

Preservation of Cultural Heritage Tourism in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2025.12110117>

Received: 29 November 2025; Accepted: 05 December 2025; Published: 18 December 2025

ABSTRACT

This study explores the cultural heritage tourism landscape of Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur, focusing on the delicate balance between preservation and economic growth. Sta. Maria, a UNESCO World Heritage town, is home to historic landmarks such as the Sta. Maria Church and natural attractions like Pinsal Falls, making it a potential hub for sustainable tourism. The objective of the study was to assess how tourism-related policies and stakeholder involvement contribute to balancing heritage conservation with local economic development.

The research utilized a descriptive-correlational quantitative method, employing validated survey questionnaires distributed to local residents, tourists, LGU representatives, and tourism officers. The study investigated respondents' demographic profiles, types of attractions, transportation availability, needed policies, levels of implementation, and economic impacts. Statistical tools such as frequency distribution, mean computation, and correlation coefficient analysis were applied.

Findings revealed that heritage site management, community involvement, and preservation policies are implemented at a very high level. Respondents identified the urgent need for policies regulating environmental impact, infrastructure development, tourist behavior, and cultural preservation. Strong positive correlations were observed between the implementation of these policies and the achievement of both preservation goals and economic benefits, including increased employment and business opportunities.

The study concludes that Sta. Maria has successfully integrated sustainable tourism practices into its governance and community structures. It recommends that local communities empower the training and livelihood opportunities, enforce the regulations and encourage infrastructure projects that support tourism without compromising heritage integrity. Through collaborative efforts and strategic planning, the town effectively protects its cultural assets while fostering economic opportunities for its residents. This research highlights the importance of continuous policy evaluation and community participation in maintaining this balance.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage Tourism, Preservation, Level of Implementation, Heritage Site Management, Community Involvement, Preservation Policies

INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage tourism is a major sector of the global tourism industry, emphasizing the preservation and appreciation of a destination's historical sites, traditional practices, and local arts. It promotes cultural awareness while providing economic opportunities for communities, aligning with the World Tourism Organization's call to protect cultural heritage as part of sustainable development (UNWTO, 2019).

The Our Lady of the Assumption Church of Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur—built by the Augustinians in 1765 and declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993—was elevated to a Minor Basilica by Pope Francis on August 15, 2025. This designation highlights its historical, architectural, and spiritual significance within the Archdiocese of Nueva Segovia (Adriano, 2025).

Sta. Maria has long been a center of cultural exchange, shaped by its colonial history and role in regional trade. Its key attractions include the basilica, “Biak na Bato” or “Mapisi Rock,” known for its dramatic coastal views, and Pinsal Falls, tied to local folklore. Tourism in the municipality supports livelihoods, boosts local craftsmanship, and promotes community-based enterprises, with increasing tourist arrivals contributing to sustainable income and infrastructure development (Department of Tourism, 2019).

Despite these benefits, challenges persist. The risks of commercialization, loss of authenticity, and site degradation underscore the need to balance preservation with economic growth. Lessons from heritage destinations like Vigan demonstrate the importance of strategic planning, community involvement, and responsible tourism management. Effective governance is also essential to prevent stakeholder conflicts and ensure that cultural assets remain protected.

This study examines how Sta. Maria can achieve this balance by assessing the condition of its heritage sites, the impacts of tourism, and existing management strategies. By integrating the perspectives of residents, tourism operators, and local officials, the research aims to develop recommendations for sustainable tourism practices that protect cultural heritage while supporting economic development.

Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on sustainable cultural heritage tourism, offering insights that can guide policymakers and community leaders in safeguarding Sta. Maria’s cultural legacy alongside continued growth.

Theoretical Framework

The study on Cultural Heritage Tourism in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur, focusing on balancing “preservation” and “economic growth”, can be grounded on several key theories from “cultural heritage management”, “sustainable tourism”, “Heritage Conservation Theory”, and “community-based tourism”. The theoretical framework blends these theories to provide a balanced perspective on managing cultural heritage sites while maximizing their potential for local development and economic gains.

Four main theoretical constructs guided this research. The first is based on the theory of “Heritage Conservation Theory” (Harrison and Schiphorst, 2016). This study is anchored by the theoretical support of Harrison and Schiphorst (1999), who they emphasize preserving historical and cultural assets for future generations. It for protection and management of cultural heritage sites in a way that maintains their authenticity and integrity.

Based on the study of Pratama et. Al (2022) it is necessary to examine how the cultural heritage management by the Department of Culture Palembang using the theory of management functions by George R. Terry consists of four dimensions including Planning, Organizing, Actuating, and Controlling. This study emphasizes on how to balance the preservation of cultural heritage for economic growth.

In line with the study of Habiba and Lina (2023), in community-based tourism, the locals have full authority and ownership of tourism businesses, ensuring that tourism’s financial benefit stays in the local economy. It has a massive contribution to local employment creation, increase in local income, and increase the local standard of living.

The social value of heritage: Balancing the promotion-preservation relationship in the Altamira World Heritage Site, Spain" (Timothy & Boyd, 2006) said that cultural tourism, and more specifically heritage tourism, is recognized as the largest and fastest-growing global tourism market.

According to the World Tourism Organization (2018), four out of ten tourists choose their destination according to its cultural attractions. Based on this growing trend, a report by the World Tourism Organization estimates that the annual growth rate in cultural trips will be 15% by the end of the century.

This theoretical framework highlights the importance of community benefits in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur, in achieving a balance between preservation and economic growth in their cultural heritage tourism.

The theoretical framework and related literature collectively highlight the importance of establishing a balanced approach to managing cultural heritage tourism in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur. The integration of theories such as Sustainable Tourism, Heritage Conservation Theory, and Community-Based Tourism emphasizes that cultural preservation and economic development can coexist through responsible planning and management. The reviewed studies on policies and regulations further reinforce this by underscoring the need for environmental protection, infrastructure improvement, tourism behavior management, and cultural preservation. These elements interact to create a comprehensive foundation for sustainable tourism practices that protect heritage resources, enhance community participation, and promote long-term economic benefits. Altogether, this synthesis presents a unified framework that supports both the conservation of cultural identity and the advancement of local economic growth through effective and sustainable heritage site management.

Conceptual Framework

This study revolved around the paradigm presented below. It further elucidates the vital processes of the study namely: Input, Process, and Output (IPO).

