

The Role of the Local Government of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, in Strengthening Its Identity as the Home of Kesong Puti

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of the Local Government of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, in preserving its identity as the “Home of Kesong Puti,” focusing on its connection to municipal policies, budget allocation, training and capacity building, public-private partnerships, including the Kesong Puti Festival in the LGU Tourism Master Plan. The study used a quantitative, descriptive–correlational design with purposive sampling. A validated Likert-scale survey was administered to 5 LGU tourism officers, 4 Kesong Puti producers, and 10 sellers to examine relationships and sustainability indicators. Reliability was validated and tested by experts, and results showed associations among LGU initiatives, challenges, and sustainability factors, but not causality.

Findings show significant challenges like rising costs and limited supply of carabao milk, weak coordination, and limited technical skills among producers. Opportunities include increasing tourism interest, active community participation, and support from provincial, regional, and national agencies. Guided by Local Government Theory, Community Empowerment Theory, Human Capital Theory, Public Value Theory, and Sustainable Development Theory, the study emphasizes that LGU initiatives help preserve culture, develop enterprises, and promote tourism.

The study revealed that LGU programs and initiatives are closely connected to governance, challenges, and opportunities. It is concluded that these efforts help strengthen cultural identity and promote sustainable development.

Keywords: Local Government Unit, Sta. Cruz Laguna, Kesong Puti, Cultural Identity, Tourism Development

The Problem and Its Background

INTRODUCTION

The Municipality of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, is well known and recognized as the “Home of Kesong Puti.” The production of this locally made dairy cheese has been a long-standing tradition that showcases the town’s rich cultural heritage. The identity of Sta. Cruz is deeply connected to its people, who continue to support and preserve the craft of Kesong Puti production. This cultural practice has played a significant role in strengthening the town’s local identity and has contributed to tourism development not only in Sta. Cruz but also in Laguna Province (Sayno, 2024). This local cultural industry aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8, which encourages inclusive and sustainable economic growth through decent work and livelihood opportunities, especially for small-scale local producers (United Nations, 2015). Moreover, Kesong Puti production supports cultural and economic development.

Based on municipal data, Sta. Cruz, Laguna has a population of 123,574 as of the 2020 census and is classified as a first-class municipality in the Province of Laguna (PSA, 2021). Beyond delivering basic services, the municipal government also promotes local identity, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability. These

responsibilities are consistent with SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, which emphasizes the protection and safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage (United Nations, 2015).

In this context, the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Sta. Cruz, Laguna plays a vital role in promoting tourism development while ensuring that local traditions and resources are sustainably managed.

In the Sta. Cruz, Laguna context, the Local Government has put in place programs to promote the town's culture, tourism, and community development. Over the years, the municipality has established its reputation as the Home of Kesong Puti.

But like other towns, it also faces challenges. This includes the reason carabao milk has become expensive and why only a few younger generations are interested in continuing the craft. These challenges may threaten the sustainability of its efforts and its capacity to maintain its cultural heritage, thereby affecting tourism and supporting local development (Cortez, 2025). These concerns are closely linked to SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, which highlights the importance of sustainable production systems and efficient use of local resources (United Nations, 2015).

With this, it is relevant to understand how the LGU of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, sustains its identity as the Home of Kesong Puti. This study assesses how the LGU creates and implements policies, develops local capacity, manages funds, and collaborates with stakeholders. It also assesses the challenges and opportunities, as well as the long-term effects of the implemented initiatives on the production of Kesong Puti, community involvement, tourism, and recognition. The study aims to identify best practices and areas for improvement in sustaining local industry and cultural identity and provide insights that would improve local governance and strengthen Sta. Cruz, Laguna's cultural heritage and tourism programs.

Background of the Study

Sta. Cruz, Laguna is one of the province's historic towns, well known for its rich traditions of producing Kesong Puti, a local white cheese that has become the town's identity (Emata, & Moreno, 2021). The "Home of Kesong Puti" reflects the pride of its residents and the town's important role in promoting the province's cultural heritage and tourism goals. It is essential to note that, at the national level, local governments are committed to promoting public welfare and sustainable development, which is of the greatest importance for contributing to community identity and, in line with this, fostering local economic and tourism opportunities.

From the national to the local, efforts to preserve cultural heritage and support the production of local food products have been ongoing. It is not only cultural heritage, but also has health benefits. Based on research, it contains *Lactobacillus plantarum 1074*, which has probiotic properties (Malilay, Oliveros, Bautista, & Castillo-Israel, 2022). The LGU of Sta. Cruz has actively supported local producers, promoted quality control, and promoted the product through participating in and creating events in town. Still, challenges like tight budgets, small staff, and coordinating with cheesemakers and the community remain.

As towns grow and face challenges related to cultural heritage and tourism, preserving the production of local cheese and its identity is vital. This study examines how the LGU of Sta. Cruz oversees policies, funding, capacity-building, and partnerships while addressing challenges and capitalizing on opportunities. This helps show local government can support tradition and community. By examining these efforts, the research highlights ways Sta. Cruz, Laguna can preserve its local food productions, involve the community and the cheesemakers, and support sustainable growth, bridging local governance and tourism development.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Local Government Theory focuses on LGUs' strategic role in ensuring effective governance, citizen participation,

and resource allocation (De Matteis & Borgonovi, 2021). The work of the Local Government of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, in supporting Kesong Puti, shows how the town can grow its local economy while keeping its cultural roots alive. By staying accountable, being open to the public, working with diverse groups, and planning carefully, the LGU ensures its programs meet what people actually need. Through these efforts, Sta. Cruz can protect an important part of its heritage and build development that can last overtime.

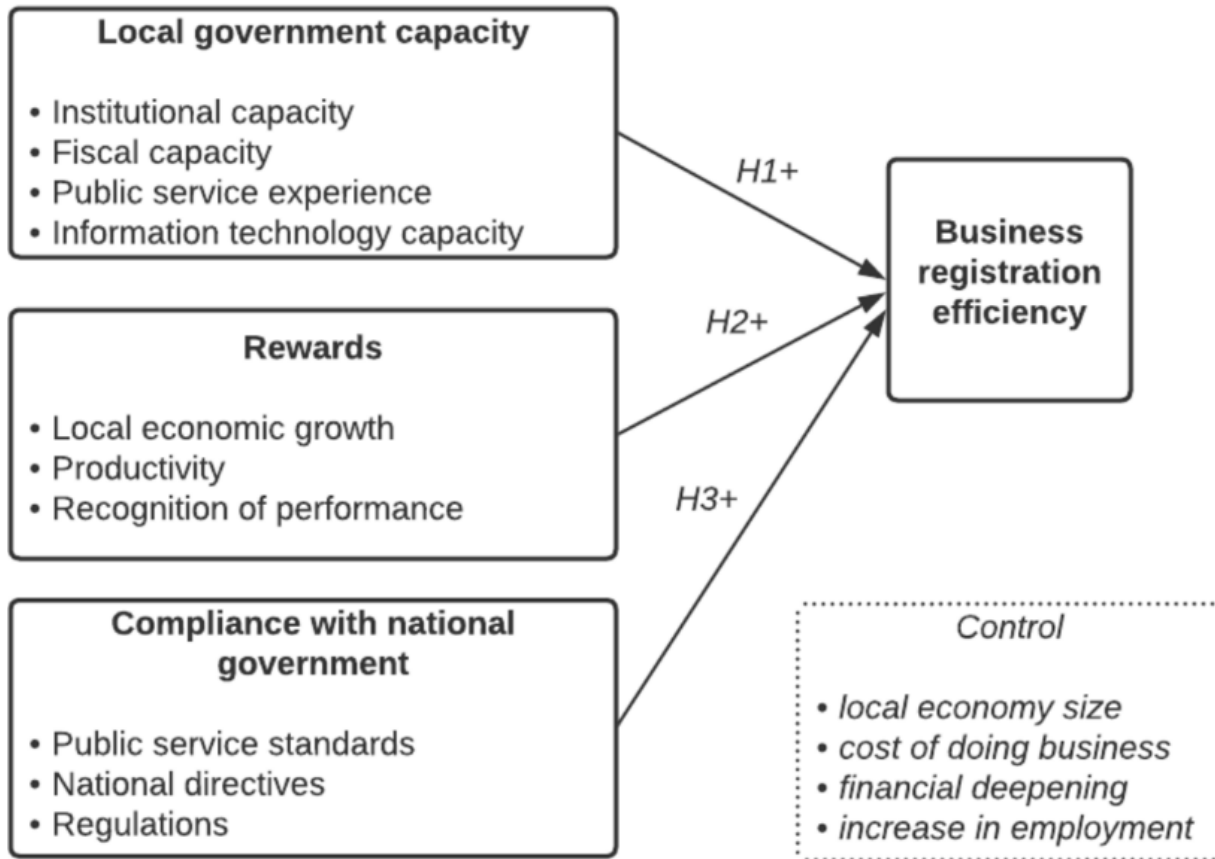


Figure 1. Local Government Theory

The theory also emphasizes the role of LGUs in guiding community development. LGUs are key elements in planning and regulating programs that serve the people. Local governments such as the municipality of Sta. Cruz and Laguna act as regulators and facilitators of development, especially in rural areas (Nur, Koliopoulos, and Niswaty, 2023). With the LGU of Sta. Cruz, Laguna's strategic involvement, preserves heritage while boosting the economy.

In conclusion, Local Government theory is vital to LGUs in planning, regulating, and facilitating programs that help residents meet their needs. The strategic initiatives show how local governance can be able to preserve its cultural heritage and social progress. LGU also plays a role in guiding the community toward growth and in ensuring that programs are implemented systematically and strategically. When this is done, risk is minimized and the success of the initiatives is more likely.

Community Empowerment Theory focuses on encouraging people to improve their skills and maximize their resources and opportunities. This means that the community must be empowered and involved. These include engaging people in promoting kesong puti, helping them make more kesong puti, and making it more profitable. As the theory emphasizes empowerment of communities, it improves individual and social connections. This leads to stronger collaboration with the LGU of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, and its people, as well as leading to sustainable growth. This study will enable us to determine how the local government encourages the community of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, to participate and be able to continue the economic growth of Kesong Puti. (Lapuz, 2023).

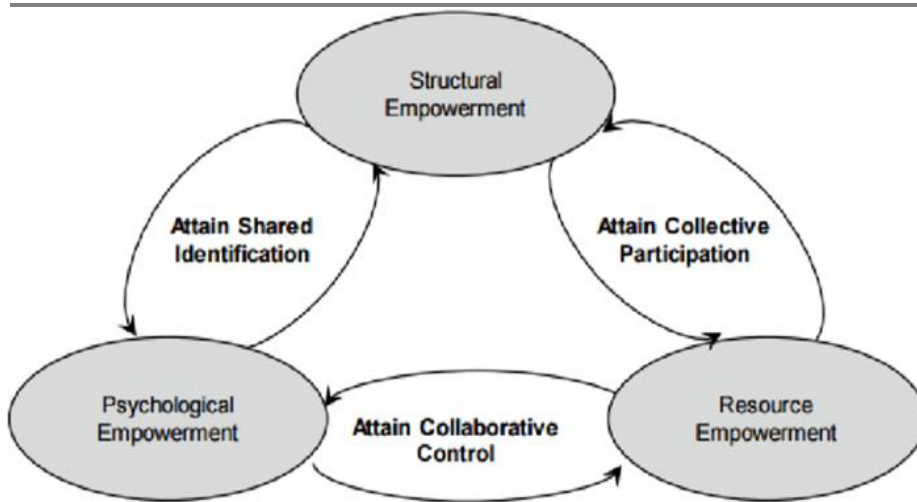


Figure 2. Community Empowerment Theory

The framework shows that the LGU of Sta. Cruz, Laguna can help or limit the residents' community engagement. Empowerment is more than providing resources and training; it also entails enabling residents to participate in the programs and policies that are implemented. A recent study found that community development revolves around social connections and access to resources. (Magnaye, 2025). This means that it is relevant that the LGU of Sta. Cruz Laguna should create participatory platforms for the public.

Overall, Community Empowerment Theory shows that, for a long-term goal and sustainable growth to occur, residents must be actively involved and have the resources, skills, and opportunities to contribute. For the LGU of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, it is important to empower its people and work with them to strengthen participation and collaboration. With this, Sta. 's growth will be helped. Cruz, Laguna, and empower the business owners of Kesong Puti.

Human Capital Theory focuses on investing in people through education, training, health, and motivation. This builds its capacity for it to contribute economically and socially (Mayilyan & Yedigaryan, 2022). In Sta. Cruz, Laguna, the programs that enable the residents to improve their skills and help them sell their products can be seen as assets and strategic human capital investments. By working with farmers and local business owners, the LGU of Sta. Cruz would be able to enhance productivity and community well-being.



Figure 3. Human Capital Theory

Previous studies highlight the critical role of local government in building capital and advancing sustainable development. (World Bank, 2024). Sta. Cruz, Laguna supports local kesong puti makers by helping them improve their products and reach more customers. Through festivals and community events, the town shares this tradition while also helping people earn a living.

Sta. Cruz, Laguna helps the community to improve their skills and be exposed to bigger opportunities.

These efforts will benefit the public and help the municipality grow. With this, Human Capital Theory supports the main idea that people are essential for community development. The LGU of Sta. Cruz, Laguna plays a significant role in applying this theory by supporting and providing programs for the community that improve each person's capabilities and strengths. With this, it strengthens Sta. Cruz's social, economic, and environmental resources. Cruz, Laguna.

Public Value Theory holds that the primary role of government is to create value that benefits the public. The Government is encouraged to create and implement programs that address community needs and strengthen their quality of life. With this, local government acts as a strategic actor that produces outcomes valued by citizens (Naidoo, & Holtzhausen, 2020).

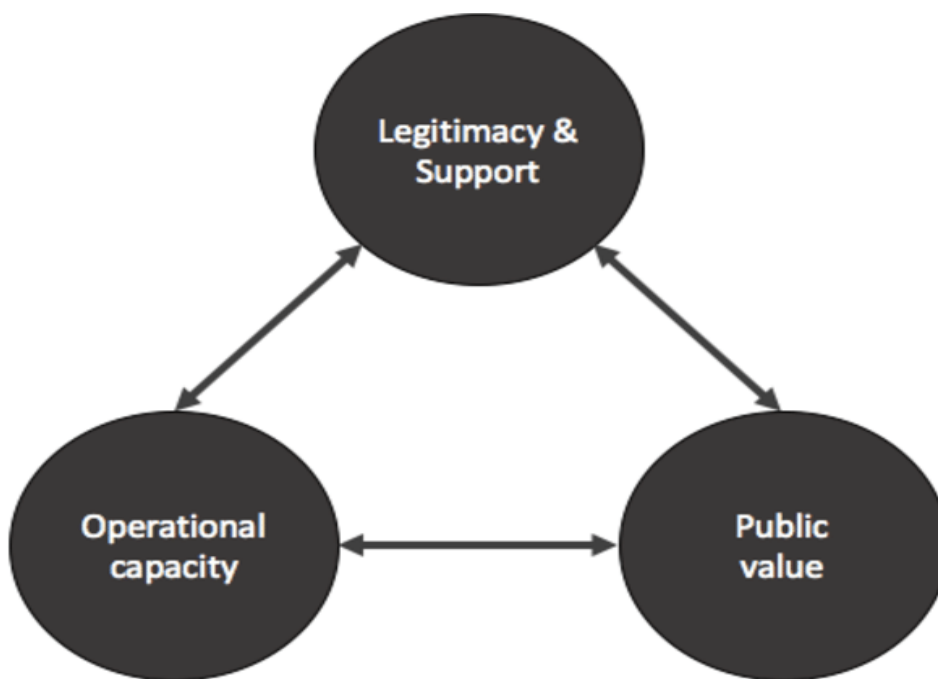


Figure 4. Public Value Theory

This framework argued that the government should create benefits that are valuable to the whole community (ANZSOG, 2017). In the case of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, this means it should focus on programs that matter to its citizens, such as promoting the local businesses of residents who make kesong puti. By enabling the community to participate in these activities, the government becomes a partner with the public in preserving the product of Sta. Cruz, Laguna.

Recent studies in Public Value Theory emphasize that creating value is more than just providing services and programs for the public. It explains that public value arises from policies, service delivery, citizen participation, and trust in government (Virtanen & Jalonon, 2023). In conclusion, this theory helps in showing the LGU of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, on how to ensure that kesong puti will still be made in future generations. Through implementing programs that give value to the community, listening to the people, and maximizing its resources, it can improve the community's quality of life and support sustainability.

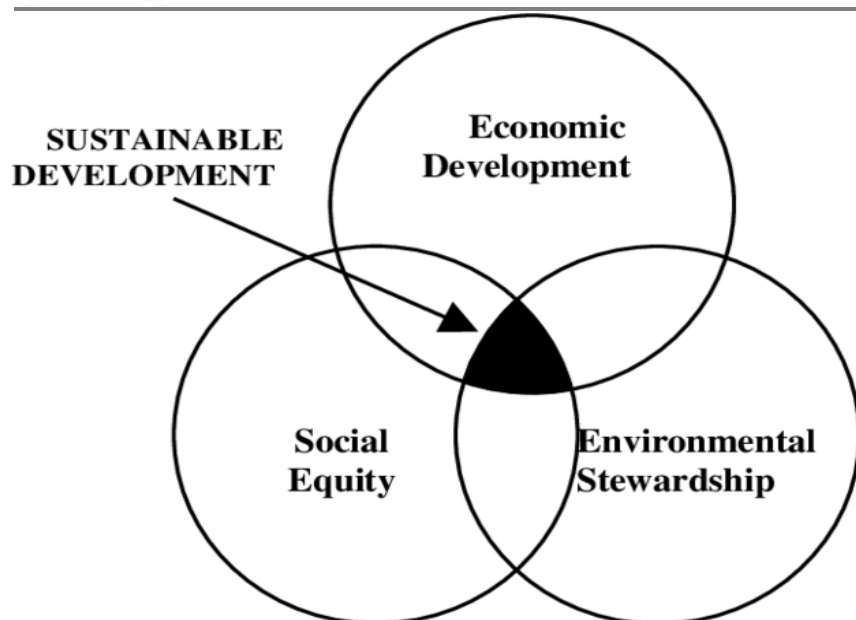


Figure 5. Sustainable Development Theory

Sustainable Development Theory emphasizes fulfilling the needs of the present without compromising future generations' ability to meet their needs. It integrates safeguarding the environment and guaranteeing equitable access to available resources for all citizens (Berkshire Publishing Group, 2024). In terms of local governance, the theory provides insights into evaluating policies and programs to achieve short-term goals and long-term benefits, ensuring that environmental, social, and economic considerations are well planned.

As the Municipality is known for its kesong puti, Sustainable Development theory can be used to demonstrate that social and economic prosperity can be achieved while maximizing Sta. Cruz, Laguna. The LGU of Sta. Cruz, Laguna can apply this theory by supporting Kesong Puti producers, encouraging community participation in local food events, preserving production areas, and creating policies that promote tourism and showcase this local product. By making sure that environmental, social, and economic goals are in place, Sta. Cruz, Laguna, demonstrates a more sustainable approach that ensures its culture is preserved. (Salvador & Sancho, 2021).

Overall, this framework shows that it is not only important to protect Sta. Cruz, Laguna, but also enabling future generations to enjoy a thriving, well-managed community by preserving its identity as the home of Kesong Puti in Laguna. This provides a strong foundation in understanding how Sta. Cruz, Laguna can sustain its natural and cultural identity.

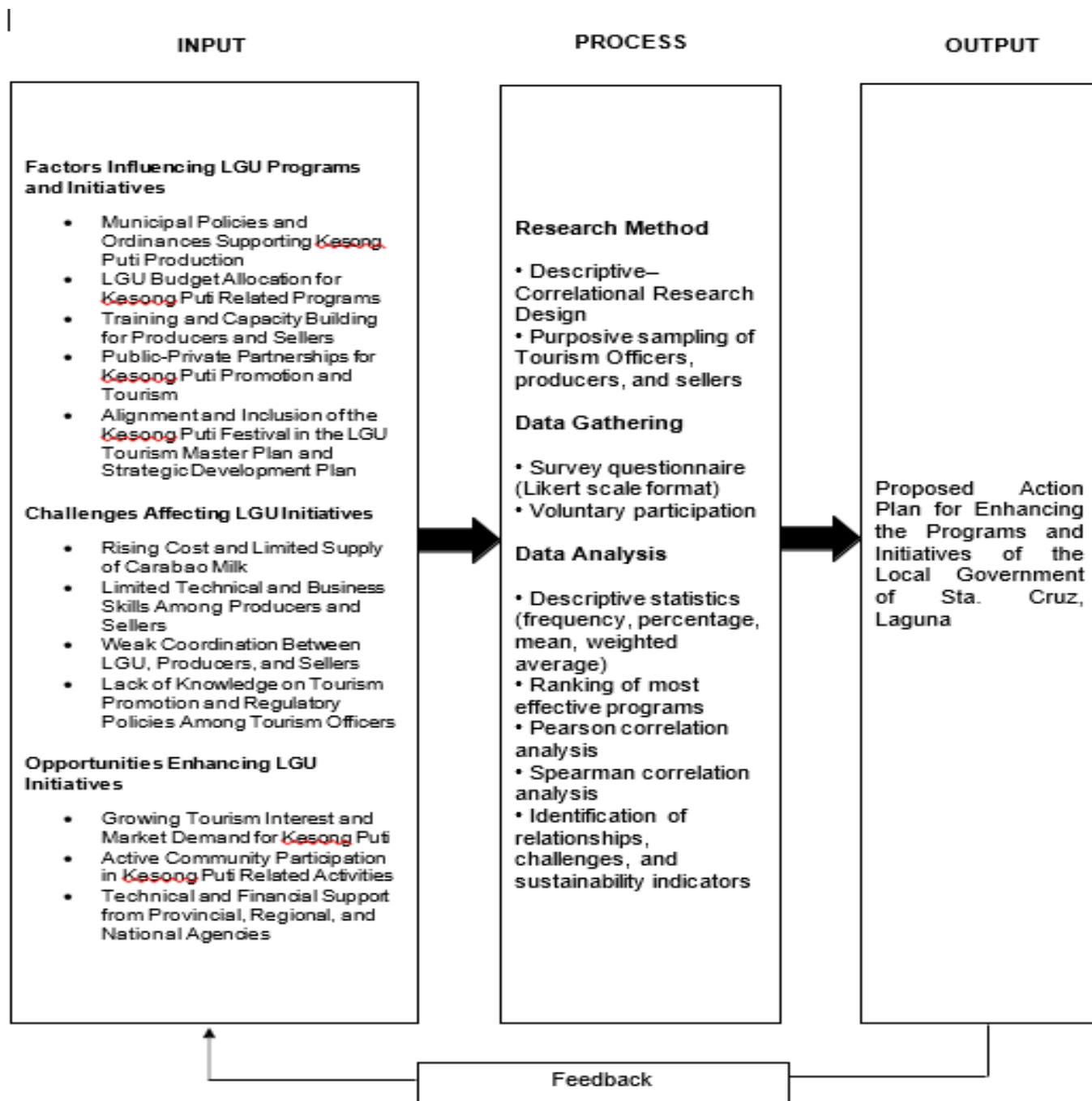
It also emphasizes the importance of long-term planning and community participation in achieving sustainable local development. This further supports the need for continued collaboration between the LGU and the community.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework highlights the main components that influence the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, in strengthening its identity as the Home of Kesong Puti. The inputs include factors such as environmental policies and regulatory support, budget funding, manpower, collaboration with government agencies and private organizations, and community support. These inputs can help Sta. Cruz, Laguna, develop programs for Kesong Puti makers and promote a sustainable environment.

These elements also serve as facilitators, ensuring the ongoing success and efficiency of local development efforts. They lay the essential institutional groundwork for executing programs that support both the production and promotion of Kesong Puti.

Furthermore, these contributions help bolster coordination among stakeholders by delineating roles and responsibilities in program execution. They also promote a more organized and cohesive strategy in tackling the challenges encountered by local producers. With continued support and collaboration, the LGU can improve both the municipality's economic prospects and cultural preservation. Moreover, the conceptual framework demonstrates how the combined efforts of the LGU, local producers, and partner institutions contribute to the sustainability and continued recognition of Kesong Puti in Sta. Cruz, Laguna. Through effective implementation of programs and active stakeholder participation, the municipality can further enhance the quality, promotion, and preservation of its local delicacy. This strengthens the overall sustainability of local development initiatives.



