



## AN ANALYSIS OF THE TOURISM PRACTICES IN LIBACAO, AKLAN: BASIS FOR A SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CIRCUIT

**AIZA ORBISTA NAHIL**

Program Coordinator, B.S. in Hospitality Management

Aklan Catholic College – Kalibo, Aklan

aizanahil2688@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

This study sought to assess the scope of tourism practices in the Municipality of Libacao, Aklan, to propose a sustainable tourism circuit. Libacao, Aklan has high ecotourism potential due to its immense natural resources, gorgeous landscapes, and rich culture al history. However, recent irregularities in visitor arrivals and shortcomings in sustainability standards have spurred the necessity for this inquiry.

The study used a descriptive research approach, with a researcher-made survey questionnaire delivered to 50 purposefully chosen tourist stakeholders, including local community members, LGU workers, tourism business owners, employees, and visitors. The data was analyzed using statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Mann-Whitney U test, and Kruskal-Wall's test.

Libacao demonstrates a highly extensive level of social ( $\bar{x} = 3.52$ ) and cultural ( $\bar{x} = 3.60$ ) tourism practices and an extensive level of environmental ( $\bar{x} = 3.34$ ) and economic ( $\bar{x} = 3.44$ ) tourism practices. Solid waste management, security presence at tourist destinations, promotion of local crafts, and niche tourism product development are among the highest-rated indicators. However, the lowest-rated indicators revealed areas that needed to be improved, such as collecting tourism site maintenance fees, assuring service quality, and promoting authentic local culinary experiences. Tourism fees ( $\bar{x} = 3.26$ ) were the lowest in both environmental and economic dimensions, indicating financial sustainability issues that

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contradict best practices highlighted in literature, such as those by Emerton et al. (2012) and Gomez et al. (2024), who advocate for transparent, well-structured fee systems.

The study also identified no substantial differences in environmental, social, or cultural behaviors based on demographic profiles; nevertheless, opinions of economic sustainability differed significantly amongst stakeholders from various employment sectors and occupations. Based on these findings, the study suggests improving institutional processes for tourism fee collecting, service quality assurance, local gastronomic promotion, and stakeholder capacity building. The findings are useful for developing a sustainable tourism circuit in Libacao, Aklan, that balances environmental protection, cultural preservation, community well-being, and economic resilience.

**Keywords:** *Analysis, Tourism Practices, Libacao, Aklan, Sustainable Tourism Circuit, Cultural*

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## INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a major global industry that significantly contributes to economic development, cultural exchange, and environmental conservation. It provides employment, stimulates local economies, and promotes the preservation of natural and cultural heritage (Goodwin, 2016; UNWTO, 2021). However, the rapid growth of tourism has also raised concerns about environmental degradation, cultural commodification, and social disruption. Unregulated tourism can lead to deforestation, water pollution, habitat loss, and the erosion of local traditions, which threatens the very assets that attract visitors.

In response to these challenges, sustainable tourism has emerged as a framework that balances economic growth with environmental protection and social equity. Sustainable tourism seeks to meet the needs of current visitors and host communities while safeguarding opportunities for future generations (UNWTO, 2021; Bramwell & Lane, 2012). It emphasizes environmental stewardship, equitable economic benefits, and cultural preservation, making it particularly relevant for rural destinations that rely on natural and cultural resources. In such areas, tourism can serve as a vehicle for development when properly managed, minimizing negative impacts and maximizing benefits for communities and ecosystems.

Community participation is a key component of sustainable tourism. Engaging local stakeholders in planning and decision-making promotes responsible resource management and ensures that tourism initiatives reflect local values and cultural heritage (García-Rosell, Haanpää, & Janhunen, 2017; Sorokin et al., 2023). Community-based tourism models foster social cohesion, equitable income distribution, and environmental awareness while allowing residents to actively shape the tourism experience. Ecotourism, a subset of sustainable tourism, further enhances environmental conservation and cultural preservation by integrating indigenous knowledge and promoting authentic local experiences (Buckley, 2019; Ceballos-Lascurain, 2021; Chen et al., 2020).

