

# Community Aspirations for Sustainable Tourism Development: The Case of Oslob, Cebu, Philippines

Oreta, Miriam Salvacion L.

Asian Institute of Tourism University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.91200196>

Received: 20 December 2025; Accepted: 26 December 2025; Published: 06 January 2026

## ABSTRACT

Oslob, Cebu, Philippines, is a municipality in the southern tip of the island province of Cebu. It has experienced significant economic and socio-cultural growth, having been re-classified from a fourth-class to a first-class municipality in 2023, a feat achieved in the last fifteen years due to the socio-cultural impact of improved quality of life largely attributed to tourism. The Oslob tourism stakeholders acknowledge that this phenomenon is a challenge to control. If the environmental (and cultural) tourism assets are not cared for more sustainably, they could, just as easily, lose the benefits they have made in recent years. It is the community's aspiration to take proactive steps toward sustainable tourism development to safeguard the upward economic trajectory of the town and retain the gains felt from the town's flagship tourism product, the whale shark interaction experience. The goal is to sustain the improved quality of the lives of Oslob's citizens, while looking after their tourism resources. This can be done by implementing more conservative and carefully monitored environmental guidelines for their main tourism product and further augmenting tourism revenue-generating opportunities by offering additional and alternative natural and man-made attractions and activities that may enhance the quality of the tourists' experience. The Triple Bottom Line for sustainable tourism development and Adaptive Management frameworks were used, employing a qualitative research design, while utilizing the case study method. Data was gathered through a stakeholders' consultation, an extensive key informant interview and participant observations, with representatives from various sectors and people's organizations. The participants provided an assessment of their current situation, stated community concerns, identified current and potential products and resources for tourism development, and proposed strategies they can undertake moving forward. The recommendations include strategies for implementation in tourism governance, tourism products and circuits, human resources in tourism and infrastructure. The ratification of the Local Tourism Development Plan, which will include all plans and strategies for tourism in Oslob, is primary in achieving these goals in the long term. This aims to aid the community's objective to more consciously embrace sustainable tourism practices so that their present and future generations will continue to reap benefits from tourism activities.

**Keywords:** sustainable tourism development, tourism stakeholders, tourism governance, tourism products and circuits, human resources in tourism, infrastructure, tourism impacts, triple bottom line, adaptive management, community aspirations

## INTRODUCTION

### Sustainable Tourism Development

United Nations Tourism (UNWTO, 1993) defines sustainable tourism development as being able to meet the needs of the present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. Studies have been undertaken on the environmental impacts of the whale shark interaction activities that take place in Barangay Tan-awan, Oslob, Cebu. This paper wants to focus on the social/socio-cultural impacts of these activities, more specifically the aspirations of the community of Oslob, Cebu who are the primary providers of the tourism services, as well as the primary recipients of the impacts, both negative and positive, of tourism in the town. These tourism stakeholders want to address issues on uncertainties and unpredictable events (Farrell and Twining-Ward, 2004) in tourism, as well as with their main tourism attraction. Implementing sustainability requires effort to address the fragility of destinations in terms of environmental, economic, and social facets (Nestico and Maselli, 2019). In cases of developing countries, a "sustainable livelihood approach" is more relevant, especially since the most notable impact for the locals is better quality of lives (Tao and Wall, 2008).

## Oslob, Cebu, Philippines

In the southern tip of the island of Cebu, Oslob is part of a tourism circuit for exciting marine and water activities that are found within a 2-hour drive radius. On the western side of the island province, the towns of Moalboal, Badian, and Aloguinsan already have main attractions that are quite established. Tañon Strait, the waters between the islands of Cebu and Negros, is an identified Marine Protected Seascape because of the abundant species in such a concentrated space (Tañon Strait Protected Seascape, n.d.): the *dugong* (local version of an animal similar in features to a manatee), sea turtles and fourteen (14) species of cetaceans, to name a few. This marine corridor is said to have about 60% of the coral species in the Philippines (Pineda, 2024). This area enjoys a lot of tourism. Moalboal boasts of its sea turtle sightings, the sardine run, and island hopping, snorkeling and scuba diving, featuring Pescador Island (Muzones, 2024). Aloguinsan, which has the Bojo River attraction that opens to Hermit's Cove and Tañon Strait, has its activities operated by the Bojo Aloguinsan Ecotourism Association (BAETAS). It was a UN Tourism recognized Best Tourism Village in 2021, and a multi-awarded sustainable ecotourism site (ASEAN-Japan Centre, 2025). Kawasan Falls, with its clear, cold waters and canyoneering activities, is in the town of Badian (Badian.info, n.d.). Badian, approximately 64 kilometers away from Oslob, would take only 1 hour by private car. It is Moalboal that boasts of many accommodation options on that side. Travel there would be 1.5hrs by car, approximately 87 kilometers away from Oslob.

Even with its proximity to all these attractions for tourists, the Municipality of Oslob can also boast of its share of abundant natural resources in its seas and mountains. Its core tourism product, the town's flagship offering (Morrison, 2022), is the whale shark interaction, which can be experienced 40 meters from the shores of Barangay Tan-awan. Whale sharks are the largest fish species in the world. This has raised many environmental concerns because the *Rhincodon Typus* is an endangered species, as identified by the World Wild Fund (WWF, n.d.). Despite this concern, this activity has been operating almost daily since 2012. The Local Government Unit (LGU) of Oslob has put up guidelines and regulations for the activity over the years of its conduct.

The Department of Finance (DOF, 2024), which classifies municipalities by income level, and the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA, n.d.) reported that Oslob, once a fourth-class municipality earning from PhP90M to PhP130M average annual regular income, now has an average annual regular income of PhP200M upwards. This re-classification was advised in 2023 but was announced among the upgraded municipalities of Cebu in 2024 (Daily Tribune, 2024). This was achieved in only fifteen (15) years, from activities largely attributed to tourism, and this credited mostly to its main tourism attraction.

## Objectives of the Study

Tourism being the main reason for this, the stakeholders indicated the need to make tourism development sustainable so that the *Oslobanons* and their tourists may continue to have their needs met. The objectives of this study are:

- (a) To identify current and potential natural and cultural tourism resources of Oslob as product options for their tourism industry.
- (b) To generate a situational analysis of tourism in Oslob, comprised of the town's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- (c) To ascertain strategies that they may pursue towards the community's aspirations for a sustainable tourism development effort.

## FRAMEWORK

### Theoretical Framework

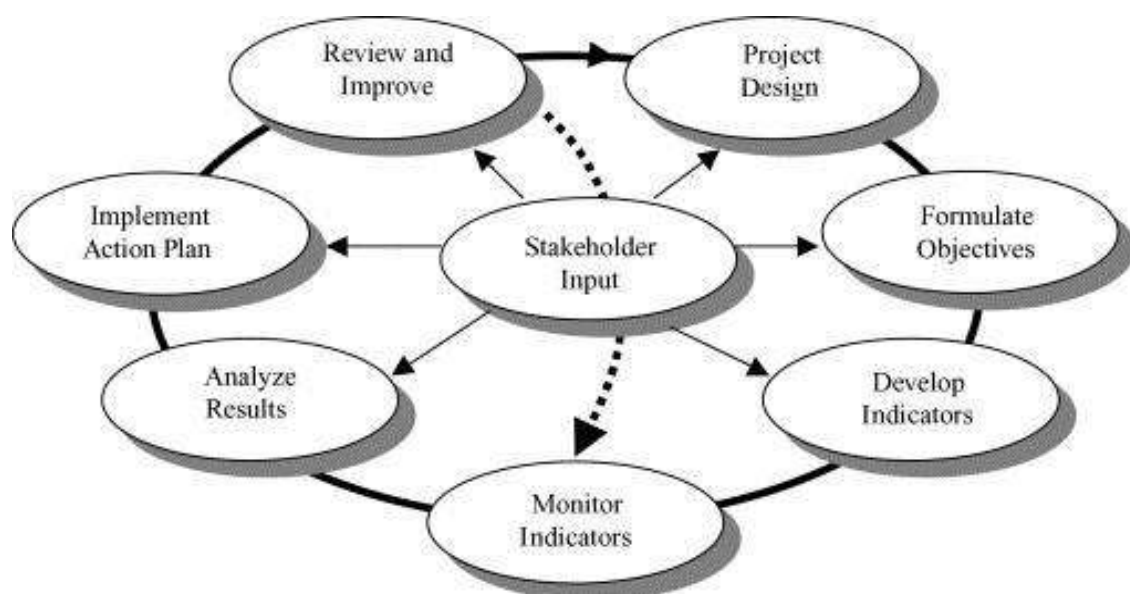
The theoretical frameworks used for this study include John Elkington's *Triple Bottom Line: People, Planet and Profit*, as adapted by the Triple Bottom Line: A Framework for Sustainable Tourism Development by Stoddard, Pollard & Evans (2012) and *Adaptive Management* as proposed by Farrell and Twining-Ward (2004), which is a process of building resilience by enhancing the ability to navigate uncertainty through repeated testing, tracking results, and collaborating in social learning.

