

Blue Tourism Perspectives and Willingness to support among locals of Davao

Beverly A. Canonigo, Jade Bernard G. Cruz, Gerome M. Sumagaysay,
Dindo D. Silud, Ph.D.
College of Hospitality Education, University of Mindanao
Davao City, Philippines
silud_dindo@umindanao.edu.ph

ABSTRACT: The study aimed to assess the perspectives on blue tourism and the willingness of Davao locals to support it. To gather data, the researchers adapted and modified a questionnaire, which was then administered to 385 residents of Davao City. This research employed a descriptive correlation design, allowing the study to not only measure the levels of the two key variables—blue tourism perspectives and willingness to support—but also examine the correlation between them. The data were analyzed using the Mean and Pearson correlation coefficient (Pearson r). The results revealed that Davao locals have a highly positive perception of blue tourism. The community views blue tourism in the region as economically beneficial and environmentally sustainable. From a social perspective, locals believe that blue tourism is inclusive, ensuring that both residents and visitors are treated well without discrimination. Furthermore, Davao residents express strong enthusiasm for supporting the growth of blue tourism, with many showing a willingness to volunteer their time and resources to aid in the development of marine tourism or to advocate for it. A significant correlation was found between the locals' positive perspectives on blue tourism and their willingness to support its growth. This suggests that the more favorable the perception of blue tourism, the greater the likelihood of locals actively engaging in its development and promotion.

Keywords: Blue Tourism, Perspectives, Willingness to Support, Locals, Davao, and Philippines, SGD 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

INTRODUCTION

The Philippines, with its expansive coastline and rich marine ecosystems, has long been recognized as a prime destination for blue tourism, a form of tourism that focuses on the sustainable use of coastal and marine resources. However, the COVID-19 pandemic dealt a severe blow to the blue tourism sector, causing a sharp decline in both domestic and international tourist arrivals. As global travel restrictions took effect, coastal destinations in the Philippines, including those in Davao, saw substantial disruptions in the flow of tourists, particularly those arriving via air travel and cruise ships (Zafra, 2021; Karani & Failler, 2020). This decline has had far-reaching consequences, not only for the tourism industry but also for the local businesses, economies, and communities that rely on marine-based tourism for their livelihood. At the same time, the pandemic has served as a catalyst for rethinking the tourism industry's structure, creating an opportunity for a shift toward more sustainable practices supported by local governments and communities (Sari & Muslimah, 2020).

The blue economy—a concept that emphasizes the sustainable management of ocean resources for economic growth, environmental protection, and social development—has become central to the future of coastal tourism (Hampton & Jeyacheya, 2020). Blue tourism, a core component of the blue economy, involves activities such as marine ecotourism, coastal recreation, and sustainable fishing, all of which have the potential to contribute significantly to local economies (Barbesgaard, 2018; Clegg et al., 2021). However, while the economic and environmental aspects of blue tourism have been widely discussed in academic literature, less attention has been paid to the social dimension, specifically the perspectives of the local communities that are directly impacted by and involved in tourism activities (Garland et al., 2019). In the context of Davao City, despite its potential to be a key player in the blue tourism industry, there is a notable lack of research on local perspectives regarding blue tourism. Most existing studies on blue tourism focus on national policies, environmental management, and the economic impacts on the tourism sector (Brears, 2021; Louey, 2022). However, few have addressed how local communities view the development of blue tourism or their willingness to support its growth. This is a critical gap because community engagement and local support are essential for the successful implementation of any tourism initiative, particularly those involving natural resources that are shared by local populations (Fosse et al., 2019).

This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the perspectives of Davao locals on blue tourism and assessing their willingness to support the sector's growth. The main objective of the study is threefold: first, to assess the extent of blue tourism perspectives among Davao locals, considering economic, social, and environmental factors; second, to evaluate the willingness of locals to support blue tourism, particularly through their behavioral intentions to engage in and promote sustainable tourism practices; and third, to determine if there is a significant relationship between the perceptions of locals and their willingness to support blue tourism initiatives.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to provide actionable insights for policymakers, tourism planners, and local stakeholders in Davao City. By understanding how locals perceive blue tourism, local authorities will be better equipped to develop policies and initiatives that are aligned with community values, thereby ensuring greater local involvement and long-term sustainability (Garland et al., 2019; Lee, Noh, & Khim, 2020). Furthermore, the study will help identify key areas where the community's perceptions and support can be enhanced, thus fostering more inclusive tourism development strategies that benefit both local populations and the environment. In light of the ongoing challenges faced by the tourism sector due to global crises like the pandemic, community-based tourism initiatives that prioritize sustainability and local involvement are more important than ever. This study will help fill the existing research gap by exploring how local perceptions of blue tourism in Davao influence their support for sustainable tourism practices. This research will also contribute to the broader discourse on the role of communities in the blue economy and sustainable tourism development (Hyytiäinen et al., 2022; Abdullah et al., 2020).