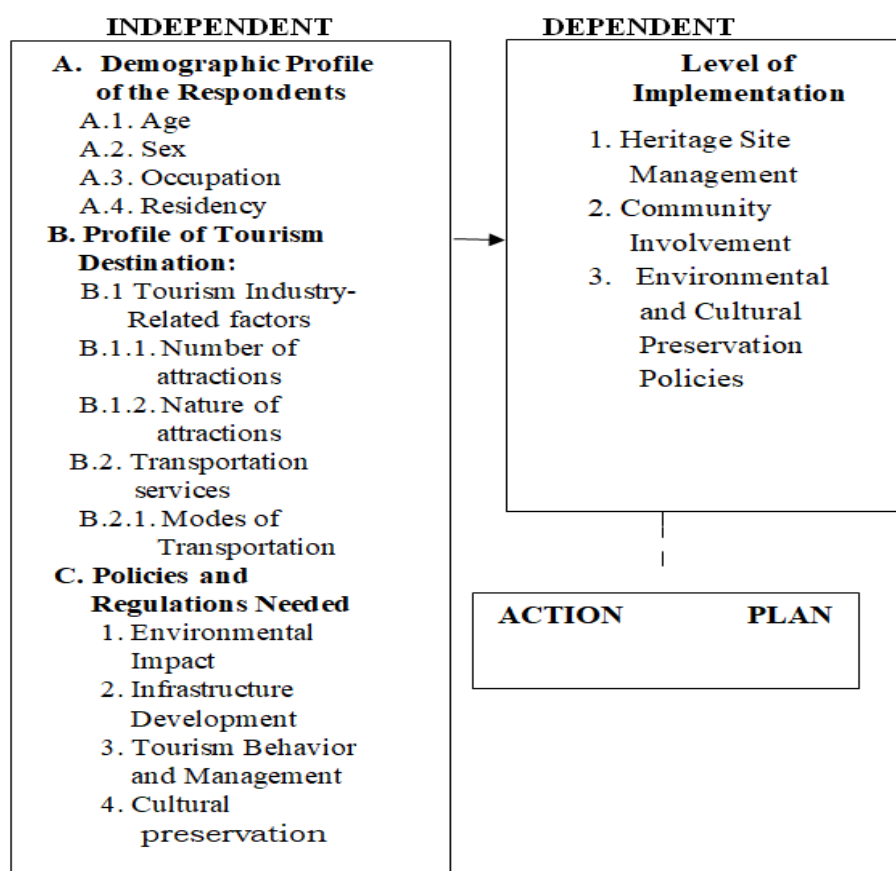


Figure 1. Research Paradigm

Figure 1 shows the paradigm of the study. The input-process—impact-output will be used to better understand the flow of the study. The input contains the profile of the respondents in terms of their age, sex, occupation and residency. On the tourism industry related-factors, it includes the types of tourist attractions, number of attractions, nature of attraction and the modes of transportation. Moreover, on the policies and regulations needed are part of the input. This involves environmental impact, infrastructure development and cultural preservation.

The process includes the level of implementation along with the following indicators namely heritage site management, community involvement, and environmental and cultural preservation policies.

In the impact, the researchers focused on the economic impact in terms of employment opportunities, improvement of living condition, and new business opportunities.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Policies and regulations play a central role in sustainable tourism and heritage conservation. They provide the framework for protecting environmental resources, guiding infrastructure development, regulating tourist behavior, and preserving cultural heritage. Environmental regulations minimize degradation and resource depletion, while infrastructure policies ensure that tourism facilities support communities without harming heritage sites. Guidelines on tourism behavior promote responsible visitation, and cultural preservation policies safeguard both tangible and intangible traditions.

Heritage site management also relies on strong collaborative efforts. Macdonald and Cheong (2014) highlight the value of public–private partnerships and third-sector participation in conserving heritage buildings and sites. Similarly, Acabado and Martin (2020) emphasize community-led conservation in Ifugao, demonstrating that local involvement leads to culturally appropriate and sustainable preservation practices.

Community participation is consistently identified as essential. Blake (2018) argues that active local engagement is crucial for safeguarding intangible heritage, while Besmonte (2022) shows through cultural mapping in Tabaco City that community involvement strengthens the documentation and transmission of local traditions.

Environmental and cultural preservation policies further reinforce sustainable conservation. Avrami et al. (2019) advocate integrating environmental and cultural values for a more holistic preservation approach, and Ferrer et al. (1996) demonstrate that community-based resource management results in more effective environmental protection.

Across the literature, sustainable heritage conservation rests on three interconnected pillars: effective site management, strong community involvement, and well-designed policy frameworks. Research consistently shows that conservation outcomes improve when local communities participate, when heritage sites are managed collaboratively, and when environmental and cultural values guide policy decisions.

Overall, the independent variable—Policies and Regulations Needed—encompasses four key dimensions: environmental protection, sustainable infrastructure development, responsible tourism management, and cultural preservation. When these areas are addressed through sound policy implementation, tourism development can progress while ensuring that cultural heritage remains protected for future generations.

Statement Of The Problem

This study aimed to explore how Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur can achieve a balance preservation and economic growth to cultural heritage tourism. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - a) age;
 - b) sex;
 - c) occupation; and
 - d) residency?
2. What is the profile of the tourism destinations in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur terms of the following:
 - 2.1 tourism industry-related factors:
 - 2.1.1 number of attractions;
 - 2.1.2 nature of attractions;

2.2 transport services:

2.2.1 modes of transportation?

3.What policies/regulations are needed to maintain a balance between tourism development and heritage conservation in terms of:

3.1 environmental impact;

3.2 infrastructure development

3.3 Tourism Behavior and Management

3.4 cultural preservation?

4 . What is the level of implementation of the balance preservation and economic growth in Sta. Maria Ilocos Sur, in terms of:

4.1 heritage site management;

4.2 community involvement; and

4.3 environmental and cultural preservation policies?

5. What is the relationship between the level of implementation of tourism-related policies and regulations and the balance between preservation and economic growth of cultural heritage in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur?

6. Based on the result of the study what action plan may be proposed?

Importance Of The Study

The generalization of this study will greatly impact the community in sta. Maria Ilocos sur. the results of this study will be beneficial to the following:

LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNIT (LGU). They would be aware of the preservation and economic growth to help them support and improve the cultural heritage for a better tourism sector

COMMUNITY. The community will benefit from this study by discovering new ways on how to balance the preservation and the economic growth in sta. Maria Ilocos Sur.

TOURISTS. This study can lead to improvements in how tourists experience cultural heritage sites, and continue to enjoy well-preserved cultural heritage enhancing the quality of their visit

FUTURE RESEARCHERS. This study serves as a reference for further exploration and interpretation, thereby contributing to the ongoing improvements in balancing the preservation and economic growth of a cultural heritage.

Definition of Terms. heritage site management, community involvement, environmental and cultural preservation policies, preservation, economic growth, level of implementation, cultural heritage tourism.

Cultural Heritage Tourism. A form of tourism that emphasizes experiencing and appreciating a destination's cultural heritage, including historical sites, traditions, and arts, particularly in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur.

Preservation. It pertains to maintaining and protecting cultural heritage sites in Sta. Maria to ensure their longevity and authenticity for future generations through sustainable management practices.

Economic Growth. It pertains to the increase in economic output and prosperity in Sta. Maria, measured by rising local income and employment opportunities resulting from tourism activities.

Tourists. It refers to an individual who visits Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur for leisure or cultural experiences, contributing to the local economy and engaging with the town's heritage

Tourism. It pertains to the activity of traveling to places outside one's usual environment for leisure and cultural experiences, particularly in relation to Sta. Maria's unique offerings.

Profile of the Respondents. It refers to the demographic and other relevant characteristics of the people participating in a study or survey, such as age, gender, and ethnicity

Age. It refers to the length of time that a person has lived or a thing has existed.

Sex. It pertains to a biological classification of humans and animals based on reproductive, hormonal, anatomical, and genetic characteristics.

Occupation. It refers to a sociological criterion that's related to a person's position in society.