### Triple Bottom Line: A Framework for Sustainable Tourism Development

- (a) **People (Social Sustainability)** – Social sustainability highlights civil society’s well-being, equity and livelihoods. This also includes that the locals are the priority for social inclusion and that cultural integrity is maintained. In this study, of primary importance is to continue the trajectory towards community well-being in the form of improved quality of life and better opportunities afforded by better living for the *Oslobanons*’ present and future generations.
- (b) **Planet (Environmental Sustainability)** –Protected biodiversity, resource conservation, and safeguarded ecological systems are the goals. There should also be provisions for climate adaptation and resilience to the elements and natural hazards. In the case of Oslob, mindful policies have been instituted to exercise care during the interaction, to protect the whale sharks, the tourists, and the boatmen. Experts say it is still “far from the ideal” given the volume of people and established practices. The whale sharks are not in captivity. The biggest apprehension of the people of Oslob is if these gentle giants should one day stop showing up. The members of the community are aware that this can happen but thus far, their fears have been allayed because they have been able to operate almost daily since the activity took off in 2012. However, the reality is, if this activity stops, what stands to happen to the people of Oslob?
- (c) **Profit (Economic Sustainability)** – Tourism activities have to be economically viable for the locality to justify its continued operations. Economic sustainability is one of the reasons why tourism is pursued. The Philippine Statistics Authority, PSA, has already reported that Philippine Tourism has a national GDP contribution of about 12% as stated in the Department of Tourism National Tourism Development Plan 2023-2028 (DOT, 2023). Oslob’s experience of the last fifteen (15) years, from 4<sup>th</sup> class to 1<sup>st</sup> class municipality (PSA, n.d.) because of income largely attributed by the locals to tourism, is evidence of profit being made by the community. This is what they hope to make sustainable and continue to enjoy in the years to come. Presently, the key informant advised that on regular days, guests number an average of 1,000-1,500 pax, increasing to 2,000-2,500 pax during peak season. At P500 per person, that is a minimum income of PhP500,000.00 per day. In a small town with a population of 29,264 as of the 2020 census (PhilAtlas, 2025), tourism’s economic gains are obvious.

## Adaptive Management

From a steadily growing body of literature, Farrell and Twining-Ward (2004) present *Adaptive Management* as a framework, one that stands out in managing the non-linear, unstable natural and social elements in a comprehensive, ever-changing tourism system. Rather than working to achieve an idealized state of equilibrium, adaptive management progresses through an accumulation of “social learning” where the stakeholders identify, experiment, and adapt to benefit from the changes that happen, both small and large. In this process, stakeholder participatory planning is key to all other components in the programs, projects, and activities that are to be collectively pursued for sustainable tourism development.

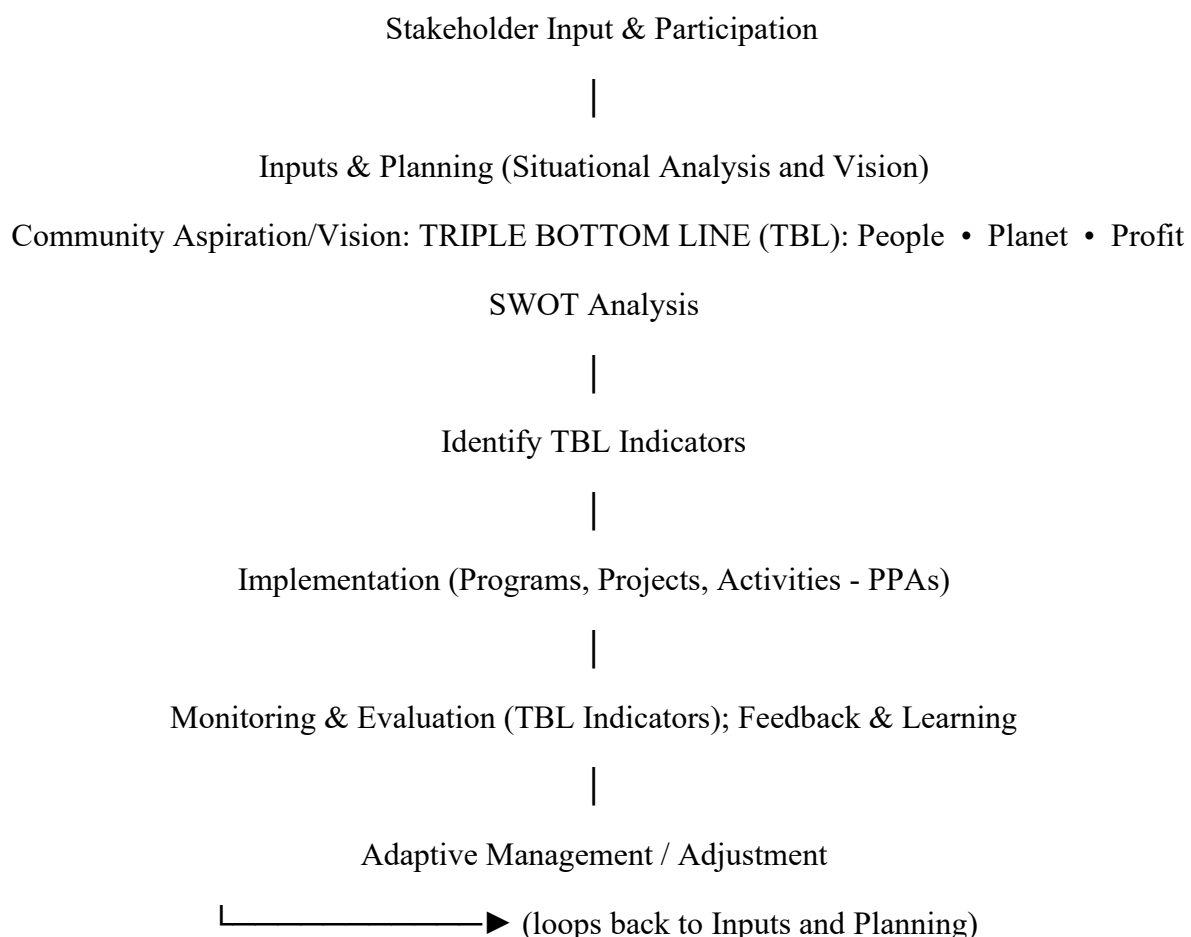


**Figure 1** is adapted from Twining-Ward and Butler (2002). Samoa Sustainable Tourism Indicator Project.

## Conceptual Framework

The researcher worked on this study using a framework that merges the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) and Adaptive Management theories with adjustments to the circumstances of Oslob, Cebu. This conceptual framework puts the participation and input of the tourism stakeholders at the center of the adaptive management cycle. They are integral to the process. This move towards self-determination for the path of their tourism development is meant to allow the locals to take ownership of the courses of action and take responsibility for them, while they seek to find the balance to achieve sustainable tourism development for People, Planet, and Profit, as well as have government's support as they collectively aspire for the continued growth of their community. As the stakeholders participated in the consultation, they gave their input to ascertain their current situation. Specific areas for concern did not end with just statements of problems, but they proceeded to provide strategies, *programs, projects, and activities* (PPA) to resolve them. What is not yet in place is the determination of specific actions to be undertaken by the community and the LGU, the indicators for monitoring and the timeline for the PPA implementation. These are the general contents of the results from the consultation. The specifics, however, are operational and are no longer part of this research. Indicators for monitoring and evaluation may be the topic of further studies, as these indicators should reflect TBL to ensure that the efforts are towards sustainable tourism development.

The applied Adaptive Management framework has the stakeholders' input and participation at its core. The flow of the moves from situational analysis to goal setting and formulation of objectives, problem identification, planning of programs, projects and activities (PPAs), identifying indicators, PPA implementation then finally to monitoring and evaluating, learning and, finally, adapting. This continuous cycle shows that the current efforts are the beginning and should be continued for it to be truly sustainable. The flow of the conceptual framework for proposed use is as follows:



**Figure 2.A.** This is the directional flow of the stages in Adaptive Management, which have incorporated the tenets of the Triple Bottom Line theory: People, Planet, and Profit.