Proposed Action Plan for Enhancing the Programs and Initiatives of the Local Government of Sta. Cruz, Laguna
Feedback

Figure 6. The Research Paradigm of the Study

These combined inputs guide the LGU in formulating strategic actions and programs that strengthen Sta. Cruz, Laguna's cultural branding, increases tourism potential, and achieves long-term recognition as the Home of Kesong Puti. Given the inputs, the LGU's process involves systematic procedures for effective implementation. It includes an assessment of existing programs and identifies the strengths, weaknesses, and possible improvements. Implementing the municipality's initiatives involves coordinating with various LGU personnel, stakeholders, and the community. Throughout the process, data analysis and monitoring of program effectiveness will ensure improved outcomes.

The output represents the measurable result of the LGU's initiatives and efforts to strengthen its identity as the Home of Kesong Puti. This includes increased production of kesong puti, community participation and tourism growth, preservation of cultural identity, and increased Public-Private Partnerships and capacity-building programs. These outcomes reflect the LGU's continuous efforts to promote sustainable local economic development and cultural heritage preservation.

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to answer the following research questions concerning the role of the Local Government of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, in promoting and sustaining its identity as the home of Kesong Puti.

What is the extent to which various factors influence the programs and initiatives provided by the Local Government of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, in terms of:

1.1.	Municipal Policies and Ordinances Supporting Kesong Production	Puti
1.2.	LGU Budget Allocation for Kesong Puti Related Programs	
1.3.	Training and Capacity Building for Producers and Sellers	
1.4.	Public-Private Partnerships for Kesong Puti Promotion	and
	Tourism	
1.5.	Alignment and Inclusion of the Kesong Puti Festival of the	
	Kesong Puti Festival in the LGU Tourism Master Plan	and
	Strategic Development Plan	

What is the extent of the challenges and opportunities faced by the Local Government that influence these programs with regard to:

1. Challenges
2. Rising Cost and Limited Supply of Carabao Milk
3. Limited Technical and Business Skills Among Producers and Sellers
4. Weak Coordination between LGU, Producers, and Sellers
5. Lack of Knowledge of Tourism Promotion and Regulations, specifically for tourism officers.

Opportunities

1. Growing Tourism Interest and Market Demand for Kesong Puti
2. Active Community Participation in Kesong Puti Related Activities
3. Technical and Financial Support from Provincial, Regional, and National Agencies

What is the extent of the long-term impact of the Local Government's programs and initiatives on the Kesong Puti Industry in terms of:

1. Sustainability of Production and Supply Chain
2. Effectiveness in Enhancing Local Enterprise Development and Market Reach
3. Strengthening Sta. Cruz, Laguna's Cultural Identity and Recognition as the Home of Kesong Puti

Is there a significant relationship between the factors influencing the Local Government's programs and the challenges or opportunities encountered in implementing these initiatives?

Is there a significant relationship between the challenges and opportunities and the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of the Local Government's programs for the Kesong Puti Industry?

What plan of action can be proposed to enhance the initiatives and programs of the LGU of Sta. Cruz and Laguna improve stakeholder collaboration, strengthen environmental and tourism efforts, and further solidify the municipality's identity as the center of Kesong Puti Production?

Research Hypotheses

There is no significant relationship between factors influencing the Local Government of Sta. Cruz programs and the challenges or opportunities encountered in implementing these initiatives for strengthening the Kesong Puti industry.

There is no significant relationship between the challenges and opportunities faced by the Local Government of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, and the effectiveness or long-term sustainability of its programs for the Kesong Puti Industry.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study, "The Role of the Local Government of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, in Strengthening the Home of Kesong Puti," is to provide insight that can help Sta. Cruz, Laguna, develop and thrive. This will benefit the following:

Local Government of Sta. Cruz, Laguna

This study will help the LGU of Sta. Cruz Laguna understand how well their programs and policies work. It will point out what is effective, what needs improvement, and where new opportunities are. The results can guide the town in supporting Kesong Puti makers, keeping the tradition alive, and creating programs that truly help the community.

Sta. Cruz, Laguna Community/Locals

With this study, the residents of Sta. Cruz, Laguna will be well-informed and have a better understanding of how the initiatives set by the local government impacts community development, citizen participation, business opportunities, and tourism growth. It will also allow the community to be more active in safeguarding Sta. Cruz's identity will instill pride and ownership in the conservation of their municipality's culture. Moreover, the study may encourage stronger community participation in local initiatives that promote cultural preservation and sustainable economic development.

Kesong Puti Producers and Sellers

This research will help identify the challenges and opportunities for the Kesong Puti Producers and Entrepreneurs. This will provide insights into how producers can improve production, marketing, and sustainability practices to strengthen their livelihoods and preserve the cultural heritage of Kesong Puti. The findings may also support producers and sellers in accessing wider markets by improving branding, promotion, and collaboration with local government and tourism stakeholders.

Tourism and Business Sectors

Tourism organizers and Business sectors will be able to learn how to make the most of their collaboration with the LGU of Sta. Cruz, Laguna. The findings may guide them in promoting Kesong Puti more effectively and enhancing its businesses. It can also help them identify strategic opportunities for product development, market expansion, and sustainable tourism initiatives.

Members of the Academe and Future Researchers

The study might serve as useful reference material for students, educators, academics, and future researchers who are interested in local governance, sustainable urban development, environmental management, tourism promotion, and community participation. It may also provide a foundation for further studies that aim to refine existing frameworks or explore similar initiatives in other local contexts.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study examined the programs and initiatives of the Sta. Cruz, Laguna LGU, in strengthening its identity as the “Home of Kesong Puti.” It covered policies, projects, partnerships, and community activities related to production support, local enterprise development, tourism promotion, and cultural preservation. It was conducted within Sta. Cruz, Laguna, and focused on efforts implemented over the past five (5) years. Data were collected through surveys of selected LGU officials, Kesong Puti business owners, and community members.

This study utilized a quantitative descriptive-correlational design and relied primarily on survey responses from Tourism Officers, Kesong Puti producers, and sellers. While the approach provided measurable data on LGU initiatives and their perceived effectiveness, it did not capture the deeper experiences and perspectives of stakeholders. Future studies may employ mixed-method approaches, such as interviews, focus group discussions, and case studies, to generate richer insights into the challenges and opportunities affecting the preservation and development of the Kesong Puti industry.

It was limited to the context of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, and dealt with programs and initiatives created by the local government units within their municipalities. This did not involve comparisons with other municipalities, cities, and provinces that also have their own local delicacies, cultural heritage, or food industries.

The study was also limited by the availability of data from the LGU office and the stakeholders’ office, including existing documents. Not all data or records reflecting projects, budget allocations, and programs were fully available, and updates might have affected the analysis. Additionally, the response rate could have been influenced by respondents' willingness to share information, which might have impacted the depth of insights gathered.

Definition of Terms

For a clearer and better understanding of the terms used in the study, the following terms are defined operationally:

Community Empowerment. It refers to the process of engaging, educating, and supporting residents so they can actively participate in the production and promotion of cultural products like Kesong Puti.

Enterprise Development. It refers to the activities that strengthen producers' business and management skills. It also supports entrepreneurs in identifying market opportunities and expanding their economic potential.

Kesong Puti. It refers to the traditional Filipino white cheese made from carabao milk, representing the cultural identity of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, and possessing probiotic properties. It is widely enjoyed as a fresh dairy delicacy, often paired with bread, rice cakes, or other local dishes.

Government Funding and Financial Assistance. It refers to the monetary resources provided by the LGU to local producers and community projects to enhance production, tourism, and cultural preservation.

Livelihood Programs. It refers to the initiatives by the LGU that directly support the income and well-being of Kesong Puti producers. These may include financial assistance, training opportunities, access to resources, and support for market linkage to improve productivity and sustainability.

Local Governance. It refers to the mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which the LGU of Sta. Cruz plans, implements, and monitors policies, programs, and services to promote local development, cultural preservation, and community welfare.

Local Government Unit (LGU). It refers to the municipal government of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, responsible for local policies, programs, and community development to support culture, tourism, and economic growth.

Market Access. It refers to producers' accessibility to local, regional, or national markets.

Municipality of Sta. Cruz, Laguna. It refers to the first-class municipality in the Philippines, recognized as the "Home of Kesong Puti" for its tradition of producing the cheese and promoting its cultural heritage.

Policy and Regulatory Support. It refers to the guidelines and regulations created by the LGU to preserve local culture, support businesses, and ensure sustainable development.

Public-Private Partnership. It refers to the partnerships between the LGU, local businesses, and other stakeholders to promote local heritage and tourism.

Sustainability. It refers to the capacity of Kesong Puti production, community involvement, and LGU initiatives in Sta. Cruz to continue over the long term without compromising resources, cultural heritage, or environmental integrity. It also ensures that economic, social, and environmental benefits are maintained and strengthened for future generations.

Training and Capacity-Building Programs. It refers to the initiatives designed to improve the skills of community members, including Kesong Puti producers and local entrepreneurs, to boost productivity and economic opportunities.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

This chapter presents a review of the related literature and studies from various local and international sources that are significant to the present study.

Related Literature

The coherence, integration, and sustainability of LGU programs are determined by the policy and regulatory capacity at the local level. First, Saguin and Howlett (2022) point out that policy capacity, comprising analytical, operational, and political capacities, serves as the foundation for translating cross-cutting development goals, such as the SDGs, into the local planning process and enables LGUs to respond effectively to specific shocks, such as the COVID-19

pandemic. It helps account for why better policy capacities can develop more regulatory measures and align local policies with their devolved responsibilities.

Local governance literature in the Philippines strongly emphasizes that formal devolution via law and executive orders must be complemented by well-developed regulatory capacity and tailored policy design. Juco, Maddawin, and Manasan (2023), from the Philippine Institute for Development Studies, analyze the "functional assignments" of LGUs under devolution and find that despite increased autonomy, there remain "significant gaps between de jure and de facto functional assignments," driven by institutional capacity constraints and unclear regulatory accountability. This highlights the need to strengthen LGU capacity to fully realize the benefits of decentralization.

In a correlated vein, Juco (2023) present the Baseline Study on the State of Devolution, recording variation in the LGU transition plans, or DTPs, and noting that many LGUs themselves report that they cannot fully assume devolved functions by the end of the transition window.

These include Juco's (2023) PIDS baseline analysis and government documents on EO-138 (DBM/EO texts) that describe the formal regulatory framework governing devolution. These discuss that policy and regulatory support, through laws, executive orders, and implementing rules, reshapes LGU responsibilities, authority, and funding flows. Therefore, an LGU's capability to operationalize newly devolved mandates depends not only on legal clarity but also on its internal policy and regulatory capacity.

The literature strongly emphasizes that devolution or regulatory reform alone is not enough: the success of the LGUs in assuming devolved functions depends on their policy capacity (Atienza & Go, 2023), differential starting points (Juco, 2023), and the design of transition plans, DOF DTP. PIDS, as reflected by Diokno-Sicat (2021), cautions that fiscal viability criteria must also be hinged on the balance of service delivery capacity. Regulatory guidance, such as DBM LBM 82, links capacity development to conditional subsidies, encouraging LGUs to strengthen their capacity. Distor (2022) has demonstrated that internal capacity, policy incentives, and external rewards constitute a key driver of LGU efficiency. Furthermore, the UNDP Mandanas report (2022) underlines the importance of accompanying fiscal transfers with digitalization and policy reform to guarantee sustainability. This suggests that effective decentralization needs strong LGU capacity and supportive policies.

From an international perspective, Junghun & Sean (2020) argue that decentralized systems must combine formal decentralization with capacity-building at the subnational level to make good use of increased autonomy. LGUs require strong regulatory institutions, planning capacity, and administrative capacity.

Building on this, Husain (2023) frames policy capacity as dynamic and adaptive. If national mandates change rapidly, as during periods of devolution or pandemic responses, LGUs that have invested in policy learning and analytical skills produce stronger regulations and operational plans. Thus, this dynamic understanding provides a useful lens for analyzing how LGUs navigate the Mandanas/EO-138 devolution transition.

Empirical evidence from Talabis et al. (2021) further corroborates that local regulatory measures, such as early lockdowns, quarantine facilities, and risk-communication strategies, produced measurable differences in COVID-19 outcomes across municipalities and cities. The program's success was greatly influenced by local administrative capacity and the broader regulatory environment.

Several empirical studies also emphasize the importance of municipal policies and local government support in strengthening the production of traditional food products. For instance, the research conducted by de Guzman and Quezon (2024), on micro-, small-, and medium-sized food businesses operating within Iloilo City found that local government partnerships, supportive local government policies, and effective marketing strategies are significant factors in enabling local food producers to successfully participate in local tourism while also contributing to economic growth via jobs created in the tourism sector through the establishment of municipal ordinances that ensure sustainable production practices. This highlights the crucial role of LGUs in supporting local industries.

Rosales (2024), who dove into product innovation in Pangasinan, noted that without enough skilled folks or real government backing, it is a struggle for these foods to evolve and reach new markets. Basically, it shows why local policies are so key to keeping those small food operations going strong. Goloso-Gubat (2024) also demonstrated that developing policy frameworks through collaboration across multiple sectors is key to enhancing production diversity, resilience, and market access; this is particularly true of artisan and specialty foods that embody cultural identity at the local level.

A similar study conducted by Raja (2021) illustrated how municipalities that formalize their food support policies through ordinances and resource allocation develop an enabling environment for production and promotion that ensures both cultural and economic sustainability. Cabannes and Marocchino (2018) highlighted in their research on food policies that integrating food policy into local government structures increases local production, distribution, and access to food products, thereby demonstrating the important role of municipalities in preserving and promoting traditional forms of food heritage through their actions. These studies, taken together, demonstrate that municipal policies/ordinances are critical to promote food production, expand access to markets, and strengthen the cultural identity of local food products.

Fiscal transfers, intergovernmental grants, and LGU internal revenues are the financial backbone of local programs; however, evidence suggests that the design and predictability of these transfers are crucial factors in determining whether funding improves service delivery. The design of a grant includes conditionality, timing, and predictability, says Lago (2024), which strongly shapes LGUs' incentives and spending choices and is thus central to assessing whether increased funds lead to better outcomes.

Complementing this micro-evidence, Lago, Lago-Peñas and Martinez-Vazquez (2024) presents a broad international survey of intergovernmental grant effects, arguing that whether conditional or formula-based predictability, and vertical fiscal balance are key factors in determining whether transfers lead to improved service delivery or fiscal dependency.

On the other hand, fiscal risk: An International Monetary Fund working paper of Nakatani (2025) presents evidence that, in the absence of adequate intergovernmental institutions and controls, local borrowing and spending under decentralization may engender fiscal crises. Funding-policy mismatches likewise come to the fore in local Philippine studies. For example, Monteverde (2025) reports that under certain devolution scenarios, LGUs may confront "fiscal gaps" when they are made to assume functions for which adequate funding for infrastructure upgrade is lacking. This may limit the financial capacity of LGUs to effectively implement devolved programs and services.

Juco (2023) interprets the Mandanas fiscal shift at the national level as a major expansion of LGU fiscal space through higher automatic tax shares. However, they note that greater resources require adequate absorptive capacity and sound financial management; hence, studying LGU readiness is as important as studying funding level. Moreover, Diaz (2021) illustrate, through the assessments of Public Financial Management Assessment Tool, that stronger budgeting, reporting, and expenditure controls are mediators of the relationship between funds and program results. When Public Financial Management systems are weak, performance suffers even when transfers increase.

In addition, Wang (2024) and other recent decentralization studies make it quite clear that basic service improvements are determined by more than just money: local competition, accountability, and administrative capacity matter as well. Overall, these studies have shown that money alone is not enough; the analysis of LGU programs needs to consider resources, PFM strength, and the time and predictability of fiscal transfers.

Evidence strongly indicates that fiscal transfers significantly influence LGU behavior, service delivery performance, and local development outcomes. Tang (2024) demonstrates that intergovernmental transfers in the Philippines play a substantial role in shaping local development trajectories. Complementing this, Mamaradlo (2021) documents the flypaper effect wherein external funds tend to increase LGU expenditure rather than stimulate greater local revenue

generation. This highlights the strong dependence of LGUs on external fiscal support.

Further expanding the theoretical landscape, Kluza and Wójtowicz (2025) differentiate between types of grants, such as equalization versus

targeted transfers and highlight how these mechanisms produce varying impacts on fiscal discipline. Additionally, Atienza and Go (2023) provide a governance-historical perspective, explaining how evolving fiscal arrangements interact with local autonomy and institutional decision-making. Collectively, these studies underscore that while fiscal transfers are powerful drivers of LGU action, their effectiveness depends on the broader governance and institutional context in which they operate.

Recent studies also highlight how local government budgeting processes and fiscal autonomy shape program implementation and community development outcomes. San Jose (2024) investigated the preparedness of key LGU personnel to execute tourism projects in the wake of the Mandanas-Garcia Supreme Court Ruling, revealing that budgetary limitations and constrained fiscal resources significantly curtailed the scale and effectiveness of local tourism initiatives. In essence, emphasizing the need for enhanced budget allocation and financial planning to sustain cultural and tourism programs. These findings highlight the importance of adequate fiscal support for local development.

A study on the budget allocation system of a highly urbanized LGU in Central Luzon (Lorenzo et al., 2021) detailed how internal planning procedures and prioritization influence the distribution of funds across programs and projects. Their findings illustrate that departmental budgeting choices determine the funding available for local endeavors, with implications for resource allocation toward product-centric initiatives, such as those supporting Kesong Puti production. This suggests that effective budget planning is essential in sustaining programs that promote local products and strengthen community-based industries. Moreover, adequate financial support from the LGU can help improve production capacity, marketing activities, and the overall competitiveness of Kesong Puti in the local market. Lalata et al. (2024) explored LGU marketing strategies for tourism destinations and noted that inadequate funding and insufficient infrastructure can stifle tourism growth. Their work suggests that smart budgeting is crucial to effectively promote local products and events.

At the national level, Rivera et al. (2025) from the Philippine Institute for Development Studies noted a rising trend in real government spending on tourism, including community projects and infrastructure. This pattern indicates growing acknowledgment of tourism's importance in local development, offering valuable lessons for budgeting traditional product programs.

Guzman and Apritado (2024) present an analysis of local government support for the development of local businesses in the Ilocos region and whether these forms of assistance, such as skills development and marketing, were related to budget allocation. The findings of this study illustrate that financial resources significantly contribute to the sustainability of local products.

Lorenzo et al. (2021) illustrate, through an analysis of municipal budget preparation, that budgeting is the means by which Local Government Units can support the development of community-based businesses by incorporating cultural and economic development priorities into their budgetary decisions. Therefore, this study demonstrates the relationship between budget allocation and the effectiveness of programs funded by local government. The literature has consequently underlined that training and capacity-building form the very basis on which LGUs translate policies and financial resources into effective programs. For example, Pulhin et al. (2021) show in their study on LCCAP in the Philippines that targeted capacity-building in planning processes directly improves plan quality and strengthens resilience outcomes; this is a measurable link between staff training and overall program performance.

Likewise, in discussing LGU preparedness for devolution in Southern Philippines, Lubos et al. (2023) reveal that developing capacity, especially in human resources, institutional arrangements, and technical training, is a highly

important element in the envisioned taking on of expanded devolved functions by LGUs. Their findings further show that capabilities in financial management and service operations become increasingly critical as fiscal responsibilities grow.

In the Philippine setting, capacity-building programs have been observed to substantially improve LGU performance. Besana, Palmares, and Diocos (2025) examine training, mentoring, and coaching programs in Passi City, Iloilo, and find that structured development interventions enhance organizational efficiency, decision-making, teamwork, and resource utilization. It follows, therefore, that capacity building is essential to effective local governance, not just incidental or supplementary.

Digital transformation further supports the need for capacity building. Espiritu, Manzon, and Florencondia (2023) examine the LGU of the Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija, and highlight how digital skills training, e-government platforms, and staff upskilling overcome administrative barriers.

Although several challenges, such as cybersecurity, digital literacy, and infrastructure, persist, this study shows that investing in human capital and system integration increases LGU capacity to deliver public services efficiently.

International evidence supports these findings. In Indonesia, for example, Setiawan, Tjiptoherijanto, Mahi, and Khoirunurrofik (2022) demonstrate that the capacity of local governments across the dimensions of analysis, operation, and politics positively influences service delivery, thereby requiring a comprehensive approach to capacity-building programs. Along the same line, Haryono, Sahputri, Anggriawan, and Putra (2023) indicate that policy capacity and leadership training affect human development outcomes and underline the imperatives of institutional reform and strategic skill development. Muksin (2023) further underscores the point by indicating that local governments involved in infrastructure projects and resettlement require technical and managerial training, thereby underscoring the necessity of targeted capacity-building programs.

Edoun, Rameetse, and Poe (2023) argue that, in the African context, leadership, resource management, and institutional strengthening are important aspects that lay the foundation for equitable and efficient service delivery in South African municipalities. Collectively, these studies suggest that effective LGU capacity building must be holistic, continuous, and context-specific. Beyond traditional training, it has to include digital competencies, analytical and policy skills, leadership development, and cross-sectoral collaboration. Such a detailed examination of LGU capacity-building strategies-including modalities, institutional support, and long-term impacts-provides insight into how to design development programs that improve governance and service delivery.

Recent policy analyses by Perez (2022) and Husain (2023) further highlight co-design and continuous learning as instrumental mechanisms for enhancing LGUs' analytical and operational capacities. Co-design enhances technical competencies and day-to-day problem-solving skills through participatory design of policies and services, leading to better effectiveness and adaptability in program implementation.

Natasha and Chibesa (2025) examine Mwense Town Council in Zambia and find that limited training, insufficient stakeholder engagement, and weak financial transparency are major bottlenecks in local governance capacity. Several empirical studies also highlight the significant role of training and capacity building in enhancing producers' skills, market access, and economic resilience.

Hossain et al. (2025) examined an integrated value-chain intervention in the Philippines that combined training, credit, and infrastructure and found that producers who received training significantly increased their market participation and income, underscoring the importance of capacity building for small-scale producers' economic engagement.

Navasero et al. (2025) assessed agricultural training in Majayjay, Laguna, revealing that structured capacity-building programs improved farmer skills and empowerment, suggesting that localized training can enhance

production efficiency and livelihood outcomes for food producers. Kartika Puspitasari (2024) investigated capacity building in tourism villages in Indonesia and reported that tourism-focused training and mentoring boosted community income and strengthened local MSMEs, indicating that similar training could benefit artisan food producers by improving product quality and marketability. Estrella (2024) studied stakeholder capacity building in Siruma, Philippines, finding that tourism human capital interventions revealed a need for enhanced technical and soft skills among locals to improve service delivery and participation in tourism sectors, supporting the idea that skills training facilitates community producers' engagement in tourism markets. Finally, Puspitasari's (2025) qualitative research in Indonesian tourism villages showed that tailored capacity-building efforts increase local original income through tourism training and assistance, further confirming that targeted educational interventions strengthen small producers' competencies and economic participation.

Stakeholder collaboration, particularly partnerships with civil society, the private sector, and community organizations, emerges consistently in Philippine case literature as a key driver of program innovation and expanded service reach. Tabuga (2023), analysis of Galing Pook awardees illustrates that high-performing LGU programs frequently incorporate multi-stakeholder arrangements, including formal partnerships, citizen participation mechanisms,

and co-delivery schemes that enhance program sustainability and impact. Pasamonte (2024) used mixed methods to assess CSO engagement in Bukidnon LGUs. She found moderate participation in planning, but weak involvement in monitoring and evaluation.

Complementing this, Talabis et al. (2021) demonstrate that effective LGU responses during the COVID-19 pandemic were often anchored in strong collaborations with local NGOs, community groups, and private donors. Their findings reveal that stakeholder partnerships not only support program implementation but also provide essential complementary resources, thereby strengthening overall local governance capacity. Ursulom et al. (2021), in Caoayan, Ilocos Sur, documented how local CSOs committed to supporting LGU service delivery in health, education, infrastructure, environmental management, and more. Compared with the international literature, it shows how collaboration affects local governance. In Chile, Alberti, Díaz-Rioseco, and Riveros (2023) examine how fiscal transfers affect local democracy: they find that larger transfers may increase incumbent vote share, but that stronger accountability mechanisms (and engagement) mitigate democratic risks. This highlights the role of collaboration in governance.

Recent literature has emphasized stakeholder collaboration for effective governance and sustainable development. Howell et al. (2023) explore water governance in Azerbaijan and observe that coordinated engagement among governmental agencies, water users, and technical experts is improving decision-making and resource management. Their study highlights that collaboration among stakeholders strengthens the implementation of development programs and encourages shared responsibility in achieving common goals. In local industries, partnerships among LGUs, producers, and private organizations can help sustain and promote products such as Kesong Puti.

