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Economic Impact of Resort Destinations in the Southern Part of Cebu

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Abstract

Tourism remains a central driver of local economies, particularly in resort areas where employment, business growth, infrastructure, and community welfare are shaped by tourism activities. This study examined residents' perceptions of the economic contributions of resort destinations in southern Cebu, focusing on the municipalities of Moalboal, Badian, Alegria, Alcoy, and Oslob. Using a correlational-quantitative research design, data were gathered from residents directly engaged in or affected by tourism. Results revealed that resort destinations were perceived to contribute positively to employment opportunities, local business development, infrastructure improvement, and overall economic welfare. Statistical analysis using the Chi-Square Test of Association showed no significant relationship between the respondents' demographic profile—comprising age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, occupation, and years of residency—and their perceptions of the economic impact of resort destinations. This finding indicates that positive views about tourism's economic benefits were consistent across demographic groups. The study recommends strengthening policies that promote sustainable tourism, reduce employment seasonality, and ensure equitable distribution of benefits so that the economic gains from resort tourism in southern Cebu remain inclusive and resilient.

Keywords: Resort Destinations; Economic Contributions; Residents' Perceptions; Tourism Development; Employment; Business Growth; Infrastructure; Community Welfare; Southern Cebu

1. Introduction

Tourism plays a pivotal role in economic growth, particularly in regions endowed with natural attractions and cultural heritage. In the Philippines, resort destinations have become crucial drivers of development, creating employment opportunities, strengthening local businesses, and encouraging infrastructure investments. The southern part of Cebu exemplifies this trend, as municipalities such as Moalboal, Badian, Alegria, Alcoy, and Oslob have emerged as leading resort hubs. These areas are renowned for pristine beaches, diving sites, waterfalls, and whale shark encounters, making them highly attractive to both domestic and international visitors. The strategic

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location of these resorts not only shapes the tourist experience but also directly influences the socio-economic landscape of host communities. The economic contributions of resort destinations are multidimensional. They generate direct employment in hospitality, food services, and tour operations while also stimulating allied industries such as agriculture, retail, and transportation. Resort development thus creates a multiplier effect, where increased tourist spending circulates within local economies (Gursoy, Chi, & Dyer, 2010). Evidence from Cebu demonstrates that resorts foster growth in micro and small enterprises, enabling local communities to benefit from tourism-related demands (Etcuban, Mabini-Consigny, Ferrater-Gimena, & Sayson, 2018). Infrastructure improvements, such as upgraded roads and utilities, have also expanded market access and enhanced the competitiveness of resort towns (Del Mundo & Villanueva, 2020).

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Despite these benefits, challenges accompany rapid resort development. Seasonal employment patterns, environmental pressures, and uneven distribution of income pose significant risks to long-term sustainability (Hall, 2019). These issues highlight the importance of adopting strategies aligned with sustainable tourism development, ensuring that economic growth does not come at the expense of environmental integrity or cultural cohesion. The Place Attachment Theory emphasizes that residents form deep bonds with their environment, which tourism can either preserve or disrupt (Relph, 1976). Similarly, Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle model underscores that destinations risk stagnation or decline if growth is not carefully managed (Butler, 1980). These frameworks underscore the need for balanced planning in southern Cebu, where tourism serves as both an opportunity and a challenge. While resort destinations are recognized as vital contributors to economic welfare, systematic research on their long-term impacts in southern Cebu remains limited. Existing studies often focus on isolated municipalities or specific aspects of tourism development, leaving a gap in comprehensive regional analysis. This study therefore examines the economic contributions of resort destinations in southern Cebu across four dimensions: employment opportunities, local business growth, infrastructure development, and overall economic welfare. The findings aim to provide evidence-based insights to guide policymakers, investors, and local communities toward more sustainable and inclusive tourism development strategies.

Aim and Research Questions

The primary aim of this study was to assess the economic contributions of resort destinations in the southern part of Cebu. Specifically, it sought to examine how these destinations influence employment opportunities, local business growth, infrastructure development, and overall economic welfare within host communities. The study also aimed to determine whether demographic factors of residents are significantly related to their perceptions of these contributions and to propose an action plan that would promote sustainable and inclusive tourism development.

