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Santuario (Shrines): The Sustainable Religious Tourism Management of Selected Philippine Congregation-managed Marian Shrines

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Cover Page Footnote

The researchers would like to express their sincere gratitude and appreciation to the congregation of the Minor Basilica of Our Lady of Manaoag, led by Ms. Mernirizza Rivera, together with the Officer-in-Charge of the Tourism Office of the Municipality of Manaoag, Mr. Timothy Joseph Sibuma, and PMAJ Fernando L. Fernandez, Jr.; and to the congregation of the National Shrine of the Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary de La Naval de Manila, led by Bro. Wilhelm B. Boñon, O.P., and the Officer-in-Charge of the Tourism Office of Quezon City, Ms. Maria Teresa A. Tirona; to Atty. Gezzez Giezi G. Granado, DCL, CHE, the Dean of UST-College of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Mr. Avi Ben P. Andalecio, MA, PhD., Academic Staff of UST-College of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Ar. Ramil B. Tibayan, MACHS, Chief Historic Site Development Officer of Intramuros Administration, Rev. Fr. Ricky B. Villar, OSA, Director of San Agustin Museum, and to PNU for the work of the researchers' Ethics Review Committee.

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This study assesses how sustainable tourism management is implemented in selected Philippine Marian Shrines, managed by religious congregations. In conducting the study, the researchers used a qualitative case study approach, as the data were collected using Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The study's key informants (n=27) are the stakeholders of the two selected study sites. These include the congregation, staff members, tourism-related business owners, Barangay government representatives, local police officers, and local tourism representatives. The Repertory Grid methodology was utilised to analyse the data gathered. From the findings, the researchers developed the I.T.S.P. (Immersion, Tutelage, Stewardship, and Proposition): Sustainable Religious Tourism Development Framework based on the viewpoints of the key informants regarding the existing situation of the shrines during their daily operations before and during the pandemic and under the new normal condition. The study's findings, as recommended by the researchers, can be used by the governing authorities of the Marian Shrines as guide in establishing the shrines as sustainable tourist destinations.

Key Words: religious tourism, management, Marian Shrine, sustainability

Introduction

For many generations, millions of people have traveled to sacred places and religious sites for spiritual purposes, with religion as their primary motivation (Wiltshier, 2019). Religion has numerous ways of expressing itself (Rebuya *et al.*, 2020), and this may be in the form of ecological activities, visiting religious shrines, and utilising natural scenes, depending on the practices of a particular religion. Out of this, religious tourism has evolved (Kim *et al.*, 2019) and is now a commercialised industry that benefits travel companies and the economy. Religious tourism refers to traveling to religious sites

and destinations motivated by religion and other factors (Centre for the Promotion of Imports, 2020a). It is an ethical, sustainable, responsible, and ecological activity that contributes to human and spiritual growth (Cugini, 2021), ensuring its long-term sustainability in terms of three dimensions of sustainable development - economic, social, and environmental. Considering the future of religious tourism, the significance of sustainable development and management in adapting to changes must be considered in religious sites for the industry to thrive continuously and to provide religious travellers with a safe and meaningful experience that will cater to their spiritual needs.

Figure 1a: National Shrine of the Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary de La Naval de Manila in Quezon City



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Santo_Domingo_Church_\(Quezon_Avenue,_Quezon_City;_03-20-2021\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Santo_Domingo_Church_(Quezon_Avenue,_Quezon_City;_03-20-2021).jpg)

The management of religious tourism presents many challenges. There is a tremendous untapped potential in religious tourism in the Philippines, particularly since 80.9% of the population is Roman Catholic, making it the most dominant religion in the country. However, many challenges exist. The first of these is, seasonality, the shifting demands and supply in the tourism industry (Ouko, 2020). Another main issue is waste disposal. Visitors must dispose their trash properly so that they can contribute in safeguarding the environment. Other issues include the theft of relics, cleanliness of religious sites and managing the sacred importance of the sites. In addition to these challenges tourist motivation can cause problems in religious locations. Tourists visit religious sites for different reasons. Hence, it is important to create tailor-made guides and programs that cater to tourists' different behaviors and motivations (Hassan *et al.*, 2022). These difficulties all force those who promote and manage religious tourism to concentrate more on sustainability, advancements, and ways to safeguard the visitors, the shrines, and their holiness.