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The municipality of Libacao, Aklan, exemplifies a rural area with considerable tourism potential. Located 29 kilometers southwest of the provincial capital, Libacao is the primary watershed of the Aklan River and is known as the "waterfalls capital of Panay Island," with around 60 waterfalls and diverse natural landscapes. The Libacao Highlands, initially developed for agricultural access, have gained attention for their scenic views and outdoor recreational opportunities. Tourism in the municipality increased after the easing of quarantine restrictions in 2021 but later declined, suggesting challenges in sustainability and effective tourism management (Department of Tourism, 2024).

Tourism can drive economic growth in rural areas by generating employment, supporting small enterprises, and improving infrastructure. However, without proper planning, tourism can degrade ecosystems, disrupt social cohesion, and erode cultural authenticity (Guttentag, 2015; Altinay & Hussain, 2020). In Libacao, where natural and cultural assets are central to the tourism experience, unregulated growth poses significant risks. Despite increased tourism activity, limited research exists on local tourism practices across environmental, social, cultural, and economic dimensions, hindering evidence-based planning for sustainable development.

Demographic factors, including age, gender, education, income, and occupation, influence sustainable tourism behaviors. Younger and highly educated tourists often display greater awareness of sustainability issues, whereas older visitors demonstrate more consistent engagement in eco-friendly behaviors, such as supporting local enterprises and choosing environmentally responsible accommodations (Su et al., 2022; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2024; Kumar, 2020). Income affects the ability to engage in eco-friendly tourism, with higher-income tourists more likely to participate in sustainable activities. Gender differences also influence behavior, with women generally showing higher environmental concern and participation in sustainability initiatives (Hwang & Lee, 2020; Han et al., 2019).

Tourism circuits offer an effective approach to achieving sustainable tourism in rural destinations. By connecting multiple attractions and dispersing visitor traffic, circuits reduce

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overcrowding, enhance economic benefits for multiple communities, and promote responsible travel behaviors (Cruz, 2017; Ahmad et al., 2024). Successful circuits require collaboration among governments, local communities, and private enterprises, along with supportive infrastructure, legislative frameworks, and inclusive stakeholder engagement. Integrating eco-friendly practices, renewable energy, and cultural preservation into circuit planning ensures environmental sustainability while creating authentic and profitable tourism experiences (Boudra & Mahdi, 2025; IADB, 2024).

## Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to analyze the tourism practices in the municipality of Libacao, Aklan.

Specifically, this study sought to determine the following:

1. What is the extent of tourism practices in Libacao, Aklan in terms of
  - 1.1 Environment
  - 1.2 Social
  - 1.3 Cultural
  - 1.4 Economic
2. Based on the findings of the study, what sustainable tourism circuit can be proposed?

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive research design, utilizing a survey to gather quantitative data on tourism practices and stakeholder profiles in Libacao, Aklan (David, 2017). This approach allowed for an in-depth analysis of the extent of sustainable tourism activities and the demographic and occupational factors influencing participation. The study focused on key tourism sites, including Mangayaw Falls, Libacao Highlands, Agbatuan Haven,

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and various hospitality establishments, targeting owners, employees, visitors, local residents, and LGU officials.

A total of 50 respondents were selected using a purposive sampling technique to ensure inclusion of individuals with relevant knowledge and firsthand experience in tourism activities. The sample consisted of community members, LGU officials and employees, tourism establishment owners and employees, and visitors. The selection process was facilitated by the Libacao Tourism Office to ensure reliability and validity of responses.

Data were collected through a two-part survey questionnaire. Part I gathered respondents' personal and demographic profiles, including age, gender, education, occupation, employment sector, and type of tourism stakeholder. Part II assessed sustainable tourism practices across four dimensions—environmental, social, cultural, and economic—using a 30-item Likert-scale questionnaire. Mean scores were calculated and interpreted using a 4-point scale to categorize the extent of tourism practices.