To achieve this aim, the following research questions were addressed:

- 1. What is the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 age;
 - 1.2 gender;
 - 1.3 civil status;
 - 1.4 educational attainment;
 - 1.5 occupation; and
 - 1.6 years of residency?
- 2. What are the respondents' perceptions of the economic impact of resort destinations in terms of 2.1 employment opportunities;



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- 2.2 local business growth;
- 2.3 infrastructure development; and
- 2.4 overall economic welfare?
- **3.** Is there a significant relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents—specifically age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, occupation, and years of residency—and their perceptions of the economic impact of resort destinations to the local economy in southern Cebu?

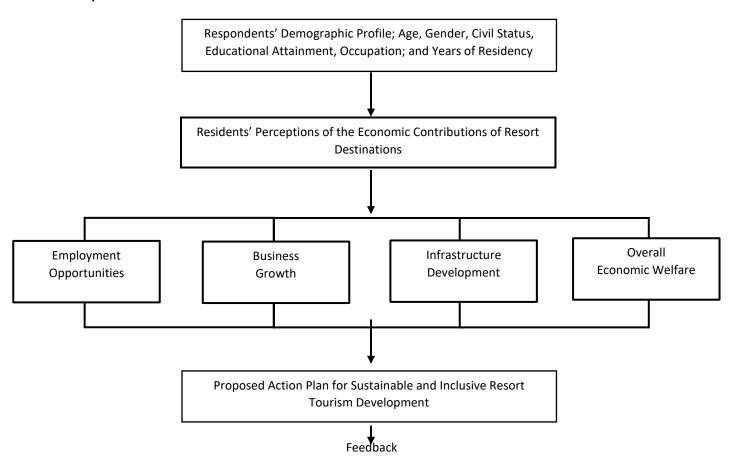
4. Based on the findings of the study, what action plan can be proposed to strengthen the economic impact of resort destinations in southern Cebu?

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Null Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents—specifically age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, occupation, and years of residency—and their perceptions of the economic impact of resort destinations to the local economy in southern Cebu.

Conceptual Framework





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Figure 1. Schematic Diagram of Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework that guided this study. The framework illustrates the relationship between the respondents' demographic profile and their perceptions of the economic impact of resort Page | 42 destinations in southern Cebu. The demographic variables—age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, occupation, and years of residency—serve as the input factors. These influence how respondents perceive the impact of resorts in terms of employment opportunities, local business growth, infrastructure development, and overall economic welfare. The perceptions collectively provide the basis for analyzing the economic impact of resort destinations in the region. The framework also integrates a feedback mechanism, as the findings are intended to inform the formulation of a proposed action plan, which in turn can guide strategies to strengthen the economic benefits of resort tourism for communities.

2. Review of Related Literature

Economic Impact of Resort Tourism

Resort destinations are widely acknowledged as key drivers of local and regional economies. They create direct and indirect employment, stimulate local businesses, and generate significant revenue for communities. In the Philippine context, beach and resort tourism has become a central feature of economic growth, particularly in regions like Cebu. Etcuban, Mabini-Consigny, Ferrater-Gimena, and Sayson (2018) reported that resorts in Moalboal provided employment not only in hospitality but also in ancillary sectors such as food supply, construction, and retail, thereby diversifying the labor market. Similarly, Archer, Cooper, and Ruhanen (2005) noted that resort tourism contributes significantly to both formal and informal sectors, offering opportunities from entry-level to specialized roles. These findings affirm that resort destinations act as catalysts for job creation, enhancing local residents' livelihood and financial security.

Local Business Growth

Tourism-driven demand fosters the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly in communities surrounding resort areas. Resorts attract tourists whose spending supports local agriculture, handicrafts, and transportation services. Nehlsen (2017) emphasized how tourism in Puerto Galera encouraged the expansion of small businesses catering to retail, food, and transport. Lichauco (2023) further found that in Montalban, Rizal, resort development created demand for local enterprises but also introduced challenges such as wage disparities and seasonal instability. On a broader scale, Gursoy, Chi, and Dyer (2010) described the tourism multiplier effect, wherein increased tourist arrivals fuel business activity in ancillary industries, thereby generating broader economic opportunities. These findings underscore that local entrepreneurship thrives in resort areas but requires careful regulation to avoid market saturation.