## Oslob's Adaptive Management Framework



**Figure 2.B.** To further envision this flow, this AI generated figure shows how the cycle continuously takes place, with the stakeholders at the core, participating in all aspects of the management cycle. Note that the arrow from PPA moves to both indicators and implementation as the researcher recognizes that indicators need not be revised each time PPAs are adjusted and, thereafter, implemented.

The framework is not linear. A feedback loop is important to continue the process of adaptation. Among the stakeholders, included are the local community, the people's organizations, sectoral representation, LGU municipal and barangay officials, and academics. The local residents recognize that they may not have the technical know-how to come up with the ideal solutions to their issues, so they have included in this consultation those from whom recommendations and alternative courses of action may be sought.

## METHODS

### Research Design

This study was conducted using a qualitative research design, with the use of the case study method. It emphasizes the constructed experiences of the Oslob community because of tourism, surrounding the events in their lives, with an emic perspective (Sirakaya-Turk et al., 2017). Data was gathered through a tourism stakeholders' consultation in Oslob.

The researcher also conducted an interview with a key informant, the Municipal Administrator and Officer-in-Charge of Tourism for the Local Government Unit of the municipality, to obtain information on the history, activities, policies, and plans for tourism activities in Oslob.

Lastly, the researcher was also a participant observer in Oslob, Cebu. A tourism rapid assessment was conducted prior to the consultation to show the existing and potential tourism products of the municipality and assist in the evaluation of such resources for inputs in the Oslob Tourism Framework Development Plan.

To allow for flexibility and in recognition of the information conveyed by the respondents, a thematic analysis was adopted for this study. This method is one where the researcher identifies and organizes relevant themes during the discussion (Labra et al., 2019). The combined deductive-inductive approach was used by identifying

the salient themes, which surfaced from the consultation, as well as key categories indicated in the Department of Tourism's LGU Tourism Guidebook (DOT, 2017). The Tourism Guidebook served as a guide for the groupings of the Projects, Programs, and Activities (PPAs) required for the Tourism Development Framework Plan, which the Municipality of Oslob intends to write.

### **Profile of Participants**

The tourism stakeholders in attendance numbered 41 individuals from all barangays of Oslob. More specifically, these participants were from the following sectors/offices: the Municipal Administrator, employees of the Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction Council, Planning and Development Council and Tourism Office, Barangay Officials and/or Sangguniang Kabataan from the 21 barangays of the municipality, the Youth Development Council, local tourism organizations, such as Oslob Hotel and Restaurants Association (OHARA), Tan-awan Oslob Sea Wardens and Fishermen Association (TOSWFA) and Hagdan Oslob Monkey Protectors and Farmers Association (HOMPFA), representatives of local transportation providers such as the "Habal-Habal" drivers or motorcycle taxi riders, and the boat rental owners, the merchants' organization representing the private sector, members of civil society such as the Parish Pastoral Council members and the academe with the presence of Cebu Technological University - Oslob Extension Campus and the Department of Education, some of whom were the identified elders on Oslob's history and heritage.

The tool used to gather the information were the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis (Teece, 2018), through a workshop and several succeeding interactive sessions discussing the sustainable tourism planning process, governance in tourism and destination marketing, which were structured where participants engaged in discussions, activities and proposed strategies to address the concerns they have identified (Merriam-Webster, 2023).

### **Thematic Analysis**

As the frameworks have already been discussed, to further tie in the elements of this study, related literature on stakeholder participatory planning, sustainable tourism development, tourism products and circuits, tourism governance, human resources in tourism, and infrastructure was gathered for a more productive discussion.

### **Stakeholder participatory planning**

"Who should be involved in Tourism Planning?" (DOT, 2017) This is quoted from the Tourism Guidebook for Local Government Units. The LGU has jurisdiction and primary responsibility for tourism in the locality. Ideally, the LGU and the community should have control over what happens in their town and should also stand to benefit the most from these plans. The Tourism Guidebook makes stipulations on the ideal composition of what would be considered by the members of the Tourism Council of the locale. The Council should include: the Local Chief Executive (LCE) or the Mayor, the (department) head of the Tourism Office, the Local Planning and Development Coordinator (LPDC), the Sanggunian Chairperson for Tourism (from among the Municipal Councilors), the representative from the Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (MDRRMC), the local agriculturist (especially when there will be endeavors for Farm Tourism), local representatives of various national agencies such as Department of Tourism (DOT) Regional Office, Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Natural Resources (DENR), especially if there are identified protected areas, law enforcement such as the Philippine National Police (PNP), Department of Agriculture (DA), the private sector involved in tourism, the transport sector, representatives from the people's organization involved in tourism, women's organization involved in tourism, non-government organizations working in tourism, barangay captains with tourism attractions (and support facilities), the academe and other sectoral representatives, as needed for tourism services and activities.

The individuals present during the Oslob tourism stakeholders' consultation fit the required list of those who need to be consulted and need to be present for the proper formulation of their tourism strategies, programs, projects and activities moving forward. Residents and other members of the community were welcome to participate in the preparations for tourism as they are the ones who will be directly affected by the tourism activities.

The Tourism Council, once formed, also has the mandate to formulate the continuing programs for developing

local tourism facilities and protection of local resources, regulate and supervise the tourism-oriented establishments, monitor the implementation of tourism plans and policies, ensure the continued compliance of sanitary and safety standards for businesses that participate in tourism activities.

Feedback from tourism activities will also be encouraged to hear from the tourists who are also identified stakeholders (Cruz, 2014), since they are the consumers of the Oslob experience. This will allow for the continuance of adaptive management.

### **Sustainable Tourism Development**

The *Brundtland Report*, World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), and *Agenda 21* (United Nations, 1993), birthed the concept of sustainability as issues for the world to work towards securing the future of the generations to come. Presently, the United Nations has the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations (UN, 2015), while the UN Tourism instituted the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism (GCET) in 1999, as adopted during the General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism, n.d.). Both the Sustainable Development Goals and Global Code of Ethics for Tourism are foundational and concrete guidelines for sustainable (tourism) development practices and strategies. In the case of Oslob, SDG highlights include the aspirations for SDG 1: No poverty, SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities, SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production, and SDG 14: Life below water. The UN Tourism GCET is a set of 10 Principles which have been designed to guide the tourism stakeholders: governments, host communities, private sector, non-government organizations (NGOs), tourists, and travelers towards being more responsible in their conduct of tourism and maximize the benefits to be gained while minimizing the negative environmental and socio-cultural consequences of these. All tenets of the GCET are applicable in Oslob's circumstances.

Comprehensive discussions in sustainable tourism development can only be made when the impacts of tourism, economic, socio-cultural, and environmental are identified, accepted, and if negative, mitigated. Only then can strategies for pursuit and implementation be decided to comply with the prescription of what is sustainable, not only for the present but for the future generation as well.

### **Tourism Governance**

Republic Act 9593, known as the Tourism Act of 2009 is the central piece of legislation in the Philippines, which recognizes and aims to promote tourism as an important contributor to national development and economic gain (Republic of the Philippines, 2009). This law establishes frameworks and guidelines for tourism development, regulations, and promotions with an awareness of sustainable tourism development programs and projects to ensure minimal negative environmental and socio-cultural impacts and boost its gains. The basis for the guidelines, tasks, plans, and processes for tourism planning has also been more concisely presented in the Tourism Guidebook for Local Government Units (DOT, 2017) to facilitate the process.

Tourism officers play a critical role in the implementation of RA 9593 by being the source of essential local information and database for tourism activities nationwide. The municipal or city tourism officers are those who act as the connection that conveys to the Department of Tourism what the real score is on the ground. They are tasked with preparing, implementing, and updating local tourism development plans, as well as enforcing laws, rules, accredited standards, and regulations applicable to tourism establishments to ensure proper compliance. However, it should be emphasized that government does not automatically equate to governance. Primary among the duties of tourism officers is for their office to lead as the Destination Management Organization (DMO). To perform this role effectively, tourism officers should embody characteristics that enable and empower them to carry out their responsibilities competently. Effective planning, implementation, monitoring, feedback, and adaptive management of tourism at the local level are strengthened when governments uphold the following values: *accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, adherence to the rule of law, and participatory and consensus-oriented decision-making* (Morrison, 2022). This was one of the objectives for the conducted tourism stakeholder consultation and is critical to the success of the adaptive management process they would like to practice.

