of SMEs, cooperatives, and access to microfinance are essential in achieving local economic development that leads to life progress in rural areas like the islands of Romblon Province.

### ***Utilizing Networks***

It is specified that the Travel and Promotion Grants provide funding to enable Romblomanon Artists and Cultural Representatives to participate in and promote their art at various artistic and cultural events, including fairs, markets, festivals, exhibitions, congresses, forums, biennials, and creative tours. These factors are essential to their personal and professional development (UNESCO, n.d.). The scholarships granted by the said institution may be applied domestically and internationally, comprising travel and promotion endeavors. In line with this, a record demonstrating attendance at the meeting will be necessary for every situation. Under Horizon 2020 and Grant Agreement Number 870708, the European Union has provided funding for the four-year project SmartCulTour (Smart Cultural Tourism as a

Driver of Sustainable Development of European Regions). Stakeholder participation is crucial when promoting tourism in a location where sustainable development is a priority. It combines numerous sustainability facets, enables all stakeholders to participate in talks about sustainable development, balances the impact of stakeholders on decision-making processes, and increases their readiness to speak up about its overall development (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018).

Partnerships become preferred tools for distributing strategic objectives as the attention of stakeholders develops (Purnomo et al., 2020). Some observers claim that partnerships, networks, and collaborations—formal or informal—are more informative in the tourism industry than in any other area of the economy (Chiodo et al., 2019). When a wide range of stakeholders are involved and play a large active part in sustainable tourism development, their cooperation, collaboration, and interaction also become key components of sustainable tourism (Roxas, Rivera, & Gutierrez, 2020). Considering these factors, the degree of support from various stakeholders will gradually mold a destination's competency.

### ***Business Conduciveness***

Sustainable Tourism Policies focusing on local business conduciveness can significantly support the development as tourism activities especially in rural areas, can be a driver of sustainable economic and sociocultural growth. However, policies must carefully be implemented in these destinations to ensure holistic growth. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) harnesses Science Technology and Innovation (STI) for resilience building of Small Islands Developing States. This partnership aims to provide technical assistance to these small islands with knowledge and skills in strengthening governance mechanisms for promotion of long-term plans and strategies in addressing development challenges of human capital development, economic growth and youth employment. Growth and sustainability of rural economies can be achieved by sustainably harnessing the development of appropriate technology policy systems and governance and local indigenous knowledge to launch and sustain emerging economy sectors and resilience building (UNESCO, n.d.).

One of the Strategic Priority Areas of this study for Romblon is by investing in physical infrastructure for a business-conducive environment, ensuring that business and infrastructure activities are environment, community, and labor-friendly. The developments of infrastructure required to support large populations in developing countries is lagging far behind the rate of urbanization. It is necessary to focus on integrated infrastructure development, which in turn requires a capacity-based approach to planning. The need is for the creation of modern infrastructure systems for energy, water, waste management, sanitation, drainage, transport

and habitat in informal urban settlements in developing countries, while learning from the mistakes of developed countries in order to take a sustainable and affordable approach.

### ***Investments on Research and Feasibility Studies***

Learning to comprehend, giving implications to, and creating an understanding of sustainable development in the everyday lives of the communities will clear aspects in the context of the realities that are happening in a community. Local community members and individuals can begin to live out and enjoy the benefits of a holistic development. One participant mentioned that “Research or Feasibility studies are crucial in developing tourist destination and attractions, with the proper study will minimize the negative impacts to environment, social, culture, local community economic and make a sustainable business”. Research also aims to measure and assess information or data for decision-making purposes. When a decision is based on reliable facts and relevant information, it is usually far more effective and credible. Through research, tourism businesses can gain a better understanding of their visitors and the local tourism market. Many provinces in the country have invested with research projects as a pre-requisite to a policy. The province of Romblon can capitalize on this and solidify sustainable approaches to development not just of the economic aspects but also balancing it with environmental and sociocultural aspects.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

