

# Rural tourism governance in Maddela, Quirino towards poverty alleviation: a development strategy

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## Abstract

This study examines the role of tourism in poverty alleviation in Maddela, Quirino, focusing on political, economic, and social development indicators alongside government administrative processes. Anchored on the Philippine government's recognition of tourism as a driver of employment, investment, and development under the Tourism Act of 2009, the research explores how tourism contributes to local development outcomes. A triangulation mixed-method research design was employed. Data were gathered through survey questionnaires administered to 364 residents from selected barangays with tourism sites, along with a key informant interview with the Municipal Tourism Officer. Findings show that political, economic, and social indicators are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Effective administrative processes, particularly in planning, staffing, reporting, coordination, and budgeting, are critical in translating tourism initiatives into tangible community benefits. The study concludes that tourism is a complementary, governance-dependent strategy for poverty alleviation rather than a standalone solution. Its success depends on institutional capacity, resource availability, and sustained stakeholder collaboration. Strengthening tourism governance through strategic planning, capacity-building, and adequate resource allocation is essential for inclusive and sustainable development.

## Keywords

Rural tourism; tourism governance; poverty alleviation; local development; administrative processes

## Introduction

Tourism has been widely recognized as a strategic sector for economic growth and development, particularly in developing countries where it creates opportunities for employment, income generation, and community-based enterprises (Mtapuri et al., 2022). As a labor-intensive industry with strong linkages to other sectors, tourism has the potential to benefit marginalized communities and support broader development goals, including poverty alleviation and inclusive growth (Bhatt et al., 2024). Tourism is not only viewed as an economic driver but also as a mechanism that can influence broader development outcomes (Wahab et al., 2023).

Building on this perspective, tourism extends beyond its economic contribution by also shaping social and institutional development (Restrepo & Anton Clavé, 2023). It can improve access to infrastructure, enhance local capacities through training, and encourage community participation in development initiatives (Bello et al., 2018). However, the extent to which these benefits are realized depends on how tourism activities are managed and governed at different levels of administration (Panasiuk, 2019). This brings attention to the importance of governance in ensuring that tourism contributes meaningfully to development objectives (Robina-Ramírez et al., 2022).

Tourism governance, therefore, becomes a critical concept in understanding this process (Farsari, 2023). It refers to the structures, processes, and interactions among stakeholders involved in planning, implementing, and managing tourism development (Errichiello & Micera, 2021). Effective governance ensures that tourism initiatives are aligned with broader development goals and that benefits are distributed equitably among stakeholders (Siakwah et al., 2020). This includes the role of government administrative processes such as planning, staffing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting, which collectively shape how tourism programs are implemented and sustained (Markatos et al., 2024).

In the Philippines, the Republic Act No. 9593 also known as the Tourism Act of 2009 declares tourism as essential to the national economy becoming an engine of employment, investment, growth, and national development (Mena & Villamejor-Mendoza, 2024). It also aims to expand its benefits to contribute to poverty alleviation. This policy direction is reinforced by the mission and vision of the Philippine Department of Tourism (DOT) which seeks to develop tourism as a major socio-economic activity through job creation and the equitable distribution of income (Rivera et al., 2025).

Tourism is one of the main factors that contribute to the nation's economic growth ( et al., 2023). Data showed that the industry's share to the Gross Domestic Product was 5.7% and in 2019, it ballooned to 12.8% GDP share (Debuque-Gonzales et al., 2022). The industry was also recognized as one of the biggest employers in the Philippines, providing 13.6% of the total employment in 2019 (Steel & Outlook, 2003).

In 2019, Department of Tourism recorded 8.2 million foreign arrivals with USD 9.3 Billion tourism receipts, 20.81% higher in 2018 (Das et al., 2022). However, despite these gains, the World Bank noted that the country still has a poverty rate of 20.8% in 2019 which translates to the inability of individuals to meet basic food and non-food necessities (Funahashi, 2023). The poverty data in 2019 is higher compared to the 16.7% poverty rate in 2018 (Capuno, 2022). Accordingly, the poverty risk in countries increased in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic which brought unprecedented global challenges in the tourism industry.