National Shrine of the Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary de La Naval de Manila in Quezon City

On July 22, 1587, the first group of devoted Dominicans came to the Philippines. Coincidentally, it was also the feast day of one of the patron saints of the Dominican Order, St. Mary Magdalene. Dominicans contributed to the development of the Catholic faith and construction of

Figure 1b: National Shrine of the Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary de La Naval de Manila in Quezon City



<https://pia.gov.ph/news/2022/10/08/mmda-advises-motorists-public-of-la-naval-de-manila-procession-sunday>

Churches in the Philippines; they also promoted education through their development of Universities (Malgapu, 2020). To this day, the Dominicans are continuing their mission in the country to preach the Word of God. The Dominicans are very visible in establishments such as the University of Santo Tomas, Colegio de San Juan de Letrán, and churches such as Minor Basilica of the Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary of Manaoag in Pangasinan, and the National Shrine of the Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary de La Naval de Manila in Quezon City.

According to Olivares (2020), the Dominicans first built Santo Domingo Church in Quezon City as a small wooden chapel in 1587 at Intramuros, one of the seven great churches. The church was named after the founder of the Dominican Order, St. Dominic de Guzman. Through the years, the church in Intramuros had many reconstructions due to strong earthquakes, fires, and the the revolution of the Imperial Japanese Army. These events have caused the city of Manila to be in a regular stage of restoration, and the last resort of the church was to transfer to Quezon City as it had only suffered minimal destruction. The year 1954 was historic for the church since it was proclaimed the first Marian year of the church. The feast day of the La Naval de Manila celebrated on the 10th day of October, increases the excitement of the devotees.

The National Museum proclaimed this church as a National Cultural Treasure of the Philippines, with its historical significance in the country. The central jewel of the church is the image of Our Lady of Rosary La Naval,

Figure 2a: The Minor Basilica of the Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary of Manaoag in Pangasinan



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manaoag_Church#/media/File:Facade_of_Minor_Basilica_of_Our_Lady_of_the_Rosary_of_Manaoag.jpg

which witnessed countless battles over the years. The image is believed to have intervened during the invasion of Dutch protestants in the 1646 Battle of La Naval de Manila. It gave birth to the annual feast celebration of La Naval, where devotees meet and whisper their prayers as they are lifted into heaven in exchange for miracles (Castro, 2019). Figure 1a and 1b provide images of the church and the statue of the La Naval de Manila.

The Minor Basilica of the Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary of Manaoag in Pangasinan

The Minor Basilica of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary of Manaoag is one of the most visited churches in the country. It is considered the pilgrimage center of the north in the province of Pangasinan, Philippines. Previously known as Santa Monica, it was built in 1600 and was first managed by the Augustinian Missionaries. Years passed, and the Augustinians left because of the opposition of the *Pangasinenses* regarding their disbelief in the religious congregation. Even though the Franciscans had tried to enter the province, they could not convert them.

The devotees who visit this church believe that the Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary brings them favours. This led to the statue being canonically crowned in 1926 and it was made part of the Philippine Dominican Province in December 1972. On October 11, 2014, Pope Francis declared the shrine a Minor Basilica. Figure 2a provides the image of the church and Figure 2b shows the statue of Mary of Manaoag.