Chen and Kamarudin also focus on metropolitan governance contexts in 2024, highlighting that stakeholder collaboration enables the co-creation of value while reducing conflict in urban development. Ahmad (2025) further explains that inclusive participation of politicians, citizens, academics, and civil society organizations contributes to social change and environmental sustainability. These studies thus suggest that effective stakeholder collaboration relies on structured mechanisms of engagement, well-defined roles, and continuous communication to align diverse interests toward the realization of sustainable outcomes.

In Kenya, Thapa et al. (2024) note that the effectiveness of transfers depended on how counties engaged with communities and stakeholders to allocate funds to health needs, indicating that collaboration with local actors is not incidental but foundational to outcome success. This reinforces the importance of participatory governance in improving service delivery outcomes.

From an administrative and data-governance perspective, Soosaar and Nikiforova (2024) examine the barriers to data sharing among local governments in Estonia. Their findings reveal that institutional resistance, low levels of inter-agency trust, and underdeveloped data-governance norms hinder the establishment of open data platforms, systems that are essential for effective stakeholder collaboration, improved monitoring, and enhanced transparency.

Recent empirical studies also underscore the importance of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in strengthening tourism promotion, governance, and local economic development. Similarly, Ikmal and Ibrahim (2025) examined PPP governance at Koa-Koa Beach and reported that structured partnerships helped address funding gaps, infrastructure limitations, and stakeholder coordination issues, leading to improved tourism management outcomes.

In the Philippines, Abdulloh et al. (2023) demonstrated that cooperative agreements between local government tourism offices and private entities significantly contributed to tourism development and local economic growth through shared project implementation and business empowerment. Uraivan (2023), in a quantitative analysis conducted in Phuket, Thailand, found that PPP models positively influenced tourism marketing promotion, service development, and physical planning, confirming that collaborative governance enhances destination competitiveness.

Moreover, Meshesha et al. (2026) emphasized that PPP arrangements in Ethiopia strengthened socio-cultural sustainability by integrating public and private resources to promote heritage tourism while supporting community identity and participation. Finally, Yin (2024) identified critical success factors for tourism PPPs, including political commitment, policy stability, and effective coordination mechanisms, highlighting that well-structured partnerships are essential for sustainable tourism promotion. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that PPPs are instrumental in pooling financial, managerial, and promotional resources to enhance destination branding and economic outcomes, providing a strong empirical foundation for examining how public-private collaboration can support the promotion of Kesong Puti and tourism development in Sta. Cruz, Laguna.

Tourism in the Philippines is increasingly focusing on how local government units (LGUs) can drive cultural and community-focused tourism. According to Tugonon and Cabugoy (2024), LGUs are key players in overseeing tourism, bringing stakeholders together, and ensuring initiatives align with community goals and long-term plans. They point out that events like the Kesong Puti Festival need to be officially included in tourism master plans to boost both cultural pride and economic benefits.

Building on that, Sinangote and Halique (2025) look at how public management can support eco-cultural tourism. They show that for tourism to be sustainable, you need to blend governance, cultural resources, and community involvement. Their work stresses that festivals should be part of strategic planning to encourage participation by everyone, strengthen local identity, and keep traditions alive.

Madrid (2024) adds that involving multiple stakeholders, such as LGUs, locals, and tourism folks, makes planning more effective and gets community buy-in. For festivals to succeed, they have to align with tourism policies, infrastructure, and local priorities. For the Kesong Puti Festival, a collaborative approach would allow the LGU to handle the cultural, economic, and marketing aspects, helping the destination stay competitive and grow sustainably. Similarly, Dueñas-Pasco (2025) examines how community input supports LGU-run tourism projects. This highlights the importance of participatory planning in strengthening local tourism initiatives.

Festivals work better when locals are part of the planning and decisions, ensuring events match community needs, include everyone, and protect heritage. This participatory approach also strengthens social ownership and increases the long-term sustainability of tourism initiatives.

Damayon et al. (2025) connect cultural traditions to sustainable tourism, showing how local customs and festivals draw visitors while building community pride. By making these festivals a core part of strategic plans, towns can

balance preserving culture with economic gains. This highlights why the Kesong Puti Festival should be a key feature in Sta. Cruz's tourism master plan is a cultural and economic powerhouse.

Recent studies emphasize the importance of aligning local tourism initiatives with broader strategic development plans to ensure sustainability and long-term impact. For instance, Abad (2025) found that effective tourism programs require clear integration into local strategic frameworks. The study revealed that when tourism initiatives are aligned with formal development plans, local governments are better positioned to enhance economic growth, cultural preservation, and stakeholder participation.

Similarly, Felicilda and Reyes (2020) further illustrated the capacity of community events to substantially elevate local pride and attract visitors to a given locale. These suggest that meticulously organized and effectively marketed community festivals can demonstrably increase the number of visitors to a town. Therefore, when festivals are integrated into tourism plans, they provide higher levels of satisfaction for tourists visiting the community and generate additional revenue for local agencies. In addition, these events can increase the participation of local businesses and residents, helping tourism and the local economy grow.

In addition, Thelen and Kim (2024), discussed the importance of community involvement and sustainability planning in food-related festivals. They found that these events thrive when local governments provide strong support, clear policies, and long-term planning. Without that, benefits such as social and economic gains can fall short. When the town includes the Kesong Puti Festival in its official tourism plans, the event has a better shot at being inclusive, eco-friendly, and sticking around for the long haul.

Moreover, Praswati et al. (2020) examined and found that cultural festivals significantly enhance destination attractiveness and visitor intention. The researchers emphasized that festivals must be strategically positioned within local tourism plans to maximize their promotional value. Without institutional backing and policy integration, festivals may struggle to sustain tourist interest. Consequently, the inclusion of the Kesong Puti Festival in the LGU's master planning documents can enhance its promotional reach and strengthen the municipality's competitive advantage.

A study by Romero et al. (2024) has successfully developed a community-based tourism model that operates most efficiently when local governments and stakeholders work in unison. It is widely believed that good governance plays an important role when everyone works together as a unit; communities can achieve positive outcomes and build strong community identities. This conclusion directly supports Sta. Cruz institutionalizes the Kesong Puti Festival in its development program to ensure multi-sectoral participation and continuity of programs. This also strengthens community cooperation. It also helps preserve local culture and traditions.

Finally, Guzman et al. (2024) have shown that strategic tourism planning based on local assets leads to more resilient and culturally anchored destinations. The study highlighted the importance of recognizing local products and unique traditions as a central element of tourism identity. A formal strategic approach also facilitates the assessment, allocation, and implementation of long-term initiatives. This current assessment supports the proposal to integrate the Kesong Puti Festival into Sta. Cruz's tourism management plan and strategic development plan strengthen institutional commitment to protecting and promoting its identity as Kesong Puti's home.

In fact, the literature consistently shows that fiscal arrangements, institutional design, and local capacity together determine LGU performance in service delivery and development outcomes. Atienza and Go (2023) illustrate how the effectiveness of devolved resources should be aligned with mandated functions rather than the fiscal capacity of LGUs, arguing that misalignment creates an environment in which increases in transfers result in higher nominal budgets without necessarily leading to increased and better program implementation. This highlights the importance of proper resource allocation in effective local governance and sustainable development.

Thus, this foundational mismatch between legal assignments and local fiscal realities frames a recurring challenge

across these subsequent empirical studies. Building on this, De Mesa (2024) underscores that even if fiscal resources are available, many Philippine LGUs cannot implement capital outlays due to planning and technical capacity gaps. Indeed, he reports that several LGUs lack bankable project pipelines meaning projects that are ready for procurement and are technically sound; this translates into sluggish or incomplete budget execution. This point squares with the international evidence synthesized by Lago (2024), who underlines that the design of intergovernmental grants, the degree of conditionality, and the predictability of timing significantly influence the rhythms of local absorption. Poorly timed and unpredictable transfers, Lago argues, further hinder LGUs' ability to synchronize their planning with procurement.

Liwanag (2024) studied budget utilization in barangays in Concepcion, Tarlac, which revealed that underspending and delayed disbursement of funds greatly hampered the implementation of community programs. This indicates that even with available funds, inefficient financial management itself poses a barrier. Lorenzo, Paguio, and Asio (2021) likewise reported that, in highly urbanized LGUs in Central Luzon, complex processes involved in budget allocation and competing priorities at the departmental level hinder resource mobilization, underscoring that financial limitations are not just about low revenues but also structural inefficiencies.

Similarly, Diaz et al. (2025) note that staffing shortages, weak technical capabilities, and fragmented organizational arrangements limit LGUs' ability to scale services, even when financial transfers are increased. Such findings are supported by Setiawan et al. (2022) in Indonesia, who show that capacity in financial management and planning at the local government level is a robust predictor of service delivery performance. These studies emphasize the importance of strengthening human resources and technical skills within local governments. Taken together, these studies underpin the finding that it is institutional capacity that mediates the relationship between funding and outcomes, reinforcing the notion that decentralization by itself will have limited impact without complementary capacity investments.

This concern is further corroborated by Wang (2024), who shows empirically that fiscal decentralization improves service outcomes only in localities characterized by sufficient administrative capacity, accountability mechanisms, and competitive fiscal environments. Wang's findings thus resonate with Khan's (2021) conceptual work, which theorizes absorptive capacity as a necessary condition for transforming financial inflows into development gains. The latter's framework makes it clear that human, managerial, and institutional competencies, like PFM quality, project readiness, and execution capacity, are conditions precedent for productive fiscal use.

Complementing these capacity-focused perspectives, Santos et al. (2025) present detailed municipal-level evidence from Metro Manila, documenting how fragmented financial systems, inconsistent procurement practices, and the absence of standardized asset registers inflate project costs and depress budget execution. Their work underlines the need for administrative reforms focused on system integration and standardized processes to improve financial utilization, reforms that directly address the institutional constraints highlighted by Diaz et al. (2025) and the absorptive capacity concepts outlined by Khan (2021).

Taken together, these studies collectively establish that the successful translation of fiscal transfers into local development outcomes depends on the interaction of well-designed intergovernmental grants, robust planning and financial systems, and strong institutional capacity at the local level. Without these complementary conditions, transfers, no matter how large, risk remaining underutilized or inefficiently spent.

Mthethwa and Tshishonga (2025) examine the challenges of municipal revenue management at Mtubatuba Local Municipality in South Africa, highlighting how limited financial resources hinder effective service delivery. The study identifies key issues, including low fee collection, political interference, corruption, and a lack of qualified personnel. These constraints directly affect the municipality's ability to fund basic services, resulting in delays and inefficiencies.

Recent empirical studies also highlight multiple structural, economic, and biological factors contributing to the

rising cost and limited supply of carabao (buffalo) milk. Licudo and Macaso (2025), in their supply chain analysis of carabao milk in Nueva Ecija, found that limited herd sizes, aging farmers, and inefficiencies in milk collection and distribution systems significantly constrained production volume and market availability. Their findings suggest that supply shortages are not merely production-based but are also influenced by structural weaknesses in local dairy value chains.

Similarly, Aquino et al. (2024) demonstrated that improving feeding strategies through home-grown forages and complete nutrient diets substantially increased milk yield among dairy buffaloes, indicating that inadequate nutrition practices can limit productivity and indirectly raise per-unit production costs. Supporting this economic perspective, Makarabbi et al. (2024) conducted a cost-benefit analysis of buffalo milk production and reported that feed and labor represent the largest cost components, placing pressure on farmers and contributing to higher milk prices when input costs rise.

Beyond economic factors, broader productivity constraints have also been identified. In the study of Chowdhury et al. (2025), they emphasized reproductive inefficiencies, disease prevalence, and management limitations as key barriers to improving buffalo milk output, further restricting supply levels. Additionally, Pehan et al. (2025) revealed logistical inefficiencies and quality-related losses that reduce effective milk availability in markets.

Finally, a behavioral study by Reproto et al. (2023) found that socioeconomic and perceptual barriers hinder farmers' adoption of improved feeding and management technologies, thereby limiting production expansion. Collectively, these studies provide strong empirical evidence that rising costs and the limited supply of carabao milk stem from interconnected issues involving production expenses, herd productivity, supply chain inefficiencies, and constraints on farmer adoption, factors highly relevant to understanding the challenges of milk scarcity affecting Kesong Puti production.

One of the perennial challenges of LGUs in the Philippines is the apparent lack of technical capacity to plan, implement, and monitor highly complex programs. The Philippines Economic Update (World Bank, 2024) notes that underspending can largely be traced to insufficient manpower and weak planning capabilities at the local level, especially in capital outlay projects.

To support this, De Mesa (2024) noted that several LGUs lack the so-called trained planning personnel, thereby limiting local development projects due to a shortage of technical capacity to formulate, cost, and implement projects.

Dagohoy (2021) found in her investigation of barangay officers that many of them lacked the knowledge required to accurately prepare a budget, monitor expenses, or comply with legal requirements. The result is delayed projects and incomplete service delivery. De Mesa (2024) indicates that capacity gaps in planning and technical aspects remain critical concerns across LGUs implementing Devolution Transition Plans, emphasizing that personnel skill development is an integral and necessary approach to autonomous governance.

Atienza and Go (2023) underscore that the realistic attainment of technical expertise relates not only to procedural but also to strategic planning and data-informed decision-making processes, while Tenorio and Sanjorjo (2025) argue that sectoral development outcomes depend heavily on the capacity of implementers of social welfare and health programs. This emphasizes competent personnel and effective planning in local governance.

A consistent theme in both international and Philippine studies is that insufficient technical expertise significantly constrains local government performance. David et al. (2023) report that limited technical skills among staff impede the adoption and sustained use of digital technologies in local governance. This highlights the need for continuous training and capacity-building programs for local government personnel. Similarly, Borrás (2024) emphasizes that restricted technical capacity hinders the implementation of sustainability transitions, while Mofokeng (2025) finds that shortages in engineering and infrastructure planning skills undermine service delivery in South African

municipalities. Pill (2024) argues that the lack of institutional and technical capacity limits LGUs' ability to execute complex governance tasks, and Canales (2025) identifies gaps in specialized knowledge, including infrastructure, data management, and project oversight. In the Philippine context, Santos et al. (2025) reveal that Metro Manila LGUs, despite adequate fiscal resources, face inefficiencies in asset management due to technical skill deficits.

Recent empirical studies also consistently highlight that limited technical and business skills among producers and sellers significantly hinder their ability to innovate, market, and grow their agribusiness ventures. Muñoz-González (2024) investigated knowledge management among small-scale agricultural producers in Mexico, finding that gaps in technical-productive, managerial, and entrepreneurial competencies constrain producers' ability to implement improved production techniques and develop strategic business plans, emphasizing the need for structured capability development. Dai and Wan (2025) examined digital marketing capabilities among specialty crop farmers in China, showing that producers with stronger digital capabilities achieved higher incomes and better market access, while those lacking these skills lagged in business performance.

Hossain et al. (2025), in a Philippine study, found that small-scale producers' market participation increased only when training was paired with infrastructure and extension services, underscoring that limited business and technical skills reduce their participation in value chains and constrain market competitiveness. Angioloni et al. (2024) analyzed farmers' preferences toward agricultural education and reported that education and skill development programs are critical for producers to adopt modern practices and improve their business outcomes, indicating that limited training diminishes producers' capacity to engage in entrepreneurial activities.

In the context of rural entrepreneurship, a study by Gyimah and Lussier (2021) identified entrepreneurial experience, industry knowledge, and marketing skills as significant predictors of business success among SMEs, suggesting that deficiencies in these skills are associated with higher failure rates among rural enterprises. Finally, Baier et al. (2025) found that skill shortages, particularly in technical and managerial competencies, are expected to worsen among small firms, affecting their innovation capacity, operational efficiency, and long-term viability. This underscores that producers without adequate business knowledge face systemic disadvantages in competitive markets.

The engagement of stakeholders, in general and of civil society in particular, is widely recognized as a critical determinant of relevance in LGU planning, program sustainability, and local ownership. As Valdecañas and Cuyegkeng (2023) show quite clearly, the quality of civic participation- meaningful consultations, multi-sector dialogues, and formal partnerships- improves the congruence between programs and community needs while nurturing local ownership. They warn, however, that the quality of engagement is often uneven, with most events limited to tokenistic consultation rather than sustained co-production, thereby undermining program sustainability and eroding citizen trust.

Similarly, Pasamonte (2024) finds that while CSOs in Bukidnon participate moderately in planning, their monitoring and evaluation remain minimal. The weak secretariat support for the LDCs, ad hoc invitations to CSOs, and unclear feedback mechanisms create institutional gaps that limit CSOs' oversight role, suggesting that formal structures matter in engagement.

Mechanisms of coordination are critical factors, especially in multi-actor initiatives that involve either digital transformation or complex service delivery. Lapuz (2023) shows how coordination failures-in terms of poor communication channels, undefined stakeholder roles, and weak strategies for digital inclusion- hinder the co-design and scaling of rural digital tourism initiatives. Similarly, Gatarin and Andal (2024) demonstrate that the advocacy efforts of civil society in Metro Manila result in systemic policy reforms only when formal mechanisms-such as multi-stakeholder task forces, participatory pilots, or memoranda of understanding-exist; when these mechanisms are lacking, gains remain localized.

Capacity, access, and trust together determine the effectiveness of CSO engagement. Ibones (2024) underscores that

the technical skills of CSOs, formal access to decision-making platforms, and trust between LGU officials and civil society are interconnected factors that, together, determine whether participation enhances program outcomes. These factors help strengthen collaboration and community participation. Where trust and formal access are weak, engagement becomes symbolic rather than substantive. These findings are supported by Arthur et al. (2023), who undertake a systematic review of community participation in health coverage and find evidence that structured multi-stakeholder platforms-with rules, resources, and feedback mechanisms- improve service prioritization and equity.

On the other hand, Davies et al. (2022) demonstrate that digital participatory budgeting initiatives have failed due to a lack of local institutional capacity to process contributions and integrate them into actionable budgets, indicating that technology alone is not enough without institutional routines. Institutionalized platforms, such as regular LDC meetings, MOUs, and joint task forces, are consistently associated with better outcomes, while ad hoc consultations rarely realize meaningful results (Valdecañas, 2023; Willetts et al., 2022).

This is further stressed by Gupte (2022), who elaborates that power imbalances, such as officials or donors leading the way, may substantially skew the agenda and limit input from marginalized stakeholders, unless countervailing rules and capacity support exist. Willetts et al. (2022) provide cross-country evidence that mutual accountability mechanisms, including joint monitoring, public reporting, and scheduled multi-stakeholder reviews, substantially improve governance outcomes in sectors such as water, sanitation, and hygiene. These mechanisms also promote transparency and inclusive decision-making among stakeholders. Mukonde et al. (2022) show that citizen participation improves program delivery only when formal structures and mutual accountability mechanisms exist. Taking this together, these studies show that for participation to be translated into real policy and service improvements. Engagement mechanisms should be sustained, formalized, and capacity supported.

When CSOs lack technical skills or LGUs are unable to process inputs, participation remains nominal, while power imbalances or politicized appointments may render coordination pro forma (Ibones, 2024; Davies et al., 2022; Gupte, 2022; Gatarin & Andal, 2024). Recent empirical studies underscore the critical importance of stakeholder coordination in tourism and rural development, offering valuable insights into the detrimental effects of inadequate coordination among local governments, producers, and sellers on destination performance.

Ramukumba (2025) investigated collaborative governance in rural tourism, demonstrating that robust collaboration among stakeholders such as government entities, small tourism enterprises, and local producers is indispensable for effective strategic planning and sustainable tourism development. The study highlights how deficiencies in communication and unequal participation impede collective decision-making processes, thereby compromising overall outcomes (Ramukumba, 2025).

In a parallel vein, Meliana et al. (2025) explored multi-stakeholder collaboration in the context of tourism village development in Garut Regency, Indonesia. Their findings indicate that, although advancements have been made in collaborative governance mechanisms, persistent coordination challenges between governmental, business, and community actors continue to constrain tourism growth. This underscores the manner in which insufficient coordination restricts joint planning and capacity-building efforts, limiting the potential for holistic development.

Chen et al. (2025) examined collaborative governance in rural China, further elucidating the impact of diverse governance structures, which incorporate both public and private stakeholders, on varying tourism outcomes. The research reveals that heightened stakeholder engagement fosters improved coordination of tourism activities and greater community involvement, whereas hierarchical, government-centric models marginalize community actors and diminish joint promotional endeavors.

Complementing these location-specific analyses, Nashihah et al. (2024) analyzed stakeholder collaboration in promoting sustainable tourism on Bawean Island, Indonesia. Their work reveals that deficiencies in coordination

among local government units (LGUs), community leaders, and private-sector participants impede collaborative strategies and diminish the effectiveness of tourism initiatives.

Panagiotopoulou and Skoultos (2025) conducted a systematic review of multi-stakeholder frameworks in sustainable destination management, identifying key implementation barriers, including inadequate coordination mechanisms, opaque communication channels, and the underrepresentation of essential local actors. These factors, they argue, erode the effectiveness of collaborative tourism governance models.

Additionally, Fang et al. (2025) examined stakeholder-centered design in rural tourism, illustrating how imbalances in actor interests erect barriers to coordinated actions and equitable benefit distribution. This further demonstrates the adverse effects of weak coordination on tourism planning, marketing, and shared outcomes in rural destinations. Strong coordination is therefore important in achieving sustainable tourism development.

Several recent studies highlight knowledge and competency gaps among tourism officers, particularly in promotion and regulatory policy implementation. Perez and Mercado (2024) found that tourism officers in Pangasinan, Philippines, often fall short in executing essential managerial functions such as training, supervision, marketing, and policy implementation, revealing a critical gap in regulatory and promotional competencies necessary for effective tourism governance. Similarly, Paez (2026) identified significant shortfalls among trainees of Tourism Promotion Services NC II, including deficiencies in digital marketing, content creation, and sustainable tourism practices, reflecting challenges faced by front-line officers at the LGU level and emphasizing the impact of limited training and outdated learning resources on policy understanding and promotional effectiveness. Outdated training and old resources hold them back, making it tough to grasp new policies or run successful tourism campaigns.

Complementing this, Ruhanen (2024) studied local governments in Australia and found that a lack of understanding of tourism policies disrupts how rules are enforced and promotions are handled. Basically, if officers don't get the policies, it leads to inconsistent enforcement and weaker results. Supporting this view, Alam et al. (2022) reported that in South Asian countries, lack of staff training, inadequate human resource capacity, and limited understanding of marketing and tourism information are major constraints to sustainable tourism development, illustrating that knowledge gaps among officers are a widespread challenge in developing economies. This highlights the importance of continuous training and capacity-building programs for tourism personnel.

Moliner Tena et al. (2025) found that even highly developed organizations still face a host of organizational challenges related directly to their respective governments. Such challenges include difficulties in adapting to new policies/government objectives or promotional tactics when implementing "smart" destination projects, and, as a result, these issues will persist in the long term due to a skills gap and the adoption of new technologies.

Emerging evidence from the study by Rebuya and Gasga (2022) confirms that deficiencies in technical expertise, understanding of regulatory frameworks, and knowledge of planning and promotion processes hinder effective tourism development and management, reinforcing the need for LGUs to invest in systematic capacity-building and training programs to strengthen officer competence.

A bunch of real-world studies point to clear gaps in the knowledge and skills of tourism officers, especially in boosting destinations and implementing policies. For instance, Sukandi (2022) examined how tourism marketing and promotion policies play out at local Tourism and Culture Offices and found that officers often lack the skills or understanding of promotional rules needed to develop effective strategies.

Similarly, Rocamora & Aguilin (2022) assessed the competencies of local tourism officers in the Philippines and revealed that, although officers are tasked with planning, policy implementation, and promotional activities, many lack the practical skills necessary to perform these functions effectively. Rocamora (2022) expanded on this by noting that their lack of understanding of tourism policies prevents them from executing strong promotional efforts, which can undermine the overall strength of governance.

Additionally, Rocamora (2022) found that while these individuals are responsible for developing and delivering the logistics associated with planning, developing, or implementing policy and marketing strategies for tourism, many lack adequate hands-on skills to perform these functions. Furthermore, he found that knowledge gaps regarding tourism policy affect the effectiveness of promotional campaigns. Dhungana (2024) points out that when people responsible for implementing tourism policies don't really grasp their roles, especially on the administrative and regulatory side, tourism efforts often fall flat. Amani and Mfumbilwa (2024) also demonstrated how a lack of understanding of marketing strategies and the use of media actually reduces marketing effectiveness.