The questionnaire underwent content validation by experts in tourism, community development, and environmental sustainability. Reliability was tested through a pilot study using the test-retest method, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.929, indicating high reliability.

Data were collected following ethical protocols, including voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality in compliance with RA 10173 (Data Privacy Act, 2012). Responses were processed using SPSS, with frequency counts, mean scores, and non-parametric tests (Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis) applied to analyze relationships between stakeholder profiles and sustainable tourism practices.

This methodology ensured the collection of valid, reliable, and ethically gathered data, forming the foundation for proposing a sustainable tourism circuit to enhance environmental, cultural, and socio-economic sustainability in Libacao, Aklan.

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## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1:** Extent of Tourism Practices in Libacao, Aklan

	$\bar{x}$	Rank	Verbal Interpretation
<b>Environmental Practices</b>	3.34	4	Extensive
<b>Social Practices</b>	3.52	2	Highly Extensive
<b>Cultural Practices</b>	3.60	1	Highly Extensive
<b>Economic Practices</b>	3.44	3	Extensive

Table 1 shows that Cultural Practices, with a mean score of 3.60, or Highly Extensive, was rated as the most important of the four aspects of sustainable tourism practices in Libacao, Aklan. The next highest scores were for Social Practices ( $\bar{x} = 3.52$ ), Economic Practices ( $\bar{x} = 3.44$ ), and Environmental Practices, which scored the lowest at 3.34 but was still considered Extensive.

The high level of community involvement in Libacao's cultural heritage preservation and promotion, especially through handicrafts and festivals, is responsible for the town's top ranking in terms of cultural tourism practices. According to the statistics, "selling locally produced handicrafts made of abaca and nito," a customary means of subsistence ingrained in local identity and handed down through the generations, was the most prevalent practice under the cultural dimension. These artisanal goods are well-known in barangays like Guadalupe, Pampangon, and Alfonso XII. They are backed by livelihood initiatives that empower women and older persons as well as LGU-DTI partnerships. The community's pride in its indigenous history, traditional songs, dances, and colorful festivals enhances their cultural expression and makes it a visible and approachable aspect of the travel experience. This dimension's top ranking can be explained by the active promotion of culture.

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Conversely, environmental activities came in last ( $\bar{x} = 3.34$ ), despite still being widespread. Gaps in the application of advanced sustainability measures, such collecting environmental fees and implementing green technologies, which were among the lowest-rated metrics under this category, may be the cause of this lower ranking. Libacao, Aklan performs admirably when it comes to fundamental waste management techniques (like segregation and clean-up campaigns), but other more organized and institutionalized practices—like the utilization of renewable energy sources or clear pricing structures for site upkeep—are still in their infancy or barely evolved. The complete achievement of environmental sustainability goals may be hampered by a lack of formal regulatory processes, limited resources, and logistical difficulties brought on by Libacao's rural location.

Libacao's tourism reflects a community-driven, heritage-centered approach where culture and social cohesion are deeply integrated into daily life. However, environmental sustainability remains challenging due to limited resources, infrastructure, and regulation, highlighting the need for stronger governance, renewable energy investments, and environmental awareness initiatives.

**Table 1.1: Extent of Environmental Tourism Practices in Libacao, Aklan**

	$\bar{x}$	Rank	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. Addressing solid waste reduction through proper waste management	3.56	1	0.61	Highly Extensive
2. Adopting technologies that reduces consumption of natural resources such as renewable energy	3.22	6	0.67	Extensive
3. Promoting the use of environment friendly modes of transportation which reduce greenhouse gas emissions	3.26	5	0.66	Extensive