The Municipality of Maddela in Quirino Province is a first-class municipality in income classification and has been tagged as the commercial growth center of the province. The Governor's Rapids, being the prime destination of the municipality, recorded 119 tourist arrivals in 2013 to 17,451 in 2016. Among the other tourist attractions in the province, the Governor's Rapids was recognized as having the highest number of tourist arrivals in 2016 (Department of Science and Technology, 2021). However, based on the Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS) Census 2017-2018 of the municipality, 55.5% of the total population has households with income below the poverty threshold. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), living below the poverty threshold translates to living below the estimated Php 10,727.00 for a family of five (5) members per month in 2018. It is living below the minimum income required for an individual or a family to meet the basic food and non-foods (Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) and ICF, 2023). Furthermore, based on the subject census, the municipality also noted that 3.5% are unemployed members of the labor force.

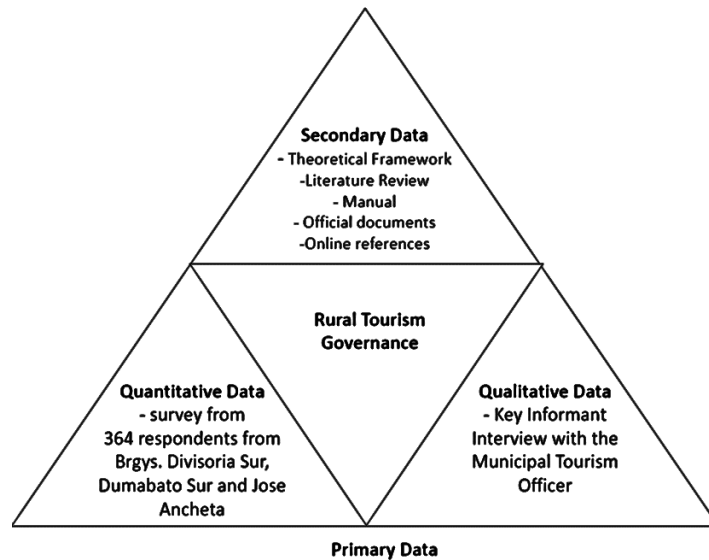
Given this condition, existing discussions on tourism and development have often focused on economic outcomes, particularly in terms of income generation and employment. However, there is still limited understanding of how governance mechanisms at the local level influence the effectiveness of tourism in achieving poverty alleviation. In particular, there is a lack of integrative analysis that connects development indicators with government administrative processes. This gap highlights the need to further examine how institutional capacity and governance practices shape the outcomes of tourism development, especially in rural settings.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to examine the role of tourism governance in poverty alleviation in Maddela, Quirino by analyzing development indicators and government administrative processes. It seeks to understand how tourism contributes to political, economic, and social development, and how administrative mechanisms support or constrain these outcomes.

## Methods

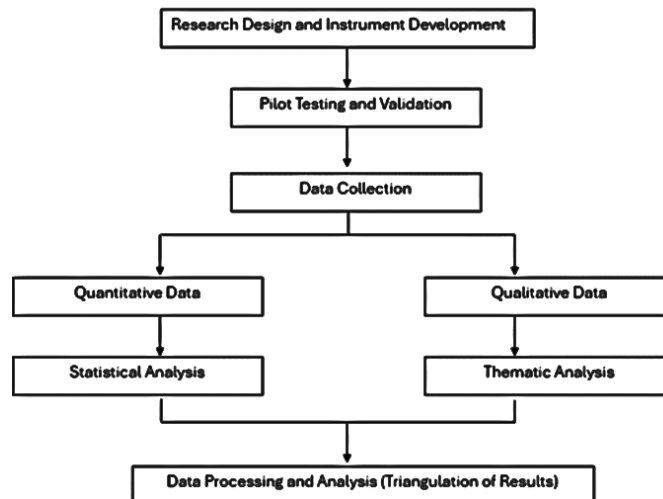
This study was anchored on Weidner's Development Administration (DA) framework, which views development as a government-led process aimed at achieving progressive political, economic, and social objectives through effective administrative systems (Chaturvedi, 2019). Guided by this framework, the research examined how tourism contributes to poverty alleviation and how local administrative processes support this goal in Maddela, Quirino.

**Figure 1.**  
Triangulation Type of Mixed Method Research Design



Source: Alassafi et al., 2017

**Figure 2.**  
Schematic Diagram of the Research Process



Source: Creswell & Clark, 2017

A triangulation type of mixed-method research design, as shown in Figure 1, was employed to ensure comprehensive and holistic analysis. It involved the review of related literature and studies to identify initial elements.