Community-based tourism has become one of the most important strategies for LGUs seeking to involve communities directly in tourism development. Andalecio and Rose (2022), through the use of structural equation modeling in Romblon, illustrated that Community-based tourism (CBT) positively affects socio-cultural, economic, environmental, and politico-administrative outcomes. Their subsequent work (Andalecio & Martin, 2023) shows that increased tourism participation through CBT strengthens citizen engagement in local governance, suggesting that when communities are integrated into tourism development, LGUs can institutionalize Community-based tourism (CBT) not just as a niche but also as a mainstream route to inclusive local development.

Falconitin et al. (2023) examine heritage tourism in Intramuros, Manila, highlighting LGU-community interactions. Their survey of 400 respondents reveals that preservation challenges, including limited funding, low youth engagement, and weak public awareness, significantly hinder the sustainability of cultural tourism initiatives. This is further complicated by preservation-oriented tourism, where multiple studies report a struggle between the promotion and protection of heritage. Seeking to uncover the current knowledge landscape, the bibliometric review conducted by Geçikli et al. (2024) uncovers that at present, sustainability, authenticity, and the protection of heritage are dominant themes in research, while collaboration across countries is limited.

Complementing this macro-level view, Uslu et al. (2023) provide demand-side evidence that residents' perceived cultural authenticity significantly influences their place attachment and support for heritage tourism. These findings suggest that LGUs can enhance heritage-tourism policies both by preserving authentic cultural assets and nurturing residents' emotional identification with local heritage.

Digital transformation has also reshaped the way LGUs market destinations and mobilize local stakeholders. In the Philippine rural context, Lapuz (2023) finds that digital tourism initiatives empower communities, technically, socially, politically, and even in terms of gender empowerment, thereby increasing the effectiveness of digital adoption. Evangelista (2022) adds that digital tools such as social media, mobile applications, and websites increase tourist satisfaction and awareness of cultural events, and that ICT platforms are important in ways that improve visibility and experience. Conceptually, Lee, Hunter, and Chung (2020) define a "smart tourism city" as the convergence of smart-city systems and tourism objectives, proposing that ICT-enabled platforms enhance destination competitiveness and improve citizens' quality of life.

Sustainability still lies at the heart of LGU tourism strategies. Bibliometric evidence by Geçikli et al. (2024) reflects a growing scholarly emphasis on sustainability and authenticity in heritage tourism, while Sobczak (2024) argues that LGUs need to actively endorse low-impact businesses, manage their visitor capacity, and offer incentives toward greener tourism practices that will help safeguard the health of their destinations in the longer term. Such recommendations are part of a broader push to balance economic opportunity with environmental stewardship. This highlights the need for sustainable tourism planning at the local level.

Governance mechanisms, such as PPPs, finally give LGUs the much-needed instrument to scale tourism programs. Calinao (2020) analyzes the PPP frameworks in Batangas Province and identifies socio-cultural, economic, environmental, political, and legal factors that shape successful tourism-related PPPs. Such evidence points out the potential of PPPs in leveraging private sector expertise while ensuring that public interests and community benefits remain central in tourism development initiatives.

On the other hand, circular economy (CE) strategies that convert waste into valuable inputs are central to promoting sustainable production. These approaches also support long-term environmental and economic sustainability.

Salvacion and Campos (2024) examine the impact of CE on business and the environment in the Philippines, showing how waste streams can be formalized and integrated into production cycles to reduce resource extraction and create value. However, they note that despite its potential, CE in the Philippines remains “inefficient, disorganized, and underdeveloped,” with structural barriers in both policy and market.

Sustainable agricultural production is another critical focus, particularly for Philippine food systems. Goloso-Gubat et al. (2024) use Sustainable Nutrition Security (SNS) metrics to assess the local food system, finding low scores in resilience, ecosystem stability, and nutrient adequacy. Their findings suggest that current agricultural production is fragile, poorly diversified, and in need of systemic reforms to ensure long-term sustainability.

In the Philippines, empirical studies have highlighted the crucial role of LGUs in encouraging sustainable production through technical support, policy guidance, and stakeholder facilitation. Chavez et al. (2023) analyzed the chicken production systems within a circular economy framework, finding that LGUs enabled small producers to optimize waste management, enhance efficiency, and reduce environmental impact by connecting them to training programs, regulatory support, and resource-sharing networks. In turn, Liangco et al. (2022) found that local policies encouraging the adoption of circular economy practices such as composting, nutrient recycling, and cooperative marketing resulted in enhanced productivity and environmental sustainability, where the LGU’s capability for capacity-building, knowledge dissemination, and incentives proved critical to successful adoption.

Micabalo et al. (2024) further showed that the LGU-led programs in Central Visayas that integrated soil conservation, integrated pest management, and eco-friendly fertilization had improved environmental quality while maintaining economic viability for farmers. Their findings indicated the role of technical assistance, training, and policy guidance to ensure that sustainable production initiatives are effective on both environmental and economic grounds.

These studies are complemented by Paninsoro and Resurreccion (2025), who examined the status of LSAs in Lanao del Norte, including Iligan City, and reported that LGU-led facilitation through training, stakeholder collaboration, and support for best practices has strengthened farmers' capacity to implement sustainable systems. Taken together, these points suggest that LGUs can institutionalize sustainability by providing supportive frameworks, linking producers to national programs, and fostering local innovation that fortifies both environmental stewardship and economic resilience.

Recent studies also highlight the increasing demand for local food experiences as a key driver of tourism interest and destination choice, providing important context for understanding demand for products like Kesong Puti. Barzallo-Neira & Pulido-Fernández (2025) investigated the global demand for gastronomic tourism and identified distinct segments of gastronomic tourists, showing that authentic local cuisine and cultural food experiences significantly influence tourists’ willingness to travel and destination choice, suggesting rising market demand for unique local food offerings. Orea-Giner et al. (2026), in their systematic review of local food tourism events, found that food festivals and culinary experiences contribute to social sustainability and tourist engagement, indicating that local food attractions can expand tourism demand and strengthen community tourism markets.

Similarly, Patel et al. (2026) examined how gastronomic tourism, including traditional dishes and participatory food experiences, shapes tourists’ perceptions and emotional engagement, concluding that culinary attractions enhance destination appeal and can increase visitation and spending. Sale and Lombrio (2025) explored local food delicacy preferences in Biliran Province, revealing that consumer preferences for local delicacies are strongly tied to taste, cultural significance, and authenticity, all factors that increase demand and support tourism development.

Additionally, Gana et al. (2025) studied the influence of local food on destination attraction in Minna, Nigeria,

showing that local specialty foods significantly contribute to tourists' destination appeal and recommendatory behavior, highlighting how local foods can boost both visitation interest and market demand.

Together, these studies demonstrate that culinary and gastronomic tourism are growing segments where local food products not only influence tourist motivation and satisfaction but also represent a burgeoning market demand, reinforcing the significance of integrating local food heritage, such as Kesong Puti, into destination branding and tourism strategies. This also helps preserve local culture and promote community identity.

Studies in the Philippines show that community engagement is a practical means of enhancing LGU performance. According to Pasamonte (2024), CSOs' moderate participation in planning, coupled with low participation in monitoring and evaluation in Bukidnon, calls for institutionalized feedback, greater CSO capacity, and formal collaboration structures.

Similarly, Ursulom et al. (2021) emphasize that CSO-LGU partnerships substantially contribute to co-creating local service solutions across health and education sectors, among others, showing how collaboration mechanisms can advance the design and delivery of programs. Finally, digital platforms increasingly enable engagement: Valle et al. (2024) have demonstrated that electronic government platforms increase both citizen interaction and responsiveness, while Baquero-Corpin and Dura (2025) show that transparent social media fosters trust and increases participation.

Furthermore, as Lagura (2025) underscores, reduced digital divides ensure improved access to governance platforms, which, in turn, enable more inclusive participation. Taken together, these studies suggest that effective engagement requires a mix of partnerships, digital platforms, trust-building, and inclusive approaches, even though capacity gaps and deficits in trust-building constrain the full realization of benefits. These factors are important in strengthening community participation and improving governance outcomes. International evidence reinforces these insights and adds comparative perspectives. They also encourage transparency, collaboration, and more responsive local programs and services.

For example, De Weger et al. (2022) in the Netherlands find that citizen engagement in health policymaking is most effective when accessible communication channels and support for capacity are provided, highlighting a dual need to empower both citizens and officials. In Malaysia, Lim and Yigitcanlar (2022) show that well-designed digital e-participation tools within smart-city initiatives enable LGUs to systematically solicit citizen input and integrate it into planning and decision-making.

Likewise, Nan and Yang (2022) demonstrate in China that demographic variables such as education, age, and income strongly influence willingness to engage and emphasize context-sensitive approaches. Further, Salamanca-Cano and Durán-Díaz (2023), in Colombia, warn that weak participation during the evaluation and follow-up phases limits accountability and long-term sustainability, while Mukonde et al. (2022), in Zambia, find that even when participatory structures exist, citizens often feel excluded due to inadequate information and capacity support.

Community-based tourism depends on active community participation with support from the LGU and institutional structures. For instance, Galleto and De Leon (2022) highlight that when locals perceive economic and social benefits, such as job or business opportunities, their support for tourism initiatives increases. This shows that community involvement and shared benefits are essential in sustaining tourism programs and encouraging local participation. In a related study, De Leon et al. (2024) also find a match between LGU priorities and community contributions that ensure socio-economic sustainability.

Digital tools further enhance community empowerment. Lapuz (2023) shows that involvement in digital tourism ventures enhances technical, political, and social skills, as well as gender empowerment, thereby enabling LGUs to co-manage projects in a more participatory manner. Capacity building is also an important intervention: Nuestro (2024) observes that training in governance, risk management, and destination branding strengthens community

participation and enables sustainable tourism outcomes. These findings highlight the role of digitalization and training in local tourism governance.

Sustained governance and trust are fundamental to the perpetuation of success. Cabaguig (2024) and Ibrahim et al. (2025) stress that participatory approaches toward local needs, such as livelihoods, physical infrastructure, and environmental conservation, reinforce community engagement, ownership, and alignment with LGU priorities. Sugiartha (2023) and Novianty, Rahmanita, and Nurbaeti (2025) further emphasize that structured participation at the planning stages, institutional support, and social capital are at the heart of empowerment and ensure sustainable tourism management. Specifically, resident attitude studies, such as those by Kim et al. (2021) and Gutierrez (2022), demonstrate that genuine participation improves perceptions of tourism and fosters a sense of community support, whereas tokenistic involvement often leads to a lack of long-term sustainability. All in all, CBT is effective under conditions of institutionalized participation, benefit-sharing, empowerment through technology, capacity building and participatory governance that aligns LGU initiatives with community priorities. These factors help strengthen long-term community support and sustainable tourism development.

These literatures reinforce that meaningful engagement requires institutionalized mechanisms, capacity building, inclusive digital tools, and sustained feedback processes, all tailored to local social, economic, and demographic contexts.

Recent empirical studies also underscore the critical role of active community participation in enhancing tourism development and sustainable outcomes. Amalina and Listyorini (2025) examined community participation in the development of an Indonesian tourism village and found that residents' involvement in planning and tourism activities significantly contributed to sustaining cultural heritage and improving tourism awareness, emphasizing that community participation drives tourism success through shared benefits and collective action.

Dosinaen and Musafa (2023) investigated community participation in tourism destination promotion and revealed that residents' engagement in promotional and infrastructural efforts enhances the effectiveness of tourism development, suggesting that active participation supports both the visibility and functionality of tourist destinations.

Mappe et al. (2024) explored community involvement in agritourism development in rural Indonesia, showing that participation in planning, implementation, and evaluation stages generates positive economic and social impacts, demonstrating that community engagement is key to sustainable agritourism.

Jiran and Juan (2025) assessed the level of resident participation in ecotourism activities at a world heritage site and found that higher levels of participation correlate with sustainable site development, indicating that when residents are involved in tourism decision-making and operations, destination sustainability is improved. Finally, Thelen and Kim (2024), in their study on food tourism festivals, highlighted that local community involvement shapes the social sustainability of food festivals, noting that skepticism or limited participation from community members can hinder authentic cultural engagement and reduce the overall sustainability of event outcomes, reinforcing the importance of active community participation in culturally centered tourism activities.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that active engagement of local communities in tourism planning, promotion, and implementation not only enhances destination experiences and sustainability but also empowers residents socially and economically, insights that directly inform strategies for strengthening community participation in Kesong Puti-related activities in Sta. Cruz, Laguna.

Intergovernmental fiscal transfers remain one of the most direct and impactful forms of national support for LGUs. In the Philippines, Tang, Wong, and Delas Alas (2024) show that predictable, formula-based unconditional transfers significantly increase household income and reduce poverty, particularly in underdeveloped municipalities. However, Pano (2020) cautions that over-reliance on the Internal Revenue Allotment can create dependency,

crowd out local revenue generation, and undermine fiscal autonomy highlighting the need for mechanisms that balance support with incentives for self-sufficiency.

Dagohoy (2021) emphasizes that the DILG should be at the forefront of providing oversight, technical assistance, and advisory support to barangay officials, especially on budgeting and program implementation. LGUs with regular engagement in coordination with DILG showed higher compliance with financial regulations and the timely execution of projects. In a parallel vein, Tenorio and Sanjorjo (2025) find that coordination between the DSWD and DOH in Region 10 has ensured expanded social welfare coverage and increased service quality, demonstrating how technical guidance and joint planning can yield measurable programmatic outcomes.

In the digital era, national-level data platforms and digital infrastructure are increasingly critical. Cereno (2024) demonstrates that centralized e- governance systems, data portals, and mapping tools enable LGUs to enhance service delivery, transparency, and planning efficiency. By leveraging these shared resources, especially in resource-limited areas, LGUs can avoid redundant investments and strengthen local development and disaster-risk management.

Trimurni, Mazdalifah, Talib, and Ginting (2024) illustrate that intergovernmental networks can substantially enhance local government capacity in disaster management. Their mixed-methods study in North Sumatra, Indonesia, found that strong networks reduce regulatory gaps and improve logistical coordination during emergencies. The authors highlight the role of national agencies in facilitating collaborative platforms where local

governments, NGOs, and private actors align strategies and resources to strengthen resilience and response. These networks also improve information sharing and decision-making during crisis situations. Overall, they help ensure faster and more coordinated disaster response efforts.

Similarly, Khisa (2020) examined decentralization in Bangladesh and emphasizes that national policy and administrative support are crucial for effective local service delivery. Despite decentralization reforms, many rural LGUs face constraints in administrative and financial autonomy, underscoring the need for national agencies to invest in both resources and the technical and bureaucratic capacity of local governments.

Indonesian studies emphasize that local government capacity plays a significant role in the effective provision of public services. For example, Siswidiyanto and Sahputri (2023) show that operational and analytical capacities among local governments significantly affect human development outcomes, such as health and education. Their findings also reveal that national-level agencies cannot simply devolve responsibilities without building local government capacity to deliver services efficiently.

Complementing this, a panel-data analysis by Setiawan, Tjiptoherijanto, Mahi, and Khoirunurrofik (2022) indicated that the interrelationships among analytical, political, and operational capacities at the local level have the most significant effect on the provision of public services. These results suggest that capacity-building programs driven by national agencies should take a holistic approach that addresses various dimensions of functionality within local government rather than focusing on a single area.

This ensures more effective and sustainable improvements in local delivery service. It also strengthens institutional coordination and improves the overall responsiveness of local governance systems. Supplementing this, there is a finding that underlines the regional capacity development supported from the national levels through a study in Burhanuddin (2024), the fact that national agencies are not just regulators but proactive partners in enhancing the operational capacity of subnational governments themselves, so that decentralization would mean real improvement in local governance.

Several recent studies also underscore the critical role of institutional support from provincial, regional, and national agencies in strengthening local production enterprises and community-based tourism. Tawingan (2024) examined the One Town, One Product (OTOP) Program of the Department of Trade and Industry in Laguna Province,

highlighting how government-led assistance in marketing, capacity building, and access to finance improved the economic sustainability of micro and small enterprises, suggesting that structured public support enhances local product competitiveness and community heritage products.

Similarly, research evaluating government services to rice farmers in the Philippines found that Ituriaga et al. (2024) demonstrated a positive relationship between government service quality (including reliability, responsiveness, and tangibles of support) and farmers' satisfaction, emphasizing that effective public technical and service assistance contributes to rural producers' productivity, trust, and collaborative engagement with agencies. These findings show that good government support is important for rural development.

Empirical assessments of agricultural assistance programs in Sarangani Province by Tangge and Tamayo (2025) revealed that while farmers possess essential knowledge and skills, their adoption of improved practices remains moderate, highlighting gaps in government training and advisory support that need to be addressed to maximize the impact of public programs. Beyond the Philippines, research on smallholder agricultural development emphasizes the importance of financial and institutional support mechanisms, with Jalotjot & Tokuda (2024) showing that access to financial support and innovation networks significantly enhances farmers' capacity to adopt new practices, suggesting similar benefits for producers of specialty local products like Kesong Puti.

Complementing this view, Tawingan's (2024) findings also underscore the importance of human capital development and product quality enhancement through public-private collaboration under the OTOP framework, illustrating how multi-agency support fosters entrepreneurship and market responsiveness for community-based products.

Finally, Custodio and Sombilla's (2025) studies on rural transformation in the Philippines document how institutional policies and targeted investments by national and regional bodies accelerate rural sector transformation, improve agro-value chains, and align local enterprises with broader economic goals. All of which are relevant to how provincial and national support can uplift Kesong Puti producers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research design, the subjects of the study, the population, the sampling techniques, the data-gathering procedure, the research instrument, and the statistical treatment.

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive–correlational research design. The descriptive component aimed to determine the extent of LGU interventions, including policy support, financial assistance, capacity building, and stakeholder collaboration, as well as the challenges, opportunities, and long-term impacts of these initiatives on the Kesong Puti industry in Sta. Cruz. The correlational component was employed to examine the relationships among the factors influencing LGU programs, the challenges and opportunities encountered during implementation, and the long-term sustainability of LGU initiatives. This design was chosen to identify associations rather than causality.

Population and Sampling Techniques

The respondents in this study include people directly involved in promoting Kesong Puti in Sta. Cruz, Laguna. This included the employees of the Tourism Office in Sta. Cruz, Laguna, who helps implement or oversee activities related to Kesong Puti. Their responses helped show how government programs support Sta. Cruz is the home of this local delicacy. The study also included local producers and sellers who are directly involved with Kesong Puti. They provided information on how government programs affect their work and help maintain the tradition. Hearing from them helped show how the community and local government work together to support Kesong Puti and keep it an important part of Sta. Cruz.

The study used purposive sampling, focusing on people directly involved with Kesong Puti in Sta. Cruz, Laguna. This method ensures respondents provide relevant insights into how the local government supports Kesong Puti. It also helps the study understand the real experiences of those who are most connected to keeping this local tradition alive.

Research Instruments

This study used a survey questionnaire to gather information from individuals directly connected to the Kesong Puti industry in Sta. Cruz, Laguna. The tool was created to better understand their actual experiences, the kind of help they receive from the local government, and how they view the programs being implemented. It included basic background questions, items that asked about the forms of support provided by the LGU, and statements that measured the perceived results of these efforts. A structured Likert scale questionnaire was used to organize and compare responses more easily, which aligns with the needs of a descriptive-correlational study.

Using the survey instrument ensured that the data collected were aligned with the research study's objectives. Using a combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions allowed the respondents to rate specific indicators while giving them freedom to express their views. This approach captured quantifiable data for statistical analysis and qualitative feedback, providing insight into the community's actual conditions. Overall, the instrument served as an effective means of understanding how the local government contributes to strengthening Sta. Cruz's identity as the Home of Kesong Puti.

Research Procedure

The study involved people who are directly connected to Kesong Puti in Sta. Cruz, Laguna, including LGU Sta. Cruz Tourism Officers, producers, and sellers. The researcher explained the study and made sure everyone knew participation was voluntary. Participants were asked to share their experiences and information about how the local government supports Kesong Puti.

Data was gathered through interviews, voluntary participation and questionnaires. Interviews allowed participants to share their experiences and opinions, while questionnaires collected information from a larger group. After gathering the data, the researcher organized and examined it to find patterns, challenges, and opportunities. This helped show the ways the local government promotes and preserves Kesong Puti in Sta. Cruz, Laguna.

Statistical Treatment

This study used a descriptive-correlational method. The survey data shall first be collated using descriptive statistics by means of tallying and calculating percentages for respondent demographics and also using mean scores to show how strongly respondents agree or disagree with statements about LGU programs, challenges, opportunities, and their effects on the Kesong Puti sector. The weighted average shall also be used in ranking the program/s or initiative/s considered to have addressed most effectively.

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine relationships between variables. Pearson correlation was applied to determine whether there were significant relationships between LGU program policies, funding, training, collaboration, and the challenges or opportunities encountered. For data that were ordinal or not normally distributed, Spearman correlation was used.

Weighted Mean- used to measure the effectiveness of LGU programs and initiatives

Pearson r- applied to determine correlations between LGU program factors and challenges/ opportunities.

Presentation, Interpretation, And Analysis of Data

This chapter presents, analyzes, and interprets data. The findings were tabulated and analyzed. The following data were interpreted using tables to provide a clearer understanding of the study's results.

Table 1. Municipal Policies and Ordinances Supporting Kesong Puti Production Indicators

No.	Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	Policies of the LGU of Sta. Cruz specifically address the promotion and protection of Kesong Puti as a local cultural product.	3.37	0.68	High
2	Existing municipal regulations in Sta. Cruz provide clear and detailed guidelines for Kesong Puti production, hygiene, and distribution for local cheesemakers and stakeholders.	3.48	0.59	High
3	Policies implemented by the LGU of Sta. Cruz actively encourage sustainable production practices and adherence to quality standards in the Kesong Puti industry.	3.26	0.65	High
4	Regulatory processes in Sta. Cruz, Laguna, such as registration, permits, and licensing for Kesong Puti producers, are straightforward, accessible, and well-communicated.	3.26	0.65	High
5	The LGU of Sta. Cruz consistently implements policies, monitors compliance, and responds to the evolving needs of Kesong Puti producers and the local industry.	3.26	0.73	High
Overall Mean		3.33	0.60	High

Legend N=19, mean scores ranging from 3.37–4.00 were interpreted as Very High (VH), indicating strong consensus and very favorable perceptions; scores from 3.00–3.36 as High (H), reflecting general agreement and favorable perceptions; scores from 2.50–2.99 as Moderate (M), showing mixed agreement and average perceptions; scores from 2.00–2.49 as Low (L), denoting disagreement and weak perceptions; and scores from 1.00–1.99 as Very Low (VL), signifying strong disagreement and very unfavorable perceptions.

Table 1 presents the level of implementation of municipal policies and ordinances supporting Kesong Puti production. The highest-rated indicator, the presence of clear guidelines ($M = 3.47$ $SD = 0.61$), shows that respondents generally agree that strong municipal efforts exist in supporting production through policies. In contrast, the lowest mean indicates slight inconsistencies in how policy support is experienced. Despite this, all indicators received high ratings, reflecting an overall positive perception of municipal support mechanisms.

A mean of 3.33 ($SD = 0.60$) further supports the notion that there are ample existing policies and ordinances in place for the production of Kesong Puti in areas of high demand across the entire country. However, the small discrepancies in individuals' responses provide evidence of minor differences in the methods of implementation or in individuals' access to those policies in the country.

Saguin and Howlett (2022) validate these results, noting that the level of policy capacity (government utilized) that a local government unit (LGU) can create will provide evidence that the LGU has effectively implemented the program. Juco et al. (2023) share similar sentiments and note that LGUs continue to struggle with discrepancies between planned policies and their actual implementation. This highlights the persistent gap between policy design and on-the-ground execution.

In addition to Atienza and Go (2023) and Diokno-Sicat (2021) both agreeing that successful local government policies need institutional capacity and the budget necessary for the implementation of those policies, it stands toThe

reason is that even though a regulatory framework has been created, their ability to implement and maintain those policies depends on the LGU's ability to implement and maintain such policies.

De Guzman and Quezon (2024) found that supportive municipal policies enhance local food production and tourism participation, while Goloso-Gubat et al. (2024) emphasized that collaborative policy frameworks improve production resilience and market access. It ensures the significance of local government units (LGUs) in helping the production of Kesong Puti.