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<b>4. Supporting to biodiversity conservation through prohibiting illegal cutting of trees in forest area and hunting endangered species</b>	3.34	4	0.77	Extensive
<b>5. Posting environment advocacy awareness on strategic area of their tourist sites</b>	3.52	2	0.58	Highly Extensive
<b>6. Collecting environmental fees that supports the maintenance and management of tourism sites</b>	3.10	7	0.86	Extensive
<b>7. Implementing penalties for violations and promote responsible tourism practices through enforcement efforts</b>	3.38	3	0.63	Extensive
<b>Grand Mean</b>	3.34			Extensive
<b>1.00 – 1.49</b> <b>Not Extensive</b>	<b>1.50 – 2.49</b> <b>Slightly Extensive</b>	<b>2.50 – 3.49</b> <b>Extensive</b>	<b>3.50 – 4.00</b> <b>Highly Extensive</b>	

Table 1.1 shows that environmental tourism practices in Libacao, Aklan as a whole was classified as extensive, with a grand mean of 3.34, showing a strong commitment among stakeholders to environmental conservation. The highest-rated indicator was addressing solid waste reduction through proper waste management ( $\bar{x} = 3.56$ , SD = 0.61), indicating that the local tourism sector has a strong practice of trash segregation, recycling, and correct disposal. This is consistent with Kumar and Sharma's (2022) findings, which underlined the importance of adequate waste management systems in limiting tourism's negative environmental impact. Similarly, Tiwari et al. (2016) emphasized the significance of community-led waste reduction activities in maintaining environmental integrity in tourism areas. Patel and Singh (2023), as well as Baldasano et al. (2023), backed this up by stating that well-integrated recycling and composting programs contribute considerably to ecological

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sustainability, particularly in tourism-dependent rural communities. Thus, the statistics imply that Libacao's outstanding waste management performance is due to both community initiative and alignment with worldwide best practices.

The second highest-ranked activity was putting environmental advocacy awareness on critical sections of tourist sites ( $\bar{x} = 3.52$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ), which was also rated Highly Extensive, showing proactive information transmission and awareness-building efforts. This was followed by implementing penalties for violations and promoting responsible tourism practices ( $\bar{x} = 3.38$ ,  $SD = 0.63$ ), supporting biodiversity conservation through prohibiting illegal tree cutting and hunting endangered species ( $\bar{x} = 3.34$ ,  $SD = 0.77$ ), and promoting the use of environmentally friendly modes of transportation ( $\bar{x} = 3.26$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ ). These findings indicate an increased concern for environmental discipline, conservation, and the gradual adoption of green mobility practices.

The lowest-rated indicator was the collection of environmental fees to fund site upkeep and management ( $\bar{x} = 3.10$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ). Although considered Extensive, the lower score implies difficulties in implementing or accepting environmental charge regimes. This finding appears to contradict previous studies that have emphasized the viability of environmental fees as long-term funding strategies. Emerton et al. (2013) and Wang et al. (2023) suggested that environmental user fees, when transparently managed, can support conservation projects, improve infrastructure, and promote community benefits. Buckley et al. (2022) also stated that visitors were often prepared to pay such fees if the money is explicitly spent in environmental preservation. Jacobsen et al. (2024) discovered that perceived misuse or a lack of transparency can lower compliance and efficacy. As a result, while Libacao has made beginning efforts to introduce environmental taxes, the poor grade may reflect deficiencies in transparency, enforcement, or public knowledge. Improving communication tactics and community involvement may promote acceptance and performance of this approach.

The community's strong performance in solid waste management is rooted in deeply held environmental values shaped by Libacao's abundant natural resources, such as forests,

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rivers, and ecotourism sites. These resources are vital to local identity and economic activity. Barangay ordinances, regular clean-up drives, and collaboration with schools and local government units have helped cultivate a strong culture of environmental stewardship. Residents understand that cleanliness and ecological balance are essential for public health, attracting visitors, and sustaining tourism.

In contrast, the weaker performance in environmental fee collection may be attributed to unclear collection and allocation systems, limited awareness of its benefits, and uncertainty about fund utilization. Without transparency and visible outcomes, stakeholder support remains low. Strengthening policies, improving transparency, and enhancing community capacity are necessary to advance environmental sustainability efforts.