Figure 2b: Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary of Manaoag



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Our_Lady_of_Manaoag#/media/File:Apo_Baket.jpg

Despite the pandemic, many people visited the province of Manaoag in 2022, with a total of 2.1 million visitors in the first quarter, not just from the Philippines but from other parts of the world (Pasion, 2022). Tourists and devotees are motivated to visit this religious site because they believe that the image is one of the most venerated Marian images in the country and possesses healing powers of the patroness of the sick, the helpless, and the needy (Ministry of Altar Servers - Minor Basilica of Our Lady of Manaoag, 2021). Villareal (2020) identifies a range of other activities that can be done at this site, including visiting its museum where tourists can learn more about its history and collections, visiting the Rosary Garden where tourists can contemplate and pray, lining up to touch the image of Our Lady of Manaoag, and lighting candles to offer a prayer at the Candle Gallery.

This study assesses sustainable tourism management at selected Philippine religious sites managed by religious congregations. The researchers developed this topic because of limited knowledge and curiosity regarding religious tourism and to develop management and sustainability practices for the chosen religious sites. To make this possible, the proponents undertook focus group discussions with the managers of the religious sites, a

documentary analysis, and an evaluation of the different sustainable tourism management practices of selected Marian shrines managed by religious congregations, focusing on the Minor Basilica of Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary of Manaoag in Pangasinan, and the National Shrine of the Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary de La Naval de Manila in Quezon City.

One of the study's objectives is to gain in-depth knowledge related to how the selected sites are preserved and managed. As a contribution to research, the paper evaluates the different issues and limitations in managing sustainable tourist destinations that can contribute to the growth and development of other religious tourism sites in the country managed by different congregations.

Literature Review

Religious Tourism

Religiously motivated tourism is a global phenomenon as old as religion itself (Wiltshier, 2019). It is also a niche within the segment of cultural tourism practiced by different religions, and it includes all trips and activities that are directly or indirectly motivated by religious reasons for religious or spiritual purposes, such as embarking on a pilgrimage and visiting holy sites (Centre for the Promotion of Imports, 2020b). Religious tourism sites are structures or areas where individuals travel to engage in sacred practices, worship, or adoration (Thorley & Gunn, 2008). It includes shrines, churches, mosques, temples, or other religious establishments that travellers visit as an act of spiritual devotion (Collins Dictionaries, n.d.; Law Insider, n.d.). According to Munro (2020), an estimated 1.4 billion tourists visited various countries in 2018, with around one-third of them traveling for religious reasons. This practice has become more diverse in modern times, particularly correlating to people's curiosity about different religions. Research suggests that religious travel includes not just going to a specific sacred location but also travelling for reasons of fellowship, humanitarian causes, or even leisure (Henama & Sifoloin, 2017).

Sustainable Religious Tourism and Management

Sustainability was defined by the United Nations (UN) Brundtland Commission in 1987 as fulfilling the needs of the present without compromising the potential of future

generations to fulfill their own needs. Its significance leads to sustainable development, which addresses a widened scope of global concerns and challenges encompassing environmental, social, and economic aspects. The UN defines sustainable tourism as a concept that takes complete account of its current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts that cover the development of guidelines and practices in improving tourists' overall tourism experience and addressing the needs of the visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities that will guarantee its long-term sustainability. This definition is closely interrelated with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as Global Goals, a universal call to action by the United Nations to improve the planet and quality of human life by 2030 (UNWTO, 2015). According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015a), it is an urgent call for all developed and developing countries to work together to create strategies that can benefit sustainable development's environmental, social, and economic dimensions.

The influence of religious leaders is significant for the effective and efficient implementation of sustainable practices within religious sites and shrines. In 2021, Pope Francis launched a seven-year green initiative called the *Laudato Si* Action Platform to protect the environment and the poor from climate change. In the Philippines, for instance, the International Shrine of Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage, also known as Antipolo Cathedral, took the initiative to practice sustainability. In 2021, a group of persons with disability (PWDs) in Antipolo cleaned the streets in support of the greening project of the local government and the ongoing beautification of the surrounding areas of the city hall and Antipolo Cathedral (Andrade, 2022). This practice actively promoted equality as people with disabilities showed others that they could still perform everyday activities and keep the environment clean and green (Andrade, 2022). As such, people are motivated to visit Antipolo, thereby providing more job opportunities for the locals. This pro-environment initiative of the city of Antipolo can offer a safe and seamless experience for those visiting. In rethinking the future of religious tourism, this type of initiative shows how SDGs can be achieved through Sustainable Tourism Management at religious sites.