On the other hand, by demonstrating that government funding shortages make it increasingly difficult to develop new products within the industry, Rosales (2024) substantiates the claim that LGUs face difficulties providing such funding for product development costs. Additionally, Talabis et al. (2021) demonstrate, through empirical evidence, that variations in local governments' administrative capacities result in differences in policy compliance at the local level. This further underscores how resource and capacity constraints shape implementation outcomes.

International literature continues to support these findings through studies by Junghun and Sean (2020), which demonstrate that decentralized systems require robust institutional frameworks, and by Husain (2023), which shows that organizations must develop adaptive policy frameworks that allow them to respond to changing local needs. Finally, studies by Raja et al. (2021) have shown that adopting formal food policies will lead to improved levels of food production and marketing and that the combination of food policy instruments will facilitate greater levels of collaboration and sustainable development for locally produced food products. Overall, the results show that the municipal regulations of Sta. Cruz, Laguna support Kesong Puti production. However, there are improvements needed in three areas: proper execution, capacity building, and stakeholder outreach. The local Kesong Puti industry will achieve its maximum sustainability and growth potential through three essential elements: better policy implementation, increased institutional capacity, and the development of support systems that reach all community members.

Table 2. LGU Budget Allocation for Kesong Puti Related Programs

No.	Indicators	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
1	The LGU of Sta. Cruz provides adequate financial support for local Kesong Puti producers to sustain their livelihoods.	3.00	0.88	High
2	Grants, subsidies, or financial aid from the LGU of Sta. Cruz help improve the production quality and consistency of Kesong Puti.	3.32	0.95	High
3	Funding from the LGU helps enhance the production facilities, marketing initiatives, and sales opportunities of Kesong Puti producers.	3.11	0.81	High
4	Financial assistance programs provided by the LGU of Sta. Cruz are accessible, well-communicated, and easy for local cheesemakers to avail.	3.16	0.83	High
5	Support from the LGU enables Kesong Puti producers in Sta. Cruz to expand or improve their business operations, including equipment, packaging, and market reach.	3.11	0.81	High
Overall Mean		3.14	0.78	High

Legend N=19, mean scores ranging from 3.37–4.00 were interpreted as Very High (VH), indicating strong consensus and very favorable perceptions; scores from 3.00–3.36 as High (H), reflecting general agreement and favorable perceptions; scores from 2.50–2.99 as Moderate (M), showing mixed agreement and average perceptions; scores from 2.00–2.49 as Low (L), denoting disagreement and weak perceptions; and scores from 1.00–1.99 as Very Low (VL), signifying strong disagreement and very unfavorable perceptions.

Table 2 shows the LGU Budget allocation received for the Kesong Puti-related program. Based on indicators

presented in Table 2, ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.95$) was rated as the highest by respondents, indicating from the ratings received are overall agreement on the budget allocation for funds to provide support to related initiatives. In comparison, financial support ($M = 3$, $SD = 0.88$) received the lowest rating from respondents, indicating that respondents perceive a few aspects of the fund provided as inconsistent. The other indicators also received ratings from survey respondents ranging from moderate to high, indicating that respondents have an overall favorable perception of the budget allocations. This suggests that respondents generally view the budget allocations positively.

The overall arithmetic mean of the total amount was 3.14 (standard deviation = 0.78), indicating that local government units will provide the resources (funding) required for Kesong Puti. The standard deviation was also high, indicating that local government units differed in their responses; therefore, the adequacy of the fund will not affect every stakeholder's response.

The findings were consistent with previous research. Lorenzo et al. (2021) stated that effective budget utilization is related to the sustainable development of the program and its successful implementation. On the same note, San Jose (2024) emphasized that LGUs remain troubled by resource management and project implementation even after greater fiscal independence, which may explain the inconsistent perception of funding variations. In line with this, Manasan and Cuenca (2021) observed that LGUs have more fiscal resources, but the differences in the planning and prioritization of funds have an impact on the use of funds at the grassroots level. Likewise, Brillantes and Lorenzo (2021) emphasize the centrality of effective administrative and fiscal capacity in transforming governmental resources into quantifiable outcomes. All in all, whereas disbursements made by local government units to Kesong Puti initiatives are quite evident, improving the processes of financial planning, prioritization, and implementation is urgent to maximize the effectiveness of the programs. This further highlights the importance of ensuring that available resources are efficiently utilized to support the long-term development of local food industries.

Table 3. Training and Capacity Building for Producers and Sellers

Indicators

No.	Indicators	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
1	Training programs organized by the LGU of Sta. Cruz enhance the skills and technical knowledge of local producers in Kesong Puti production.	2.89	0.88	High
2	Capacity-building initiatives from the LGU improve enterprise management, product quality, and efficiency among Kesong Puti producers.	3.05	0.85	High
3	LGU training programs in Sta. Cruz are accessible and inclusive, reaching all local cheesemakers and stakeholders involved in Kesong Puti production.	2.89	0.81	High
4	Training activities incorporate updated techniques, hygiene standards, and industry best practices specific to Kesong Puti production.	2.79	0.92	High
5	Capacity-building programs provided by the LGU of Sta. Cruz support the long-term development and sustainability of Kesong Puti producers.	3.00	0.82	High
Overall Mean		2.93	0.79	High

Legend N=19, mean scores ranging from 3.37–4.00 were interpreted as **Very High (VH)**, indicating strong consensus and very favorable perceptions; scores from 3.00–3.36 as **High (H)**, reflecting general agreement and favorable perceptions; scores from 2.50–2.99 as **Moderate (M)**, showing mixed agreement and average perceptions; scores from 2.00–2.49 as **Low (L)**, denoting disagreement and weak perceptions; and scores from 1.00–1.99 as **Very Low (VL)**, signifying strong disagreement and very unfavorable perceptions.

Table 3 presents the level of training and capacity building by producers and sellers across five indicators, with an average of 2.79 to 3.05, indicating a high level of agreement amongst the respondents. The mean of capacity-building initiatives ($M=3.05$, $SD=0.85$) was the highest, which shows that this aspect of training is comparatively

more visible or available, and the mean of activities that incorporate updated techniques and hygiene standards ($M=2.79$, $SD=0.92$) was the lowest, which means that fewer capacity-building initiatives were observed and more heterogeneous experiences were experienced. The rest of the indicators displayed similar medium means, which denotes the same perception of training implementation. Standard deviations ranging from 0.81 to 0.92 reflect variations in respondents' experiences and may be due to differences in access or participation. A notation of a total correlation between these variables shows a mean of 2.93 (SD 0.79). The mean reflected a modest, yet consistent, relationship, indicating that the training and capacity-building dimensions are related.

According to the results, training and capacity-building programs are present, but they might not be deep, consistent, or accessible enough. In line with this observation, Mwadzangangi et al. (2025) underline that innovations and operational capacities among agricultural actors are significantly increased by means of training, coaching, and learning interventions; however, the effect of such interventions is contingent on sufficiency, regularity, and relevance in practical implementation of the programs. This suggests that effectiveness depends on how well training is delivered. As a result, the moderate scores observed in the present study may reflect minimal experience with either extensive or ongoing training programs. On the same note, it has been proven that capacity-building activities should be incorporated into broader systems of support to achieve more demanding outcomes. Hossain et al. (2025) conclude that training with support infrastructure and financial aid could lead to significant increases in market participation and income among small-scale producers in the Philippines and emphasize that training alone might not be sufficient to achieve high performance. This observation confirms the moderate mean, indicating that, though there is training, no complementary resources seem to exist.

Additionally, capacity-building is closely associated with the development of capabilities used for innovation and competitiveness. Service-innovation capability developed through formal training, according to Khan et al. (2024), is an important contributor toward improving the sustainable performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Therefore, as demonstrated by the results of this research, the medium range of building capacity may limit producers' ability to maximize their capacity and increase competitiveness through innovation in the marketplace to the greatest extent possible.

Generating an enabling environment is also essential in an agro-based setting. Strong institutional support and collaborative community participation play a crucial role in enhancing the sustainability and competitiveness of local agricultural industries. By exhibiting that the synergy between the support of the government and community-level initiatives is effective in building capacity, Zhang et al (2024) improve the adoption of knowledge, technology, and productivity of smallholders. The findings of the current study therefore suggest that such multi-actor support systems are not fully implemented, resulting in moderate outcomes. Moreover, training is needed to strengthen the supply chain's capabilities and improve economic viability. Israela and Siwandeti (2024) emphasize that producers' ability to respond to market dynamics and price-setting mechanisms in agri-food supply chains can be enhanced through targeted training programs that raise producers' knowledge levels.

Generally, the findings indicate that although training and capacity-building programs currently exist among producers and sellers, there is a sense of urgency to launch more thorough, sustained, and integrated programs. The interventions in question, especially multi-sectoral support, combining training methods in practice, and integrating resources, may improve skills and innovation levels, as well as overall field performance.

In addition, strengthening feedback mechanisms between LGUs and stakeholders may help ensure that future training programs are more responsive, targeted, and aligned with producers' and sellers' actual needs. This can be done through regular consultations, post-training evaluations, and structured communication channels that allow producers to directly express their challenges, gaps, and recommendations. By regularly getting feedback, LGUs can improve training content, change how it is delivered, and focus on the most needed skills.

Table 4. Public-Private Partnerships for Kesong Puti Promotion and Tourism

No.	Indicators	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
1	Collaboration between the LGU of Sta. Cruz and private businesses strengthens the Kesong Puti industry through joint promotion, marketing, and distribution initiatives.	3.05	0.62	High
2	Partnerships involving the LGU of Sta. Cruz, non-government organizations (NGOs), and community groups improve the planning and implementation of Kesong Puti-related programs.	3.00	0.82	High
3	Coordination among local stakeholders contributes to tourism promotion and the expansion of local and regional markets for Kesong Puti products.	3.21	0.71	High
4	Private sector participation provides Kesong Puti producers in Sta. Cruz with additional resources, technical support, and business opportunities.	3.05	0.85	High
5	The LGU of Sta. Cruz effectively coordinates and sustains partnerships to support long-term Kesong Puti promotion, tourism development, and industry growth.	3.11	0.81	High
Overall Mean		3.08	0.69	High

Legend N=19, mean scores ranging from 3.37–4.00 were interpreted as Very High (VH), indicating strong consensus and very favorable perceptions; scores from 3.00–3.36 as High (H), reflecting general agreement and favorable perceptions; scores from 2.50–2.99 as Moderate (M), showing mixed agreement and average perceptions; scores from 2.00–2.49 as Low (L), denoting disagreement and weak perceptions; and scores from 1.00–1.99 as Very Low (VL), signifying strong disagreement and very unfavorable perceptions.

According to the results provided in Table 4, the respondents tend to agree that the concept of public-private partnerships (PPP) has a significant role to play in promoting kesong puti and tourism, as revealed by the mean scores of between 3.00 and 3.21. Coordination on tourism and market reach ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.71$) has the highest mean value, and this implies that the respondents significantly contribute to this organizational effort to promote tourism and share resources between the government and privatized organizations. This reflects the importance of collaboration in tourism promotion.

Similarly, other variables achieved scores above 3.00, indicating a uniform perception that PPPs have a positive impact on various aspects of tourism development, such as marketing, infrastructure, and stakeholder collaboration. Partnerships with NGOs/community groups ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 0.81$) support the idea that, despite awareness of PPPs, some respondents see the prospects for enhancing or further diversifying partnerships.

The standard deviations (0.62–0.85) are moderate and may result from variation in exposure to the projects or in partner quality. The overall mean, ($M = 3.0842$, $SD = 0.69062$) summarizes the general trend of association among the PPP indicators, which speaks of an integrated assessment that there is a strong appraisal of collaboration between the government and the business in the context of associated measures.

The current findings align with the empirical literature, which shows that public-private partnerships (PPPs) have been widely used to promote tourism development through the integration of resources, skills, and funds. For example, research in the agritourism environment also shows that PPPs are effective in infrastructure development, promotion activities, and community interaction, which are major aspects of destination marketing, but challenges such as policy ambiguity and stakeholder coordination persist (Thanh & Lee, 2025).

Tourism governance studies also highlight that PPP agreements increase managerial efficiency and resource transfer in tourism administration and marketing of tourism attractions, a result consistent with respondents' moderate to strong approval of the merits of partnership (Muhammad et al., 2021). These partnerships also help improve coordination among stakeholders involved in tourism development.

Furthermore, according to the sectoral analysis, active implementation of collaborative PPP strategies in the tourism sector is intended to expand market reach and attract tourists, thereby intensifying competitiveness and visibility in the global tourism environment (VietnamPlus, 2025). PPPs in the tourism sector empower communities, provide technical support, and drive economic growth, which, in effect, justifies participants' positive perceptions of partnership roles (Abdulloh et al., 2025). These partnerships also encourage innovation and resource-sharing among stakeholders, enabling local tourism enterprises to improve the quality of their services and products. As collaboration between the public and private sectors becomes more effective, communities are provided with greater opportunities for sustainable livelihood and long-term tourism development.

Lastly, studies on tourism resiliency focus on the need to increase stakeholders' active involvement and policy cohesion to enhance partnerships, which can explain some differences in perceptions, as captured in the standardized deviations in the table (Kimaro & Saarinen, 2025). This highlights the importance of coordinated stakeholder engagement in achieving more consistent and resilient tourism outcomes. These results suggest that while PPPs are already recognized as effective mechanisms for tourism promotion, there is still room to strengthen coordination, expand inclusive participation, and improve implementation strategies to maximize their full potential in local economic and cultural development. This improvement can support long-term tourism development in the community. Better cooperation among stakeholders can also help sustain tourism programs.

Table 5. Alignment and Inclusion of the Kesong Puti Festival of the Kesong Puti Festival in the LGU Tourism Master Plan and Strategic Development Plan

No.	Indicators	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
1	Kesong Puti is featured in events during the Kesong Puti Festival.	3.47	0.51	Very High
2	Kesong Puti is readily available during the Kesong Puti Festival.	3.47	0.61	Very High
3	The LGU's Tourism Master Plan effectively incorporates the Kesong Puti Festival in terms of planning, promotion, and integration with other tourism initiatives.	3.32	0.58	High
4	The LGU's Strategic Development Plan supports and promotes the growth of the Kesong Puti Festival as a cultural and economic asset.	3.21	0.63	High
5	The inclusion of the Kesong Puti Festival in LGU plans strengthens local cultural identity and attracts tourism revenue.	3.37	0.60	High
Overall Mean		3.37	0.53	High

Legend N=19, mean scores ranging from 3.37–4.00 were interpreted as Very High (VH), indicating strong consensus and very favorable perceptions; scores from 3.00–3.36 as High (H), reflecting general agreement and favorable perceptions; scores from 2.50–2.99 as Moderate (M), showing mixed agreement and average perceptions; scores from 2.00–2.49 as Low (L), denoting disagreement and weak perceptions; and scores from 1.00–1.99 as Very Low (VL), signifying strong disagreement and very unfavorable perceptions.

In Table 5, the respondents are found to be in a high level of agreement in terms of alignment and inclusion of Kesong Puti Festival within the Local Government Unit (LGU) tourism master plan and strategic development plan, with an overall mean of between 3.2105 and 3.4737. The best average scores were achieved by featuring Kesong Puti in festivals and the availability of Kesong puti during the festival (both 3.47), hence the perception of

the festival being successfully incorporated into official planning documents and strategic objectives includes its importance as seen in its perceived worth to tourism development. Other measures, such as the Tourism Master Plan (M=3.31) and the Inclusion of cultural identity and tourism revenue (M=3.37), also show an overall high average across reports, suggesting that planning processes for the festival were valued in terms of local tourism outcomes.

Even though the degree of agreement between the Strategic Development Plan and the Kesong Puti Festival (M = 3.2105) is lower, it still indicates a positive alignment with the festival's goals, set on a broader strategic plane. The standard deviations are low (0.51-0.63), indicating that respondents give similar answers, and the correlation between all indicators is substantial, indicating that the perception of alignment tends to co-vary. The findings are not new, as the literature is conclusive that strategic planning where cultural festivals are incorporated in tourism development boosts destination attraction and economic returns.

As stressed by Ramely et al. (2025), the local support for festivals, when integrated into regular planning and strategic programs, is key to the sustainability of tourism; thus, this combination promotes community attachment and perceived positive outcomes from tourism development. Studies on festival tourism planning also emphasize the importance of strategic frameworks that align cultural events with overall tourism plans, noting that this helps promote sustainable development, multicultural preservation, and destination branding (Fang et al., 2025). This also strengthens the long-term value of festivals in local tourism development. In addition, effective festival planning can encourage greater community participation and attract more visitors to the area. These frameworks also provide guidance for stakeholders in coordinating resources and ensuring effective implementation.

Moreover, they support long-term planning by integrating cultural assets into broader economic and tourism development strategies.

Table 6. Rising Cost and Limited Supply of Carabao Milk

No.	Indicators	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
1	The rising cost of carabao milk makes it difficult for Kesong Puti producers in Sta. Cruz to sustain regular production.	3.47	0.51	Very High
2	The limited supply of carabao milk affects the ability of producers to meet the demand for Kesong Puti.	3.47	0.51	Very High
3	Inconsistent availability of carabao milk disrupts continuous Kesong Puti production.	3.47	0.51	Very High
4	High carabao milk prices reduce the profitability of Kesong Puti production despite existing LGU support.	3.47	0.51	Very High
5	The limited and costly supply of carabao milk remains a major challenge to the success of LGU-supported Kesong Puti initiatives in Sta. Cruz.	3.47	0.51	Very High
Overall Mean		3.43	0.50	Very High

Legend N=19, mean scores ranging from 3.37–4.00 were interpreted as Very High (VH), indicating strong consensus and very favorable perceptions; scores from 3.00–3.36 as High (H), reflecting general agreement and favorable perceptions; scores from 2.50–2.99 as Moderate (M), showing mixed agreement and average perceptions; scores from 2.00–2.49 as Low (L), denoting disagreement and weak perceptions; and scores from 1.00–1.99 as Very Low (VL), signifying strong disagreement and very unfavorable perceptions.

As seen in Table 6, the respondents mostly agree that rising costs and limited supply are major problems, with a

mean score between 3.32 and 3.47, indicating a common perception across all respondents on all indicators. The highest levels of agreement are detected in variables, such as rising cost, which makes production difficult, and limited supply affects demand fulfillment, and Inconsistent availability disrupts production ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 0.51$), which indicates the prevalence of the price increase and the unavailability of supplies. Limited supply affects demand fulfillment ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.51$), which is slightly above that, also supports the idea of cost pressures being also significant, and the variable high prices reduce profitability ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.67$), although slightly lower, still speaks in favor of the fact that there is much reason to be concerned with the issue of supply constraints.

This is indicated by the relatively low standard deviations, suggesting a relatively homogeneous perception of these challenges among the respondents. Also, the overall mean ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.50$) indicates a general correlational pattern between these variables, describing a strong and coherent degree of fear of rising prices and a limited milk supply. Research findings suggest that the rising costs are associated with varying feed prices and high production costs for smallholder dairy farmers. Dairy farmers are not assured of competitively priced and reliable inputs, and there is inefficiency in the supply chains for these inputs. This shows consistent concerns across respondents. Thus, a smaller amount of milk would be able to enter the market, given the restricted volume of milk produced by cattle. (Annor & Delima, 2024) In addition, Gracia & Trivino's (2024) literature indicates that small dairy farmers face difficulties due to low productivity per animal. This low productivity, combined with relatively high feed and animal care costs, reduces the overall milk production. In conclusion, rising input costs (i.e., feed and labour) have a greater economic impact on farmers and make it difficult for them, making it likely that producers will reduce herd sizes or production. This ultimately threatens the long-term sustainability of smallholder dairy farming. These constraints directly affect production efficiency and market supply stability. Over time, they may discourage continued dairy farming among smallholders. This further weakens the resilience of smallholder dairy systems.

No.	Indicators	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
1	Kesong Puti producers and sellers in Sta. Cruz lack access to advanced technical knowledge needed to improve product quality.	3.26	0.56	High
2	Limited training opportunities affect the ability of producers and sellers to learn and apply modern Kesong Puti production techniques.	3.21	0.54	High
3	Gaps in technical and business skills hinder producers from scaling up Kesong Puti production efficiently.	3.21	0.54	High
4	The LGU of Sta. Cruz has limited technical experts or resource persons to provide continuous guidance to Kesong Puti producers and sellers.	3.32	0.58	High
5	Limited exposure to industry best practices affects the competitiveness of the Kesong Puti industry in Sta. Cruz.	3.32	0.58	High
Overall Mean		3.26	0.51	High

Legend N=19, mean scores ranging from 3.37–4.00 were interpreted as Very High (VH), indicating strong consensus and very favorable perceptions; scores from 3.00–3.36 as High (H), reflecting general agreement and favorable perceptions; scores from 2.50–2.99 as Moderate (M), showing mixed agreement and average perceptions; scores from 2.00–2.49 as Low (L), denoting disagreement and weak perceptions; and scores from 1.00–1.99 as Very Low (VL), signifying strong disagreement and very unfavorable perceptions.

According to Table 7, the respondents agree that there are restrictions on both technical and business capabilities for producers and sellers, with a mean score of 3.21-3.32, indicating a high level of agreement. The indicators with the highest rating, which are LGU's limited technical expert for guidance and limited exposure, reduce competitiveness ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.58$), imply that more advanced or specific competencies are not present, whereas

Limited training opportunities and Gaps in skills ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.54$) imply that such gaps are observed in all the respondents. The existence of these limitations is also proved by producers' lack of technical knowledge ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 0.56$). The standard deviations are relatively low, suggesting that there are no changes in perceptions, whereas the correlation, ($M = 3.2632$, $SD = 0.51230$), implies that the specified issues related to the skills are interconnected on various levels of production and selling.

OECD (2021) also backs these findings, noting that, due to issues with investment and familiarity with the required skills, SMEs are often unable to grow and adapt, which is why respondents find it apparent that their skills gaps exist. Similarly, Kotsios (2023) found that critical business skills, such as financial management, planning, and communication, are typically unavailable in SMEs, which has a direct impact on enterprise performance and resilience. Moreover, he stated that poor technical knowledge is one of the biggest obstacles to SME underperformance and sustainability, which supports the agreement in the table. This highlights skills gaps as a key barrier to SME growth.

Last but not least, Efendi et al. (2020) explained that the absence of innovation and competitiveness depends on organizational learning and skill development; i.e., both can cause stagnation and an inability to enter the market. In general, the findings point to insufficient technical and business expertise as a persistent and meaningful obstacle between producers and sellers. This further limits opportunities for growth and market expansion.

To address these challenges, it is essential for LGUs and partner institutions to strengthen training programs, technical assistance, and knowledge-sharing initiatives tailored to producers' and sellers' needs. Enhancing access to capacity-building opportunities, mentorship, and market exposure can help bridge existing skill gaps, improve productivity, and foster innovation.

Table 8. Weak Coordination between LGU, Producers, and Sellers

No.	Indicators	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
1	Communication gaps exist between Kesong Puti producers, sellers, the LGU of Sta. Cruz, and partner organizations.	3.11	0.57	High
2	Inconsistent coordination among the LGU, producers, and sellers affects the smooth and timely implementation of Kesong Puti-related programs.	3.21	0.63	High
3	Differences in priorities among stakeholders lead to delays or inefficiencies in program planning and execution.	3.26	0.56	High
4	Limited collaboration among stakeholders reduces opportunities for collective problem-solving and shared decision-making.	3.32	0.58	High
5	Weak coordination affects the effective integration of Kesong Puti initiatives into the tourism and local economic development plans of Sta. Cruz.	3.16	0.69	High
Overall Mean		3.21	0.56	High

Legend $N=19$, mean scores ranging from 3.37–4.00 were interpreted as Very High (VH), indicating strong consensus and very favorable perceptions; scores from 3.00–3.36 as High (H), reflecting general agreement and favorable perceptions; scores from 2.50–2.99 as Moderate (M), showing mixed agreement and average perceptions; scores from 2.00–2.49 as Low (L), denoting disagreement and weak perceptions; and scores from 1.00–1.99 as Very Low (VL), signifying strong disagreement and very unfavorable perceptions.

Table 8 reveals that the respondents concur that there was weak coordination between the LGU, the producers of the products, and the sellers, with the mean score of 3.11 and the mean score of 3.32. According to the

highest mean, limited collaboration reduces problem-solving ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 0.58$) indicates that the most obvious areas of discrepancies in coordination are specific collaborative processes, and the fact that the means of differences in priorities cause delays ($M = 3.26$) and inconsistent coordination ($M = 3.21$) are not different indicates that the problem of communication and joint planning is frequently encountered. The other indicators also show similar consistency in agreement and low standard deviations, indicating similarity in perceptions. The correlation ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.56$) indicates that these coordination problems are multivariate, with stakeholders' interactions correlating.