Furthermore, the design integrated both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine: (1) the contribution of the tourism industry to poverty alleviation using development indicators, and (2) the administrative processes adopted by the local government. The research flow followed four stages: (1) research design and instrument development, (2) pilot testing and validation, (3) data collection, and (4) data processing and analysis. A schematic diagram, as shown in Figure 2, represents this process for clarity.

The study was conducted in the barangays of Dumabato Sur, Divisoria Sur, and Jose Ancheta, where the municipality's primary tourist attractions are located. A pilot test was carried out to determine the reliability of the survey instrument using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.841, which indicates satisfactory internal consistency. The finalized questionnaire used a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Primary data were collected through a survey of 364 respondents selected via simple random sampling and a key informant interview with the Municipal Tourism Officer. Secondary data were obtained from official records, reports, journals, books, and online sources. Quantitative data were processed and analyzed using Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to generate frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, while qualitative data from interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the study, including informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and adherence to academic integrity principles.

## **Results and Discussion**

This study integrates both quantitative and qualitative findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of how tourism contributes to poverty alleviation in Maddela, Quirino, and how government administrative processes support this objective. The quantitative data, derived from 361 valid responses out of 364 surveyed residents, offer measurable insights into community perceptions across political, economic, and social development indicators, as well as administrative processes. Meanwhile, qualitative data from the Municipal Tourism Officer deepen the analysis by providing contextual explanations of institutional practices, challenges, and strategies.

Rather than treating these datasets independently, this section adopts an integrative approach, where statistical findings are interpreted alongside theoretical frameworks and qualitative insights. This allows for a more critical examination of whether observations reflect effective development administration and whether tourism initiatives genuinely contribute to poverty alleviation. This approach shifts the discussion from basic description to a more critical assessment of implications, existing gaps, and the sustainability of present practices.

### **Political Development**

The respondents' level of agreement (3.30) under the Political Development Indicator supported the statement of Fainsod as cited by Sapru (1981) that the enhancement of development administration effectiveness depends on the quality and training of the public servants who are in charge of the social and political environments. Overall, the respondents perceived tourism professionals as efficient and skilled individuals who are effective in fulfilling their duties. Furthermore, respondents perceived that tourism professionals can contribute to tourism growth and development in the municipality through their quality, knowledge and effectiveness. However, beyond this perception, the findings emphasized that an institutional capacity is not solely dependent on individual competence but also on structural support mechanism.

Taking into consideration the qualifications specified in the IRR of RA 9593 or the Tourism Act of 2009, and the creation of plantilla item in 2023 show institutional strengthening, with the presence of the Municipal Tourism Council as support mechanism. This formalized and detailed role emphasizes improved bureaucratic stability. These findings suggest that the quality of tourism personnel, which is measured through training, experience, and professional competence, plays a vital role in advancing tourism-led poverty alleviation.

Nonetheless, the earlier operational challenges during administrative transitions suggest that institutional continuity is highly vulnerable, specifically on a local setting where systems may rely heavily on individual and changing leadership. Therefore, while the findings reveal the importance of a skilled and qualified personnel, it also suggests the importance of stronger institutionalization of systems to sustain development outcomes.

### **Economic Development**

The Maddela, Quirino Tourism Officer discussed that the presence of tourist attractions and activities in the municipality created employment opportunities for the local residents such as river wardens, utility workers, and bangkero or bugadors.

It can be concluded from the 3.40 level of agreement of the respondents that they acknowledged the efforts of the Maddela, Quirino regarding tourism employment opportunities, income generation, businesses, promotion of local products, and presence of community-based enterprises. They viewed the local government's efforts positively, indicating a sense of optimism or confidence in the effectiveness of these interventions to improve economic conditions within the community. This aligns with Roe & Urquhart (2001) and the World Tourism Organization's framework on pro-poor tourism in 2004, which emphasize expanding livelihood opportunities and maximizing community benefits.

Tourism sector, compared to other industries, has a potential in poverty reduction specifically in developing and less developing countries due to the industry's nature as labor-intensive, employment of vulnerable members of the community, and inter-sectoral linkages that offer opportunities to the poor (Spenceley & Meyer, 2012).