Sustainable Religious Tourism: Issues and Constraints

Seasonality in the tourism industry is caused by the changing demand and supply because of temporary consumption brought on by the shifting climate and consumer trends in a particular destination (Ouko, 2020). Based on the study by Chiutsi (2017), the negative impacts greatly outweigh the positive impacts on a tourist destination during the off-peak season. However, maintenance and other fixed costs must still be covered even during the off-peak season, even if the facilities and equipment are only utilised in part. Revenue costs or even a shortage of seasonal workers and instability of revenue due to lack of tourist visits are identified as major challenges. Hiring seasonal workers is often inevitable due to the reduction in tourist visits during the off-peak season. Often as a result of this, quality of staff training and service delivery are also factors to be considered. As supported by Chiutsi (2017), poor staff training reduces service quality, thus affecting the satisfaction of tourists. The seasonality of religious events, as a product of pilgrimage offering, can thus, limit the sustainability of religious tourism.

Some case studies show that religious people such as monks can be active participants in the entire **waste management** system at holy sites, helping spread the word about their sustainability initiatives for example on Buddhist holy days and during religious rites - encouraging people to take responsibility for the trash issue in their neighbourhoods (Intahphuak *et al.*, 2017). This shows suggests that religion can serve as a community's moral center and the hub of community empowerment for waste management consciousness. According to Kasam *et al.* (2019a), sustainable solid waste management is vital, and religious sites must be clean because cleanliness reflects the purity and holiness of the place. In the Philippines, devotees and tourists who commemorated Holy Week in an Offer Walk in Antipolo City, province of Rizal, were reported for being irresponsible in dumping their trash in the places where people go to pray and go on holiday (Seráfica, 2018) - contrary to what the Catholic Church prescribes. In response to climate change and calls to protect the planet, demands are high to change this kind of carless lifestyle. The environmental organisation EcoWaste Coalition condemned the irresponsible actions that 'tainted the traditional acts of devotion and penance'

carried out by the Filipino Catholic faithful during Holy Week (Seráfica, 2018). It also urged church leaders to release a statement that would inspire people to take further action to protect and preserve the integrity of creation.

Denton and Kleberg (2018) state that religious community can suffer from the **theft** of priceless fine art or silver works. The disappearance of silver chalices and unique works by masters and other significant paintings and historical treasures from religious groups is prevalent. Some of these artifacts date back to the religious community's early days or were brought over from Europe (Denton & Kleberg, 2018). Undoubtedly, there is a large resale market, and criminals do not seem to understand the spiritual value of such products. As stated by Soth (2020), the monks of the Abbey of Fecamp were visited by Bishop Hugh of Lincoln in the 11th century. The hand of Mary Magdalene, their most valued artifact, was displayed to him. The bishop committed a well known relic theft. This 'custom' pitted monasteries against one another in a competition for pieces of well-known saints from the 9th through the 12th centuries. The bishop believed that relics protected the owner in the form of miracles. Burke (2014) stated that these thefts, which have been documented throughout history, are evidence of the relics' extraordinary value and the additional value they create when they are taken. According to Partlow (2019), Rolando, a church caretaker in Bais City, reported to officials that a teenager had stolen the Tabernacle. Fortunately, it was found in a sugarcane field next to Bais public cemetery. According to Bishop Julito Cortes of the Diocese of Dumaguete, the incident was considered an act of desecration (Partlow, 2019), which prompted prayers for restitution, acts of penance, including processions and vigils, and the prohibition of masses at San Nicolas de Tolentino Church for three days.