These results are discussed in the Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory (2021), which found that collaborative governance involves constant communication, trust, and mutual motivation, and that weak coordination results from the lack of these factors. Likewise, the moderate-to-high perception of coordination gaps is linked to the explanation offered by Bianchi et al. (2021), as fragmented coordination decreases the effectiveness of government service delivery. This emphasizes that coordination failures directly weaken overall governance performance.

In general, all the findings reveal that poor coordination is a persistent issue between the LGU, producers, and sellers. They need to reinforce communication, stakeholder interaction, and sharing mechanisms to make implementation better and allow the sustainability of programs in the industry of Kesong Puti. Strengthening partnerships among stakeholders can improve the effectiveness of local initiatives. This is essential for ensuring more coordinated and sustainable program implementation.

Table 9. Lack of Knowledge on Tourism Promotion and Regulations Specifically for Tourism Officers

No.	Indicators	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
1	Tourism officers are knowledgeable about local tourism promotion strategies.	3.31	0.58	High
2	Tourism officers are effective in implementing tourism promotion programs.	3.26	0.56	High
3	Tourism officers understand LGU regulatory policies for tourism.	3.37	0.50	High
4	Tourism officers are trained in modern tourism promotion techniques.	3.31	0.48	High
5	Tourism officers keep up-to-date with changes in tourism laws and regulations.	3.31	0.48	High
Overall Mean		3.31	0.50	High

Legend $N=19$, mean scores ranging from 3.37–4.00 were interpreted as Very High (VH), indicating strong consensus and very favorable perceptions; scores from 3.00–3.36 as High (H), reflecting general agreement and favorable perceptions; scores from 2.50–2.99 as Moderate (M), showing mixed agreement and average perceptions; scores from 2.00–2.49 as Low (L), denoting disagreement and weak perceptions; and scores from 1.00–1.99 as Very Low (VL), signifying strong disagreement and very unfavorable perceptions.

Table 9 presents the findings, with respondents indicating limitations on the part of tourist officers in terms of knowledge of tourism promotion and regulations, with mean values ranging from 3.26 to 3.37. The highest rated indicator, Tourism understand LGU regulatory ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 0.50$), indicates that gaps in regulatory understanding are particularly noticeable, while tourism officers training in modern tourism, tourism officers keep up-to-date with changes in tourism laws and regulations, and tourism knowledge about local tourism promotion strategies(all with $M = 3.3158$) indicate that gaps in knowledge in promotional strategies and regulatory frameworks are generally perceived by officers. This suggests a need for stronger training and upskilling of tourism officers.

The low standard deviations indicate a consistent response amongst respondents, with the overall mean ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 0.50$) representing the correlation pattern, indicating that the knowledge challenges are strongly linked across multiple aspects of tourism roles. These results agree with Bindawas (2025) stressed that developing employee competencies, including strategic and technical skills, is critical to sustainable tourism development, as without adequate training, officers may lack essential knowledge of promotion and regulation. A similar focus is evident in Booyens (2020), in which the author demonstrated that education and skills training are core challenges in the tourism workforce, and that employment outcomes in the tourism sector depend on stronger sector-specific knowledge and training.

According to the findings of Stangl et al. (2024), transferable skills, including communication, regulatory knowledge, and adaptive management, will support the long-term sustainable development of tourism sectors and explain why respondents continue to perceive knowledge gaps among tourism officers. This underscores the importance of continuous capacity development for tourism personnel.

Further, several researchers have shown the significance of a skilled workforce to tourism resilience; moreover, tourism workforce development research will demonstrate what tourism knowledge is (e.g., governance and promotion) and why it's essential for tourism knowledge to influence the extent to which policies are implemented at destinations. For example, the comprehensive review by Ladkin et al. (2023) on tourism employment and workforce highlights that workforce training and skills development are among the most pressing needs for the tourism industry in the aftermath of global disruptions. Finally, there has also been wider research on human resource development, such as Utami et al. (2025) in rural tourism contexts, that revealed gaps in promotional knowledge and tourism management practices among stakeholders, including local officers, which also constrain the growth of the destinations, and this calls for coordinated educational strategies to address such deficits.

Overall, the results suggest that a lack of knowledge in tourism promotion and regulatory frameworks is a major and persistent challenge for tourism officers. Strengthening focused training, regulatory education, and skills development is critical to enhancing the effectiveness of tourism programs and better supporting the promotion of Kesong Puti and other local tourism initiatives.

Table 10. Growing Tourism Interest and Market Demand for Kesong Puti

No.	Indicators	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
1	Increasing consumer demand for local products in Sta. Cruz positively impacts the growth of the Kesong Puti industry.	3.42	0.51	Very High
2	Tourism activities and events in Sta. Cruz create more sales and market opportunities for local Kesong Puti producers.	3.42	0.51	Very High
3	The town's local food heritage attracts visitors and potential business partners for Kesong Puti products.	3.42	0.51	Very High
4	Current market trends favor artisanal and culturally unique products like Kesong Puti, benefiting producers in Sta. Cruz.	3.37	0.60	High
5	Rising tourism and related promotions increase the visibility of Sta. Cruz as the recognized Home of Kesong Puti.	3.42	0.50	Very High
Overall Mean		3.41	0.52	Very High

Legend N=19, mean scores ranging from 3.37–4.00 were interpreted as Very High (VH), indicating strong consensus and very favorable perceptions; scores from 3.00–3.36 as High (H), reflecting general agreement and favorable perceptions; scores from 2.50–2.99 as Moderate (M), showing mixed agreement and average perceptions; scores from 2.00–2.49 as Low (L), denoting disagreement and weak perceptions; and scores from

1.00–1.99 as Very Low (VL), signifying strong disagreement and very unfavorable perceptions.

Table 10 indicates that respondents perceive that interest in tourism and market demand for kesong puti are rising, as the mean scores are closely clustered around 3.37 to 3.42, suggesting a consistent perception of rising demand. The occurrence of high means for increasing consumer demand, tourism activities, local food heritage, and rising tourism (all $M = 3.42$) indicates that respondents perceive a strong tendency for cultural tourism motivations and consumer interest to be towards kesong puti. Meanwhile, Market trends favor artisanal products like Kesong Puti ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 0.60$) shows the same pattern with minor variation. The overall pattern ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.52$), which reflects the correlation among various indicators, further demonstrates a cohesive view that tourism interest and market demand are increasing for this local product.

These perceptions fit modern research on food and cultural tourism: According to Lin et al. (2025) tourists are increasingly shown to be attracted to destinations based on the local food culture, where the food itself becomes one of the key tourist attractions that determine choices and patterns of travel demand, it is just another factor reinforcing why the respondents see kesong puti as part of a growing tourism market. This highlights the growing role of local cuisine in shaping tourism demand.

Likewise, the study by Apak and Gurbuz (2023) found that local food consumption is significant for sustainable tourism development among domestic tourists. Moreover, the study also indicated the importance of local products in terms of fulfilling the demands of tourists as well as promoting tourism. Supporting this trend, Stalmirska (2024) said that local food products are an indigenous part of the destination experience and its marketing, enhancing visitor interest and encouraging deeper engagement with the destination's culture and identity, which parallels the growing interest in Kesong Puti. Furthermore, research conducted by Jalis et al. (2024) revealed that the quality of local food and the cultural value significantly influence the experience of domestic tourists towards travel decisions, which may reiterate the contention that the increased market seeking is an indication of broad consumers' behavior preferences related to local specialties. These findings highlight the growing role of local food products in strengthening tourism and cultural identity.

Table 11. Active Community Participation in Kesong Puti-Related Activities

No.	Indicators	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
1	Active participation of Sta. Cruz residents strengthens the preservation of Kesong Puti production traditions.	3.37	0.60	High
2	Local residents actively promote Kesong Puti through town events, festivals, and cultural programs.	3.42	0.51	High
3	Community support enhances the effectiveness and legitimacy of LGU-led Kesong Puti initiatives.	3.42	0.51	High
4	Engagement of youth organizations and local groups helps sustain the cultural continuity of Kesong Puti in Sta. Cruz.	3.42	0.51	High
5	Strong community involvement in Kesong Puti activities increases local pride and reinforces Sta. Cruz's cultural identity.	3.42	0.51	High
Overall Mean		3.41	0.52	High

Legend $N=19$, mean scores ranging from 3.37–4.00 were interpreted as Very High (VH), indicating strong consensus and very favorable perceptions; scores from 3.00–3.36 as High (H), reflecting general agreement and favorable perceptions; scores from 2.50–2.99 as Moderate (M), showing mixed agreement and average perceptions; scores from 2.00–2.49 as Low (L), denoting disagreement and weak perceptions; and scores from 1.00–1.99 as Very Low (VL), signifying strong disagreement and very unfavorable perceptions.

Table 11 shows strong consensus among respondents regarding the community's active participation in Kesong

Puti's activities, with scores ranging from 3.37 to 3.42. The highest mean scores, locals actively promote Kesong Puti through events, community support, youth organizations sustain cultural continuity, and strong involvement (all measures = 3.42, standard deviation (SD) = 0.51), illustrate that community members are most engaged in diverse activities, such as supporting production, participating in promotional events, and attending festivals. Community involvement is widely evident across various aspects of participation (M = 3.37, SD = 0.60). Pattern aggregate (overall mean, M=3.41, SD=0.52) reveals the existence of a positive perception that active participation in the Kesong Puti activity and event.

According to recent studies, such as those conducted by Hurdawaty et al. (2020), local communities play a key role in developing and sustaining tourism. Their research demonstrates that when community members are actively engaged in tourism activities (e.g., marketing and caring for heritage sites), they gain power and enable future tourism in the community. Community member engagement is regarded as having extremely high value. This shows that community involvement is vital for sustainable tourism.

Sakawati et al. (2022) also observe that collaboration and community involvement are indispensable for attaining inclusive growth and corresponding shared benefits, thereby supporting the high degree of agreement with the currently studied engagement indicators. Sosa, Aulet, and Mundet (2021) stressed the community's involvement in food tourism and gastronomy projects, which play a significant role in sustainable tourism and local empowerment, and which, according to the concept of Kesong Puti production and promotion, and of integration of stakeholders at multiple levels.

Reindrawati's (2023) study of participation challenges in the planning of sustainable tourism has highlighted that when communities are actively involved in decision-making and the implementation of various tourism programs, tourism outcomes are usually more favorable and equitable, which reinforces the respondents' active participation in tourism. This emphasizes the importance of community engagement in achieving sustainable and inclusive tourism development.

Table 12. Technical and Financial Support from Provincial, Regional, and National Agencies

No.	Indicators	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
1	Technical and financial assistance from provincial, regional, and national agencies strengthens the LGU of Sta. Cruz's Kesong Puti programs.	3.37	0.60	High
2	Support from external agencies provides Sta. Cruz Kesong Puti producers with valuable training, funding, and technical expertise.	3.42	0.61	High
3	Collaboration between the LGU of Sta. Cruz and higher-level agencies expands opportunities for local Kesong Puti industry development.	3.37	0.50	High
4	National-level promotion programs increase the visibility of Kesong Puti beyond Sta. Cruz, attracting tourists and potential business partners.	3.37	0.50	High
5	Multi-level government support contributes to the long-term sustainability and growth of Kesong Puti-related initiatives in Sta. Cruz.	3.37	0.50	High
Overall Mean		3.38	0.49	High

Legend N=19, mean scores ranging from 3.37–4.00 were interpreted as Very High (VH), indicating strong

consensus and very favorable perceptions; scores from 3.00–3.36 as High (H), reflecting general agreement and favorable perceptions; scores from 2.50–2.99 as Moderate (M), showing mixed agreement and average perceptions; scores from 2.00–2.49 as Low (L), denoting disagreement and weak perceptions; and scores from 1.00–1.99 as Very Low (VL), signifying strong disagreement and very unfavorable perceptions.

Table 12 shows that respondents agree that the technical and financial aid provided by provincial, regional, and national agencies is a key factor in the development of the kesong puti industry, with mean scores of 3.37 to 3.42. The highest obtained mean ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.61$), suggests that financial aid mechanisms are perceived as being comparatively more accessible or effective, while other indicators (all $M = 3.3684$) indicate a uniform degree of agreement that both technical support and capacity building support are offered across different government levels. The relatively low standard deviations confirm the homogeneity of respondents' perceptions and the overall mean ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.49$). The overall correlation indicates that the technical and financial supports are likely to co-occur, which strengthens the perceived nature of multifaceted agency support.

These findings are consistent with the study of Achmad et al. (2023), which showed that comprehensive support frameworks, such as infrastructure, stakeholder involvement, and operational assistance, significantly improve the performance of tourism industries while strengthening the capacity to enhance tourism in the region, hence implying that technical and financial support from tourism agencies can improve the performance of local tourism.

Likewise, Krittayarungroj et al. (2023) stressed that the successful implementation of tourism development depends on strong institutional support, including government-led capacity building and resource facilitation, findings consistent with respondents' views on the role of agencies. Supera et al. (2024) also noted that providing structured financial assistance, capacity building, and technical assistance in relation to the Philippines rural tourism will allow local communities to maximize the socio-economic benefits of tourism.

Casado- Aranda et al. (2021) also argued that coordinated governance models and multi-agency participation (including public agencies) are essential to providing long-term continuity and recovery of tourism, thereby highlighting how collaborative actions between regional/national agencies and local stakeholders can help sustain tourism programs. Finally, Andriansyah et al. (2024) confirm that tourism policies should encourage micro-entrepreneurs by providing access to credit, technical training, and links to financial institutions, consistent with the responses from this study, which indicated that these supports are in place and beneficial.

Table 13. Sustainability of Production and Supply Chain

No.	Indicators	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
1	Programs and initiatives of the LGU of Sta. Cruz help ensure a stable and continuous supply of raw materials for Kesong Puti production.	3.26	0.45	High
2	LGU-supported initiatives have improved the consistency and reliability of Kesong Puti production processes over time.	3.26	0.45	High
3	Long-term assistance from the LGU of Sta. Cruz contributes to the gradual modernization and improvement of Kesong Puti production methods.	3.21	0.54	High
4	LGU efforts strengthen coordination and partnerships among milk suppliers, Kesong Puti producers, and sellers within the local supply chain.	3.26	0.45	High
5	Programs implemented by the LGU of Sta. Cruz promote sustainable and environmentally responsible practices in Kesong Puti production.	3.26	0.56	High
Overall Mean		3.25	0.47	High

Legend N=19, mean scores ranging from 3.37–4.00 were interpreted as Very High (VH), indicating strong consensus and very favorable perceptions; scores from 3.00–3.36 as High (H), reflecting general agreement and favorable perceptions; scores from 2.50–2.99 as Moderate (M), showing mixed agreement and average perceptions; scores from 2.00–2.49 as Low (L), denoting disagreement and weak perceptions; and scores from 1.00–1.99 as Very Low (VL), signifying strong disagreement and very unfavorable perceptions.

Table 13 shows that, in general, the respondents agree that the kesong puti production and supply chain is sustainable, as the mean scores ranged from 3.21 to 3.26. The indicators LGU programs ensure a stable supply of raw materials, initiatives improve consistency of production, LGU strengthens coordination, and programs promote sustainable practices ($M = 3.26$) imply the constant perceptions of the production processes, supply relationships, and chain practices as being upheld in a way that they are perceived to be sustainable.

On the other hand, responses to some sustainability variables show variation, as represented by long-term assistance with modernized production methods ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.54$). The total measure ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 0.47$) representing the pattern of correlations shows that these aspects are considered by stakeholders to be interrelated elements of sustainability in the kesong puti supply chain.

These views are consistent with the results of Raftowicz, Solarz, and Dradrach (2024), who assumed that short food supply chains (with the analogy to localized dairy and artisanal product systems) would lead to sustainable rural development through strengthening social and economic relationships and decreasing reliance on long and ineffective chains, explaining why the respondents consider the supply chain comparatively sustainable.

To achieve this, Jia et al. (2024) found that the participation of local producers, as well as the reduction of inefficiencies in resilient and sustainable food systems based on short supply chains, produce positive results in terms of economics, environment, and society, which is agreeable to a very high degree among the respondents on average. Additionally, Borsotto et al. (2023) emphasized that the presence of various economic, social, and environmental indicators is essential for evaluating sustainability in short food supply chains, demonstrating that well-structured local production systems can supplement the sustainability of food chains through producer networks and stakeholder incentive alignment.

Within the wider frame of sustainable food systems, Raftowicz et al. (2024) found that consumer attitudes towards short food supply chains are becoming more positive when these food systems demonstrate a high level of sustainability, which confirms that sustainability in production adds to the market demand and support that occurs in the community, which is also true of the perceptions of this study.

Lastly, Jia et al. (2024) stressed that short food supply chains contribute to the economic development of the area and to the environmental aims due to minimized transportation distances and direct producer-consumer connections, which help to clarify the statement that, as a rule, respondents agree that the kesong puti supply chain practices are sustainable.

In general, the supply chain of kesong puti is perceived by stakeholders as moderately to strongly sustainable, and this opinion is consistent regardless of the production-distribution-chain relationship. This informs broader studies that localized, short supply chains, common in artisanal products, are important for balancing economic, social, and environmental aspects of supply chain sustainability. This may further strengthen the sustainability and competitiveness of Kesong Puti.

In addition, strengthening institutional support, improving access to modern production technologies, and enhancing long-term capacity-building programs can further reinforce the sustainability of the *kesong puti* supply chain. Continuous collaboration among LGU, producers, and stakeholders is also essential to ensure resilience, improve efficiency, and sustain the cultural and economic value of *kesong puti* in Sta. Cruz, Laguna. These efforts also support adaptation to changing conditions.

Table 14. Effectiveness in Enhancing Local Enterprise Development and Market Reach

No.	Indicators	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
1	Programs and initiatives of the LGU of Sta. Cruz contribute to the growth and competitiveness of local Kesong Puti enterprises.	3.32	0.48	High
2	LGU-led initiatives have expanded local, regional, and external market opportunities for Kesong Puti producers in Sta. Cruz.	3.32	0.48	High
3	LGU programs help improve product branding, packaging, and overall market visibility of Kesong Puti.	3.21	0.63	High
4	Enterprise development activities supported by the LGU of Sta. Cruz strengthen the business management and marketing skills of Kesong Puti producers.	3.32	0.48	High
5	Support from the LGU of Sta. Cruz has contributed to increased local and regional demand for Kesong Puti products.	3.26	0.56	High
Overall Mean		3.28	0.50	High

Legend N=19, mean scores ranging from 3.37–4.00 were interpreted as Very High (VH), indicating strong consensus and very favorable perceptions; scores from 3.00–3.36 as High (H), reflecting general agreement and favorable perceptions; scores from 2.50–2.99 as Moderate (M), showing mixed agreement and average perceptions; scores from 2.00–2.49 as Low (L), denoting disagreement and weak perceptions; and scores from 1.00–1.99 as Very Low (VL), signifying strong disagreement and very unfavorable perceptions.

Table 14 shows that respondents generally agree that programs aimed at improving local enterprise development and expanding the market through kesong puti-related programs are effective; the mean scores range from 3.21 to 3.32. The indicators (all $M = 3.3158$, $SD = 0.48$) show that the activities Enterprise support, networking, and access to a wider market are perceived as strong contributors to business enhancement. Although programs improve branding and packaging ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 0.63$) and LGU supports increase demand for products ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 0.56$) show slightly lower agreement, the results indicate positive perceptions. The overall mean ($M = 3.2842$, $SD = 0.50471$) indicates that respondents are consistent in perceiving these combined activities as instrumental to the development of local business capacity and market outreach.

This is consistent with empirical evidence of the constructive effects of tourism/enterprise integration. Purnomo and Purwandari (2025) found that tourism MSME empowerment (through innovation, collaboration, governance, and capacity building) significantly improves local tourism and business development by connecting enterprise activities with tourism flows and community resources, corroborating a study's finding that local enterprises benefit from tourism-related initiatives that expand marketing reach. This integration also strengthens value chain linkages by increasing opportunities for local sourcing, employment, and income generation within the community.

Likewise, Mastuki et al. (2025) reported that tourism villages can serve as catalysts for the development of the MSME market by attracting tourists as consumers, who can then increase the visibility and competitiveness of products. Their research highlights the role of organized tourism environments in supporting local enterprises to improve access to markets and the uptake of innovation, which was in line with the moderately high level of agreement of the preceding table.

Furthermore, Mubarak (2025) indicated that small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTes) are major drivers of economic growth in the region, and focused marketing strategies enable SMTes to connect with tourists, thereby increasing the economic performance in the region. This explanation supports respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness in promoting enterprise development and reach. Moreover, research indicates that local tourism

development positively influences local economic prosperity and enterprise performance.

For instance, Li (2025) indicated that tourism prosperity positively influences high-quality development outcomes, suggesting that strong tourism outcomes also positively influence local enterprise development and market penetration. Lastly, Rahmi Efendi (2025) indicated that the contribution of touring MSMEs was significant in promoting local economic development through job creation, income generation, and increased regional income. The finding supports the perception that improving enterprise development and market reach is effective when tourism activities are combined with local business strategies.

These studies collectively emphasize that strengthening SMEs and MSMEs within the tourism ecosystem can create a multiplier effect on local economies. They also highlight the importance of integrating tourism promotion with entrepreneurship support programs to maximize inclusive growth. Furthermore, sustained collaboration between local businesses and tourism stakeholders is essential to ensure long-term competitiveness and resilience of the sector.

Table 15. Strengthening Sta. Cruz, Laguna’s Cultural Identity and Recognition as the Home of Kesong Puti

No.	Indicators	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
1	Initiatives of the LGU of Sta. Cruz have reinforced the town’s reputation as the Home of Kesong Puti locally and regionally.	3.32	0.48	High
2	Promotional campaigns by the LGU have increased public awareness of Sta. Cruz’s Kesong Puti heritage.	3.37	0.50	High
3	Events and festivals organized or supported by the LGU highlight the cultural significance of Kesong Puti in Sta. Cruz.	3.37	0.50	High
4	Community pride and recognition of Kesong Puti as part of Sta. Cruz’s cultural identity have grown due to LGU-led initiatives.	3.26	0.45	High
5	Efforts of the LGU of Sta. Cruz contribute to the long-term preservation and continuity of Kesong Puti traditions.	3.47	0.51	High
Overall Mean		3.36	0.41	High

Legend N=19, mean scores ranging from 3.37–4.00 were interpreted as Very High (VH), indicating strong consensus and very favorable perceptions; scores from 3.00–3.36 as High (H), reflecting general agreement and favorable perceptions; scores from 2.50–2.99 as Moderate (M), showing mixed agreement and average perceptions; scores from 2.00–2.49 as Low (L), denoting disagreement and weak perceptions; and scores from 1.00–1.99 as Very Low (VL), signifying strong disagreement and very unfavorable perceptions.

Table 15 shows that respondents agreed that the cultural identity and recognition of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, as the home of kesong puti, is being strengthened as the mean score ranges from 3.26 to 3.47. The highest mean, Efforts preserve Kesong Puti Traditions ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 0.51$), indicates that respondents perceive especially the identification of strong cultural recognition with kesong puti, whereas the remaining variables demonstrate consistent agreement with the positive relationship between the identity of the destination and the tradition, promotion, and community pride, and this local product. The overall measure ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 0.41$) indicates a cohesive perception that cultural identity and recognition are reinforced by cultural heritage and food tourism activities. These findings are consistent with those of Sanchez-Sanchaz et al. (2025), who report that participating in food tourism events strengthens the cultural identity of destinations by allowing visitors to engage with local traditions and culinary heritage, thereby contributing to higher levels of place identity and destination recognition.

Similarly, Duda (2024) states that culinary heritage routes - tourism products based on local foods and traditional dishes - play an important role in strengthening regional identity and allowing destinations to differentiate themselves both culturally and economically. In addition, Gallego et al. (2024) show that traditional cuisine and culinary culture play a central role in the construction and preservation of local identity in rural communities, as the foods that support a community can become symbolic of their cultural heritage and collective memory. This highlights how food tourism supports both economic and cultural sustainability.