### **Tourism Products and Circuits**

Tourism product development is crucial in the process of correct tourism planning and development (Cruz,



2014). Tourism products are the backbone of why tourism can take place in identified localities. The tourism product is the main asset that makes tourism possible. These are natural or man-made resources or attractions that are coupled with a bundle of other activities, services and facilities which are offered to tourists and travelers for a price they are willing to pay. The need to identify products to supplement the flagship offering is pressing, given the aspirations of the community. It is a necessary response to increase tourism traffic in the town and to address the community's concern of the lack of "control" of the whale sharks' behavior. What would they do if one day the gentle giants do not come? They need to strengthen alternative sites and possibly even entice the tourists to increase the duration of their stay, because they have other interesting things to do.

Meanwhile, a tourism circuit is a route that may comprise destinations that are geographically proximate or dispersed and involves at least three (3) major tourist destinations that share common characteristics or themes (Cruz, 2014). The marine and freshwater circuit of Oslob, Badian, Moalboal, and Aloguinsan is an established tourism circuit in the island province of Cebu and within the Central Visayas Region. It is important to highlight this comparative advantage in pursuing sustainable tourism courses of action following the identification of stakeholder inputs.

### **Human Resources in tourism**

One of the strongest justifications for pursuing tourism development is its potential to generate both economic and socio-cultural gains. Such benefits to society may take the form of employment, education, income generation, investments, entrepreneurial ventures, and other livelihood opportunities. Central to realizing these gains is the quality of tourism services delivered at the destination level, which is largely shaped by human capital. When providing tourism services, the importance of employees' attitudes, competencies, and consistency in service delivery should not be underestimated, as these directly influence visitor satisfaction and destination image (Inkson & Minnaert, 2018). Moreover, within the framework of the experience economy, tourism value is co-created through interactions between visitors and service providers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004), making frontline personnel the primary mediators of memorable and meaningful experiences. In this context, tourism frontliners serve as the first point of contact and are instrumental in shaping initial impressions, expectations, and overall perceptions of the destination (Chen & Chen, 2010). For Local Government Units (LGUs) acting as Destination Management Organizations (DMOs), this underscores the necessity of investing in continuous training, skills development, and ethical orientation of tourism workers as part of destination governance (UNWTO, 2007). Capacity-building programs that emphasize service excellence, cultural sensitivity, and sustainability principles not only enhance service quality but also reinforce inclusive growth, community pride, and long-term destination competitiveness.

In addition to these skills and excellence in the delivery of services, the employees, workers, and business owners in the industry should be trained in disaster preparedness and readiness. Cebu province encountered several crises and disasters in 2025, such as a strong earthquake, typhoons, and floods (Rappler, 2025). This emphasizes the need for proper disaster, risk reduction management training coupled with constant refresher courses on the implementation of proper environmental practices for the whale shark interaction, as well as its other sensitive, natural tourism resources.

### **Infrastructure**

Infrastructure in the form of roads, ports, facilities, public transportation, tourist rest areas, utilities, and the like is the basic system needed by the destination to serve its residents, its businesses, and its visitors (Morrison, 2022). These are the systems for electricity, communications, fresh water sources, solid waste and sewage disposal, and the maintenance of its road networks, directional signage, and cautionary traffic signs. The basic social services needed in localities are also included here, such as medical care and hospitals, fire stations, police stations, public markets, and passenger terminals.

The infrastructure of a destination is also reflected in its attractions. The physical or tangible dimensions of tourism products, including natural and built attractions, event halls, convention centers, accommodations, food and beverage establishments, and entertainment facilities constitute the infrastructure necessary both for residents to live comfortably and for visitors to have their needs met. Effective tourism infrastructure planning requires a comprehensive review of existing facilities and an assessment of additional requirements. This



underscores the importance of examining Comprehensive Development Plans (CDPs) and Comprehensive Land Use Plans (CLUPs) when formulating tourism development strategies (DOT, 2017). Additionally, ordinances governing solid and wastewater management including regular garbage collection, proper disposal procedures, and well-maintained landfills must first address the needs of local communities before catering to tourists. Wastewater management is particularly critical, as leakage into the marine environment could not only compromise tourism activities but also threaten the marine species in Oslob, which require careful protection and several of which are marine protected areas that belong to the nation and the world, not just Oslob and the province of Cebu.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION



**Figure 3.** Map of Oslob's attractions (Lo, n.d.).

Discussions opened primarily with the other tourism products the town has to offer. The key informant and the researcher present these current and potential attractions to further solidify tourism in Oslob, Cebu to augment the whale shark interaction experience. Clearly listing these indicate the need for their inclusion in the crafting of the Local Tourism Development Plan (LTDP). The existence of LTDP will help make sure that tourism activities are conducted correctly and sustainably, especially for the heritage and environmentally sensitive areas. With that, the Oslob community may continue to experience the benefits tourism has brought to their town.

### Oslob's Tourism Products and Circuit

Oslob, Cebu, is accessible through two (2) main commercial gateways. First is Mactan Cebu International Airport, about 128 kilometers away, and takes about 4 hours by private car. Another way to get to the town is via Dumaguete airport, in Negros Oriental. You can then go from the airport to Sibulan port and cross to Liloan Port, Santander, Cebu via a 25-minute ferry ride traversing Tañon Strait and driving an hour by car to the town proper (Poblacion) of Oslob. Lastly, there is also the informal gateway through the seaports using a smaller boat, locally called **banca**, traversing the waters between Bohol and Cebu. This extends the circuit of water activities to the other Central Visayas island province of Bohol and its neighboring popular island, Panglao.

In addition to the secondary data, the key informant provided information on the background, history, and intended ways forward for the identified attractions of Oslob. This was coupled with product research in addition to the participant observations of the researcher after having experienced the Tourism Rapid Assessment (TRA) of the sites.

The turning point of the flurry of tourism activities in Oslob was in 2012. Then Mayor Ronald Guaren had been, for years past, working on restoring the cultural tourism assets of the town to spur tourism activities. It was not

taking off, and movement was minimal. Historically, it was a regular activity for the fishermen of Oslob to feed small fish to the whale sharks, locally called **tuki**, to drive them away from the fishing grounds. This was done because the **tuki** would scare the table-sized fish they were trying to catch. It was then that there was a Japanese scuba diver who was in the water observing this familiar interaction between the whale shark and the fishermen. The whale sharks were seen as “pests” by the fishermen when they interfered with fishing. This scuba-diving enthusiast took photos and a video of the whale shark up close and posted it online. Thereafter, tourists started coming in the hundreds and eventually, thousands. It was almost an overnight sensation.

At that time, they had no tourist facilities or accommodation. Tourists who wanted to stay overnight would camp out or stay in the small nipa cottages intended for day use by locals. Eventually, residents opened their homes for “homestay” until the private sector bravely started investing in larger, more-equipped accommodation facilities catering to markets with varied budget ranges. Restaurants started opening, and ancillary services such as laundromats, pharmacies, and pawnshops/money changers were slowly becoming available. More so, back then they had no rules, policies nor guidelines in the conduct of the whale shark interaction. During that time, it was Donsol, Sorsogon, that was the established whale shark interaction destination. The interaction activities in Donsol were set up by the World Wildlife Fund in consonance with the Whale Shark Code of Conduct based on the multi-awarded practices of Western Australia’s Department of Conservation and Land Management, and a recognized example for Best Ecotourism practices in 2003 (De Guzman & Reyes, 2013). Meanwhile, Oslob was trying to play “catch-up” with the tourists who randomly showed up in their town. The individuals who ran the Donsol operations tried to assist by mentoring the fisherfolk of Oslob and teaching them about whale sharks and the procedures for the interaction. There were also sessions facilitated by the Department of Tourism to establish an internationally compliant wildlife interaction tourism activity. But eventually when Oslob settled, its interaction model proved to be different from that of Donsol.