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive correlation research design, which is particularly useful when the goal is to describe the characteristics of a phenomenon and explore the relationships between variables. According to Lambert and Lambert (2013), the descriptive approach is ideal when researchers aim to provide a clear and detailed account of the participants, the context of the events, and the surrounding circumstances. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the study's subject matter, making it highly suitable for investigating the perceptions of blue tourism among Davao locals.

In addition, correlational research seeks to examine the relationships between two or more variables within the same population (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). In this study, the correlational method was used to explore how blue tourism perspectives and the willingness to support blue tourism initiatives among locals are related. This design is appropriate for uncovering the connections between community perceptions and their behavioral intentions, providing valuable insights into the factors influencing local support for blue tourism in Davao.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents According to Demographic Profile

Profile Variables	Group	Frequency	Percent
Age	18-20	33	8.6
	21-25	119	30.9
	26-30	148	38.4
	31 above	85	22.1
Total		385	100
Sex	Male	189	49.1
	Female	196	50.9
Total		385	100
Marital Status	Single	187	48.6
	Married	161	41.8
	Divorce	1	.3
	Widowed	7	1.8
	Not Specified	29	7.5
Total		385	100
Educational Background	High School Level	8	2.1
	High School Graduate	186	48.3
	Senior High Level	4	1.0
	Senior High Graduate	21	5.5
	College Level	153	39.7
	College Graduate	3	.8
	Elementary Level	3	.8
	No Educational Background	7	1.8
Total		385	100


The respondents for this study were residents of Davao City, selected through convenience sampling. This non-probability sampling technique was chosen because it allows for the selection of participants based on ease of access and availability (Nikolopoulou, 2022). Only those who consented to participate were included in the study, with a target sample size of 385 individuals. Participants were required to have been residents of Davao City for at least two years, ensuring they had sufficient familiarity with the local community and environment. Non-residents and those who initially consented but later withdrew from the study were excluded, and individuals had the option to withdraw at any time without penalty. Data collection for the study was scheduled for May 2024.

Out of the initial 386 individuals approached, one respondent chose to withdraw from the study, leaving a total of 385 valid respondents. The demographic characteristics of the final sample were as follows: the largest age group was between 26-30 years, comprising 148 respondents; the majority of respondents were female (196 respondents); most were single (187 respondents); and the highest proportion of respondents had completed high school as their highest level of education. Thus, the typical respondent in this study was a female, aged between 26-30 years, single, and a high school graduate.

This study used two adapted questionnaires to measure the key variables. The first questionnaire, which focused on the independent variable (blue tourism perspectives), was adapted from the work of Topazine et al. (2019). The second questionnaire, measuring the dependent variable (willingness to support blue tourism), was adapted from Erul, Woosnam, and McIntosh (2020). The questionnaire was divided into two parts: the first part assessed the extent of blue tourism perspectives using indicators related to the economic, social, and environmental aspects of blue tourism. The second part measured willingness to support blue tourism development, with indicators reflecting behavioral intentions to support such initiatives. A 5-point Likert scale was used to capture responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The data collection process involved several key steps. First, the researcher obtained permission to conduct the study by submitting letters to the Barangay Captains of selected barangays and receiving approval from the Dean of the College of Hospitality Education. Once permission was granted, the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, with clear instructions provided to ensure they understood how to complete them without undue influence. Afterward, the completed questionnaires were retrieved, and valid responses were sorted for further analysis. The valid data were then tallied, scored, and processed by the school statistician. Finally, the data were analyzed and interpreted to draw conclusions regarding the local community's perspectives on blue tourism and their willingness to support it.

For data analysis, mean scores were calculated to determine the overall level of blue tourism perspectives and willingness to support among the locals of Davao. Additionally, Pearson's r was used to determine the significant relationship between blue tourism perspectives and willingness to support, allowing for a deeper understanding of the connection between these two variables.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Level of Blue Tourism Perspectives among Locals of Davao

Table 2 presents the level of blue tourism perspectives among the locals of Davao, with an overall mean score of 3.83, which is categorized as very much observed and considered high (SD = 0.602 – Clustered Answers). This indicates that the local community holds a high level of blue tourism perspectives. Among the three indicators, environmental perspectives received the highest mean score of 3.89, also categorized as high (SD = 0.646 – Clustered Answers). This score reflects local attitudes toward protecting nature, promoting equality in water usage, and implementing sophisticated waste disposal systems, suggesting that Davao locals place significant importance on environmental sustainability in blue tourism. These findings align with the assertions of Louey (2022), who emphasizes the necessity of preserving ocean and coastal ecosystems for sustainable growth, as the blue economy requires careful management of coastal resources.

In terms of the economic perspective, the mean score was 3.85 (SD = 0.642 – Clustered Answers), indicating that the local community perceives blue tourism as having a positive economic impact. Key statements contributing to this view include providing support to local businesses, ensuring tax compliance and legal market practices, and fostering honest and transparent dealings by public officials. This suggests that blue tourism is perceived as a healthy and thriving sector in Davao City. The result supports the claims of Hampton and Jeyacheya (2020), who highlight that blue tourism can drive economic growth, improve livelihoods, and create jobs, all through the sustainable use of ocean resources.