Infrastructure Development



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Infrastructure is a critical enabler of tourism development. Roads, utilities, and transportation systems facilitate accessibility and increase the competitiveness of destinations. In the Philippines, the Build, Build, Build program was instrumental in enhancing connectivity to emerging tourism hubs, including Cebu, thus supporting the tourism sector (Del Mundo & Villanueva, 2020). Lichauco (2023) highlighted that improved infrastructure in resort municipalities not only attracts tourists but also contributes to local development by providing jobs and improving access to services. Similarly, Hall (2007) asserted that infrastructure investment is essential for tourism expansion Page | 43 but must align with sustainability principles to prevent overdevelopment and environmental strain. Therefore, while infrastructure fuels resort growth, it also raises concerns about ecological impact if not managed responsibly.

Overall Economic Welfare

Resort tourism also influences the broader economic welfare of communities by increasing household incomes, improving access to services, and promoting community development. Studies in Moalboal and other Philippine resort towns demonstrate how tourism generates livelihoods and enhances standards of living (Etcuban et al., 2018; Nehlsen, 2017). International evidence also supports this perspective. For instance, McGehee and Andereck (2004) found that resort tourism in the Maldives and Bali boosted entrepreneurship and diversified local economies. However, the benefits are not always evenly distributed. Hall (2019) emphasized that reliance on seasonal tourism can create vulnerability, particularly for workers in low-wage or temporary positions. Blake and Sinclair (2016) likewise argued that equitable distribution of tourism benefits remains a pressing challenge, as wealth often accumulates among property developers and large investors rather than local residents.

Theoretical Anchors

This study draws on three theoretical frameworks. The Sustainable Tourism Development Theory by Theobald (1998) stresses the balance between economic, social, and environmental dimensions of tourism growth, ensuring that current gains do not compromise future sustainability. Relph's (1976) Place Attachment Theory highlights the emotional and cultural bonds that communities develop with their environment, which can be disrupted or reinforced by resort tourism. Finally, Butler's (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle theory explains the stages of destination evolution, from exploration to potential decline or rejuvenation, which is useful for assessing the trajectory of southern Cebu's resort destinations. Together, these theories provide a holistic lens to understand the interplay between economic gains, community identity, and sustainability.

3. Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a correlational-quantitative research design to examine the economic impact of resort destinations in the southern part of Cebu. The design was chosen to identify the relationships between the respondents' demographic profiles and their perceptions of resorts' impact to local economic development. Quantitative methods allowed for systematic data collection and statistical analysis, ensuring objectivity and reliability of results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Research Environment



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The study was conducted in five municipalities in the southern part of Cebu: Moalboal, Badian, Alegria, Alcoy, and Oslob. These locations were selected because of their prominence as resort destinations, offering attractions such as diving sites, waterfalls, beaches, and whale shark encounters. Each municipality has become increasingly reliant on tourism as a primary driver of local economic activity, making them ideal sites for investigating the impacts of resort-based tourism

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Respondents and Sampling

The respondents of the study were fifty (50) residents from the five selected municipalities. Purposive sampling was used to ensure representation of individuals with direct knowledge and experience of tourism impacts in their communities. Ten (10) respondents were selected from each municipality, balancing perspectives across the region. Purposive sampling was deemed appropriate as it allowed for the inclusion of residents whose insights were directly relevant to the objectives of the study (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

Research Instrument

Data were gathered using a researcher-made survey questionnaire. The instrument was divided into two sections: (1) demographic profile of respondents (age, gender, civil status, educational impact of resort destinations in terms of employment opportunities, local business growth, infrastructure development, and overall economic welfare. Responses were measured using a four-point Likert scale: 4 – High Impact, 3 – Moderate Impact, 2 – Less Impact, and 1 – No Impact. The instrument underwent pilot testing with 20 individuals outside the sample to ensure clarity, reliability, and validity of responses

Research Procedure

The study followed a systematic process of data collection. Formal permissions were sought from local government units and endorsed by the university adviser and dean of the graduate school to ensure academic and ethical compliance. Surveys were administered directly to respondents through face-to-face distribution, enabling clarification of questions and active engagement. Completed questionnaires were retrieved, tabulated, and organized for statistical analysis

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency counts and percentages summarized the respondents' demographic profiles. Simple means determined the extent of perceived impacts of resort destinations. The Chi-Square Test of Association was employed to establish significant relationships between the respondents' demographic characteristics and their perceptions of the resorts' economic contributions. These statistical methods were appropriate for analyzing relationships between categorical variables in social research (McHugh, 2013).