Residency. It refers to your legal or official home, which can be a requirement for things like voting or citizenship

Profile of Tourism Destination. It's a geographical area that offers tourist products due to natural or created attractions.

Tourism Industry Related Factors. It linked to people traveling to other locations, either domestically or internationally, for leisure, social, or business purposes.

Number of Attractions. It could refer to the number of places a tourist wants to visit, or the variety of attractions available in a specific destination

Natural Attraction. It refers to a naturally occurring site or feature that people visit because of its beauty, uniqueness, or significance.

Transportation Services. It refers to the system or companies that provides the movement of people or goods from one location to another

Modes of Transportation. It refers to the various means by which people and goods are moved from one place to another.

Polices and Regulation Needed. To provide a framework for a fair and efficient environment, ensure legal and ethical compliance, and protect the public and consumers

Environmental Impact. It refers to the effect that the tourism activities have on the environment, both positive and negative.

Infrastructure Development. It plays a crucial role in enhancing tourism.

Tourist Behavior and Management. It refers to the study and application of strategies to understand, influence, and manage the actions and impacts of tourists to ensure sustainable and positive experiences for both visitors and host communities

Cultural Preservation. It refers to the act of maintaining and safeguarding a community's cultural heritage, traditions, and practices for future generations.

Level of Implementation. It refers to the extent or degree to which a plan, policy, or project has been executed or put into practice.

Heritage Site Management. It refers to the process of preserving, protecting, and maintaining cultural or natural heritage sites to ensure their longevity and significance for future generations.

Community Involvement. It refers to the active participation and engagement of individuals or groups in activities that contribute to the well-being and development of their local or broader community.

Environmental and Cultural Preservation Policies. It pertains to the guidelines and regulations aimed at protecting natural ecosystems and cultural heritage to ensure their sustainability and respect for future generations.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research design, locale, population, data gathering instrument, data gathering procedure, statistical treatment of data, data categorization and ethical considerations.

Research Design

The researchers used descriptive quantitative survey design and correlational research design to determine the profile of tourism destinations, effectiveness of existing tourism-related government interventions, policies, and level of implementation of the balance between preservation and economic growth in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur. Moreover, a Pearson product-moment correlational was utilized to investigate the relationship between the level of implementation of related tourism policies and regulations and the balance between preservation and economic growth of cultural heritage in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Locale And Population Of The Study

The study was conducted among Municipal Tourism Officers, Local Government Unit (LGU), visitors and locals of Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur. The researchers used Quota Sampling to determine the respondents. Quota Sampling is a method where a subset of individuals is selected based on predetermined characteristics to represent the larger population.

Quota sampling was employed by the researchers to select the respondents in order to guarantee representation from important cultural heritage tourism stakeholders in Sta. Ilocos Sur, Maria. Respondents had to be from one of the following groups: Municipal Tourism Officers, representatives of Local Government Units (LGUs), tourists, or local residents of Sta. Maria. These standards made sure that when evaluating the degree of cultural heritage preservation implementation and its connection to economic growth, the opinions of institutional stakeholders, locals, and visitors were taken into account.

Research Instrument

A survey questionnaire was the main data-gathering instrument of the study. It was adapted from the study of Caruyan et al. (2024) titled “Destination Competitiveness of Santiago, Ilocos Sur” and was modified and validated by three experts in the tourism industry. The validation yielded an index score of 0.92, interpreted as a highly valid. The instrument consisted of seventy-two (72) questions intended to gather the necessary information on cultural heritage preservation and economic growth in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur. Using a five-point Likert scale, the questionnaire was designed to obtain concise and precise responses that could be quantified and analyzed.

The responses of the respondents were described using standard interpretation. For policies and regulations needed, results revealed overall means ranging from 4.47 to 4.51, which fall under the category *Highly Necessary*. This indicates a strong demand for environmental policies, infrastructure guidelines, tourist behavior management, and cultural preservation measures to balance tourism development with heritage conservation. For the level of implementation, results showed overall means ranging from 4.47 to 4.51, which are interpreted as *Very High*. This suggests that Sta. Maria has effectively implemented strategies on heritage site management, community involvement, and environmental and cultural preservation policies.

Thus, the research instrument not only provided reliable data but also revealed that both the perceived necessity of policies and the actual implementation of preservation and tourism management practices in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur were rated at the highest levels.

Statistical Treatment Of Data

The gathered data were interpreted using the following statistical tools:

Frequency and Percentage. These are used to describe the profile of the cultural heritage tourism and economic growth in the Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur.

Mean. Is used to determine the level of balancing preservation of cultural heritage and economic growth in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur.

Correlation Analysis. It is used to determine the significant relationship of balancing preservation and economic growth in the Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur in their Cultural Heritage Tourism.

Data Categorization

The following statistical and descriptive range were utilized to interpret the data gathered.

On the Policies/Regulations

Numerical Rating	Statistical Range	Descriptive Rating
5	4.21 – 5.00	Highly Necessary
4	3.41 – 4.20	Necessary
3	2.61 – 3.40	Neutral
2	1.81 – 2.60	Slightly Necessary
1	1.00 – 1.80	Not

On the Level of Implementation

Numerical Rating	Statistical Range	Descriptive Rating
5	4.21 – 5.00	Very High
4	3.41 – 4.20	High
3	2.61 – 3.40	Moderate
2	1.81 – 2.60	Low
1	1.00 – 1.80	Very Low

Ethical Considerations

The following ethical aspects were taken into account in conducting the study:

Informed Consent: Researchers secured informed consent from study participants, ensuring they understood the study's purpose, potential risks, and benefits before agreeing to take part. This ensured that participants

willingly joined the study with full awareness of its purpose and procedures, reinforcing respect for their autonomy and decision-making.

Confidentiality: Researchers prioritized the confidentiality of participants' information, especially when handling sensitive data related to businesses, government policies, or individuals. Maintaining confidentiality safeguarded participants' trust and ensured that sensitive information was protected from misuse or unauthorized disclosure.

Privacy Protection: Researchers upheld the privacy of those involved in the study by refraining from disclosing personally identifiable information without explicit consent. Techniques such as data anonymization and aggregation were used to safeguard privacy. Protecting privacy upheld participants' dignity and security, ensuring that their personal identities remained anonymous and their information treated with utmost care.

Transparency and Honesty: Researchers maintained transparency regarding their objectives, methodologies, and any potential biases. Providing accurate and truthful information was vital for fostering trust among participants and the broader community. Practicing transparency and honesty-built credibility and trust between researchers and participants, ensuring that all data and findings reflected accuracy and truthfulness.

Benefit to Participants and Community: Researchers evaluated how the study could positively impact participants and the community. The research aimed to enhance understanding of destination competitiveness, potentially leading to better policies, management practices, or community welfare. By aiming to produce beneficial outcomes, the study sought to contribute to the sustainable development of Sta. Maria's cultural heritage tourism and the welfare of its people.

Cultural Sensitivity: The research on destination competitiveness involved engagement with various cultures. Researchers demonstrated cultural sensitivity and respect for local customs, traditions, and values, which included obtaining permission from local authorities and involving local stakeholders in the research process. Demonstrating cultural sensitivity fostered mutual respect and understanding, ensuring that local customs and traditions were valued and preserved throughout the research process.