Based on the foregoing, tourism can be considered as an engine for employment and income generation, and promotion of local products that elevates efforts toward poverty alleviation. Opportunities were present and must be utilized to maximize its benefits. These include the accreditation of Buddies Place as a DOT-Accredited Secondary Tourism Establishment where local products can be sold for marketability, the business opportunities for local residents such as souvenir-making and establishment of food business, banana chips making, and the preservation of the basket weaving tradition. This can be supported by the respondents' level of agreement on tourism economic benefits which can be interpreted as respondents maintained a positive outlook towards the government's economic policies and programs. However, to maximize the tourism economic benefits, tourism-related programs and activities must be planned and coordinated.

Also, the findings revealed that tourism in Maddela, Quirino functions as a complementary economic driver as its potential for poverty alleviation can only be maximized through continuous planning, coordination, and collaboration with provincial and regional agencies, and tourism stakeholders, particularly in implementing livelihood and enterprise development programs. Without these, the positive perceptions as shown in the data may not fully translate into substantial economic benefits.

### **Social Development**

The social development indicator yielded a mean score of 3.28, signifying general agreement with the local government's initiatives related to social welfare. Respondents expressed positive perceptions regarding livelihood training, road infrastructure, power supply, and water services. These findings are consistent with Sapru's (1981) assertion that development administration should enhance social well-being.

The Municipal Tourism Officer confirmed that training programs for tourism front liners are conducted in coordination with the regional tourism office, while the municipality also organizes capacity-building activities such as first aid and water search-and-rescue training. These capacity-building initiatives served as a tool for the tourism front liners and professionals to participate in the economic and social development through tourism in terms of sustaining their livelihood, thus, improving their welfare. Through capacity-building initiatives, tourism professionals will meet the demands of tourists in terms of service quality, visitor satisfaction, and overall tourism

competitiveness. When these demands are met, tourism multiplier effects can be experienced such as tourist spending on destination and local products, income and employment generation for locals, and provision of pertinent infrastructures. Capacity-building initiatives demonstrate a more direct link between tourism and social development. However, its long-term impact depends on continuous training, monitoring, and alignment with industry standards.

Sapru et al., (1981) also highlighted the provision of infrastructure as a factor in social welfare under development administration. Tourism development is dependent on tourism infrastructures, and the latter's importance can be attributed to its contribution in the distribution of tourism services (Seetanah, 2019). Respondents perceived tourism as a driver of infrastructure development such as accessibility and connectivity within destinations, and power and water supply infrastructures. This indicated recognition of the role of tourism in enhancing basic amenities and infrastructure services, which are essential for community well-being and tourism development. Additionally, the Municipal Tourism Officer emphasized that the municipality has considered tourism infrastructure to support the operations of the tourism sites such as provision of parking areas, information desk, toilet, and water supply. Funding of tourism infrastructure is being done by the municipality (for Maddela Waterfalls) and by the province (for Governor's Rapids) or both (Maria Angela Falls).

While tourism can catalyze infrastructure development, its influence depends on prioritization and budget allocation. Nonetheless, if the infrastructure projects are implemented within identified time frame depending on its priority, its completion will contribute to the quality of life and welfare of the local residents.

Overall, the improvement of the well-being and welfare of the local community through capacity-building initiatives and infrastructure development facilitated in pursuing poverty alleviation through tourism in terms of sustaining the skills or technical know-how and complimenting the quality of life of local community.

Table 1 showed that the average responses on the statements under political development indicator is 3.27, while the statements under economic is 3.40, and the statements under social development averaged 3.28. This pattern suggests that respondents perceive tangible economic benefits than institutional or governance-related improvements.

**Table 1**  
Descriptive Statistics on the Series of Development Indicators

	<b>Political</b>	<b>Economic</b>	<b>Social</b>
Mean	3.296399	3.403047	3.281440
Median	3.000000	3.250000	3.200000
Maximum	4.000000	4.000000	4.000000
Minimum	2.000000	2.000000	2.000000
Std. Dev.	0.438702	0.473922	0.443865
Skewness	0.255961	-0.186112	-0.216162
Kurtosis	2.375786	2.164985	2.977832
Jarque-Bera	9.802762	12.57185	2.818740
Probability	0.007436	0.001862	0.244297
Sum	1190.000	1228.500	1184.600
Sum Sq. Dev.	69.28532	80.85665	70.92565
Observations	361	361	361

*Source: Processed by the author, 2026*

## Planning

The preparation and implementation of the local tourism development plan are mandated under the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Tourism Act of 2009, which specify the responsibilities of local government units (LGUs) consistent with their powers under the Local Government Code of 1991.