Ethical Considerations



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Ethical protocols were strictly observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, with respondents providing informed consent after being briefed on the study's objectives and procedures. Confidentiality was assured by anonymizing responses, and data were used solely for academic purposes. Sensitivity to local culture was prioritized, ensuring respect for community values and traditions. The study further sought to contribute to local development by presenting findings that could inform sustainable tourism policies.

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4. Results and Discussion

Profile of Respondents

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents (N = 50)

Profile Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	18–29 years	4	8
	30–39 years	24	48
	40–49 years	17	34
	50–59 years	4	8
	60 and above	1	2
Gender	Male	29	58
	Female	21	42
Civil Status	Single	18	36
	Married	28	56
	Widowed	2	4
	Separated	2	4
Educational Attainment	High School Graduate	9	18
	College Level	21	42
	College Graduate	20	40
Occupation	Hospitality & Tourism	40	80
	Business & Finance	7	14
	Engineering & Technology	2	4
	Healthcare	1	2
Years of Residency	25–29 years	4	8
	30 years & above	46	92

Table 1 shows that the respondents were mostly in the 30–39 age group (48%), followed by 40–49 years (34%). The majority were male (58%) and married (56%). Education levels were high, with 42% at college level and 40% being graduates. A large proportion (80%) were employed in hospitality and tourism, and 92% had lived in their municipality for 30 years or more. These findings highlight the dependence of local households on tourism-related employment and align with previous studies emphasizing the central role of resort tourism in shaping community livelihoods (Etcuban et al., 2018; Gursoy, Chi, & Dyer, 2010).

Table 2. Impact of Resort Destinations on Employment Opportunities



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Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Tourist influx boosts local employment (accommodations, tours, retail)	3.88	High Impact
Seasonal tourism generates temporary jobs	3.78	High Impact
National tourism policies influence growth and employment	3.80	High Impact
Local government initiatives enhance job creation	3.84	High Impact
Improved transport infrastructure stimulates travel-related employment	3.86	High Impact
Mean	3.83	High Impact

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Table 2 shows that resort destinations had a high impact on employment, with an mean of 3.83. The highest-rated indicator was job creation due to tourist influx (M = 3.88). This demonstrates that tourism significantly contributes to local employment opportunities. Seasonal employment, though rated lowest (M = 3.78), still indicates a positive impact. These results are consistent with studies highlighting tourism's role in generating jobs across multiple sectors (Archer, Cooper, & Ruhanen, 2005; Hall, 2007).

Table 3. Impact of Resort Destinations on Local Business Growth

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Resorts increase demand for local goods and services	3.90	High Impact
Tourism fosters growth of small and medium enterprises	3.82	High Impact
Ancillary businesses (e.g., transport, retail) thrive due to tourism	3.85	High Impact
Resorts stimulate local agricultural and craft production	3.83	High Impact
Mean	3.85	High Impact

Table 3 shows that respondents perceived resort destinations as highly influential in stimulating local business growth, with a mean of 3.85. Resorts drive demand for goods, services, and small enterprises, creating opportunities for local entrepreneurs. This is consistent with findings in Puerto Galera, where tourism spurred micro and small business expansion (Nehlsen, 2017).

Table 4. Impact of Resort Destinations on Infrastructure Development

Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Road and transport upgrades improve access	3.85	High Impact
Resorts stimulate utilities development (water, electricity)	3.80	High Impact
Tourism supports communication facilities	3.79	High Impact
Mean	3.81	High Impact

Table 4 shows that tourism was perceived to have a high impact on infrastructure development, with a mean of 3.81. Road and transport upgrades were rated highest (M = 3.85), emphasizing the importance of infrastructure in facilitating access and enhancing competitiveness. This finding reflects national trends in tourism development projects under the *Build*, *Build*, *Build* program (Del Mundo & Villanueva, 2020).