Conflict of Interest: Researchers disclosed no potential conflicts of interest that could affect the study's objectivity, as transparency was deemed essential for preserving the integrity of the research. Disclosing the absence of conflicts of interest guaranteed impartiality and upheld the objectivity and ethical soundness of the research findings.

Compliance with Regulations and Guidelines: Researchers followed the ethical guidelines and regulations set forth by the ethical review committee, ensuring that the research was conducted ethically and adhered to legal standards. Adhering to established ethical and legal standards ensured that the study was conducted responsibly, protecting both participants and the integrity of the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results and findings of the study.

FINDINGS

Table 1.1 Profile of Respondents in terms of Age.

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
A. Age		
67 - 78	5	6.3%

55 - 66	8	10.0%
43 – 54	22	27.5%
31 – 42	16	20.0%
19 - 30	29	36.3%
Total	80	100%

As shown in the table, the 19–30 years old group has the highest frequency (29 respondents), representing 36.3% of the total participants. This indicates that most respondents are young adults who are typically more active, adaptable, and engaged in academic, social, or digital activities. According to Arnett (2015), individuals within this stage frequency known as emerging adulthood table are characterized by exploration, independence, and openness to new experiences. Their higher participation may be linked to their familiarity with technology and greater accessibility to research and communication platforms. Recent findings by the Pew Research Center (2023) also highlight that younger generations are the most active in online participation and information sharing, making them more visible and responsive in studies and surveys. In contrast, the 67–78 years old group has the lowest frequency (5 respondents), accounting for 6.3% of the total. This suggests limited participation among older adults, which may be influenced by factors such as declining health, mobility issues, and lower digital literacy. The World Health Organization (2022) notes that older adults often face barriers in communication and technology use, reducing their engagement in activities that require digital or written responses. Similarly, Lee and Coughlin (2015) explained that many older individuals experience technology anxiety and prefer traditional methods of interaction, which may contribute to their lower representation in research participation. Overall, the results show that younger respondents (19–30 years old) are more likely to engage in research activities, while participation decreases significantly among older adults (67–78 years old), consistent with global trends in technological and generational participation.

The results imply that Sta. Maria’s cultural tourism primarily attracts younger generations, suggesting the need for modern and interactive tourism strategies such as digital promotions and experiential activities. The presence of middle-aged and working adults highlights opportunities for family-oriented programs and cultural festivals. On the other hand, the smaller participation of senior groups suggests the need to improve accessibility, comfort, and wellness-oriented tourism to make heritage sites more inclusive for all ages.

Studies emphasize that the age distribution can influence the types of activities and experiences preferred, with younger generations potentially being more inclined towards experiential and digitally integrated tourism (e.g., Smith & Robinson, 2019).

Table 1.2 Profile of Respondents in terms of Sex

B. Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	39	48.8%
Female	41	51.2%
Total	80	100%

Regarding sex, the distribution is fairly balanced, with females slightly outnumbering males. Out of 80 respondents, 41 or 51.2 percent were female, while 39 or 48.8 percent were male, ensuring that both perspectives are represented. This balance is significant since men and women contribute differently to cultural heritage tourism. Women often participate in crafts and hospitality, while men are more involved in site management and infrastructure, providing a holistic view of community participation.

The gender distribution directly supports this study's objective of assessing community involvement and perspectives in cultural heritage preservation. Since both sexes are nearly equally represented, the data provide balanced insights into how policies, site management, and tourism activities are perceived across genders. This alignment strengthens the validity of conclusions regarding community involvement and highlights that preservation and tourism programs in Sta. Maria must address the interests and contributions of both male and female stakeholders.

The near-equal distribution of sex suggests that both male and female perspectives are well-represented in the study. The significant proportion of local residents (non-tourism) underscores the crucial role of the community in the preservation and sustainable development of cultural heritage, as their support and involvement are vital for long-term success. According to Su and Wall (2020), the participation of local communities in heritage and tourism planning ensures more equitable and sustainable outcomes, as residents act as stewards of local identity and cultural integrity.

Table 1.3 Profile of Respondents in terms of Occupation.

C. Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
Government employee	1	1.3%
Local resident (non-tourism)	43	53.8%
Visitor/Tourist	36	45.0%
Total	80	100%

Table 1.3 presents the occupational profile of the respondents. The majority are local residents not directly engaged in tourism, accounting for 43 (53.8%) of the sample. This shows that the community plays a central role in shaping and sustaining cultural heritage tourism in Sta. Maria, since residents are both custodians of traditions and beneficiaries of tourism development. Visitors or tourists comprise 36, reflecting a substantial level of external interest in Sta. Maria's attractions and confirming its potential as a growing tourism destination. Government employees, on the other hand, make up only 1 or 1.3%, representing the smallest group of respondents. Although limited in number, their role is crucial in formulating policies and overseeing the implementation of tourism and preservation programs.

The occupational distribution implies that cultural heritage tourism in Sta. Maria is strongly community-based, with local residents having a decisive influence on preservation and development efforts. The large share of tourists emphasizes the need for strategies that balance visitor experience with conservation of cultural sites. Meanwhile, the presence of government employees, though small, highlights the importance of continuous policy support and enforcement. These insights directly address the study's objective of examining how different stakeholder groups contribute to balancing cultural preservation with economic growth.

Understanding the motivations and demographics of these tourists is essential for tailoring tourism strategies that respect and enhance the cultural heritage (e.g., Garrod & Fyall, 2000).

Table 1.4 Profile of Respondents in terms of Residency.

D. RESIDENT OF STA. MARIA ILOCOS SUR	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	44	55.0%
No	36	45.0%
Total	80	100%

On residency within Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur, a majority of the respondents (55.0%) are residents, while 45.0% are not. This demographic breakdown provides a foundational understanding of the individuals whose perspectives will inform the study on balancing preservation and economic growth through cultural heritage tourism in Sta. Maria.

The residency data further distinguishes between local perspectives and those of visitors, which is critical for addressing the study's aim of balancing preservation and economic growth in a way that benefits both the community and the tourism sector.

Table 2.1.1 Profile of Tourism Destinations – Tourism Industry Related - Number of Attractions

Tourist Attractions	Mean	Average Number of Attractions
Church/Historical Sites	1.03	1
Beach	1.74	2
Water Falls	0.95	1
Museums	0.14	0
Events/Festivals	0.91	1
Local Markets	1.00	1
Adventure/Sport Activities	0.86	1

Looking at the number of tourist attractions (Table 3), the average number reported for each category is relatively low, with most averaging around one attraction per type. Churches/Historical Sites have a slightly higher average of 1.03. This implies that while various types of attractions exist, the concentration within each category might be limited. Developing and promoting more attractions within each category could potentially enhance the overall tourism experience.

Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur possesses a rich cultural and natural tourism profile, integrating heritage preservation with economic tourism growth. The tourist attractions in the municipality are predominantly historical sites (96.3%), such as the renowned Sta. Maria Church, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Additionally, natural attractions like Pinsal Falls (90.0%) contribute to the area's appeal, drawing visitors interested in both cultural heritage and outdoor recreation. Studies in heritage tourism (2019-2024) suggest that destinations with strong historical significance experience sustainable visitor interest when conservation efforts align with tourism development.