**Table 1.2: Extent of Social Tourism Practices in Libacao, Aklan**

		$\bar{x}$	Rank	SD	Verbal Interpretation
<b>1. Offering equal employment opportunities to residents, and minorities to be hired and trained</b>		3.62	2	0.60	Highly Extensive
<b>2. Observing peace and order on tourism areas through the presence of uniformed personnel and authorities</b>		3.66	1	0.51	Highly Extensive
<b>3. Involving the local community on planning for tourism development.</b>		3.54	5	0.64	Highly Extensive
<b>4. Having an available local guide in the tourist destination areas.</b>		3.50	7	0.58	Highly Extensive
<b>5. Ensuring quality standards of service and excellence required by the industry.</b>		3.34	9	0.65	Extensive
<b>6. Collaborating with national government to support the local tourism</b>		3.56	4	0.50	Highly Extensive

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industry through financial funds and infrastructure development.

**7. Having established tourism plans to strongly support sustainable development of tourism.**

**8. Boosting tourism arrival through strong promotional and marketing efforts.**

**9. Utilizing social media platforms and personalities to enhance marketability of tourist destinations.**

**Grand Mean**

**1.00 – 1.49**

**Not Extensive**

*1.50– 2.49*

*Slightly Extensive*

3.42 8 0.73

3.52 6 0.61

3.58 3 0.53

Extensive

Highly Extensive

Highly Extensive

Highly Extensive

*2.50 – 3.49*

*Extensive*

*3.50 – 4.00*

*Highly Extensive*

Table 1.2 indicates that socially sustainable tourism practices in Libacao, Aklan are rated as "Highly Extensive," with a grand mean of 3.52. This result reflects the municipality's strong commitment to socially responsible tourism development. Among the indicators, "maintaining peace and order in tourist locations through the presence of uniformed authorities and staff" received the highest mean score ( $\bar{x} = 3.66$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ), highlighting the importance placed on safety, order, and visible security in tourism areas. This practice is strongly supported by close collaboration between local tourism stakeholders and the Libacao Local Government Unit (LGU), particularly during festivals and major tourism events. Such coordination enhances visitor confidence and reinforces Libacao's image as a safe and welcoming destination, consistent with studies emphasizing the role of perceived safety in tourist satisfaction and visitation.

Other highly rated indicators include "offering equal employment opportunities to residents and minorities" ( $\bar{x} = 3.62$ ), "utilizing social media platforms to enhance destination marketability" ( $\bar{x} = 3.58$ ), and "collaborating with national government for financial and

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infrastructure support" ( $\bar{x} = 3.56$ ). These findings suggest strong stakeholder efforts toward inclusivity, modern marketing, and institutional partnerships. Community involvement in tourism planning ( $\bar{x} = 3.54$ ) and strong promotional activities ( $\bar{x} = 3.52$ ) further demonstrate local engagement in shaping tourism development.

However, lower ratings were observed for "ensuring quality standards of service and excellence" ( $\bar{x} = 3.34$ ). This suggests gaps in formal training and professional competencies among tourism workers, many of whom lack tourism-specific educational backgrounds. Addressing this issue through structured training, accreditation programs, and partnerships with educational institutions could significantly improve service quality and strengthen Libacao's long-term social sustainability in tourism.

**Table 1.3: Extent of Cultural Tourism Practices in Libacao, Aklan**

	$\bar{x}$	Rank	SD	Verbal Interpretation
<b>1. Showcasing traditional songs and dances in tourist sites and cultural events in the municipality</b>	3.58	4	0.53	Highly Extensive
<b>2. Selling locally produced handicrafts made of abaca and nito products</b>	3.74	1	0.44	Highly Extensive
<b>3. Promoting artisanal making and preservation of traditional metal crafts</b>	3.54	5.5	0.64	Highly Extensive
<b>4. Encouraging locals to actively participate on community-based tourism initiatives on offering authentic cultural experiences</b>	3.54	5.5	0.54	Highly Extensive
<b>5. Offering authentic local gastronomical experiences to the tourists.</b>	3.38	7	0.63	Extensive