Table 2. Level of Blue Tourism Perspectives Among Locals of Davao

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation	Descriptive Level
Economic	3.85	0.642	High
Social	3.76	0.639	High
Environmental	3.89	0.646	High
Overall	3.83	0.602	High

In terms of social perspectives, the mean score was 3.76, categorized as high level (SD = 0.639 – Clustered Answers), indicating that the local community perceives blue tourism as having a positive social impact. This perception is strongly supported by statements such as the integration of local lifestyles, prioritizing the well-being of employees, and ensuring equal treatment for youth and women. These findings suggest that blue tourism in Davao City fosters an inclusive environment, where both locals and tourists are treated with respect and fairness. This aligns with the work of Juvan and Dolnicar (2021), who emphasized that the capital invested in tourism not only stimulates real estate development (urbanization) and the

construction of hotels and resorts but also contributes to the creation of infrastructure—such as electricity and commercial areas—that improves the overall living conditions of the local population.

Level of Willingness to Support Blue Tourism among Locals of Davao

Table 3 presents the willingness to support blue tourism among the locals of Davao, with an overall mean score of 4.28, categorized as a very high level (SD = 0.607). This indicates that the local community is highly supportive of blue tourism, particularly in actively contributing to the development of marine tourism in Davao. Respondents expressed a strong willingness to not only support existing initiatives but also propose new ideas to further enhance marine tourism, which forms the core of blue tourism. This suggests that Davao locals are fully committed to the success of blue tourism, recognizing its potential to generate revenue for the government while creating additional jobs and livelihood opportunities for the community.

Table 3. Level of Willingness to Support Blue Tourism Among Locals of Davao

Indicators	Mean	Std. Deviation	Descriptive Level
1. I will exert oneself to support marine tourism development in Davao.	4.40	0.751	Very High
2. I am enthusiastic to keep up on marine tourism development in Davao.	4.16	0.787	High
3. I will propose an idea to support marine tourism development in Davao.	4.28	0.868	Very High
Overall	4.28	0.607	Very High

The result is consistent with Brears (2021), who highlighted the crucial role of the local community in advancing objectives that foster social justice and human well-being, while simultaneously mitigating environmental risks and the depletion of ecological resources.

Correlation between Blue Tourism Perspective and Willingness To Support Blue Tourism among Locals of Davao

Table 4 presents the analysis of the significant relationship between blue tourism perspectives and the willingness to support blue tourism among the locals of Davao. The results show a computed r-value of 0.434 and a p-value of 0.000, which is below the significance level of 0.05, indicating a moderate positive correlation. This suggests that the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming a significant relationship between the two variables. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a meaningful connection between the blue tourism perspective and the willingness to support blue tourism among Davao's local community.

Table 4. Correlation between Blue Tourism Perspective and Willingness to Support Blue Tourism Among Locals of Davao

Variables Correlated	<i>r</i> - value	Verbal Description	<i>p</i> -value	Decision
Blue Tourism Perspective vs Blue Perspective Development	0.434**	Moderate Positive Relationship	0.000	Ho is rejected

Legend: Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The result supports the validity of the Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) Theory developed by Papageorgiou (2016), which emphasizes the importance of ensuring key environmental conditions—such as resilience to climate change, the preservation of seascapes and coastal landscapes, and maintaining a healthy ecological status of coastal and marine areas. According to Papageorgiou, achieving these conditions can have a significant impact on how tourism is structured and managed in coastal areas.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The perception of blue tourism among the locals of Davao is notably positive, with the community viewing it as both economically thriving and environmentally well-maintained. Social perspectives also highlight that blue tourism in Davao is inclusive, with no discrimination against the local population, and both locals and visitors are treated equally and respectfully. Furthermore, the people of Davao show strong enthusiasm for supporting the growth of blue tourism, particularly through volunteering their time and energy to promote and help develop marine tourism in the city. A significant correlation has been observed between the local community’s perspective on blue tourism and their willingness to support its growth.

Based on these findings, several recommendations are proposed. The City Government of Davao should consider formulating a comprehensive plan to further develop and implement blue tourism. This plan should aim to protect and enhance the coastal and marine environments, while also establishing a dedicated committee to oversee the initiative and allocate an appropriate budget for its ongoing maintenance. Additionally, the local community should be given opportunities to benefit economically by providing employment within the hospitality sector, as well as allowing locals to sell their products directly to tourists. To ensure sustainable tourism, visitors to Davao should be oriented on the local government’s rules and regulations for blue tourism, enabling them to enjoy the area responsibly. The local community should also be encouraged to take on active roles as stewards of marine life, setting an example for tourists to follow. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to explore the lived experiences of tourists engaging in blue tourism, which would provide further insights into how the sector can continue to evolve and thrive.

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