Sustainable Tourism Development through Community-Based Tourism is achievable in the Province of Romblon and it is just a matter of when and how (Andalecio & Martin, 2023). The study revealed that tourism policies in the form of tourism development plans in the provincial level is nonexistent despite the promotion of the province as a tourism destination which can be a potential threat for sustainability. Tourism development is not possible without proper planning. It is stated by Briones et al. (2017) that the industry is continuously being successful in enhancing the economy of the country especially the local communities which results to improved quality of life. More so, Aya-Ay et. al (2020) concluded that the tourism initiatives of the Local Government Unit lead to Pro-Poor Tourism, which could signify that the resources were fairly distributed and shared among the members of the community. The economic, environmental, sociocultural, and politico-administrative aspects of development are positively related with the tourism industry in the province and made a promising contribution to improve the quality of life of the local communities through various tourism activities (Andalecio & Martin, 2023). This is a manifestation that Romblomanons are looking forward to utilizing their resources as tourism enterprise. The study revealed that local communities in the province generated extra income through alternative sources in tourism.

This essentially supports the study of Anuar (2017) which mentioned that CBT supports the local people and its community to generate income, diversify local economies, preserve the culture, safeguard the environment, and provide educational opportunities. The findings of the study support the claim of Jugmohan (2015) stating that the lack of methodologies to appraise the pre-conditions for CBT, poor planning, gaps existing between the planning and practical implementation stage, other than guidelines presents serious problem in sustainable management of destinations despite of initial euphoria in the beginning stage of development. Furthermore, it is concerning that despite positive responses from the communities of the province there are no specific guidelines nor projects and programs to ensure sustainable tourism development in the province and its LGUs. This must be taken seriously and both the provincial and the LGUs must act as soon as possible since they have opened the borders to more visitors.

## 5. CONCLUSION

As the goal of the study, it provided a comprehensive answer through series of physical fieldwork through inter-island travel in the entire province of Romblon. The study mapped and uncovered the tourism resources of the Romblon Islands. This is the very first time that a researcher attempted to map out all the existing, potential, and emerging tourism resources in the province and thus provided a comprehensive document that list down all attractions from nature-based, culture and heritage, and historical with the emphasis on attractions that made it to the list of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) as National Cultural Treasures (NCT), Important Cultural Properties (ICT), and Other Cultural Properties.

After a series of in-depth key-informant interviews, focus group discussions, and community immersion and observation, the study uncovered quite a good number of themes that revealed the realities of the province and its LGUs in the management and administration of its tourism industry in terms of Local Governance for tourism administration; tourism policy formulation and regulation; tourism investment financing; tourism program implementation; and, tourism management control and information system. The investments performance efficiency in each municipality's tourism activities were also included as parameters of the investigation, however, it was revealed that the province suffers problem in having program efficiency metrics in data collection for decision-making through validity; integrity; precision; reliability; and timeliness as the province of Romblon still has not been able to fully utilize ICT in data collection and management. The province and the seventeen (17) LGUs do not have tourism master plans or development plans for the industry which will serve as blueprint, assessment, and mitigation for the threats brought by tourism development. This is a major problem that both the provincial government and the LGUs must pay attention since they are

positioning the province as a tourism destination in the region. The study also uncovered the realities of the tourism development in the islands by digging deep into the community participation for tourism security in terms of citizen participation; private sector involvement; politico-administrative engagement; economic considerations; socio-cultural aspects; and environmental factors which essentially supported and served as confirmatory method for the survey made. Findings revealed positive confirmations from the survey method made in the initial gathering of data.

Impediments to productivity of local development investments on tourism security of Romblon were also uncovered. Several challenges were discovered in the study and became a basis for strategic formulation of a comprehensive tourism development plan for the province. The key-informants through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) were vital in answering how the province would strengthen its business functions to optimize its resource investments for tourism security and consequently became part of the basis for the long-term project proposal.

This study serves as a basis for local and provincial legislation to institutionalize a sustainable community-based tourism program for the entire province. Through evidence-based policy making, the provincial government ensures a data-driven decision making in the aspect of sustainable tourism development.

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