In terms of the number of attractions, beaches average 1.74 attractions per site, while historical sites and museums tend to have fewer. This indicates that natural attractions often feature multiple points of interest, boosting visitor engagement. Research in tourism management highlights that destinations with diverse attractions foster increased economic activity and longer visitor stays, benefiting local businesses.

Table 2.1.1 Profile of Tourism Destinations – Tourism Industry Related - Number of Attractions

Nature	Frequency	Percentage
Historical	75	93.8%
Cultural	65	81.3%

Natural	52	65.0%
Man Made	29	36.3%
Recreational	44	55.0%
Religious/ Spiritual	70	87.5%

In terms of the nature of tourist attractions (Table 2.1.2), Nature (frequency 75, 93.8%) and Historical (frequency 65, 81.3%) attractions dominate. This further reinforces the significance of both the natural environment and the rich cultural heritage in Sta. Maria's tourism profile. Cultural (frequency 52, 65.0%), Man-Made (frequency 29, 36.3%), Recreational (frequency 44, 55.0%), and Religious/Spiritual (frequency 70, 87.5%) attractions also contribute to the overall landscape, offering varied experiences for visitors. The strong presence of historical and religious/spiritual sites directly connects to the study's focus on cultural heritage tourism.

The nature of attractions reflects a dominance of historical (93.8%) and cultural (81.3%) sites, supported by natural and recreational venues. This mix underscores Sta. Maria's dedication to cultural preservation while leveraging tourism for economic growth. Studies on sustainable tourism emphasize that maintaining authenticity in heritage sites while enhancing accessibility and visitor experience is key to long-term viability.

Table 2.2.1 Profile of Tourism Destinations in terms of Transport Services

Modes of Transportation	Frequency	Percentage
Bus	64	80.0%
Tricycle	76	95.0%
Jeepney	63	78.8%
Private Rentals	70	87.5%
Own Service	68	85.0%
Walk/Bicycle	59	73.8%

Table 2.2.1 outlines the modes of transportation available in Sta. Maria. Tricycles are the most frequently mentioned mode (frequency 76, 95.0%), indicating their crucial role in local transport for both residents and potentially tourists for short distances. Buses (frequency 64, 80.0%) and Jeepneys (frequency 63, 78.8%) also appear to be significant, likely facilitating travel to and from neighboring areas. Private Rentals (frequency 70, 87.5%), Own Service (frequency 68, 85.0%), and Walk/Bicycle (frequency 59, 73.8%) also play a role, offering flexibility and potentially catering to different tourist preferences. The availability and efficiency of these transport services are crucial for accessibility to the various tourist attractions and contribute to the overall tourism experience.

Regarding transport services, the municipality offers varied modes of transportation, including buses (80.0%), jeepneys (95.0%), and tricycles (85.0%). The presence of Partas Bus ensures connectivity to major locations, facilitating accessibility for tourists. Research on transport infrastructure and tourism suggests that well-developed mobility options significantly enhance the attractiveness of destinations, promoting higher tourist satisfaction and economic opportunities.

Studies on cultural heritage tourism often emphasize the importance of well-preserved historical sites and the integration of local communities in tourism activities (e.g., Timothy & Boyd, 2003). The prominence of

Churches/Historical Sites in Sta. Maria aligns with this. Furthermore, the availability of diverse transportation options, including local modes like tricycles, is often highlighted as a factor influencing tourist mobility and experience within a destination (e.g., Prideaux & Xiang, 2013). The findings from the image directly address the research question about the profile of tourism destinations in Sta. Maria. The dominance of historical and natural attractions underscores the importance of preservation efforts while considering economic growth through tourism. The variety of transport options suggests a degree of accessibility that can be further leveraged for tourism development. The relatively low average number of attractions per category could indicate opportunities for developing and promoting a wider array of experiences to attract more visitors and extend their stay, thereby contributing to economic growth in a way that respects and potentially benefits the local cultural heritage.

Table 3.1. Needed Policies/Regulations Environmental Impact

Policies			Mean	DR
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT				
1. Policies regulating waste management at tourist sites.			4.49	Highly Necessary
2. Policies limiting construction within environmentally sensitive areas.			4.47	Highly Necessary
3. Promotion of eco-friendly practices among tourists (e.g., recycling, reduced practice use).			4.55	Highly Necessary
4. Regulations on the use of natural resources (e.g., water, land) in tourism areas.			4.54	Highly Necessary
5. Restrictions on tourist activities to prevent environmental degradation (e.g., limiting access to fragile ecosystems).			4.50	Highly Necessary
Overall			4.51	Highly Necessary
<i>Legend</i>	Numerical Rating	Statistical Range	Descriptive Rating	
	5	4.21 – 5.00	Highly Necessary	

The highest-rated policy with a mean score of 4.55 is the promotion of eco-friendly practices among tourists, which indicates that encouraging responsible behaviors such as recycling and reducing harmful practices is viewed as the most crucial measure in minimizing environmental impact. On the other hand, the lowest-rated policy, with a score of 4.47, is the limitation of construction within environmentally sensitive areas. While still considered highly necessary, this suggests that stakeholders may see controlled development as acceptable provided that it does not severely compromise ecological balance. Overall, the mean score of 4.51, categorized as Highly Necessary, reflects a strong consensus that all these environmental policies are essential in ensuring sustainable tourism management and in protecting natural resources for long-term use.

Table 3.2 Needed Policies/Regulations Infrastructure Development

B. INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT			Mean	DR
Ensuring sustainable infrastructure design to support tourism.			4.56	Highly Necessary
Regulations on the construction of new facilities to avoid disrupting the heritage landscape.			4.51	Highly Necessary

Encouraging the use of local materials and sustainable methods in tourism infrastructure		4.45	Highly Necessary
Guidelines for infrastructure maintenance to avoid negative impacts on heritage sites.		4.49	Highly Necessary
Managing transportation infrastructure to minimize congestion near heritage sites.		4.40	Highly Necessary
Overall		4.48	Highly Necessary
<i>Legend</i>	Numerical Rating	Statistical Range	Descriptive Rating
	5	4.21 – 5.00	Highly Necessary

Infrastructure Development: The indicators related to infrastructure development also exhibit high mean scores (ranging from 4.40 to 4.56), indicating a significant perceived need for strategic planning in this domain. Ensuring sustainable infrastructure design to support tourism (Mean=4.56) is considered most critical, followed closely by regulations on the construction of new facilities to avoid disrupting the heritage landscape (Mean=4.51). The need for encouraging the use of local materials and sustainable methods in tourism infrastructure (Mean=4.45), guidelines for infrastructure maintenance to avoid negative impacts on heritage sites (Mean=4.49), and managing transportation infrastructure to minimize congestion near heritage sites (Mean=4.40) are also strongly felt. These findings resonate with the concept of "responsible tourism," which advocates for infrastructure development that is environmentally sound, culturally sensitive, and respects the character of the destination (e.g., Middleton et al., 2009). The consistently high necessity rating highlights the crucial role of well-planned and managed infrastructure in supporting tourism without compromising Sta. Maria's cultural heritage.