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6. promote festival celebration to drive tourist arrival (e.g. religious, indigenous and local produce).	3.72	2.5	0.45	Highly Extensive
7. Preserving cultural tradition of the indigenous people or the Aklanon Bukidnon.	3.72	2.5	0.53	Highly Extensive
<b>Grand Mean</b>	3.60			Highly Extensive
<b>1.00 – 1.49</b>	<i>1.50 – 2.49</i>	<i>2.50 – 3.49</i>	<i>3.50 – 4.00</i>	
<b>Not Extensive</b>	<i>Slightly Extensive</i>	<i>Extensive</i>	<i>Highly Extensive</i>	

Table 1.3 indicates that cultural tourism practices in Libacao, Aklan are rated as "Highly Extensive," with a grand mean of  $\bar{x} = 3.60$ . This finding highlights the municipality's strong commitment to cultural preservation as a core component of its tourism development. The highest-rated indicator was the sale of locally made handicrafts from abaca and nito ( $\bar{x} = 3.74$ , SD = 0.44), while the lowest, though still extensive, was the provision of authentic local gastronomic experiences ( $\bar{x} = 3.38$ , SD = 0.63). This contrast reflects both local tourism priorities and varying levels of community capacity.

The prominence of handicrafts aligns with studies emphasizing their role in strengthening cultural identity and generating livelihoods. In Libacao, barangays such as Guadalupe, Pampangon, and Alfonso XII are well known for producing bags, baskets, trays, and other items made from abundant nito and abaca fibers. These crafts serve not only as cultural symbols but also as vital income sources for local families. Support from the Libacao LGU and the Department of Trade and Industry, particularly through training programs and the Negosyo Center, has further strengthened this sector by empowering women and senior citizens with entrepreneurial skills and market access.

Other highly rated practices include preserving the traditions of the Aklanon Bukidnon and promoting festivals ( $\bar{x} = 3.72$ ), as well as showcasing traditional songs and dances ( $\bar{x} = 3.58$ ). These activities reinforce cultural visibility and community participation.

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In contrast, local cuisine promotion remains less developed. Although Libacao offers distinctive dishes, they are seldom integrated into tourism packages due to limited promotion, infrastructure, and knowledge transfer. As a result, traditional food is often viewed as a household practice rather than a tourism asset, indicating an area for future development.

**Table 1.4: Extent of Economic Tourism Practices in Libacao, Aklan**

		$\bar{x}$	Rank	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1.	<b>Registering tourism-related business with the barangay and municipal office</b>	3.46	4	0.54	Extensive
2.	<b>Providing average monthly wage to tourism industry workers/ employee</b>	3.34	5	0.62	Extensive
3.	<b>Offering affordable tourism products and services in the destination</b>	3.52	2	0.61	Highly Extensive
4.	<b>Regulating control on inflation and price index in tourist areas</b>	3.32	6	0.68	Extensive
5.	<b>Collecting fees and charges for the maintenance and operation of tourist site</b>	3.26	7	0.69	Extensive
6.	<b>Encouraging local and international investments to support tourism development</b>	3.50	3	0.54	Highly Extensive
7.	<b>Enhancing economic resilience and stability by offering niche tourism products to attract diverse range of visitors throughout the year by reducing seasonality and dependency on a single market segment.</b>	3.68	1	0.47	Highly Extensive
<b>Grand Mean</b>		3.44			Extensive

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<b>1.00 – 1.49</b>	<i>1.50 – 2.49</i>	<i>2.50 – 3.49</i>	<i>3.50 – 4.00</i>
<b>Not Extensive</b>	<i>Slightly Extensive</i>	<i>Extensive</i>	<i>Highly Extensive</i>

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Table 1.4 shows that economic sustainable tourism practices in Libacao, Aklan are rated as "Extensive," with a grand mean of  $\bar{x} = 3.44$ . This indicates that the municipality has made meaningful progress in developing its tourism economy, although several aspects still need improvement to ensure long-term economic sustainability. The highest-rated indicator, "Enhancing economic stability and resilience through specialized tourism products" ( $\bar{x} = 3.68$ ,  $SD = 0.47$ ), reflects strong stakeholder awareness of the importance of product diversification. This finding supports previous studies noting that specialized tourism offerings such as ecotourism, cultural heritage experiences, and adventure tourism reduce dependence on seasonal demand and provide more stable income and employment, particularly in rural communities. In Libacao, unique natural attractions, traditional handicrafts, and emerging tourism circuits contribute to livelihood generation, community-based enterprises, and reduced outmigration.