According to Hassan *et al.* (2022), religion is an essential cultural element linked to people's lives. Its influence results in different tourist motivations and segmentation specific to religious tourism. Some tourists are religiously motivated; others come for social and cultural reasons, and others for shopping (Griffin & Raj, 2017). Because tourists may visit for multiple motivations, it is essential to create a tailor-fit guide and programs that will cater for tourists' different behaviors and motivations.

Table 1: Tabular Representation of Research Materials and Methods

Design	Approach	Research Measurement	Research Instrument	Mode of Analysis
Qualitative	Case Study	Observation	Photo and Video Documentation	Repertory Grid
		Focus Group Discussion	Semi Structured Aide Memoire or Questionnaire with Robofoto	
		Documentary Analysis	Tabular Reconnaissance or Literature Review Matrix	
Conceptualised by the Researchers				

Materials and Methods

Design

The research utilised a qualitative design, specifically, the case study approach. A case study is a research approach in which the researcher examines several real-world instances over time by collecting extensive and in-depth data from various sources (Creswell, 2013). This approach allowed researchers to understand complex phenomena better as it illustrated the subject’s existing condition, practices at the study site, and the stakeholders’ (or key informants) viewpoints through oral and written evidence. Table 1 provides a tabular representation of the outlined research materials and methods.

Subject and Study Site

The researchers used purposive sampling, where they selected the key participants based on their knowledge and characteristics that could aid the researchers in fulfilling their objectives. The key informants of this study were the stakeholders of the Minor Basilica of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary of Manaoag and the National Shrine of the Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary de La Naval de Manila. These two shrines were considered as the study sites. These churches are both managed by the Dominican Community, composed of several Dominican Priests, and are supported by the Parish Pastoral Council. Their responsibility is to promote the church’s mission to share Christ’s love and moral principles with the world (Anning, 2007).

The researchers chose 27 key informants - 12 from the Minor Basilica of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary of Manaoag and 15 from the National Shrine of the Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary de La Naval de Manila.

These are referred to as stakeholders for this study. According to Lichtenwalner (2017), the stakeholders of a church are as follows: the broader church, congregation, congregant families, community, staff, staff families, volunteers, volunteer families, ministries, and outreach recipients. Staff members and volunteers of a church include the ushers and security officers (Critin *et al.*, 2005) who manage the flow of traffic and parking. Moreover, many motivations exist for tourists who visit a religious site for example, sightseeing and shopping (Griffin & Raj, 2017). Different businesses are located around the vicinity of these religious sites, hence, the church has a direct effect on businesses, making business owners among the stakeholders.

The above-mentioned key informants have first-hand knowledge about the management and daily operations of the two shrines because a diverse mix of key informants was chosen to collect various perspectives. Thus, their knowledge and opinions are valuable in providing the researchers with insights and understanding regarding the sustainable management of the shrines. A summarised profile of the key informants is presented in Table 2.

Data Analysis

Different research measurements and instruments were used to gather all the needed information to complete the primary research fully and successfully. The research analysis consisted of three measures:

(a) Observation

The researchers physically visited and toured the chosen churches to witness the different activities and available facilities. All these were documented through visual