Presently, Tan-awan, Oslob has a briefing area and “well-oiled” procedures from guest registration to a briefing or orientation, to the actual whale shark interaction, which runs almost daily. The fishermen and the key informant advised that they have an average of 8-10 whale sharks showing up every day, with a few full-grown and more generally in the juvenile size. This practically guarantees the tourists a whale shark interaction experience, any day. However, try as they would, the operations do not fully comply with all the standards for wildlife interaction. Even with the continued efforts to establish whale shark interaction practices in accordance with international guidelines, as of this writing, the whale sharks in Tan-awan, Oslob, though not in captivity, are being fed by the fishermen to facilitate the activity. In addition, WWF wildlife interaction guidelines state that there should be a maximum of one (1) boat or six (6) individuals only per animal, at a 3-meter distance from the body and a 4-meter distance from the tail of a whale shark. Tan-awan has multiple boats out simultaneously and an undetermined number of whale sharks. The tourists take turns at seeing these gentle giants while swaying to the natural currents, in boats with no engines, during the operating hours of 6:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. The distance requirements are not necessarily followed because even if people were briefed and they tried to stay close to their boats, and away from the animals, the **tuki** followed the currents and the food with no measure or care to stay away from the swimmers. The animals do not shy away from moving close to humans or even occasionally graze them as they swim by.

This main attraction adds a significant activity to the already existing marine and freshwater tourism circuit in the area. Before the popularity of tourism activities, the main source of income for the residents of Oslob was agriculture. Typical of coastal towns in the area, they lived by farming and fishing. Since there are no large expanses of flatlands in the area, the planting of crops is done in the mountains, specifically in Barangays Cansalo-ay, Can-ukban, and Canangca-an. The harvests, mostly vegetables, and fish catch were in quantities for sale within the locality and nearby areas, and mostly for personal consumption, not for commercial volumes. Back then, when the fisherfolk were not educated about proper fishing techniques, the destructive fishing practice called **muroami** was popularly used. This was damaging to the corals and fish nesting grounds because nets were lowered with heavy blocks pounding on the seabed to scare fish out of hiding (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, n.d.), regardless of whether it crushed all the corals along its path, just to improve the fish catch. This is no longer done today.

To date, farming and fishing activities continue, but in quantities more aligned with the town’s needs. The urgency to earn from such activities has lessened as there are now alternative sources of income.

There is a total of eleven (11) identified current and potential natural and man-made attractions in the town of Oslob.

## **Natural Attractions**

### **Whale shark interaction - Barangay Tan-awan**

In the interaction area, the operators saw the need to coordinate their efforts and started to organize themselves. They have since set up the Tan-awan Oslob Sea Wardens and Fishermen Association (TOSWFA), who look out for the welfare of the *tuki*, their colleagues, and the tourists, as well as aid each other when conducting the tour. Unlike the model in Donsol, Sorsogon, where the interaction takes place in the middle of the seas, where spotters can see the whale sharks naturally feeding, the whale shark interaction in Oslob takes place only 40-45 meters from its shores. It is deep, but it is in clear, blue-green waters due to the white sand at the seabed. There is no need to sail to dark blue depths because of the closeness to the coast. This is why they can accommodate tourists in large numbers because the access and turnaround are quick. The members of TOSWFA use non-motorized boats that can each seat a maximum of 8-10 passengers. They manually row the 40-meter distance and let the currents take over during the period of interaction. From the shore, one can observe the tourists getting the experience of a lifetime with the whale sharks for a period of about 20-25 minutes, which is the natural ebb of the currents, where the whale sharks feed. This activity takes place daily, weather and circumstance permitting, from 6:00 a.m. to about 11:00 a.m.

### **Sumilon Island Marine Sanctuary – Sumilon Island**

The area around Sumilon Island is the first Marine Protected Area (MPA) in the country (Manlupig, 2023). It was designated as MPA as early as 1974, upon the prompting and supervision of Silliman University Marine Reserve of Dumaguete, working with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). On the island is the Bluewater Sumilon Island Resort, which operates under strict supervision to ensure compliance with the requirements of the MPA that surrounds it. It is a popular site for snorkeling and scuba diving. Day passes are issued with a specific carrying capacity. Only the resort on the island can issue this pass. Others who want to experience seeing the abundant marine species will snorkel from their boats, at a distance, and the sand bars that surface with the tides.

### **Oslob Macaque Sanctuary (Monkey viewing) – Barangay Hagdan**

The “friendly” Macaque monkeys can be found in an area close to the national highway. The encounters are managed and monitored by the HOMPFA (Hagdan Oslob Monkey Protectors and Farmers Association). They brief tourists about the “do’s and don’ts” in the monkey experience and are always present while the tourists observe these animals. The monkeys are “wild”. None of them are in captivity. They have just gotten accustomed to some of the individuals who are members of the organization who manage the site.

### **Hagdan and Bangcogon beaches (potential)**

The waters of barangay Hagdan are also an identified Marine Protected Area (MPA) due to its rich corals and resources. These are monitored by the Hagdan Oslob Farmers and Fishermen Association (HOFFA). Along with Hagdan beaches, the beaches of Bangcogon are also potential alternative sites for snorkeling and diving activities. The coral gardens are rich in these areas, teeming with fish and marine species, big and small. This is in addition to the commonplace sightings of turtles that are seen feeding close to shore, as it is a natural habitat for them. These may be alternatives to the Sumilon snorkeling experience. To do things correctly, the LGU wants to set guidelines first before the tourism activity is promoted more actively. The HOFFA and the Bangcogon Oslob Fisherman Association, BOFA, are already organized and have learned to be more proactive rather than reactive in their intended tourism activities.

### **Tumalog Falls**

Experience the gentle shower of the waterfalls and their shallow ponds for dipping. All this for a minimal fee. One must walk through steep hills to get to the site. Though very well paved, the up and down curves of the path are a challenge. So, the Tumalog Water Falls Driver’s Association offers a reasonably priced “habal-habal”

ride to and from Tumalog Falls. It is a breathtaking view with slight showers giving bathers a light pat while cooling their bodies. The falls do not carry a deluge of water with a booming sound. However, that is also where the challenge lies because when there is a dry spell or drought, the Tumalog Falls has also been known to dry up in the summer months of March to May.

### **Sunset on the mountains of Oslob (potential)**

On a steep climb to the mountains that lie within the boundaries of the towns of Oslob on the western side and Samboan on the eastern side, there is a spot which beautifully captures a full panoramic view of Negros Island from the island of Cebu and the Tañon Strait glimmering between it. It is a beautiful sight to see as the sun sets. The wide-open space may also allow for quieter tourism activities, such as camping in the cool weather of that elevation. As this is yet a potential tourist site, the LGU intends to set the guidelines first before offering it to the public. Presently, there are also no toilet facilities or rest areas on this steep upward trail. The drive can also prove to be quite dangerous with its steep incline and sharp curves, thus, advisories shall be made to discourage night driving for those who are unfamiliar with the terrain.

### **Man-Made / Cultural Attractions**

#### **Baluarte Ruins**

This watchtower, the only one remaining of the six (6) that were built along the coastline of Oslob in 1788 to look out for potential threats from the coast, is the last wall that still prominently stands. This watchtower was manned in 1815 when an attempt was made to attack the town. This was successfully thwarted because the people of the town were prepared. It was rehabilitated in 2009 and now stands as a reminder of their bravery.

#### **Cuartel Ruins**

This is a heritage site in Cebu built by the Spaniards in 1860 and made of coral. It was meant to be the barracks of Spanish troops, and its current structure sturdily withstood earthquakes, typhoons, and calamities of the past. Though it remained unfinished until the end of the Spanish era in 1898 (Suroy.ph, n.d.), it still stands firm to this day.

#### **Local food – seafood, roasted native chicken, *nilarang* fish**

The abundant waters surrounding Oslob allow it to boast of the availability and affordability of fresh seafood in its food establishments. A particular favorite of locals is the *nilarang*, which generally uses bigger-sized, “fatty” fish in a fresh tomato base soup. This might be the Visayan counterpart to *sinigang*, which is a sour soup that originates from Luzon but, generally, with sour flavors from tamarind. Tourists may want to experience this fresh delicacy as prepared in a home-cooked manner. There is also the availability of native chicken, as against chicken provided by growers. It is organic as it is raised in the backyards of residents. Its meat is tougher, but when prepared correctly, it is quite a savory dish.

#### **Parroquia de la Inmaculada Parish (Immaculate Conception Parish)**

This National Cultural Treasure, declared by the National Historical Commission of the Philippines is the parish in the heart of Oslob town. Throughout the years, it was run by different orders of the Catholic Church. It was established in 1599 as a **visita** or just appended to the grand church of Boljoon by the Augustinians. After almost 90 years, it was turned over to the Jesuit order. Five years later, it was returned to the Augustinians where Bishop Gomez worked on the building of the convent, made from wood and coral. It became a separate, independent parish in 1848, and then the bell tower was constructed in 1858. Sadly, the first of a series of fires destroyed different portions of the church. It first burned in 1942. It was repaired in 1956. In 1980, renovations for the convent and church were undertaken. Once again in a restored state, a fire destroyed it in 2008 and was repaired in 2010, with its present form now standing (TheOldChurches.com, n.d.).