Table 3.3 Needed Policies/Regulations Tourist Behavior And Management

C. TOURIST BEHAVIOR AND MANAGEMENT			
Policies regulating tourist behavior to minimize damage to cultural and environmental heritage sites (e.g., restrictions on littering, noise, and respectful behavior).		4.45	Highly Necessary
Implementation of visitor quotas or entry limits to protect over-tourism and prevent overcrowding at heritage sites.		4.44	Highly Necessary
Requiring tourists to participate in educational programs about local culture, history, and environmental preservation before visiting heritage sites.		4.38	Highly Necessary
Ensuring that tourists contribute to preservation efforts, such as donations or funding for local conservation programs.		4.59	Highly Necessary
Restrictions on photography and other activities that may harm or exploit heritage sites (e.g., no drone flying or restricted access to certain areas).		4.54	Highly Necessary
Overall		4.48	Highly Necessary
<i>Legend</i>	Numerical Rating	Statistical Rang	Descriptive Rating
	5	4.21 – 5.00	Highly Necessary

Tourist Behavior and Management: The indicators under Tourist Behavior and Management also reveal a high level of perceived necessity (mean scores ranging from 4.38 to 4.59). Policies regulating tourist behavior to minimize damage to cultural and environmental heritage sites (Mean=4.45), including aspects like noise and respectful behavior, are deemed essential. The implementation of visitor quotas or entry limits to protect over-tourism (Mean=4.44) is also considered important, particularly in the context of a potentially popular heritage site like Sta. Maria's church. Requiring tourists to participate in educational programs about local culture, history, and environmental preservation (Mean=4.38) is seen as a valuable tool for fostering responsible behavior. Furthermore, ensuring that tourists contribute to preservation efforts (Mean=4.59) through mechanisms like donations or funding is highly supported. Finally, restrictions on photography and other activities that may harm or exploit heritage sites (Mean=4.54) are considered necessary. These findings align with research on visitor management in heritage sites, which emphasizes the need for clear guidelines, education, and sometimes limitations to mitigate negative impacts from tourism (e.g., Garrod & Fyall, 2001). The high necessity across these indicators underscores the importance of actively managing tourist behavior to safeguard Sta. Maria's cultural and environmental assets.

Table 3.4 Needed Policies/Regulations for Cultural Preservation

CULTURAL PRESERVATION		
Protecting traditional practices and local customs in the context of tourism.	4.51	Highly Necessary
Preventing commercialization that compromises cultural authenticity.	4.35	Highly Necessary
Promoting cultural education and awareness among tourists.	4.53	Highly Necessary
Guidelines for historical buildings and landmarks used for tourism.	4.52	Highly Necessary
Guidelines for community participation in decision-making on cultural preservation.	4.45	Highly Necessary
Overall	4.47	Highly Necessary
Grand Mean	4.49	Highly Necessary
Legend: DR – Descriptive Rating; HN – Highly Necessary		
<i>Legend</i>	Numerical Rating	Statistical Range
5		4.21 – 5.00
		Necessary

Cultural Preservation: The indicators focusing on Cultural Preservation demonstrate a strong consensus on the need for proactive measures (mean scores ranging from 4.35 to 4.52). Protecting traditional practices and local customs in the context of tourism (Mean=4.51) is considered paramount. There's also a recognized need for preventing commercialization that compromises cultural authenticity (Mean=4.35). Promoting cultural education and awareness among tourists (Mean=4.52) is seen as a vital tool for fostering respect and appreciation. Guidelines for historical buildings and landmarks used for tourism (Mean=4.52) are deemed crucial for their conservation. Finally, guidelines for community participation in decision-making on cultural preservation (Mean=4.45) are considered important for ensuring that tourism development benefits and respects local stakeholders. These findings are consistent with the principles of cultural heritage tourism, which emphasize the importance of preserving the authenticity and integrity of cultural resources and involving local communities in their management (e.g., Smith, 2003). The high necessity ratings across these indicators highlight the commitment to safeguarding Sta. Maria's cultural heritage in the face of tourism development. Overall Alignment with the Statement of the Problem: The identified needed policies and regulations directly address the study's aim to explore how Sta. Maria can achieve a balance between preservation and economic growth through cultural heritage tourism. The strong emphasis on environmental

protection, responsible infrastructure development, effective tourist behavior management, and proactive cultural preservation measures indicates a clear understanding of the potential challenges and the necessary steps to mitigate negative impacts while harnessing the economic benefits of tourism. The high necessity ratings across all categories suggest a local awareness of the importance of these policy interventions for the sustainable development of cultural heritage tourism in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur.

Table 3.5 Overall Results for Needed Policies/Regulations

Area	Mean	DR
NEEDED POLICIES/REGULATIONS		
Environmental Impact	4.51	Highly Necessary
Infrastructure Development	4.48	Highly Necessary
Tourist Behavior and Management	4.48	Highly Necessary
Cultural Preservation	4.47	Highly Necessary
Overall	4.48	Highly Necessary

Table 3.5 presents the overall results for the needed policies and regulations in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur, as assessed by the respondents. The findings reveal that all four identified areas—environmental impact, infrastructure development, tourist behavior and management, and cultural preservation—are considered highly necessary, with an overall mean rating of 4.48. Among these, environmental impact received the highest mean of 4.51, indicating that respondents perceive environmental protection as the most critical area requiring immediate policy attention. Both infrastructure development and tourist behavior and management followed with equal mean scores of 4.48, highlighting the need for improved facilities and better management of tourist conduct to ensure sustainable tourism practices. Meanwhile, cultural preservation, though with the lowest mean of 4.47, was still rated as highly necessary, reflecting the community's strong desire to protect their heritage amidst increasing modernization and tourism activities. These results emphasize the importance of a holistic and integrated approach in policy-making that addresses environmental, infrastructural, behavioral, and cultural aspects to promote sustainable development in the locality.

Table 4.1 Level of Implementation Heritage Site Management

Areas	Mean	Descriptive Rating
HERITAGE SITE MANAGEMENT		
1. Management of historical landmarks for both tourism and preservation.	4.55	Very High
2. Effects to maintain the authenticity of cultural heritage sites.	4.47	Very High
3. Protection measures against vandalism or damage to heritage sites.	4.55	Very High
4. Conservation and restoration programs for heritage sites.	4.49	Very High
5. Management of tourist access to reduce impact on heritage sites.	4.50	Very High
Overall	4.51	Very High
<i>Legend</i> Numerical Rating	Statistical Range	Descriptive Rating
5	4.21 – 5.00	Very High

The table shows that the highest level of implementation in heritage site management is found in the management of historical landmarks for both tourism and preservation and in protection measures against vandalism or damage to heritage sites, both with a mean score of 4.55 (Very High). This indicates that great importance is given to preserving historical landmarks and ensuring their protection from threats, which reflects strong efforts in safeguarding cultural heritage for both present and future generations.

On the other hand, the lowest level of implementation is observed in efforts to maintain the authenticity of cultural heritage sites, which obtained a mean score of 4.47 (Very High). Although still rated very high, this result suggests that maintaining authenticity may be more challenging compared to other aspects of heritage site management, possibly due to pressures from modernization, tourism demands, or limitations in restoration practices.

For the overall implementation, the computed mean of 4.51 (Very High) reveals that heritage site management practices are consistently and effectively carried out. This highlights a strong commitment to preservation, protection, and sustainable management, ensuring that heritage sites remain valuable cultural assets.