In addition, Kizilgeci (2025) highlighted that gastronomic identity, formed by the foods (i.e., food products) associated with that area and the local/regional methods of food preparation, can be a very important element in establishing an image or brand for the destination. Finally, Satrio et al. (2025) focused on how the preservation of the local, authentic cuisine is a means of supporting the development of both cultural tourism and a sense of identity among the respondents, who believe that the greater the recognition of their culture, the more strongly they identify with their cultural traditions related specifically to food. Overall, the data revealed that community engagement with food heritage and culinary tourism activities positively impacts the development of Sta. Cruz's cultural identity as the birthplace of kesong puti and the recognition that goes with this identity, birthplace of kesong puti, in the eyes of the community and other stakeholders. The cultural attributes of a particular place and its potential for sustainable tourism.

Table 16. Relationship Between LGU Program Factors and Implementation Challenges and Opportunities

LGU PROGRAM FACTORS	Rising Cost & Limited Supply of Carabao Milk	Limited Technical & Business Skills	Weak Coordination	Lack of Tourism Knowledge	Growing Tourism Demand	Active Community Participation	External Technical & Financial Support
Municipal Policies and Ordinances	0.060	0.261	0.062	.552*	.680**	.652**	.713**
	0.807	0.280	0.801	0.014	0.001	0.002	0.001
	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
LGU Budget Allocation	0.017	0.298	0.032	0.420	.615**	.565*	.622**
	0.946	0.215	0.896	0.073	0.005	0.012	0.004
	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
Training & Capacity Building	0.276	.556*	0.354	0.296	.702**	.654**	.611**
	0.252	0.013	0.137	0.219	0.001	0.002	0.005
	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
Public-Private Partnerships	0.204	0.430	0.239	0.431	.717**	.674**	.689**
	0.402	0.066	0.324	0.066	0.001	0.002	0.001
	19	19	19	19	19	19	19
Festival Alignment in LGU Plans	.540*	.580**	0.301	0.175	.705**	.672**	.540*
	0.017	0.009	0.211	0.473	0.001	0.002	0.017

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 16 outlines the correlation between the LGU program determinants and the implementation problems and future opportunities. Municipal Policies and Ordinances have no significant relationship with rising cost and limited supply of carabao milk, limited technical and business skills, and weak coordination, but show strong positive relationships with lack of tourism knowledge and all opportunity factors, growing tourism demand, active

community participation, and external technical and financial support. This means policies help expand opportunities but do not directly address structural problems.

LGU Budget Allocation also shows weak relationships with challenges but strong positive relationships with growing tourism demand, active community participation, and external technical and financial support, indicating that funding primarily supports opportunities rather than addressing constraints. Training and Capacity Building is significantly related to limited technical and business skills and strongly associated with all opportunity factors. This suggests it directly addresses skills gaps while also enhancing opportunities. This implies that capacity-building efforts are both corrective and enabling, strengthening readiness while expanding development potential.

Public-Private Partnerships show weak relationships with challenges but strong positive relationships with all opportunity factors, indicating their role in creating opportunities rather than resolving structural issues. Festival Alignment in LGU Plans has significant relationships with rising cost and limited supply of carabao milk, limited technical and business skills, and with all opportunity factors. This implies it plays a dual role, both addressing challenges and strengthening opportunities. These findings suggest that LGU efforts are more effective in promoting tourism development and stakeholder engagement than in addressing underlying production and coordination issues.

Table 17. Relationship Between Implementation Challenges and Opportunities and the Effectiveness and Sustainability of LGU Programs for the Kesong Puti Industry

Challenges & Opportunities	Sustainability of Production & Supply Chain	Enterprise Development & Market Reach	Cultural Identity & Recognition
Rising Cost & Limited Supply of Carabao Milk	0.412	0.323	0.311
	0.080	0.177	0.194
	19	19	19
Limited Technical & Business Skills	.646**	.580**	.565*
	0.003	0.009	0.012
	19	19	19
Weak Coordination	.569*	.532*	.546*
	0.011	0.019	0.016
	19	19	19
Lack of Tourism	.809**	.838**	.793**
	0.000	0.000	0.000
	19	19	19
Growing Tourism Demand	.752**	.761**	.736**
	0.000	0.000	0.000
	19	19	19
Active Community Participation	.743**	.761**	.736**
	0.000	0.000	0.000
	19	19	19
External Technical & Financial Support	.797**	.881**	.821**
	0.000	0.000	0.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 17 analysis indicates an in-depth discussion of the relationship between implementation challenges and opportunities, program effectiveness, and sustainability of the local government unit (LGU) programs of the Kesong Puti industry. The Pearson correlation coefficients provide a way of determining which program variables have the most significant effects, thus enabling an accurate evaluation of the relationship between challenges, opportunities, and their effects as a measurable value. Rising cost and limited supply of carabao milk have low and non-significant relationships with program effectiveness and sustainability, indicating minimal impact on outcomes. Limited technical and business skills shows moderate to strong and significant relationships, meaning skills and capacity directly affect program results. Weak coordination also has moderate relationships with outcomes, highlighting the importance of alignment among LGU units and stakeholders.

A lack of tourism knowledge has the strongest and most significant relationships with all outcomes, underscoring the critical role of awareness, training, and knowledge-sharing in improving effectiveness and sustainability. Active community participation shows high and significant relationships with all outcomes, underscoring the importance of stakeholder involvement. External technical and financial support also has strong and significant relationships, confirming that institutional support is essential for both short-term performance and long-term sustainability.

Overall, the results show that capacity building, coordination, awareness, community participation, and external support are key drivers of effective and sustainable LGU programs, while cost and supply issues have limited direct influence on outcomes.

Proposed Action Plan

The city of Sta. Cruz in Laguna is widely known for its dairy origins and in the manufacture of its popular Kesong Puti, thus the opportunities and challenges it faces as far as the sustainability and marketability of the local industry is concerned. In all analysis tables, the research shows that, even with solid citizen engagement, local government unit (LGU) support initiatives, and community engagement, there are gaps in the operational efficiency and sustainability of programs, as well as in digital integration, cost-effectiveness, and equitable access to programs of the local government units (LGUs). This indicates the need for stronger systems to address remaining operational and structural gaps.

In response to these findings, the proposed action plan aims to provide strategic interventions that would strengthen the LGU's ability to establish Sta. Cruz as the home of Kesong Puti. The plan prioritizes streamlining program activities, promoting digital solutions to improve access, amplifying citizen engagement, and supporting sustainable industry development.

In support of these strategies, digital transformation is a key aspect of this action plan. The results demonstrate that the incorporation of web-based systems for registration, training, and marketing assistance is relevant to the work of the Kesong Puti industry, as they could improve operational efficiency and stakeholder satisfaction. Examples of such platforms include mobile-friendly services for farmers, artisans, and entrepreneurs, online order-tracking systems for local businesses, and community feedback forums. Improved user-friendliness ensures that all actors, such as local producers and government officials, can access programs and services easily.

In addition, the program must be supported through transparency and trust in the citizens. Regular reporting on program development, running of activities, and financial reporting, alongside a satisfaction survey, will create a sense of accountability and make the stakeholders active participants. Data privacy protections have also been implemented to secure manufacturer information, financial data, and LGU records, particularly in online systems. This strengthens public confidence and encourages continued stakeholder engagement.

The action plan will have programs that actively involve the local stakeholders, farmers, cooperatives, and residents in decision-making, training, and marketing Kesong Puti. Engaging communities ensures that LGU programs reflect the needs and desires of the people in the area, thereby strengthening relevance and long-term sustainability. The

plan also includes capacity-building for LGU personnel and Kesong Puti producers to support operational sustainability. Training initiatives will enhance technical skills, efficiency, digital literacy, and customer service, ensuring both government employees and local entrepreneurs can effectively manage and grow the industry. The action plan was developed based on the findings of the correlation analysis (Tables 16 and 17) and the identified gaps in the Kesong Puti industry. The results showed that capacity building, coordination, awareness, community participation, and external support strongly influence program effectiveness and sustainability, while cost and supply issues have a limited direct impact. From these results, key problem areas (e.g., limited technical and business skills, weak coordination, lack of tourism knowledge) and opportunity drivers (e.g., community participation, external support, tourism demand) were translated into specific, actionable program components such as training, digital integration, partnerships, and monitoring systems.

The budgetary requirements are anchored on the resources, infrastructure, and activities necessary to achieve the program’s objectives and success indicators. Technology-driven initiatives such as service delivery speed, digital integration, and data security require higher allocations due to server upgrades, app development, and cybersecurity measures, ensuring faster response times, higher system uptime, and zero to minimal security incidents. Human-centered programs like community engagement, inclusivity, and staff training are budgeted for workshops, outreach campaigns, and training modules, supporting participation rates of 40%–60%, satisfaction levels of 75%–85%, and staff competency rates of 70%–90%.

Governance-related areas such as transparency, monitoring, and evaluation focus on reporting tools, surveys, and analytics systems, with success indicators including 75%–90% compliance in report publication and 80%–100% KPI tracking coverage. Market-oriented and sustainability efforts, including promotion, phased implementation, and cost-effectiveness, are funded to support marketing campaigns, pilot projects, and budget monitoring systems, targeting 30%–50% increases in market reach, 20%–40% sales growth, and 15%–25% cost reductions. The successful implementation of the proposed action plan will require strong inter-agency coordination, particularly between the LGU, local producers, tourism offices, and private sector partners to ensure that all interventions are aligned and effectively executed.

Key Areas	Action Plan	Objectives	Strategies	Budgetary Requirements	Responsible Sector	Success Indicators	Timeline	Expected Outcomes
Operational Efficiency	Maps and streamlined processes in the operational procedure of LGU programs serving the Kesong Puti producers.	Minimize time lag in program delivery and enhance responsiveness to the needs of producers.	1. Automate repetitive tasks; 2. Standardize workflows; 3. Introduce feedback loops for continuous improvement	₱500,000–₱700,000 (process mapping, software tools, training)	LGU Program Coordinators, Workflow Teams	25%–40% faster processing; 80%–90% satisfaction	1–3 months	Greater speed of execution of the programs, increased satisfaction of the producers.
Cost-Effectiveness	Adopt budget monitoring, automation of support programs, administrative processes, and cost-saving measures. Be financially viable and continue with the high-quality support.	Ensure financial sustainability while maintaining high-quality support	1. Implement zero-based budgeting; 2. Use shared digital platforms; 3. Negotiate supplier contracts	₱400,000–₱600,000 (automation tools, monitoring systems)	Finance Team, IT Team, Budget Analysts	15%–25% cost reduction; 80% budget compliance	3–6 months	Reduced the cost of operation and created more sustainable programs.

Service Delivery Speed	Upgrade servers, streamline online services, and implement mobile- friendly applications and reporting programs. Facilitate producers and LGU stakeholders' support in good time.	Enable timely support for producers and LGU stakeholders	1. Cloud migration; 2. Optimize server load balancing; 3. Introduce mobile-first design	₱1M– ₱1.5M (server upgrades, app development)	IT Engineers, System Administrators	30%–50% faster service response; 80% system uptime efficiency	1–3 months	Quick and quality service provision.
Community Engagement & Participation	Conduct training, workshops, and consultation sessions with producers and cooperatives	Increase community participation and stakeholder involvement in program decision-making	1. Establish producer advisory councils; 2. Use participatory planning; 3. Provide incentives for attendance	₱300,000– ₱500,000 (training materials, facilitation costs)	Community Liaisons, LGU Officers	40%–60% participation rate; 75%–85% engagement satisfaction	3–6 months	Foster greater cooperation and encourage the implementation of local government unit programs.
Digital Integration	Development of mobile applications, online ordering systems, and interactive dashboards will facilitate continuous monitoring and oversight.	Facilitate seamless access to services and digital marketing for Kesong Puti	1. Launch pilot apps; 2. Provide digital literacy training; 3. Integrate e- payment systems	₱1.2M– ₱1.8M (app development, dashboard systems)	Developers, IT Integration Team	50%–70% user adoption; 80% system usability rate	3–6 months	Improved provision for better accessibility and online marketing reach.
Transparency & Public Trust	Publish quarterly progress reports, conduct community satisfaction surveys, and communicate policies clearly.	Strengthen public confidence in LGU initiatives	1. Open data portal; 2. Quarterly town halls; 3. Independent audit publication	₱200,000– ₱400,000 (reporting tools, survey platforms)	Communications Team, LGU Management	75%–90% report publication compliance; 80% trust/satisfaction rate	Quarterly (Ongoing)	Increased transparency, higher citizen trust
Data Privacy & Security	Implement encryption protocols, periodic security audits, and robust database management.	Protect the sensitive information of producers and LGU operations	1. Multi-factor authentication; 2. Regular penetration testing; 3. Staff cybersecurity training	₱600,000– ₱900,000 (security software, audit costs)	IT Security Team, Compliance Officers	0–2 security incidents; 100% audit compliance	Quarterly (Ongoing)	Enhanced data protection, maintained trust

Inclusivity & Accessibility	The program will include various languages, and the local dialects will be recorded, and appropriate outreach programs will be focused on marginalized producers.	Ensure equitable access to programs for all communities	1. Translate materials into local dialects; 2. Partner with NGOs; 3. Mobile outreach caravans	₱350,000–₱500,000 (translation, outreach campaigns)	Language Experts, Outreach Coordinators	60%–80% reach of target groups; 80% accessibility satisfaction rate	3–6 months	Broader participation, inclusive program adoption
Monitoring & Evaluation	Implement dashboards, performance tracking, and analytics for continuous program assessment.	Support data-driven decisions and improve program effectiveness	1. Real-time dashboard 2. Independent evaluation teams; 3. Feedback integration	₱500,000–₱700,000 (analytics tools, audit systems)	Audit Team, Data Analysts	80%–100% KPI tracking coverage; 70%–85% improvement actions implemented	Quarterly (Ongoing)	Continuous improvement, evidence-based interventions
Capacity Building & Staff Training	Technical, digital literacy, and customer service training will be delivered to LGU staff and producers.	Equip personnel to manage programs efficiently and support industry growth	1. Certification programs; 2. Peer-to-peer mentoring; 3. Continuous learning workshops	₱800,000–₱1.2M (training modules, trainers)	HR Team, Technology Advisors	70%–90% staff competency rate; 80% training completion rate	6–12 months	Skilled workforce, improved program outcomes
Sustainability & Phased Implementation	A phase-by-phase introduction of programming, pilot projects, and stakeholder feedback will be taken.	Ensure long-term adoption and stability of programs	1. Start with small-scale pilots; 2. Gather stakeholder feedback; 3. Scale successful models	₱700,000–₱1M (pilot projects, evaluation costs)	Project Managers, LGU Coordinators	60%–80% pilot success rate; 70%–85% stakeholder approval	6–12 months	Achieved sustainable implementation and scalable support by the industry.
Promotion & Market Expansion	Launch marketing campaigns, digital promotions, and partnerships with retailers	Strengthen the identity of Sta. Cruz is the Home of Kesong Puti and expands market reach	1. Social media campaigns; 2. Retailer collaborations; 3. Trade fair participation	₱1M–₱1.5M (campaigns, partnerships)	LGU Marketing Team, Local Cooperatives	30%–50% increase in market reach; 20%–40% sales growth	3–6 months	Increased visibility, higher sales, strengthened local identity

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the conclusions from presenting, evaluating, and interpreting the study's data, along with suggestions for further research.

Summary of Findings

The summary of the results outlines the main conclusions of the research, highlighting the scope of LGU program implementation and its correlation with the challenges and opportunities in the Kesong Puti industry. Under the LGU program factors, the average of all respondents was 3.3263, indicating that the programs were generally considered well executed. In particular, the indicators with a mean of 3.4737 indicated strong agreement with the presence of structured planning and program alignment. The standard deviation of 0.60078 represents the moderate differences in responses.

In the second group of LGU-related indicators, the overall average was 3.1368, indicating an average level of implementation. The indicators reporting a mean of 3.3158 indicated that some program factors were well understood by the respondents, especially regarding operational support. The standard deviation of 0.78331 is relatively high because participants' responses were more varied. Regarding training and capacity building, the overall average was 2.9263, indicating moderate agreement among respondents. The highest mean value, 3.0526, indicates that some training programs were implemented. The lowest mean, 2.7895, indicates that some capacity-building elements have been realized, but they have not been felt. A standard deviation of 0.78940 represents average variability in responses.

In the public-private partnership, the average was 3.0842, indicating moderate collaboration between the LGU and stakeholders. The mean of 3.2105 indicates that several partnership initiatives have been effectively implemented, with means of 3.0526 and 3.0000 indicating that other aspects have been viewed as moderately important.

The alignment and inclusion of the festival on the LGU Tourism Master Plan had an average of 3.3684. The results showed a mean of 3.4737, indicating a high level of recognition for this aspect. The SD of 0.53025 is used to indicate homogeneous responses among participants.

Regarding issues related to the increase in the cost and limited supply of carabao milk, the mean aggregate value is 3.4316, indicating significant agreement among participants that this is a major problem. Indicators that provide mean values of 3.4737 imply high agreement in considering mean values regarding whether there are supply and cost-related issues. The low standard deviation of 0.50006 indicates that the respondents have a homogeneous perception of this issue.

The limited technical and commercial skills of manufacturers and marketers produced an average of 3.2632, indicative of moderate levels of apprehension. The more detailed agreement that skill deficiencies exist is shown by a mean of 3.3158. The standard deviation value of 0.51230 indicates quite consistent responses.

There was poor coordination among the Local Government Unit (LGU), producers, and sellers, with a mean of 3.2105, indicating moderate concurrence. The maximum mean of 3.3158 represents the fact that a deficiency of coordination is not dismissed. The standard deviation of 0.55966 has a moderate dispersion. The lack of information about tourism promotion and the regulatory framework among tourism officials has resulted in an overall mean of 3.3158, indicating moderate agreement. The highest mean of 3.3684 amplifies the stronger language of agreement on what is known. The standard deviation of (0.49583) signifies that there are low variability levels in the responses.

In the opportunity, where tourism interest and demand in the market were given an average of 3.4105, it was observed that the respondents had a high level of agreement with the outcome. The indicators with a mean of 3.4211 indicate a great perceived demand. The standard deviation of 0.51843 means that the perceptions are consistent.

Active community participation also showed an overall mean of 3.4105, indicating that the respondents are in firm agreement with the existence of community involvement. The standard deviation of 0.51843 yields consistent responses.

The agencies provided technical and financial support, with a mean of 3.3789, indicating a high level of agreement. There is low variability, as indicated by the standard deviation of 0.49394. The mean sustainability of production and supply chain was 3.2526, indicating a moderately high level of sustainability. This is a steady response to the standard deviation of 0.46591.

The effectiveness in terms of increasing the development of local enterprises and market penetration was moderate, with a mean of 3.2842. A standard deviation of 0.50471 indicates moderate consistency. Strengthening cultural identity had an overall mean of 3.3579, and the value is high, which means that they all feel that the programs help in recognizing culture. The value of the standard deviation of 0.40868 shows uniform responses.

Correlational analysis of program factors and the implementation challenges and opportunities of the LGU program revealed several important relationships. Program planning was shown to have strong positive relationships with tourism demand (0.680), community participation (0.652), and technical support (0.713*). Equally, alignment planning showed remarkably high correlations with cost and supply challenges (0.540 and 0.580), suggesting that strategic planning is strongly associated with reducing these challenges.

Other findings from the correlation results indicate that capacity-building and coordination elements are mostly linked to sustainability and enterprise development. Technical knowledge was significantly correlated to sustainability (0.809), enterprise development (0.838), and cultural identity (0.793). Other support mechanisms, such as tourism demand, community participation, and support from agencies, are significantly correlated with sustainability, enterprise development, and cultural identity, with coefficients as high as 0.881, suggesting a very strong association.

All in all, the results indicate that the LGU program's determinants, difficulties, and potentials are interconnected. The increased rates of program implementation are linked to higher levels of tourism demand, greater community involvement, more supportive systems, and better sustainability and business outcomes. However, some issues like the lack of competencies, divergence and supply shortages still persist, which underscores the need to continue working to improve the success of LGU initiatives in their application to the Kesong Puti industry.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings indicate that in areas such as planning, coordination, training, collaboration, and policy alignment, LGU programs in the Kesong Puti industry are implemented at moderate to high levels. Variations in the outcomes, however, point to inconsistent execution. While training and capacity-building remain inconsistent, policy integration and tourism alignment are comparatively efficient. This implies that even while programs work, they still require improvement. To increase overall effectiveness and promote the sustainable, competitive growth of the Kesong Puti industry, implementation must be strengthened and standardized, especially in skills development and human resources training.

According to the correlation analysis, Implementation challenges in the Kesong Puti industry are significantly correlated with LGU program factors. Rising carabao milk prices, lack of supply, lack of technical and business expertise, poor coordination, and low tourism promotion are among the issues that are moderately to highly observed. This implies that even though LGU interventions are in place, structural and operational barriers continue to affect the producers and sellers. These further underscores the urgency of improving support systems within institutions.

The study shows that LGU programs create strong opportunities in the Kesong Puti industry through tourism

demand, community involvement, and technical and financial support. Effective implementation enhances these opportunities via improved promotion and stakeholder engagement. Results also indicate that sustainability is driven by opportunities, while challenges, especially skills and knowledge gaps, must be addressed to ensure long-term industry growth.

Further, the findings are quite consistent, with the sustainability of production and supply chains, enterprise development, and the strengthening of cultural identity being moderately to highly evident. This indicates that the LGU's programs have already helped support production, market coverage, and the popularization of the image of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, the Home of Kesong Puti. The results underscore the idea that long-term sustainability requires not just production but also ongoing innovation, skill development, and market expansion.

These conclusions can be further supported by a correlation analysis, which showed that some factors in the LGU program are significantly related to both challenges and opportunities. The positive relationships among program implementation, tourism demand, community involvement, and technical sponsorship are strong, indicating that good governance positively impacts the industry's performance. Similarly, good links between the problematic issues, including deficiencies in skills and coordination and sustainability performance attest to the fact that unresolved issues may hinder long-term development.

In general, the paper concludes that LGU programs are important in the development of the Kesong Puti industry. The programs tend to be effective, but their potential is constrained by challenges that are unlikely to disappear and require highly targeted interventions. At the same time, the availability of strong opportunities ensures strong growth and sustainability.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. LGUs should regularly train producers and sellers in technical, business management, and skills to address knowledge and skill gaps and increase program implementation efficiency. It is anticipated that increasing this capacity will improve competitiveness, productivity, and product quality.
2. LGUs should create sustainable supply chain solutions to deal with growing expenses and the scarcity of carabao milk. This could entail supporting regional dairy production through cooperation with agricultural organizations, breeding initiatives, and subsidies. Increasing supplier cooperation can also lower production costs, stabilize supply, and ensure more reliable access to raw materials.
3. To enhance coordination, LGUs should establish robust procedures for cooperation between producers, sellers, and local governments. To cut down on inefficiencies, this entails holding frequent stakeholder meetings, maintaining open lines of communication, and clearly defining roles. Aligning efforts toward common objectives can also be facilitated by establishing official partnerships and forums for cooperation.
4. LGUs should provide targeted training on marketing, policy enforcement, and regulatory compliance to improve the competencies of tourism officers and stakeholders. Developing these abilities will enhance tourism promotion tactics and guarantee that activities adhere to standards and best practices.
5. LGUs should actively promote the Kesong Puti Festival and related activities to support tourism marketing. Digital campaigns, collaborations with other tourism agencies, and community-based marketing initiatives can all accomplish this. It is anticipated that strengthening these initiatives will increase the number of tourists and yield greater benefits for the community.
6. To enhance technical and financial assistance, LGUs should increase collaboration with national, regional, and provincial entities. Program execution and sustainability will be improved by having access to capital, expertise, and equipment. Increasing these collaborations guarantees more institutional support for regional

projects.

7. LGUs should promote product innovation, better packaging and branding, and market development to increase production and supply chain sustainability. Encouraging efficient and environmentally friendly production methods will also contribute to the sustainable growth.
8. To boost market access and boost marketing initiatives, LGUs should broaden their distribution networks. Trade events, digital e-commerce, and collaborations with the business sector can all help achieve this. These tactics will expand the market's reach and provide manufacturers and sellers with more revenue prospects.
9. The Kesong Puti industry should be promoted by LGUs as part of Sta Cruz's cultural heritage. Community pride will be strengthened, and culture will be preserved with ongoing support for festivals and cultural events.
10. For future researchers, it is recommended to study the long-term impact of LGU programs on the Kesong Puti industry and compare Sta. Cruz, with other regions, to identify best practices. They should also analyze consumer behavior, tourism trends, and the role of digital platforms in expanding market reach and ensuring sustainability. Future Researchers are encouraged to use mixed-method approaches, such as surveys, interviews and focus group discussions to gain deeper insights into the challenges of the stakeholders. Future studies may also incorporate objective indicators, including production output, tourism arrivals, income generation, and business sustainability measures, and provide more detailed documentation of sampling procedures, instrument validation, reliability testing, and statistical analyses to enhance research credibility and transparency.
11. Institutionalize Sta. Cruz is the "Home of Kesong Puti". Sta. Cruz should be formally recognized through ordinances or a declaration. Kesong Puti should be integrated into schools, cultural programs, and tourism packages to strengthen identity.
12. In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree Master's in Public Administration Republic of the Philippines Laguna State Polytechnic University Province of Laguna

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Appendix B Survey Questionnaire

Part I. Demographic Information

Direction: Please fill out the following information. Kindly check (✓) the parenthesis that best suits your answer.