The 3.23 respondents' level of agreement on planning indicates the recognition of the respondents on the importance of community engagement and local knowledge in shaping tourism development strategies, enhancing stakeholder participation, and fostering ownership of tourism initiatives. The finding reflects a participatory approach to governance, wherein the voices and concerns of local stakeholders are considered in decision-making processes related to tourism management, regulation and in crafting the local tourism development plan as required under the Tourism Act of 2009. Tourism development requires efficient planning and effective management due to the sector's complexity and its multi-stakeholder nature (dos Anjos & Kennell, 2019).

Planning, in Maddela, Quirino, reflected effective organizational management, strategic decision-making, and resource allocation. This can be confirmed by the conceptualization of the three (3) year local tourism development plan for 2025-2027, taking into consideration the inputs and feedback from tourism stakeholders of the private sector, and the Technical Working Group, in coordination with the Municipal Planning and Development Council. Maddela, Quirino complied with the role of LGUs in crafting of the said development plan per the Tourism Act of 2009.

Planning serves as the foundation of development strategy. It defines organizational vision, identifies strengths and constraints, allocates resources, and establishes policy directions, thus, the need to gather feedback and inputs from stakeholders. Planning is closely related to coordinating.

The output of planning activities, in this case, the local tourism development plan, will serve as the backbone of the LGU's strategy to attain the political, economic, and social development benefits. Its implementation, however, depends significantly on adequate budgetary support and coordinated execution.

### **Staffing**

The 3.11 respondents' level of agreement on staffing was consistent with their level of agreement on political development indicator. Respondents perceived that the current manpower of the LGU tourism unit is sufficient to cater to the local tourism industry and they view that tourism personnel are proactive with tourism development. Under political indicator, respondents view tourism professionals as efficient and skilled individuals who are effective in fulfilling their duties.

Staffing, as a government administrative process and procedure, was closely similar to the political development indicator which requires the alignment of skills and requirements of personnel in their development role. There must be adequate and skilled manpower to plan and implement the development objectives such as poverty alleviation through tourism.

### **Coordinating**

The high level of agreement (3.25) on communication channels under coordination indicates transparency and clarity in informing stakeholders about regulations, fees, and standards governing tourism activities, fostering compliance and understanding among all parties involved. Furthermore, respondents agreed that local tourism projects are communicated to the community prior to its implementation. This indicated that respondents perceived a proactive approach by authorities in communicating planned tourism projects to the local community, allowing for input, feedback, and awareness before implementation. This suggested a participatory and inclusive approach to tourism development.

Coordinating was an important management process as it refers to the interrelationship of multi-stakeholder to maintain the multiplier effects from tourism in local development (dos Anjos & Kennell, 2019). It is paired with planning, which serves as the backbone of the LGU's strategy to attain the political, economic, and social development benefits. Thus, the feedback and inputs of stakeholders involved should be gathered.

Respondents' level of agreement on coordinating was closely related to their level of agreement in planning. As defined in the Tourism Act of 2009, the Local Government Units, in coordination and consultation with stakeholders, must ensure the preparation and implementation of a tourism development plan. Coordinating scored the highest among administrative processes, which

translates into a critical strength, as tourism development inherently requires multi-sectoral collaboration. However, effective coordination must go beyond information dissemination and extend to joint decision-making and resource sharing.

Table 2 showed the descriptive statistics on the series of government administrative processes, particularly planning, staffing, and coordinating.