Table 4.2 Level of Implementation Community Involvement

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT			Mean	Descriptive Rating
1. Involvement of local communities in tourism planning and decision-making.			4.41	Very High
2. Opportunities for local businesses to participate in tourism activities.			4.51	Very High
3. Programs supporting local cultural practices and artisan products.			4.41	Very High
4. Community awareness programs about tourism's impact on culture and heritage.			4.44	Very High
5. Involvement of residents in maintaining cultural and environmental preservation.			4.55	Very High
Overall			4.47	Very High
<i>Legend</i>	Numerical Rating	Statistical Range	Descriptive Rating	
	5	4.21 – 5.00	Very High	

Community Involvement: The mean scores for Community Involvement range from 4.41 to 4.55, also rated as "Very High" (VH). This signifies a strong level of implementation in engaging the local community in tourism-related activities and decision-making. Specifically, there's a very high level of implementation in the involvement of local communities in tourism planning and decision-making (Mean=4.41), opportunities for local businesses to participate in tourism activities (Mean=4.51), and programs supporting local cultural practices and artisan products (Mean=4.41). Community awareness programs about tourism's impact on culture and heritage (Mean=4.44) and the involvement of residents in maintaining cultural and environmental preservation (Mean=4.55) also show very high levels of implementation. This strong emphasis on community involvement is a key principle of sustainable tourism, ensuring that local populations benefit from tourism and are actively involved in the preservation of their cultural and natural heritage (e.g., Tosun, 2006). The consistently very high ratings suggest that Sta. Maria has been successful in integrating the local community into its cultural heritage tourism framework.

Table 4.3 Level of Implementation Environmental And Cultural Preservation Policies

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION POLICIES	Mean	Descriptive Rating
Implementation of policies regulating the environmental impact of tourism.	4.49	Very High

Enforcement of cultural preservation laws and guidelines.		4.39	Very High
Effectiveness of waste management practices at tourist sites.		4.51	Very High
Control over commercial development within heritage areas.		4.55	Very High
Environmental monitoring practices to mitigate tourism's impact.		4.40	Very High
Overall		4.47	Very High
<i>Legend</i>	Numerical Rating	Statistical Range	Descriptive Rating
	5	4.21 – 5.00	Very High

Environmental and Cultural Preservation Policies: The mean scores for Environmental and Cultural Preservation Policies range from 4.39 to 4.55, all rated as "Very High" (VH). This indicates a strong level of implementation of policies and practices aimed at safeguarding both the environment and cultural heritage in the context of tourism. Specifically, there's a very high level of implementation in the implementation of policies regulating the environmental impact of tourism (Mean=4.49), the effectiveness of waste management practices at tourist sites (Mean=4.51), and control over commercial development within heritage areas (Mean=4.55). The enforcement of cultural preservation laws and guidelines (Mean=4.39) and environmental monitoring practices to mitigate tourism's impact (Mean=4.40) also show very high levels of implementation. The strong implementation in these areas is crucial for mitigating the potential negative impacts of tourism on both the natural and cultural environment, ensuring the long-term sustainability of Sta. Maria as a cultural heritage tourism destination (e.g., Weaver, 2006). The consistently very high ratings suggest a strong commitment to integrating environmental and cultural preservation into the tourism development framework.

Overall Alignment with the Statement of the Problem: The "Very High" level of implementation across all areas – Heritage Site Management, Community Involvement, and Environmental and Cultural Preservation Policies – strongly suggests that Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur has made significant progress in achieving a balance between preservation and economic growth in its cultural heritage tourism endeavors. The findings indicate a proactive approach towards managing its heritage assets, engaging the local community, and implementing policies to protect both the cultural and natural environment. This robust level of implementation likely contributes positively to the sustainable development of cultural heritage tourism in Sta. Maria, aligning with the study's aim of understanding how this balance can be achieved.

Table 4.4 Overall Results for Level of Implementation

Areas	Mean	Descriptive Rating
IMPLEMENTATIONS		
Heritage Site Management	4.51	Very High
Community Involvement	4.47	Very High
Environmental and Cultural Preservation		Very High
Policies	4.48	
Overall	4.49	Very High

The table presents the overall level of implementation of cultural heritage preservation and tourism initiatives in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur. Heritage site management achieved the highest mean of 4.51, which is considered Very High and shows that efforts to maintain sites, provide visitor amenities, and conserve historical landmarks are successfully completed. Preservation policies came in at 4.48, which is also Very High, indicating that rules governing tourism and safeguarding cultural assets are regularly followed. Residents actively participate in programs like livelihood projects, guided tours, and cultural events, as evidenced by the

community involvement mean of 4.47, which is likewise Very High. The overall mean of 4.49 indicates that Sta. Maria is rated as having Very High implementation across all indicators. When it comes to combining preservation and tourism management, Maria has made great strides.

These results suggest that Sta. Maria has laid solid groundwork in sustainable tourism and heritage conservation. To handle upcoming issues like growing visitor numbers, environmental stresses, and cultural commodification, these initiatives must be continuously monitored and improved. Although the extremely high ratings demonstrate how effective the current policies are, they also caution stakeholders and policymakers against complacency. To guarantee that heritage preservation stays in line with long-term economic growth, they should instead update regulations, increase training programs, and improve community participation.

Table 8. Relationship between the level of implementation of tourism-related policies and regulations and the balance between preservation and economic growth of cultural heritage in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur

	Implementation Level					
A. Environmental Impact	0.67**	SP	0.69**	SP	0.63**	SP
B. Infrastructure Development	0.67**	SP	0.65**	SP	0.58**	MP
C. Tourist Behavior and Management	0.65**	SP	0.67**	SP	0.58**	MP
D. Cultural Preservation	0.55**	MP	0.56**	MP	0.49**	MP
Legend: **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						
SP – Strong Positive Correlation; MP – Moderate Positive Correlation						

Table 8 illustrates a significant positive correlation between the implementation of policies related to preservation and economic growth of cultural heritage in Sta Maria, Ilocos Sur. Strong correlations were found between Environmental Impact policies and levels of Heritage Site Management ($r=0.670$), Community Involvement ($r=0.685$), and Environmental and Cultural Preservation Policies ($r=0.632$), indicating that enhanced policy implementation fosters effective heritage management and community engagement. Infrastructure Development policies also show strong positive correlations with Heritage Site Management ($r=0.671$) and Community Involvement ($r=0.646$), suggesting that appropriate infrastructure supports sustainable tourism. Similarly, Tourist Behavior and Management policies exhibit strong correlations with Community Involvement ($r=0.666$) and moderate correlations with Environmental and Cultural Preservation Policies ($r=0.577$), reflective of their role in minimizing negative tourism impacts. Lastly, Cultural Preservation policies demonstrate a moderate positive correlation with Heritage Site Management ($r=0.551$) and Community Involvement ($r=0.564$), affirming the importance of prioritizing cultural preservation in policy development for sustainable heritage tourism.

In conclusion, the significant positive correlations across all categories strongly suggest that the level of implementation of tourism-related policies and regulations in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur is indeed significantly related to achieving a balance between the preservation and economic growth of its cultural heritage. Higher levels of implementation in areas such as environmental impact, infrastructure development, tourist behavior management, and cultural preservation are associated with better heritage site management, greater community involvement, and more effective environmental and cultural preservation policies, all of which are crucial for sustainable cultural heritage tourism development.