The indicators "Offering affordable tourism products and services" ( $\bar{x} = 3.52$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ) and "Encouraging local and international investments" ( $\bar{x} = 3.50$ ,  $SD = 0.54$ ) were also rated highly, highlighting efforts to maintain accessibility while recognizing the need for partnerships and external funding to expand tourism infrastructure. Similarly, the registration of tourism-related businesses with local authorities ( $\bar{x} = 3.46$ ,  $SD = 0.54$ ) suggests the presence of regulatory mechanisms that support governance and formalization of enterprises.

However, lower ratings were recorded for "Providing average monthly wages to tourism workers" ( $\bar{x} = 3.34$ ) and "Regulating inflation and price indices in tourist areas" ( $\bar{x} = 3.32$ ), pointing to concerns over wage adequacy and price stability. The lowest-rated indicator, "Collecting fees and charges for tourist site maintenance" ( $\bar{x} = 3.26$ ), reveals gaps in financial sustainability caused by weak systems, limited awareness, and enforcement challenges.

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Strengthening transparent fee collection and management is therefore essential to support Libacao's long-term tourism sustainability.

**Table 2:** *The proposed sustainable tourism circuit for Libacao, Aklan.*

Tourism Circuit	Barangay/Location	Key Attraction and Activities	Sustainability Contribution
<b>Cultural Heritage and Craftsmanship Circuit</b>	Poblacion, Libacao	Talibong-making and marble engraving (Redecio's Talibong), blacksmithing demonstrations (Panday Nono), local food experiences and cultural music at FamVill and Tago Refreshment	Preserves traditional craftsmanship, strengthens cultural identity, provides livelihood for local artisans, promotes cultural education
<b>Nature and Adventure Circuit</b>	Barangay Guadalupe	Mangayaw Falls trekking and swimming, JIAden Private Pool river experience, De Esperanza Resort activities (swimming, fishing, dining)	Encourages ecotourism, supports conservation of natural resources, generates income through nature-based tourism

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<b>Rural Retreats and Wellness Circuit</b>	Barangay Manika and Barangay Oyang	Libacao Highlands scenic views, Agbatuan Haven homestay, Nasuraan Falls expedition, camping and trekking activities	Promotes rural tourism, community immersion, environmental awareness, and low-impact adventure tourism
<b>Tourism Route Integration</b>	Poblacion – Guadalupe – Manika – Oyang	Organized travel route with food stops, adventure sites, and cultural immersion	Enhances visitor flow, improves accessibility, disperses tourism benefits across barangays
<b>Package Tour Development</b>	Municipality-wide	Day tour, overnight, and 2 nights–3 days packages including transport, meals, guides, cultural demos, and environmental fees	Increases tourism revenue, ensures inclusive local participation, promotes regulated and sustainable tourism practices
<b>Implementation Strategies</b>	Municipality-wide	Infrastructure improvement, capacity building, marketing, sustainability initiatives	Strengthens governance, improves service quality, supports long-term tourism sustainability
<b>Expected Impact</b>	Libacao, Aklan	Increased income, cultural preservation, environmental protection, community empowerment	Supports balanced economic, social, and environmental development

Table 2 shows that the proposed Sustainable Tourism Circuit of Libacao, Aklan is designed to integrate cultural heritage preservation, nature-based tourism, and rural community development into a cohesive and sustainable tourism framework. The table highlights three major tourism circuits—Cultural Heritage and Craftsmanship, Nature and Adventure, and Rural Retreats and Wellness—each strategically located across different barangays to maximize local participation and equitable distribution of tourism benefits.