**Table 2.**  
Descriptive Statistics on the Series of Government Administrative Processes and Procedures

	Political	Economic	Social
Mean	3.229917	3.108033	3.247922
Median	3.000000	3.000000	3.000000
Maximum	4.000000	4.000000	4.000000
Minimum	1.000000	1.000000	1.000000
Std. Dev.	0.494180	0.548449	0.470109
Skewness	0.016635	-0.257992	-0.008059
Kurtosis	3.651988	3.420502	3.908336
Jarque-Bera	6.410690	6.664398	12.41439
Probability	0.040545	0.035714	0.002015
Sum	1166.000	1122.000	1172.500
Sum Sq. Dev.	87.91690	108.2867	79.56094
Observations	361	361	361

*Source: Processed by the author, 2026*

Table 2 showed that the average response on the statements under coordinating is 3.25, while statements under planning is 3.23, and the statements under staffing average 3.11. The results show that while collaborative mechanisms are relatively strong, internal capacity and resource allocation remain areas for improvement.

Respondents' level of agreement on coordinating was closely related to their level of agreement in planning. Respondents' level of agreement on staffing, on the other hand, was closely similar to the political development indicator, which requires the alignment of skills and requirements of personnel in their development role. Respondents expressed their level of agreement on planning, staffing and coordinating since these indicators are observable by the residents of the local community.

### Reporting

Maddela, Quirino followed a system of reporting as defined in the IRR of the Tourism Act of 2009. Although coordination with stakeholders is crucial, reporting, as one of the government administrative processes, will assist Maddela, Quirino on keeping its stakeholders updated about the status of the plans and programs.

Furthermore, reporting requires pertinent records and reports to be presented and maintained for decision-making. This will support the personnel involved in the development process to track down what needs to be addressed and what programs need additional funding. It also provides institutional continuity, particularly during administrative transitions. As noted by the Municipal Tourism Officer, retrieving tourism-related documents posed challenges during her designation in 2019. Despite earlier challenges, the tourism unit has institutionalized reporting practices in accordance with the mandates of Republic Act No. 9593. However, without regular monitoring and feedback mechanisms, reporting becomes a compliance exercise rather than a strategic tool.

### Budgeting

Budget is considered as the heart of the government plans and programs. Classical theorists opined budgeting as a critical element in public administration (Fayol, 1937 and Gulick, 1937 as cited by Marijani, 2018) as the identified political and socio-economic objectives will not come to fruition without a budget to support its operation.

According to the Department of Budget and Management (n.d.), government budgeting is an important activity wherein resources are allocated to attain the economic and social objectives of the country. This will enable the government to strategize and manage its financial resources to implement projects, programs and activities that best promote the development objectives in the country.

While the municipality has allocated funds for tourism, these are largely directed toward personnel expenses, limiting the implementation of additional projects. Nonetheless, Maddela, Quirino have partnered with the provincial office on full funding of the Governor's Rapids in Divisoria Sur. Additionally, some of the projects under the Maria Angela Falls in Jose Ancheta such as the information desk and parking area are funded by the Province of Quirino.

The findings underscore a vital issue in development administration wherein plans and policies cannot be fully come to completion without adequate financial resources. Budgeting is not merely a technical function but a decisive factor that shapes the scope and impact of tourism development efforts. Therefore, budget is a pertinent element in poverty alleviation initiatives, particularly tourism development.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that tourism in Maddela, Quirino functions as a governance-dependent strategy for poverty alleviation rather than a standalone solution. Its effectiveness is shaped by the interaction of political capacity, economic opportunities, and social development outcomes, which are supported by key administrative processes such as planning, staffing, coordination, reporting, and budgeting. In this regard, tourism contributes to employment generation, local enterprise development, and improvements in community welfare; however, these benefits are not automatically realized and depend largely on the strength of institutional capacity and governance practices.

Building on these findings, the study highlights that the success of tourism as a development strategy lies in the government's ability to effectively plan, coordinate, and allocate resources. While existing administrative processes in Maddela, Quirino provide a foundation for organized and inclusive development, limitations in budgetary capacity and resource allocation constrain the full realization of tourism's potential. This suggests that tourism should be positioned as a complementary development approach that requires continuous institutional support rather than as a primary or standalone solution to poverty.

In light of these insights, several practical directions can be considered. Strengthening institutional capacity through expanded staffing and improved organizational continuity is essential to sustain development initiatives. In addition, aligning tourism planning with adequate and dedicated budget allocation will ensure that proposed programs and infrastructure projects are effectively implemented. Enhancing stakeholder collaboration and participation further supports transparency, accountability, and shared ownership of tourism development efforts. These measures are necessary to maximize the contribution of tourism toward inclusive and sustainable development outcomes.

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