Action Plan

Rationale

Tourism and heritage conservation are vital to the local economy, culture, and environment. This action plan seeks to balance economic growth with cultural and environmental sustainability. By preserving heritage sites,

engaging the community, and improving infrastructure, the locality can attract more visitors while maintaining its cultural identity and natural beauty. The inclusion of environmental management and systematic monitoring ensures that development remains sustainable, inclusive, and responsive to both community needs and visitor expectations.

Objectives

1. Preserve and enhance heritage sites through regular maintenance, security improvement, and proper visitor management to ensure their sustainability for future generations.
2. Promote community involvement in tourism and heritage initiatives by providing training, organizing events, and fostering local entrepreneurship.
3. Protect the environment and cultural integrity of tourist destinations through waste management, zoning regulations, and cultural education.
4. Develop sustainable tourism infrastructure that ensures accessibility, safety, and eco-friendliness for both visitors and residents.
5. Establish a monitoring and evaluation system to assess progress, ensure accountability, and guide future planning based on measurable results.

ACTION PLAN

1. Heritage Site Management

Activities	Responsible Agency/Group	Timeline	Resources Needed	Indicators of Success
Conduct regular repair and maintenance of Sta. Maria Church, Pinsal Falls, and other key sites	LGU, Tourism Office, National Historical Commission	Quarterly	Budget, skilled workers, tools	Well-preserved sites with fewer damages
Put up clear signage and guidelines for tourists	Tourism Office, Barangays	Within 6 months	Printing cost, signboards	Visible and functional signs installed
Strengthen site security (CCTV, guards, volunteer watch groups)	LGU, PNP, Barangays	1 year	Security funds, manpower	Reduced vandalism and damage

2. Community Involvement

Activities	Responsible Agency/Group	Timeline	Resources Needed	Indicators of Success
Offer training on souvenir-making, guiding, and cultural performances	LGU, TESDA, DTI, DepEd	Every semester	Trainers, training kits, venue	At least 100 locals trained yearly
Organize fairs and markets for local products	LGU, DTI, Cooperatives	Annual	Event budget, performers, equipment	Higher number of visitors and community engagement
Hold cultural events and festivals with community participation	LGU, Schools, Youth Groups	Annual	Annual	Higher number of visitors and community engagement

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

Activities	Responsible Agency/Group	Timeline	Resources Needed	Indicators of Success
Form a Tourism and Heritage Council to oversee activities	LGU, Community Leaders	3 months	Council setup budget	Regular quarterly meetings held
Conduct yearly surveys on tourist satisfaction and community gains	LGU, Academe, NGOs	Annual	Survey forms, manpower	Survey results used in planning
Prepare an annual report on tourism and heritage preservation	LGU, Tourism Office	Annual	Printing and online posting	Published reports distributed

3. Environmental and Cultural Preservation

Activities	Responsible Agency/Group	Timeline	Resources Needed	Indicators of Success
Implement strict waste management in tourist areas	MENRO, Barangays, NGOs	Continuous	Bins, clean-up tools	Cleaner sites, less waste
Enforce zoning laws to prevent overbuilding near heritage sites	LGU, DENR	Ongoing	Monitoring team, policy enforcement	No illegal or harmful construction
Distribute brochures and conduct orientations on cultural sensitivity	Tourism Office, Tour Guides	6 months	IEC materials	More disciplined tourist behavior

4. Infrastructure Development

Activities	Responsible Agency/Group	Timeline	Resources Needed	Indicators of Success
Upgrade roads and install tourist-friendly signage	DPWH, LGU	1–2 years	Construction budget	Safer and easier access to sites
Introduce eco-friendly transport (bike rentals, e-trikes)	LGU, Private Investors	1 year	Units, charging stations	At least 10 units operating
Set up tourist information centers with maps and guides	LGU, Tourism Office	6 months	Staff, brochures, facility	At least 1 center per major site

CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn.

- From the demographic profile of the respondents, the research found that the majority were young adults and included both male and female respondents. The majority of the respondents were either into local businesses, have tourism-related work, or are students. Many of them were also Sta. Maria residents, indicative of a community-based understanding and outlook towards heritage conservation and tourism.

2. Coming to the profile of tourist destinations in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur, the research discovered that the municipality has a wide range of attractions. These range from historical and cultural, religious and natural sites, with leading examples being the UNESCO World Heritage Site—Sta. Maria Church—and natural attractions like Pinsal Falls. These sites underscore the town's vast tourism potential. As for transport services, the research found that visitors largely depend on tricycles, jeepneys, and private cars for transportation, hence making Sta. Maria's tourist attractions mostly open.
3. In terms of the policies and legislation required for balancing tourism development with heritage conservation, strong community demand for action was revealed by the findings in a number of critical areas. There is large demand for environmental policy with emphasis on efficient waste management and conservation of ecologically sensitive areas. In addition, regulating tourist attitudes, such as encouraging responsible visiting through visitor education programs, is needed. Infrastructure development has also been viewed as needed, with priority given to upgrading and maintaining roads, signage, and tourist facilities with minimal environmental footprint. Cultural preservation policies were also viewed as essential, with priority on enforcing legislation protecting heritage areas and encouraging community-based cultural activities.
4. With regard to the extent of implementation of the balance between preservation and economic development, the research found that Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur, has a high degree of implementation in various aspects. Heritage site management is practiced well, with active measures to maintain, preserve, and protect heritage sites. Community participation is manifested in active engagement in tourism planning, heritage education, and cultural programs. Environmental and cultural preservation policies are also strictly enforced, showing how much the municipality believes in sustainable tourism.
5. Lastly, the study determined that there was a statistically significant and positive correlation between the degree of implementation of policies on tourism and the balance between preservation and economic growth. The research established that proper heritage site management and robust participation from the people are vital in ensuring this balance. This underscores the fact that government action alone may not ensure the success of Sta. Maria's cultural heritage tourism but must be complemented by community participation and planned interventions, resulting in higher investments, employment generation, and a better quality of life for the local population.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the researchers recommend the following measures to further strengthen the balance between cultural heritage preservation and economic development in Sta. Maria, Ilocos Sur:

1. Since the demographic profile showed that the majority of respondents were in the younger age bracket, tourism programs should be designed to integrate modern and experiential activities that appeal to youth while still preserving authenticity. At the same time, inclusivity measures should be implemented to make heritage sites more accessible for the older age bracket.
2. The local government and tourism stakeholders are encouraged to diversify and promote existing attractions beyond historical sites, while improving transportation systems to enhance accessibility for both locals and tourists.
3. The LGU should strictly implement measures on environmental impact, tourist behavior, infrastructure development, and cultural preservation. This includes stronger waste management systems, stricter visitor regulations, and preservation guidelines for heritage structures.
4. Continuous monitoring and evaluation should be done to sustain the efforts. Community involvement should also be strengthened by providing livelihood programs, cultural education, and training for residents to ensure their active participation in heritage preservation and tourism.
5. Future research should focus on long-term impacts, particularly on employment, living conditions, and business opportunities, to further guide policy formulation and sustainable tourism development.

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