Table 5. Impact of Resort Destinations on Overall Economic Welfare



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Indicator	Mean	Interpretation
Tourism increases household income and livelihood	3.87	High Impact
Resorts enhance access to goods and services	3.83	High Impact
Improved standards of living through tourism growth	3.82	High Impact
Mean	3.84	High Impact

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Table 5 shows that respondents perceived resorts to have a high impact on overall economic welfare, with a mean of 3.84. Increased household income and livelihood improvements (M = 3.87) were highlighted as the most important contributions. This supports findings from international contexts such as the Maldives and Bali, where resort tourism strengthened local welfare and entrepreneurship (McGehee & Andereck, 2004).

Table 6. Relationship Between Respondents' Demographic Profile and Their Perceptions of the Economic Impact of Resort Destinations

Profile Variable	χ² Value	df	p-value	Interpretation
Age	7.42	8	0.49	Not Significant
Gender	1.08	2	0.58	Not Significant
Civil Status	5.36	6	0.50	Not Significant
Educational Attainment	8.26	8	0.41	Not Significant
Occupation	6.72	8	0.57	Not Significant
Years of Residency	3.24	4	0.52	Not Significant

Decision: Fail to reject the null hypothesis. Level of Significance: 0.05

Table 6 presents the results of the Chi-Square Test of Association conducted to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the respondents' demographic characteristics and their perceptions of the economic impact of resort destinations in southern Cebu. The computed *p*-values for all demographic variables exceeded the 0.05 level of significance, indicating that **no significant relationship** exists between the respondents' profiles (age, gender, civil status, educational attainment, occupation, and years of residency) and their perceptions of tourism's economic contributions. This means that respondents, regardless of their demographic characteristics, generally shared similar views on the positive economic impact of resort destinations in their municipalities. The findings suggest that tourism benefits are perceived to be widespread and equally experienced across diverse groups within the community. Similar conclusions were drawn by McGehee and Andereck (2004), who found that community perceptions of tourism benefits tend to be homogeneous in areas where tourism has been an established economic driver for several years. Hence, these results support the null hypothesis that no significant association exists between demographic variables and residents' perceptions of the economic impact of resort destinations.

5. Summary of Findings



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The study assessed the economic impact of resort destinations in the southern part of Cebu. The respondents, who were mostly middle-aged, male, and employed in the hospitality and tourism sector, demonstrated strong awareness of the impact of resorts on their communities. The demographic data revealed that the majority had lived in their municipalities for over three decades, indicating that their perspectives were shaped by long-term exposure to tourism development.

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The results showed that resort destinations had a high impact across all four dimensions of economic contributions. In terms of employment opportunities, tourism was found to create both permanent and seasonal jobs, highlighting its importance for household livelihood. Local business growth was also significantly influenced, as resorts stimulated demand for goods, services, and entrepreneurial ventures in food, handicrafts, and transportation. Infrastructure development was perceived as another major contribution, particularly through road improvements, utilities, and communication facilities that enhanced access and connectivity. Finally, resort tourism was seen as contributing to overall economic welfare by increasing income levels, improving access to goods and services, and raising the quality of life of residents.

The statistical analysis further revealed that there was no significant relationship between the demographic profiles of respondents and their perceptions of the economic impact of resort destinations. This finding suggests that the perceived benefits of tourism were widely shared across different age, gender, and educational groups. The results underscored the role of resort tourism as a broad-based driver of economic development in southern Cebu, while also pointing to the need for strategies that ensure sustainability and equitable distribution of benefits.

The study found no significant relationship between the demographic characteristics of respondents and their perceptions of the economic impact of resort destinations. This suggests that the perceived benefits of tourism were widely shared across diverse groups regardless of age, gender, education, occupation, or length of residency. Such uniformity may be attributed to the long-standing role of resort tourism as a primary livelihood and economic driver in southern Cebu. Over time, communities may have developed a collective perception of tourism's contributions, which transcends individual demographic differences. Hence, while SOP 3 aimed to examine whether demographic factors shaped perceptions, the findings indicate that perceptions were consistent across groups, supporting the null hypothesis.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study confirmed that resort destinations in southern Cebu are widely perceived by residents as strong contributors to local economic development. Across all four dimensions—employment opportunities, local business growth, infrastructure development, and overall economic welfare—the respondents rated the contributions as high, with means ranging from 3.81 to 3.85. These findings suggest that tourism is not only recognized as a key livelihood source but also as a driver of entrepreneurial opportunities and community development. The statistical analysis further revealed no significant relationship between demographic characteristics and perceptions (p > 0.05), indicating that positive views of tourism's economic role were shared consistently across different age, gender, and occupational groups. Despite these favorable perceptions, the results also underscore critical issues that require attention. Seasonal employment patterns continue to challenge income stability, infrastructure expansion must balance tourism accessibility with community needs, and benefits must be distributed equitably to prevent concentration among external stakeholders. Therefore, while resort