Name (Optional): _____

Age: _____

Sex: _____

Location: _____ **Occupation:** _____ **Affiliation with Kesong Puti Industry:**

☐ Producer ☐ Seller ☐ LGU of Sta. Cruz Tourism Officer

Part II: Factors Influencing LGU Programs and Initiatives

Direction: Please put a check (✓) and rate the given statement honestly using the Following scale and adjectival rate:

4- Strongly Agree

3 – Agree

2 – Disagree

1 – Strongly Disagree

A. Municipal Policies and Ordinances Supporting Kesong Puti Production	4	3	2	1
1. Policies of the LGU of Sta. Cruz specifically address the promotion and protection of Kesong Puti as a local cultural product.				

2. Existing municipal regulations in Sta. Cruz provide clear, detailed guidelines for Kesong Puti production, hygiene, and distribution for local cheesemakers and stakeholders.				
3. Policies implemented by the LGU of Sta. Cruzs actively encourages sustainable production practices and adherence to quality standards in the Kesong Puti industry.				
4. Regulatory in Sta. Cruz, Laguna processes such as registration, permits, and licensing for Kesong Puti producers are straightforward, accessible, and well-communicated.				
5. LGU of Sta. Cruz consistently implements policies, monitors compliance, and responds to the evolving needs of Kesong Puti producers and the local industry.				
B. LGU Budget Allocation for Kesong Puti Related Programs	4	3	2	1
1. The LGU of Sta. Cruz provides adequate financial support for local Kesong Puti producers to sustain their livelihoods.				
2. Grants, subsidies, or financial aid from the LGU of Sta. Cruz help improve the production quality and consistency of Kesong Puti.				
3. Funding from the LGU contributes to enhancing the production facilities, marketing initiatives, and sales opportunities of Kesong Puti producers.				
4. Financial assistance programs provided by the LGU of Sta. Cruz are accessible, well-communicated, and easy for local cheesemakers to avail.				
5. Support from the LGU enables Kesong Puti producers in Sta. Cruz to expand or improve their business operations, including equipment, packaging, and market reach.				
C. Training and Capacity Building for Producers and Sellers	4	3	2	1
1. Training programs organized by the LGU of Sta. Cruz enhance the skills and technical knowledge of local producers in Kesong Puti production.				
2. Capacity-building initiatives from the LGU improve enterprise management, product quality, and efficiency among Kesong Puti producers.				
3. LGU training programs in Sta. Cruz are accessible and inclusive, reaching all local cheesemakers and stakeholders involved in Kesong Puti production.				
4. Training activities incorporate updated techniques, hygiene standards, and industry best practices specific to Kesong Puti production.				
5. Capacity-building programs provided by the LGU of Sta. Cruz support the long-term development and sustainability of Kesong Puti producers.				
D. Public-Private Partnerships for Kesong Puti Promotion and Tourism	4	3	2	1
1. Collaboration between the LGU of Sta. Cruz and private businesses strengthens the Kesong Puti industry through joint promotion, marketing, and distribution initiatives.				
2. Partnerships involving the LGU of Sta. Cruz, non- government organizations (NGOs), and community groups improve the planning and implementation of Kesong Puti–related programs.				
3. Coordination among local stakeholders contributes to tourism promotion and the expansion of local and regional markets for Kesong Puti products.				

4. Private sector participation provides Kesong Puti producers in Sta. Cruz with additional resources, technical support, and business opportunities.				
5. The LGU of Sta. Cruz effectively coordinates and sustains partnerships to support long-term Kesong Puti promotion, tourism development, and industry growth.				
E. Alignment and Inclusion of the Kesong Puti Festival in the LGU Tourism Master Plan and Strategic Development Plan				
1. Kesong Puti is featured in events during Kesong Puti Festival.				
2. Kesong Puti is readily available during Kesong Puti Festival.				
3. The LGU's Tourism Master Plan effectively incorporates the Kesong Puti Festival in terms of planning, promotion, and integration with other tourism initiatives.				
4. The LGU's Strategic Development Plan supports and promotes the growth of the Kesong Puti Festival as a cultural and economic asset.				
5. The inclusion of the Kesong Puti Festival in LGU plans strengthens local cultural identity and attracts tourism revenue.				

Part III: Challenges Affecting LGU Initiatives

Direction: Please put a check (✓) and rate the given statement honestly using the Following scale and adjectival rate:

4 - Strongly Agree 3 - Agree

2 – Disagree

1 – Strongly Disagree

Challenges Affecting LGU initiatives				
A. Rising Cost and Limited Supply of Carabao Milk	4	3	2	1
1. The rising cost of carabao milk makes it difficult for Kesong Puti producers in Sta. Cruz to sustain regular production.				
2. The limited supply of carabao milk affects the ability of producers to meet the demand for Kesong Puti.				
3. Inconsistent availability of carabao milk disrupts continuous Kesong Puti production.				
4. High carabao milk prices reduce the profitability of Kesong Puti production despite existing LGU support.				
5. The limited and costly supply of carabao milk remains a major challenge to the success of LGU-supported Kesong Puti initiatives in Sta. Cruz.				
B. Limited Technical and Business Skills Among Producers and Sellers	4	3	2	1
1. Kesong Puti producers and sellers in Sta. Cruz lack access to advanced technical knowledge needed to improve product quality.				
2. Limited training opportunities affect the ability of producers and sellers to learn and apply modern Kesong Puti production techniques.				
3. Gaps in technical and business skills hinder producers from scaling up Kesong Puti production efficiently.				

4. The LGU of Sta. Cruz has limited technical experts or resource persons to provide continuous guidance to Kesong Puti producers and sellers.				
5. Limited exposure to industry best practices affects the competitiveness of the Kesong Puti industry in Sta. Cruz.				
C. Weak Coordination between LGU, Producers, and Sellers	4	3	2	1
1. Communication gaps exist between Kesong Puti producers, sellers, the LGU of Sta. Cruz, and partner organizations.				
2. Inconsistent coordination among the LGU, producers, and sellers affects the smooth and timely implementation of Kesong Puti-related programs.				
3. Differences in priorities among stakeholders lead to delays or inefficiencies in program planning and execution.				
4. Limited collaboration among stakeholders reduces opportunities for collective problem-solving and shared decision-making.				
5. Weak coordination affects the effective integration of Kesong Puti initiatives into the tourism and local economic development plans of Sta. Cruz.				
D. Lack of Knowledge on Tourism Promotion and Regulatory Policies Among Tourism Officers				
1. Tourism officers are knowledgeable about local tourism promotion strategies.				
2. Tourism officers are effective in implementing tourism promotion programs.				
3. Tourism officers understand LGU regulatory policies for tourism.				
4. Tourism officers are trained in modern tourism promotion techniques.				
5. Tourism officers keep up-to-date with changes in tourism laws and regulations.				

Part IV: Opportunities Enhancing LGU Initiatives

Direction: Please put a check (✓) and rate the given statement honestly using the Following scale and adjectival rate:

4 - Strongly Agree 3 - Agree

2 – Disagree

1 – Strongly Disagree

Table: Opportunities Enhancing LGU Initiatives

Opportunities Enhancing LGU Initiatives	4	3	2	1
A. Growing Tourism Interest and Market Demand for Kesong Puti				
1. Increasing consumer demand for local products in Sta. Cruz positively impacts the growth of the Kesong Puti industry.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Tourism activities and events in Sta. Cruz create more sales and market opportunities for local Kesong Puti producers.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. The town's local food heritage attracts visitors and potential business partners for Kesong Puti products.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Current market trends favor artisanal and culturally unique products like Kesong Puti, benefiting producers in Sta. Cruz.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Rising tourism and related promotions increase the visibility of Sta. Cruz as the recognized Home of Kesong Puti.	☐	☐	☐	☐
B. Active Community Participation in Kesong Puti-Related Activities				

1. Active participation of Sta. Cruz residents strengthens the preservation of Kesong Puti production traditions.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Local residents actively promote Kesong Puti through town events, festivals, and cultural programs.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Community support enhances the effectiveness and legitimacy of LGU-led Kesong Puti initiatives.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Engagement of youth organizations and local groups helps sustain the cultural continuity of Kesong Puti in Sta. Cruz.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Strong community involvement in Kesong Puti activities increases local pride and reinforces Sta. Cruz's cultural identity.	☐	☐	☐	☐
C. Technical and Financial Support from Provincial, Regional, and National Agencies				
1. Technical and financial assistance from provincial, regional, and national agencies strengthens the LGU of Sta. Cruz's Kesong Puti programs.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Support from external agencies provides Sta. Cruz Kesong Puti producers with valuable training, funding, and technical expertise.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Collaboration between the LGU of Sta. Cruz and higher-level agencies expands opportunities for local Kesong Puti industry development.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. National-level promotion programs increase the visibility of Kesong Puti beyond Sta. Cruz, attracting tourists and potential business partners.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Multi-level government support contributes to the long-term sustainability and growth of Kesong Puti-related initiatives in Sta. Cruz.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Part V: Extent of the Long-Term Impact of the Local Government's programs and initiatives on the Kesong Puti Industry

Direction: Please put a check (✓) and rate the given statement honestly using the Following scale and adjectival rate:

4- Strongly Agree

3 – Agree

2 – Disagree

1 – Strongly Disagree

Table: Effectiveness of LGU Initiatives for the Kesong Puti Industry

A. Sustainability of Production and Supply Chain	4	3	2	1
1. Programs and initiatives of the LGU of Sta. Cruz help ensure a stable and continuous supply of raw materials for Kesong Puti production.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. LGU-supported initiatives have improved the consistency and reliability of Kesong Puti production processes over time.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Long-term assistance from the LGU of Sta. Cruz contributes to the gradual modernization and improvement of Kesong Puti production methods.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. LGU efforts strengthen coordination and partnerships among milk suppliers, Kesong Puti producers, and sellers within the local supply chain.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Programs implemented by the LGU of Sta. Cruz promote sustainable and environmentally responsible practices in Kesong Puti production.	☐	☐	☐	☐

B. Effectiveness in Enhancing Local Enterprise Development and Market Reach	4	3	2	1
1. Programs and initiatives of the LGU of Sta. Cruz contribute to the growth and competitiveness of local Kesong Puti enterprises.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. LGU-led initiatives have expanded local, regional, and external market opportunities for Kesong Puti producers in Sta. Cruz.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. LGU programs help improve product branding, packaging, and overall market visibility of Kesong Puti.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Enterprise development activities supported by the LGU of Sta. Cruz strengthen the business management and marketing skills of Kesong Puti producers.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Support from the LGU of Sta. Cruz has contributed to increased local and regional demand for Kesong Puti products.	☐	☐	☐	☐
C. Strengthening Sta. Cruz, Laguna's Cultural Identity and Recognition as Home of Kesong Puti	4	3	2	1
1. Initiatives of the LGU of Sta. Cruz have reinforced the town's reputation as the Home of Kesong Puti locally and regionally.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Promotional campaigns by the LGU have increased public awareness of Sta. Cruz's Kesong Puti heritage.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Events and festivals organized or supported by the LGU highlight the cultural significance of Kesong Puti in Sta. Cruz.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Community pride and recognition of Kesong Puti as part of Sta. Cruz's cultural identity have grown due to LGU-led initiatives.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Efforts of the LGU of Sta. Cruz contribute to the long-term preservation and continuity of Kesong Puti traditions.	☐	☐	☐	☐

Statement of the Problem	Hypothesis of the Study	Statistical Treatment	Findings	Conclusion	Recommendation
1. What is the extent to which various factors influence the programs and initiatives provided by the Local Government of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, in terms of: 1.1. Municipal Policies and Ordinances Supporting Kesong Puti Production 1.2. LGU Budget Allocation for Kesong Puti-Related Programs	There is no significant relationship between factors influencing the Local Government of Sta. Cruz programs and the challenges or opportunities encountered in implementing these initiatives for strengthening the Kesong Puti industry.	This study utilized a descriptive–correlational research design to assess the extent of LGU interventions and their impact on the Kesong Puti industry in Sta. Cruz, Laguna. A total of 19 respondents participated, consisting of 5 LGU Tourism Officers, 4 Kesong Puti producers, and 10 sellers. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, weighted average, Pearson	The results show that LGU programs for the Kesong Puti industry are generally well implemented, particularly in structured planning, program alignment, and integration with tourism initiatives. However, operational support, training and capacity building, and public-private partnerships were only moderately implemented.	The findings indicate that planning, coordination, training, collaborations, and policy alignment are implemented from moderate to high levels. Variations in outcomes suggest inconsistent execution. While training and capacity-building initiatives continue to be inconsistent, policy integration and tourism alignment are comparatively efficient.	LGUs should regularly provide training for producers and sellers in technical skills, business management, and enterprise development to address knowledge and skill gaps and improve program implementation efficiency. Strengthening these capacities is expected to enhance competitiveness, productivity, and product quality.

		correlation, and Spearman correlation.			
Statement of the Problem	Hypothesis of the Study	Statistical Treatment	Findings	Conclusion	Recommendation
1.3. Training and Capacity Building for Producers and Sellers 1.4. Public-Private Partnerships for Kesong Puti Promotion and Tourism 1.5. Alignment and Inclusion of the Kesong Puti Festival in the LGU Tourism Master Plan and Strategic Development Plan 2. What is the extent of the challenges and opportunities faced by the Local Government that influence these programs?	There is no significant relationship between the challenges and opportunities faced by the Local Government of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, and the effectiveness or long-term sustainability of its programs for the Kesong Puti Industry.	Data were collected using a survey questionnaire with both close-ended and open-ended items, including a Likert scale to measure perceptions of LGU support, challenges, and opportunities. The respondents consisted of 5 LGU Tourism Officers, 4 Kesong Puti producers, and 10 sellers selected through purposive sampling.	LGU programs were implemented at varying levels, indicating differences in effectiveness and stakeholder understanding. While there is strong recognition of program alignment with local tourism plans and support from agencies and the community, gaps remain in skills development, stakeholder coordination, and awareness of tourism-related policies.	Training and capacity-building initiatives continue to be inconsistent, while policy integration and tourism alignment are comparatively efficient. This suggests that although the programs are functioning, improvements are still necessary. To enhance overall effectiveness and promote the sustainable and competitive growth of the Kesong Puti industry, implementation must be strengthened and standardized.	LGUs should develop sustainable supply-chain solutions to address the rising cost and limited supply of carabao milk. This may include supporting regional dairy production through partnerships with agricultural organizations, breeding programs, and subsidies. Strengthening cooperation among suppliers can help reduce production costs and ensure a more stable supply of raw materials.
Statement of the Problem	Hypothesis of the Study	Statistical Treatment	Findings	Conclusion	Recommendation
2.1. Challenges 2.1.1. Rising Cost and Limited Supply of Carabao Milk 2.1.2. Limited Technical and Business Skills Among Producers and Sellers 2.1.3. Weak Coordination between LGU, Producers, and Sellers		Interviews were conducted for deeper understanding. The gathered data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and weighted average. Pearson and Spearman correlation analyses were also applied to determine the relationships among LGU interventions, challenges, opportunities, and long-term sustainability.	Findings highlight both challenges and opportunities within the Kesong Puti industry. Major challenges include high production costs, limited supply of carabao milk, gaps in technical and business skills, and coordination problems among stakeholders. Despite these challenges, respondents strongly agreed on the presence of growing tourism demand, active community participation, and improvements in	The study shows that LGU programs create strong opportunities for the Kesong Puti industry through tourism demand, community involvement, and technical and financial assistance. Effective implementation enhances sustainability, enterprise development, and cultural identity. However, challenges—particularly those related to skills development and human resource training—must be addressed to ensure	To stabilize supply and ensure more reliable access to raw materials, LGUs should develop sustainable supply-chain strategies. To improve coordination, LGUs should establish stronger collaboration mechanisms among producers, sellers, and local government units. These may include regular stakeholder meetings, clear communication channels, and defined roles and responsibilities to reduce inefficiencies and improve program implementation.

			technical and financial support.	long-term industry growth.	
Statement of the Problem	Hypothesis of the Study	Statistical Treatment	Findings	Conclusion	Recommendation
2.1.4. Lack of Knowledge on Tourism Promotion and Regulations, specifically for Tourism Officers 2.2. Opportunities 2.2.1. Growing Tourism Interest and Market Demand for Kesong Puti 2.2.2. Active Community Participation in Kesong Puti-Related Activities	There is no significant relationship between the challenges and opportunities and the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of the Local Government's programs for the Kesong Puti Industry.	Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and weighted average, while Pearson and Spearman correlation analyses were used to determine relationships among LGU interventions, challenges, opportunities, and long-term sustainability.	The results suggest that stronger LGU implementation is linked to better industry outcomes. Improved promotion, stakeholder engagement, and community participation contribute positively to sustainability, enterprise development, and cultural identity. However, continuous improvement is needed to address existing constraints and maximize the industry's potential.	Sustainability is largely driven by available opportunities, particularly tourism demand and community involvement. Challenges, especially those related to skills deficiencies and knowledge gaps, must be addressed to ensure long-term industry growth. Correlation analysis further supports the conclusion that certain LGU program factors significantly influence both opportunities and challenges affecting industry performance.	LGUs should establish official partnerships and collaborative forums to align stakeholder efforts and clearly define roles and responsibilities. Targeted training programs on tourism marketing, policy enforcement, and regulatory compliance should be provided to tourism officers and stakeholders to improve their competencies and strengthen tourism promotion and industry development efforts.
Statement of the Problem	Hypothesis of the Study	Statistical Treatment	Findings	Conclusion	Recommendation
2.2.3. Technical and Financial Support from Provincial, Regional, and National Agencies 3. What is the extent of the long-term impact of the Local Government's programs and initiatives on the Kesong Puti Industry in terms of: 3.1. Sustainability of Production and Supply Chain 3.2. Effectiveness in Enhancing Local Enterprise Development and Market Reach		Pearson and Spearman correlation analyses were used to determine the relationships among LGU interventions, challenges, opportunities, and long-term sustainability of the Kesong Puti industry.	The analysis revealed that LGU programs have significant relationships with both challenges and opportunities. A strong positive relationship was found between program implementation and tourism demand, community participation, and technical and financial support, indicating that effective governance positively influences industry performance.	The findings demonstrate that well-implemented LGU programs contribute to sustainability, enterprise development, and market expansion. Strong tourism demand, community involvement, and technical support enhance the long-term performance of the Kesong Puti industry, confirming the importance of effective governance and stakeholder engagement.	LGUs should strengthen tourism promotion strategies and ensure that activities comply with standards and best practices. The Kesong Puti Festival and related activities should be actively promoted through digital marketing campaigns, partnerships with tourism agencies, and community-based promotional initiatives to increase tourism engagement and support industry growth.

Statement of the Problem	Hypothesis of the Study	Statistical Treatment	Findings	Conclusion	Recommendation
3.3. Strengthening Sta. Cruz, Laguna's Cultural Identity and Recognition as the Home of Kesong Puti 4. Is there a significant relationship between the factors influencing the Local Government's programs and the challenges or opportunities encountered in implementing these initiatives? 5. Is there a significant relationship between the challenges and opportunities and the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of the Local Government's programs for the Kesong Puti Industry?	There is no significant relationship between the factors influencing the Local Government's programs and the challenges or opportunities encountered in implementing these initiatives. There is also no significant relationship between the challenges and opportunities and the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of the Local Government's programs for the Kesong Puti Industry.	Pearson and Spearman correlation analyses were utilized to determine the relationships among LGU interventions, challenges, opportunities, effectiveness, and long-term sustainability indicators.	The findings revealed significant relationships between LGU program implementation and industry outcomes. Strong positive relationships were observed between program implementation and tourism demand, community participation, and technical and financial support. Likewise, challenges such as deficiencies in technical skills, business competencies, and stakeholder coordination were found to influence sustainability performance.	The study concludes that LGU programs play a crucial role in the development of the Kesong Puti industry. Effective implementation contributes to industry growth, sustainability, enterprise development, and cultural preservation. However, unresolved challenges, particularly in skills development and stakeholder coordination, may hinder long-term progress. The presence of strong opportunities supports continued industry expansion and sustainability.	Strengthening existing initiatives is expected to increase tourist arrivals and generate greater benefits for the community. To improve technical and financial assistance, LGUs should strengthen collaboration with national, regional, and provincial agencies to gain access to funding, expertise, and equipment. Expanding these partnerships will improve program implementation, sustainability, and institutional support for Kesong Puti-related development projects.
Statement of the Problem	Hypothesis of the Study	Statistical Treatment	Findings	Conclusion	Recommendation
Kesong Puti Industry? 6. What plan of action can be proposed to enhance the initiatives and programs of the LGU of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, improve stakeholder collaboration, strengthen environmental and tourism efforts, and further solidify the municipality's identity as the center of Kesong Puti production?	There is no significant relationship between the challenges and opportunities and the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of the Local Government's programs for the Kesong Puti Industry.	Pearson and Spearman correlation analyses were used to examine the relationships among LGU interventions, challenges, opportunities, effectiveness, and long-term sustainability indicators.	The findings indicate that LGU programs contribute positively to the development of the Kesong Puti industry. While the programs are generally effective, their full potential is constrained by persistent challenges that require targeted interventions. At the same time, existing opportunities provide strong foundations for industry growth and sustainability.	The study concludes that LGU initiatives are essential in promoting the sustainable development of the Kesong Puti industry. Although challenges remain, particularly in resource management, skills development, and stakeholder coordination, the presence of strong tourism demand, community support, and institutional assistance creates favorable conditions for continued growth and long-term sustainability.	LGUs should strengthen partnerships and collaborations to secure greater institutional support for regional development projects. Product innovation, improved packaging and branding, and market expansion initiatives should be promoted to enhance production sustainability and supply-chain resilience. Encouraging efficient and environmentally responsible production practices will contribute to sustainable growth. Furthermore, LGUs should intensify tourism promotion efforts, strengthen stakeholder collaboration, and continue positioning Sta. Cruz as the recognized center and cultural home

					of Kesong Puti production.
Statement of the Problem	Hypothesis of the Study	Statistical Treatment	Findings	Conclusion	Recommendation
6. What plan of action can be proposed to enhance the initiatives and programs of the LGU of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, improve stakeholder collaboration, strengthen environmental and tourism efforts, and further solidify the municipality's identity as the center of Kesong Puti Production?	There is no significant relationship between the challenges and opportunities and the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of the Local Government's programs for the Kesong Puti Industry.	Pearson and Spearman correlation analyses were utilized to determine the relationships among LGU interventions, challenges, opportunities, and sustainability indicators.	The findings revealed that LGU programs contribute significantly to the growth and sustainability of the Kesong Puti industry. Strong opportunities exist through tourism demand, community participation, and external technical and financial support. However, persistent challenges related to resources, skills development, and stakeholder coordination continue to affect program effectiveness.	The study concludes that LGU programs are instrumental in sustaining and developing the Kesong Puti industry. While opportunities provide a strong foundation for growth, targeted interventions are necessary to address existing constraints and maximize the long-term benefits of LGU initiatives. Sustainable growth depends on continuous program enhancement, stakeholder cooperation, and effective resource utilization.	LGUs should broaden distribution networks and strengthen marketing initiatives through trade fairs, digital e-commerce platforms, and partnerships with the private sector to expand market reach and increase income opportunities for producers and sellers. The Kesong Puti industry should be continuously promoted as an important cultural heritage asset of Sta. Cruz through festivals, cultural events, and tourism programs. Future researchers are encouraged to examine the long-term impact of LGU programs, compare Sta. Cruz with other regions to identify best practices, and analyze consumer behavior, tourism trends, and the role of digital platforms in industry expansion. Furthermore, Sta. Cruz should institutionalize its identity as the "Home of Kesong Puti" through formal ordinances or official declarations, while integrating Kesong Puti into school curricula, cultural activities, and tourism packages to strengthen local identity, cultural preservation, and tourism development.