#### **Toslob Festival**

This annual celebration takes place on the feast of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, Oslob’s

patroness. Dance competitions and festivities take place in the streets as the town celebrates its fiesta. It is a way for the *Oslobanons* to express thanksgiving for their blessings as well as celebrate their merry making even in days before the actual fiesta.

### Situational Analysis of the State of Tourism in Oslob, Cebu

This study also aimed to craft a situational analysis report of tourism and its activities in the town of Oslob. Using Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis, the stakeholder consultation and the succeeding workshops yielded these results.

**Figure 4: Table of Findings.** This table shows the summary of findings that are the collated information collected during the stakeholder consultation. Using the SWOT Analysis (Teece, 2018), the present and potential tourism products and the strategies recommended in the form of projects, programs, and activities, that could be grouped under four categories: Tourism Products and Circuit, Tourism Governance, Human Resources in Tourism, and Infrastructure. These were the common themes that surfaced in the processing of their inputs. The basis of this also stems from the components of a tourism development plan (DOT, 2017).

S- Strengths, W-Weaknesses, O-Opportunities, T-Threats

Category	SWOT Findings	Proposed Strategies / Programs, Projects, and Activities (PPAs)	Tentative Timeline
<b>Tourism Products and Circuits</b>	<b>S:</b> Whale shark interaction and rich marine biodiversity	Manage waste in whale shark interaction areas, especially from guests; Continue close monitoring; Improve briefing procedures; Clean beaches	Continuing
		Digitalization of systems and procedures to improve statistics and information	Short-term to long-term
		Formulate educational modules on whale shark science for locals and tourists	Short-term to long-term
		Educate guests to take waste back with them	Mid- to long-term
	<b>S:</b> Kawasan Falls	Strengthen existing tourist circuits	3–7 years
	<b>O:</b> Canangsaan Lake, Can-ukban Mini Falls, Malabago, Langub and Nigad Springs, Lagunde turtle watching, monkey viewing	Integrate sites into tourism circuits within proximity to Oslob	Continuing
	<b>O:</b> Dive spots of Barangay Gawi and Barangay Hagdan	Establish guidelines before allowing tourism; Actively promote sites	Mid- to long-term
	<b>O:</b> Cultural heritage sites (restored)	Seek government support; Develop promotional materials; Establish social media presence; Craft heritage tours	Short- to long-term
		Prepare visitor orientation programs	Short- to long-term
		Construct toilets and rest areas	Short- to long-term
<b>Tourism Governance</b>	<b>W/T:</b> Price control of basic goods and tourism fees	Coordinate rates across accommodation sector; Strict implementation and disclosure of tariffs	Short-term to long-term
		Protect and strictly monitor abusive loan sharks	Immediate to long-term
		Conduct seminars for market vendors;	Immediate to

		Improve access to reasonable lenders	long-term
		Impose sanctions on violators and overpricing	Immediate to long-term
	<b>W/T:</b> Road safety	Impose speed limits; Install rumble strips; Increase police visibility	Immediate to long-term
	<b>T:</b> Whale shark SOPs	Strict implementation of policies and operating hours; Formulate and enforce SOPs	Short-term to long-term
		Prioritize early interaction for guests staying overnight	Immediate to long-term
		OHARA to take active role; Involve consultants for best practices	Short-term to long-term
	<b>O:</b> Marketing, promotion, and DIY travel	Create compelling tourism content; Establish information centers; Increase official social media presence	Short-term to long-term
	<b>T/O:</b> Public safety and security	Maintain police visibility to preserve safety	Immediate to long-term
<b>Human Resources in Tourism</b>	<b>S:</b> Hospitable people	Continue mindfulness and service culture	Continuing
	<b>W/T:</b> Lack of trained personnel	Develop in-service training modules (languages, diversity, inclusivity)	Short-term to long-term
	<b>W:</b> Unemployment	Build LGU job database; Disseminate job opportunities; Conduct job fairs	Short-term and continuing
		Provide preferential opportunities for locals	Immediate to long-term
	<b>W:</b> Poor management / lack of know-how	Coordinate training with partner groups; Emergency response training	Short-term and continuing
<b>Infrastructure</b>	<b>W/T:</b> Poor access roads to Oslob	Work with LGU, Cebu Province, and national agencies for road construction and repair	Short-term to 5 years and onwards
	<b>W:</b> Lack of tourist rest areas	Identify strategic sites; Construct rest facilities	1–2 years and onwards
	<b>W:</b> Insufficient water supply	Develop Mountain Barangay Waterworks System	3–5 years and onwards
	<b>W:</b> Poor connectivity	Consider partnerships with service providers	Mid- to long-term
	<b>W/T:</b> Poor waste management	Educate locals and tourists; Establish local waste management facility	Short-term to long-term

The results from the stakeholder consultation and the key informant interview show that the members of the community are aware of the tourism resources they have, the benefits they gain from them, and the possible consequences should tourism activities slowdown in their town. Most of the proposed strategies have immediate or short-term timelines as the urgency to address them is recognized. With the intent to immediately address concerns is also the awareness that it may not be sustained for the long term. It is proven in principles of management that reactionary strategies often have very limited considerations and are not very “sustainable” as it aims only to correct urgent matters. This is why the community’s aspirations are toward sustainable tourism development so that they may continue to reap benefits from tourism for generations to come. The most glaring fact is that despite the increased revenues and improved quality of life of the people in Oslob from tourism activities, as of this writing, the formal Local Tourism Development Plan (LTDP) is yet to be ratified. A leadership who is more proactive in the practice of sustainability was needed to pursue the crafting of a proper tourism plan. The strategies proposed will overlap in implementation across the themes derived from the results. Overall, it can be concluded that proper and decisive *tourism governance* is critical and key to the proper implementation of the strategies proposed for the aspirations for sustainable tourism to be achieved.

In *tourism products and circuits*, of primary consideration is the flagship product, the *tuki* interaction experience. The information provided by the key informant advised that in low season, they have 1,000 to 1,500 passengers over a period of 5 to 6 hours, with the operating hours from 6:00am to 11:00am, daily. In peak season, it can reach up to almost double that number. Based on the information on Donsol, Sorsogon whale shark watching (De Guzman & Reyes, 2013) and the recently featured “*Pagbutwa: The Festive Opening of Butanding Season*” (BicolDotPH, 2025), whale shark interaction, also known as *butanding* in Sorsogon, remains in compliance with ecotourism conservation efforts and guidelines established by WWF decades ago. This is also in accordance with Australia’s guidelines, which is known for the Ningaloo Marine Park having these gentle giants. Whale sharks sighted in Donsol cover about 40% of all whale shark sightings in the Philippines, significantly more than those seen in Oslob, Cebu. There was no literature available to provide exact numbers or limits for the carrying capacity in the engagement with the whale sharks. However, there are specific rules that tourists are briefed on prior to the Donsol interaction:

1. Tourists must register and pay at the Donsol Visitor Center
2. Tourists must watch the video containing the Whale Shark Code of Conduct
3. After completing the briefing, they given boarding passes and assigned to a BIO, Butanding Information Officer.
4. A maximum of six (6) tourists is assigned to each BIO. Only one (1) boat at a time may have snorkelers in the water to interact with the whale shark
5. Researchers are given priority for interaction, and their findings are posted in the Visitor Center for everyone to learn from them

This process takes about 20-30minutes to complete. These guidelines are further broken down to a list of do’s and don’ts in the interaction. Specific to the whale shark interaction; scuba diving is not allowed and the prescribed distance from the body and the tail, 3-meters and 4-meters respectively, should always be observed. The tourists watch as the gentle giants feed naturally in the depths of the blue ocean and the briefing will inform the tourists that at no time will they “guarantee” whale shark interaction as the experience is one that takes place in the wild.