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The Cultural Heritage and Craftsmanship Circuit in Barangay Poblacion emphasizes the preservation of traditional skills such as Talibong-making, blacksmithing, and marble engraving, complemented by local food experiences and cultural performances. This circuit demonstrates how cultural assets can be transformed into experiential tourism products that generate income while safeguarding indigenous knowledge and traditions. The strong focus on craftsmanship reinforces cultural identity and promotes community pride, making culture a central pillar of Libacao's tourism development.

Meanwhile, the Nature and Adventure Circuit in Barangay Guadalupe showcases waterfalls, river-based recreation, and nature resorts, reflecting the municipality's rich natural resources. This circuit supports ecotourism principles by encouraging low-impact activities such as trekking and guided tours, which raise environmental awareness and contribute to conservation efforts. Similarly, the Rural Retreats and Wellness Circuit in Barangays Manika and Oyang promotes immersive rural experiences through homestays, highland excursions, and adventure treks, fostering meaningful interactions between visitors and host communities.

The table further shows that the integration of organized routes, package tours, and implementation strategies enhances accessibility, visitor management, and sustainability. Overall, the proposed tourism circuit positions Libacao as a balanced and resilient destination by aligning economic growth with cultural preservation and environmental protection, ensuring long-term benefits for both the community and future visitors.

## Conclusions

The results of the study reveal that sustainable tourism practices in Libacao, Aklan are generally well-established, with an overall emphasis on cultural and social sustainability. Among the four dimensions assessed, cultural tourism practices ranked highest and were described as Highly Extensive, demonstrating that Libacao's tourism development is strongly anchored in heritage preservation, traditional craftsmanship, festivals, and indigenous culture.

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Social tourism practices also achieved a Highly Extensive rating, reflecting strong community involvement, inclusive employment opportunities, effective peace and order mechanisms, and active collaboration with government institutions.

Economic tourism practices were rated Extensive, indicating meaningful progress in tourism-related income generation, product diversification, and investment promotion. However, concerns related to wage adequacy, inflation control, and transparent fee collection suggest that economic benefits are not yet fully optimized or equitably distributed. Environmental tourism practices, while still classified as Extensive, ranked lowest among the four dimensions. This highlights gaps in advanced sustainability measures such as renewable energy adoption, environmental fee systems, and institutionalized conservation financing, despite strong performance in waste management and environmental awareness initiatives.

Overall, Libacao's tourism development reflects a community-driven and culture-centered model that successfully promotes social cohesion and cultural identity. The proposed Sustainable Tourism Circuit further strengthens this model by integrating cultural heritage, nature-based tourism, and rural community experiences into a unified framework. However, to ensure long-term sustainability, greater attention must be given to environmental governance and economic equity to balance tourism growth with ecological protection and inclusive development.

## Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthen Environmental Governance.** The local government should institutionalize environmental sustainability measures by improving the collection and

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transparent utilization of environmental fees. Clear guidelines, visible outcomes, and community participation in fund management can increase stakeholder trust and compliance.

2. **Promote Renewable Energy and Green Technologies.** Investments in renewable energy sources, eco-friendly transport, and resource-efficient technologies should be prioritized in tourism sites through partnerships with national agencies and the private sector.

3. **Enhance Skills Training and Service Quality.** Capacity-building programs, certification, and regular training for tourism workers should be implemented in collaboration with educational institutions to improve service quality and professionalism.

4. **Develop Local Gastronomy as a Tourism Product.** Traditional food and local cuisine should be integrated into tourism packages through food festivals, culinary training, and the establishment of community-based food enterprises.

5. **Improve Economic Equity and Wage Policies.** The LGU should explore mechanisms to ensure fair wages, price regulation in tourist areas, and stronger monitoring of tourism-related businesses to promote inclusive economic benefits.

6. **Sustain and Expand the Tourism Circuit.** The proposed sustainable tourism circuit should be continuously refined through infrastructure improvement, marketing, and stakeholder coordination to ensure balanced distribution of tourism benefits across barangays.

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