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tourism remains a vital economic engine in southern Cebu, its long-term sustainability depends on policies and practices that integrate inclusivity, resilience, and environmental stewardship into tourism development strategies.

Based on the findings, several recommendations were proposed. First, local governments in southern Cebu should strengthen policies that promote sustainable tourism practices. This includes regulating resort development to prevent environmental degradation, supporting eco-friendly initiatives, and ensuring that cultural heritage is preserved alongside economic growth. Second, capacity-building programs for residents should be enhanced. Training in hospitality, entrepreneurship, and tourism services can equip residents with the skills needed to maximize opportunities created by resort destinations. Partnerships between local government units, resorts, and educational institutions would be valuable in implementing such programs. Third, mechanisms should be established to ensure equitable distribution of tourism benefits. Support for micro and small enterprises, coupled with access to financial and technical resources, can help local businesses thrive. Monitoring systems should also be developed to ensure that tourism-related income does not disproportionately benefit external investors at the expense of local communities. Finally, collaboration among stakeholders—including residents, resort operators, and policymakers—should be prioritized in the formulation of tourism plans. Inclusive decision-making ensures that the voices of local communities are heard, thereby enhancing their sense of ownership and responsibility toward sustainable tourism development. These measures can guide southern Cebu in harnessing tourism as a driver of prosperity while safeguarding environmental and social well-being.

7. Implications of the Results

The results of this study demonstrated that resort destinations in southern Cebu significantly contribute to employment opportunities, local business growth, infrastructure development, and overall economic welfare. These findings imply that the tourism industry is a reliable driver of regional economic activity and should be considered a central component in local and provincial development planning. The consistent "high impact" ratings across all indicators suggest that stakeholders can build upon a strong foundation of community support for tourism initiatives, provided that they address sustainability concerns.

The high impact of resorts on employment implies that tourism is an essential livelihood source for residents. This underscores the need for programs that professionalize and stabilize tourism-related work. Seasonal employment, while valuable, must be supplemented with skills training and opportunities that provide year-round income stability. Local governments and resort operators should invest in capacity-building initiatives that equip workers with competencies not only in hospitality but also in entrepreneurship, guiding communities toward long-term resilience.

The results on local business growth imply that tourism stimulates entrepreneurship and supports the expansion of micro and small enterprises. This finding indicates that local governments and financial institutions must develop support mechanisms, such as access to credit and business mentoring, to help entrepreneurs sustain operations despite the seasonality of demand. Resorts, in turn, should prioritize local sourcing of goods and services, which would ensure that tourism-generated income is reinvested within the community.

The perceived high impact of tourism on infrastructure development implies that public and private investments in roads, utilities, and communication facilities are both necessary and justified. However, these results also serve as

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a reminder that infrastructure projects should be designed to serve dual purposes: supporting tourism while also improving access to essential services for residents. This dual-use approach ensures that infrastructure development yields broad and inclusive benefits, rather than concentrating advantages in tourist zones alone.

Finally, the results indicating improvements in overall economic welfare imply that tourism enhances household incomes, living standards, and community development. At the same time, the study highlights the potential risk Page | 50 of uneven benefit distribution, as not all residents may have equal access to tourism-driven opportunities. This suggests that equitable participation must be actively pursued through inclusive policies and community engagement in tourism planning. Without such measures, economic gains may disproportionately favor resort owners and external investors, leaving vulnerable groups with limited benefits.

Taken together, the results imply that resort tourism is not only an economic engine but also a developmental opportunity for southern Cebu. However, its long-term success depends on governance frameworks, community participation, and sustainability practices that ensure economic impact are maximized while adverse impacts are minimized.

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