Based on the researcher’s observations, the Oslob experience may not have the *tuki* in captivity, but the feeding directs their behavior to stay in a designated area. Whale sharks are also known to be migratory animals travelling thousands of kilometers around the globe with patterns for congregating in areas that have become popular for this at certain times of year: Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico; Ningaloo Reef, Australia; Tofo Beach, Mozambique; Donsol Bay, Philippines and the Galapagos Islands (Evangeline, 2025). In Donsol, the season only lasts from December to May. But in Oslob, the whale sharks have shown up “daily”, all year-round, since 2012. This has been fortuitous for tourism in Oslob town, but environmentalists have been known to object to the “feeding” practice. The TOSWFA and the key informant have said that “feeding” did not only take place due to tourism. It was a practice of the community for generations past, in times when the *tuki* was viewed as a pest to fishermen for driving away their catch. The TOSWFA also recognize their “regulars” among the whale sharks. They have observed that these regulars come and go throughout the year until others cease to come back and are eventually replaced by new juveniles. They claim these are juveniles since the fish’s length range from 20-30 feet and not the full grown 40-45 feet adult whale sharks.

To pursue sustainable tourism development, there should be more conservative guidelines to work towards environmental sustainability. Granted the socio-economic benefits are evident but for the Triple Bottom Line to be achieved, nature should be protected. Adjustments can be made over time and by identifying the complementing natural and man-made resources and promoting them, the other tourism assets can supplement whatever income opportunities will be lessened from the whale shark interaction. Recommended strategies may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Set a daily maximum limit for whale shark interaction. An example of a successful ecotourism implementation of daily maximum limit was when this was established for the Puerto Princesa Underground River experience in Palawan, Philippines, implemented about a decade ago. It was when the UNESCO World Heritage Site was in danger of exceeding limits of people in the sensitive areas and for the wildlife living in it.



2. Require pre-registration of tourists, minimize or eradicate walk-ins. This way people need to queue for this once in a lifetime experience. Policies or an ordinance can be made to prioritize guests staying in accommodation with members of the Oslob Hotel and Restaurants Association (OHARA). Instead of those rushing to come in from other gateways to just quickly experience whale shark interaction and leave for the next destination in the tourism circuit. This can increase opportunities for other barangays to earn from tourism.

Pre-registration should be managed by the LGU, and this will require careful monitoring of their registration page to ensure correctness of information. This will also help provide data for the indicators needed for monitoring, feedback and learning of the adaptive management cycle.

3. Adopt an ecological niche pricing strategy and increase the value of this unique experience. At its present rate of PhP 500.00 per person, the Oslob tourism stakeholders will insist on quantity to increase income. If this is priced higher, it may reduce volume and make the operations more manageable. They can indicate preferential rates for *Oslobanons* or Cebu province or Region VII residents to prioritize domestic tourism.
4. Properly brief tourists on Code of Conduct. Presently, there is a briefing area, but it is in an open area which is not taken too seriously.
5. Shorten operating hours to ease the stress on the animals. Lessening hours of interaction have not proven to be beneficial to the whale sharks but reducing occasions for overtourism would reduce the overall environmental impact of the activity (Guerra & Dawson, 2016).
6. They should go into consultation with marine biologists and specialists about making their practices more sustainable for the environment, the people and the economy.

To further enhance the **tourism product** offerings, alternate itineraries should be created and promoted to include the identified **natural tourism products**: Sumilon Island Marine Sanctuary snorkeling and diving, Oslob Macaque (Monkey) Sanctuary, Tumalog Falls trek and swim and sunset in Oslob mountains; and **cultural tourism products**: Baluarte Ruins, Cuartel Ruins, Parroquia de la Inmaculada Parish and the local food experience. If the whale shark experience requires a queue, then guests can enjoy the other sites and spread the concentration of tourism activities to include other parts of town. The cultural tourism attractions can supplement day tour activities. The LGU should ensure that the correct information and knowledgeable tour guides can convey the appropriate information on the parish and the ruins. The members of the Oslob Tour Guides Association (OTGA) can take the lead on this rather than the tour escorts accompanying groups from outside of Oslob. For the beaches of Hagdan and Bangcogon and barangays Gawi and Lagunde and the possible campsite, the community now knows that before tourism is pursued more actively in these areas with rich marine resources and scenic mountain landscapes, the guidelines on the conduct of these activities should be in place. They already have HOFFA and BOFA as the community's efforts to self-organize. After the guidelines are in place, then alternate itineraries and promotional efforts can be made to include and market these additional products. As in Tan-awan, the members of these groups are hoping to benefit the most from activities that may be started in these areas, as a more accessible alternative to Sumilon. Rather than being reactionary, they want to be more proactive about setting up the systems first. Lastly, the town can also market itself as a place for "stay-cations" to enjoy the small-town, coastal vibe, to extend the stay even longer. Ancillary services will be needed for this and can encourage entrepreneurs to start businesses to support this.

Complementing the tourist products, not just for tourism but for the whole town, is the waste management concerns in the tourist attractions and in the municipality of Oslob as a whole. The LGU is expected to take the lead in finding a long-term solution to this. This is also a concern raised in the **infrastructure** requirements of the stakeholders. Currently, their waste is being taken to the neighboring town for disposal, with garbage pick-ups sometimes delayed. With improved income and funds available, the LGU spoke of putting up their own materials recovery facility (MRF) as well as a sanitary landfill for their needs. This will allow them to provide for themselves as well as offer a service to neighboring towns. This can be an additional source of municipal income. These are also clear steps towards sustainable waste management and becoming a more sustainable community. Meanwhile, the immediate solution needs to be the continuing efforts to educate tourists and tourism service providers about ensuring that solid and water waste do not pollute the surroundings and seas of Oslob.

In the aspect of *human resources in tourism*, the *Oslobanons* should gain the most from tourism. Despite the increased municipal revenue due to the town's growing tourism industry, there are still reports of unemployment. There were also informal discussions from the stakeholders that they want to encourage *Oslobanons* to make the investments in providing tourism services instead of having outsiders buy properties and immigrating to Oslob. As of this writing, there were no statistics provided on the businesses owned by non-locals. However, the community's awareness of this makes the researcher optimistic that they will be able to maximize tourism benefits to "natives" of the town. Ordinances for the requested training and capacity-building for basic delivery of tourism and hospitality services, coupled with periodic job fairs, are aimed at minimizing unemployment and maximizing work opportunities. The presence of the academic institution in the area as the source of experts who can conduct the training may help address this need.

The pressing concern for waste management was already raised in the discussion on tourism products. More on the theme of *infrastructure*, the discussion on the needs of the townsfolk, as well as safety and security issues, and other basic social services came to light. It was repeatedly highlighted that Oslob is a quiet, sleepy town in the south of Cebu. The community would like to keep it that way. At present, there is little or no crime to speak of, and the visibility of peace officers will keep it that way, especially with the presence of "outsiders", the tourists and guests. They also raised the community concern of abusive loan sharks and people who borrow without realizing that the fees charged are exorbitant. This should be curtailed. Adding disaster risk reduction management consciousness also keeps the community ready for whatever eventuality, with Cebu province having experienced earthquakes, typhoons, and floods in 2025. Directly related to the tourism activities, road access and road safety were foremost in the cognizance of the locals because of poor road conditions affecting Oslob's accessibility, and the reported road accidents from over speeding transportation providers. Over speeding was caused by the rush to get to the other points of the tourism circuit. The overnight stays being proposed by the OHARA, making Oslob guests the priority for the interaction and other tourism activities, would discourage the rushing speeds of these vehicles and encourage more revenue for Oslob. Finally, the availability of freshwater supply for the town is a growing concern that the LGU should address, as more services are provided to the people of the town, including the tourists who will be staying there. This is also a sound, sustainable strategy that will have long-term gains.

## CONCLUSION

The awareness of the tourism stakeholders of Oslob is heightened, especially when it comes to making sure things are set up correctly before more of their resources and people engage in tourism. The Local Government Unit's work is expected to encompass all concerns raised and oversee its progress. The beauty in this situation is that the members of the community also subscribe to the goals for sustainability. They learned their lesson with the "overnight sensation" they experienced when they were unprepared for the popularity of the whale shark interaction when it first "boomed". Sustainable tourism development is the way forward. The Local Tourism Development Plan is a crucial guide for such plans and strategies for implementation. The townsfolk of Oslob have aspirations, and they ask that they be guided in their efforts to continue to work towards the balance for achieving the Triple Bottom Line. It is still far from perfect, but the collective willingness of the community to work together to reach the ideals of sustainable tourism development and embrace ethical practices in tourism is a big step in the right direction to benefit the present members of the community and a hope for a better tomorrow for the future generations of *Oslobanons*.

## REFERENCES

1. ASEAN-Japan Centre. (2025, July 29). Bojo River: community co-creation through sustainable ecotourism. ASEAN-Japan Sustainable Tourism Best Practices. [https://www.asean.or.jp/sustainable-tourism/cat\\_philippines/bojo-river-community-co-creation-through-sustainable-ecotourism/](https://www.asean.or.jp/sustainable-tourism/cat_philippines/bojo-river-community-co-creation-through-sustainable-ecotourism/)
2. Badian.info. (n.d.). Kawasan Falls, Badian, Cebu – swim in the crystal clear waters. <https://www.badian.info/kawasan-falls/> (badian.info).
3. BicolDotPH. (2025, January 10). Butanding season is officially here. <https://bicoldotph.com/2025/01/10/butanding-season-is-officially-here/>
4. Chen, C. F., & Chen, F. S. (2010). Experience quality, perceived value, satisfaction and behavioral intentions for heritage tourists. *Tourism Management*, 31(1), 29–35.

- <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2009.02.008>
5. Cruz, R. G. (2014). *Tourism planning and development*. Rex Bookstore.
  6. Daily Tribune. (2024, December 8). Cebu province now has 25 first-class towns, two first-class cities. <https://tribune.net.ph/2024/12/08/cebu-province-now-has-25-first-class-towns-two-first-class-cities>
  7. De Guzman, J., & Reyes, P. (2013). *Whale shark encounter in Oslob: Exploring a new paradigm of community-based tourism involving protected species* [Unpublished thesis]. Asian Institute of Tourism, University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines.
  8. Department of Finance (DOF). (2024). Department Order No. 074, series of 2024. Bureau of Local Government Finance. <https://blgf.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/DOF-DO-074.2024.pdf>
  9. Department of Tourism. (2017). *Tourism guidebook for local government units* (Revised ed.). DOT.
  10. Department of Tourism. (2023). *National Tourism Development Plan 2023–2028*. Department of Tourism, Republic of the Philippines.
  11. Evangeline, E. (2025, October 8). The incredible migrations of whale sharks. *Animals Around The Globe*. <https://www.animalsaroundtheglobe.com/the-incredible-migrations-of-whale-sharks-2-358961/>
  12. Farrell, B. H., & Twining-Ward, L. (2004). Reconceptualizing tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31(2), 274–295. e
  13. Guerra, M., & Dawson, S. M. (2016). Boat-based tourism and bottlenose dolphins in Doubtful Sound, New Zealand: The role of management in decreasing dolphin-boat interactions. *Tourism Management*, 57, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.05.010>
  14. Inkson, C., & Minnaert, L. (2018). *Tourism management: An introduction* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications Ltd.
  15. Labra, O., Castro, C., Wright, R., & Chamblas, I. (2019). Thematic analysis in social work: A case study. In B. R. Nikku (Ed.), *Global social work: Cutting edge issues and critical reflections* (Chapter 12). IntechOpen. <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.89464>
  16. Lo, M. R. (n.d.). Map of Oslob, Cebu [Image]. Bing Images. <https://www.bing.com/images/search?q=map+of+Oslob+Cebu>
  17. Manlupig, M. (2023). Sumilon Island: Cebu's first marine sanctuary. <https://cebuinsider.com/sumilon-island/>
  18. Marine Conservation Philippines. (2018). *Marine protected areas in the Philippines*. <https://www.marineconservationphilippines.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/marine-protected-areas-in-the-philippines.pdf>
  19. Merriam-Webster. (2023). Workshop. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/workshop>
  20. Morrison, A. M. (2022). *Tourism marketing: In the age of the consumer*. Routledge.
  21. Muzones, G. (2024, July 16). Top 12 tourist spots in Moalboal Cebu famous for the incredible sardine run experience. *Guide to the Philippines*. Top 12 Tourist Spots in Moalboal Cebu Famous for the Incredible Sardine Run Experience | Guide to the Philippines
  22. Nesticò, A., & Maselli, G. (2019). Sustainability indicators for the economic evaluation of tourism investments on islands. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 248, Article 119217. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2019.119217>
  23. Pineda, A. (2024). Tañon Strait Protected Seascape: Protecting marine biodiversity and dolphins. GeoPinas. <https://geopinas.com/tanon-strait-protected-seascape/>
  24. PhilAtlas. (2025). Oslob, Cebu. <https://www.philatlas.com/visayas/r07/cebu/oslob.html>
  25. Philippine Statistics Authority. (n.d.). Philippine city and municipality classes. PSA. <https://www.in-philippines.com/philippine-city-and-municipality-classes/>
  26. Prahalad, C. K., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004). Co-creation experiences: The next practice in value creation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18(3), 5–14. <https://doi.org/10.1002/dir.20015>
  27. Rappler. (2025, December 11). From a magnitude 6.9 earthquake to Typhoon Tino: How Cebuanos dealt with back-to-back disasters [Suggested reads]. Rappler. <https://www.rappler.com/philippines/visayas/suggested-reads-cebu-earthquake-typhoon-tino-2025/>
  28. Republic of the Philippines. (2009). Republic Act No. 9593: An act declaring tourism as an indispensable element of the national economy and an engine of investment, employment, growth and national development, and strengthening the Department of Tourism and its attached agencies. [https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2009/ra\\_9593\\_2009.html](https://lawphil.net/statutes/repacts/ra2009/ra_9593_2009.html)
  29. Sirakaya-Turk, E., Uysal, M., Hammitt, W., & Vaske, J. (Eds.). (2017). *Research methods for leisure*,

- recreation and tourism (2nd ed.). CABI.
30. Stoddard, J. E., Pollard, C. E., & Evans, M. R. (2012). The triple bottom line: A framework for sustainable tourism development. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration*, 13(3), 233–258. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15256480.2012.698173>
  31. Suroy.ph. (n.d.). Oslob Church and Cuartel ruins. Suroy.ph. <https://suroy.ph/oslob-church-and-cuartel-ruins/>
  32. Suroy.ph. (2025). Oslob Whale Shark Watching: The ultimate travel guide. <https://suroy.ph/whale-shark-watching-oslob-cebu/> Suroy.ph
  33. Tao, T. C. H., & Wall, G. (2008). Tourism for marginal groups: Tourism as a livelihood strategy in an indigenous community in Taiwan. ResearchGate. [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Geoffrey-Wall-2/publication/242315697\\_Tourism\\_for\\_Marginal\\_Groups\\_Tourism\\_as\\_a\\_Livelihood\\_Strategy\\_in\\_an\\_Indigenous\\_Community\\_in\\_Taiwan/links/551bce9c0cf20d5fbde21234/Tourism-for-Marginal-Groups-Tourism-as-a-Livelihood-Strategy-in-an-Indigenous-Community-in-Taiwan.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Geoffrey-Wall-2/publication/242315697_Tourism_for_Marginal_Groups_Tourism_as_a_Livelihood_Strategy_in_an_Indigenous_Community_in_Taiwan/links/551bce9c0cf20d5fbde21234/Tourism-for-Marginal-Groups-Tourism-as-a-Livelihood-Strategy-in-an-Indigenous-Community-in-Taiwan.pdf)
  34. TheOldChurches.com. (n.d.). Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Church in Oslob, Cebu. TheOldChurches.com. <https://www.theoldchurches.com/philippines/cebu/oslob/our-lady-of-the-immaculate-conception-church-in-oslob-cebu/>
  35. Twining-Ward, L., & Butler, R. (2002). Implementing sustainable tourism development on a small island: Development and the use of sustainable tourism development indicators in Samoa. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 10(5), 363–387.
  36. Teece, D. J. (2018). SWOT analysis. In M. Augier & D. J. Teece (Eds.), *The Palgrave encyclopedia of strategic management* (pp. 1689–1690). Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-00772-8\\_285](https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-00772-8_285)
  37. United Nations. (1993). Earth Summit Agenda 21: The United Nations programme of action from Rio. UN Department of Public Information.
  38. United Nations. (2015). Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>
  39. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. (n.d.). Muroami fishing. In *Sustainable Development Glossary*. United Nations. <https://unesewa.org/sd-glossary/muroami-fishing>
  40. United Nations World Tourism Organization. (1993). Sustainable tourism development: Meeting present needs while protecting future opportunities. UNWTO. <https://www.unwto.org/sustainable-development>
  41. UN World Tourism Organization. (2007). A practical guide to tourism destination management. UNWTO. <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284412433>
  42. World Commission on Environment and Development. (1987). *Our common future*. Oxford University Press.
  43. World Wide Fund for Nature. (n.d.). Whale sharks: Gentle giants of the ocean. WWF. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/species/whale-shark>