Table 2: Profile of Key Informants

Name of Church	Key informants	Age	Gender	Position	Number of Years/ Months Working in the Industry
Minor Basilica of the Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary of Manaoag in Pangasinan	1	42	Female	Museum and Archives Officer	5 Years
	2	29	Female	HR Staff	6 Years
	3	37	Male	Health and Safety Officer	1 Year
	4	28	Male	Security Officer	7 Years
	5	30	Male	Finance Management Officer	3 Years
	6	38	Male	Finance Management Officer	9 Years
	7	42	Male	LGU - Tourism Officer	13 Years
	8	39	Male	Police Lieutenant	18 Years
	9	42	Male	Police Staff Sergeant	21 Years
	10	34	Male	Police Staff Sergeant	14 Years
	11	24	Female	LGU - Tourism Officer	2 Years
	12	34	Male	Security Officer	9 Years
National Shrine of the Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary de La Naval de Manila in Quezon City	13	27	Male	Admin of the La Naval Facebook Page Head of the Souvenir and Solicitation Program Committee	6 Years
	14	27	Male	Executive Assistant – Security and Marshalls Committee (La Naval de Manila Festivities)	5 Months
	15	24	Male	Student-brother	2 Years
	16	26	Male	Former studentate liturgical committee in charge of liturgical affairs of the Church; Assistant Spiritual Director of Tiples de Santo Domingo	2 Years
	17	53	Female	LGU - Senior Tourism Operations Officer	20 Years
	18	31	Male	LGU - Tourism Operations Assistant	5 Years
	19	30	Male	Spiritual Director of Tiples de Santo Domingo	4 Years
	20	25	Male	Head of the MUKHA AD Youth Ministry (<i>Masiglang Ugnayan ng mga Kabataang Hinuhubog sa Anyo ng Anak ng Diyos</i>)	2 Years
	21	28	Male	Music Director of the Shrine	3 Years
	22	53	Male	Operations Employee	17 Years
	23	29	Male	Member of the Liturgical Committee	8 Years
	24	27	Male	Assistant Spiritual Director of the Tiples de Santo Domingo	2 Years
	25	50	Male	Security Officer	14 Years
	26	25	Male	Head of the Promotions Committee of La Naval 2022	1 Year
	27	32	Male	Former Conventual Chapter Secretary of Santo Domingo Convent; Member of the Cultural Heritage Committee of the Dominican Province of the Philippines.	4 Years

Conceptualised by the Researchers

media – photos and videos. According to Prasanna (2022), observation is a more convenient and straightforward gathering of data as minimal technical skills and knowledge are required. This kind of measurement gave the researchers an in-depth understanding of the different activities and strategies of the stakeholders in the selected religious sites.

(b) Focus Group Discussion

The next measurement was Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The researchers gathered information from groups of site stakeholders through semi-structured aide memoire prompts. According to Miller (2020), the FGD generates distinct answers as everyone provides their ideas and perspectives. The semi-structured format combines the unstructured and structured formats. In a structured interview, questions are prearranged and set beforehand, while in unstructured interviews questions are unconstrained or spontaneous, and follow-up questions are raised based on the participants’ previous answers. With the semi-structured Focus Groups, valuable information was given to the researchers. The

prepared questions were structured in a three-column tabular format consisting of the study’s objective, the framework obtained from the research, and the formulated questions based on the other two columns. From there, the researchers identified three main sub topics:

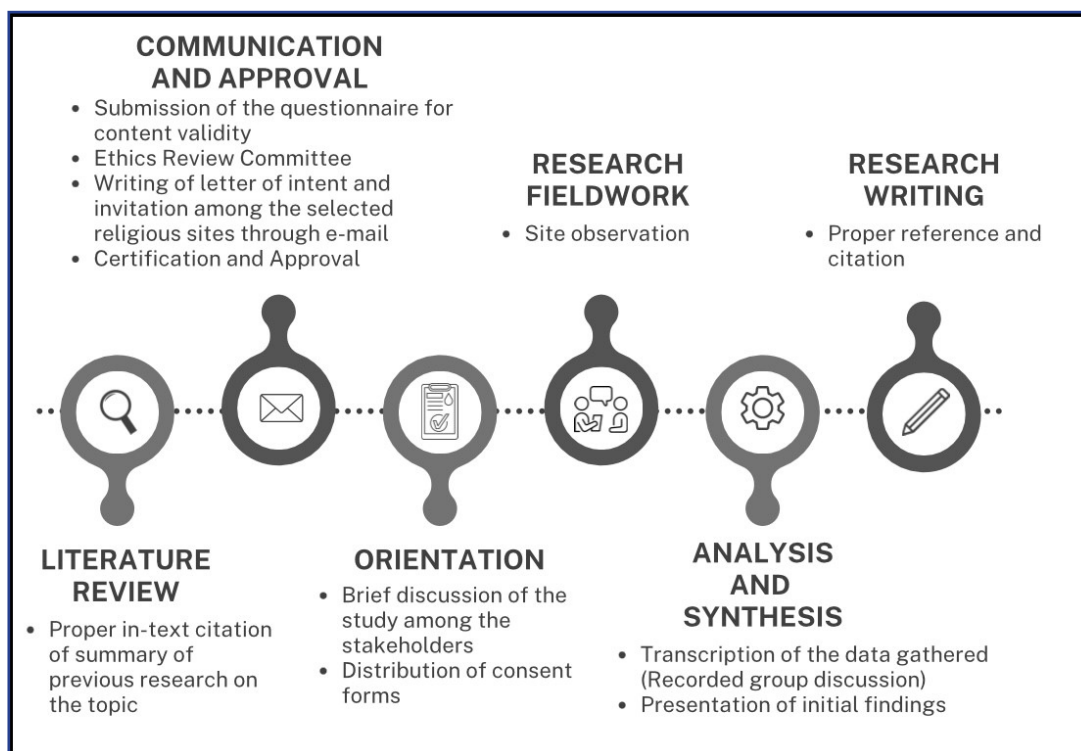
(1) **Religious Occasions and Facilities;** questions on this topic include

‘What are the common motivations of pilgrims and tourists when visiting your shrine?’ and ‘What are the different facilities available for tourists on the site?’

(2) **Policies and Practices** where questions on this topic were

‘Because the shrine is a religious tourism site, are there any policies and guidelines tourists must follow to preserve the beauty and holiness of the iconic shrine?’ and ‘How do the stakeholders communicate with each other in implementing sustainable practices in the shrine, such as recycling waste, reducing electricity use, and encouraging the locals to participate in church activities?’

Figure 3: Visual Representation of Data Collection Procedure



(Conceptualised by the Researchers)

(3) **Sustainability**, was the third sub-topic which contained questions such as

'What sustainability and development plans do you have to improve further and maintain the shrine?' and

'How do you maintain your collaboration with your stakeholders in terms of waste management?'

(c) Document Analysis

Lastly, Document Analysis was carried out, wherein the researchers requested documents from the stakeholders regarding tourist arrivals, current development plans, and all related documents about developing the areas. This data measurement was conducted through tabular reconnaissance or a literature review matrix, a method that involves different perspectives regarding a topic to be compared, and to identify the connections between the gathered information. This instrument enabled the researchers to quickly compare articles to determine the scope of research across time and easily identify the differences and similarities between journal articles (Duquesne University, 2022).

Through using these tables the researchers developed conclusions regarding the relationship of the data as seen from the table.

Data Collection Procedure

The data and information collection was done using a systematic gathering process and approach to coordination and collaboration among stakeholders and key informants for ethical standards and concerns. Figure 3 represents the data and information collection procedure of the research.

After conceptualising the title, objectives, and literature review, the researchers provided letters of intent to expert validators, requesting them to validate the content of the questionnaire for the study. After receiving the approval, the researchers submitted the ethics review requirements to the Philippine Normal University (PNU) for approval. The PNU Ethics Review Committee examined the research proposal and its supporting materials (QAC No. CC-09242018-023). The researchers conducted fieldwork wherein they visited, observed, and asked questions

about the churches. Throughout the research there was continuous and extensive discussion regarding the scope and limitations of the research. The key informants who were invited to participate in the FGDs were more focused on the managerial rather than religious aspects of the sites to assess the sustainability of the shrines. Discussions were all video or voice recorded and a transcript was produced to facilitate textual analysis of the discussions.

Ethical Considerations

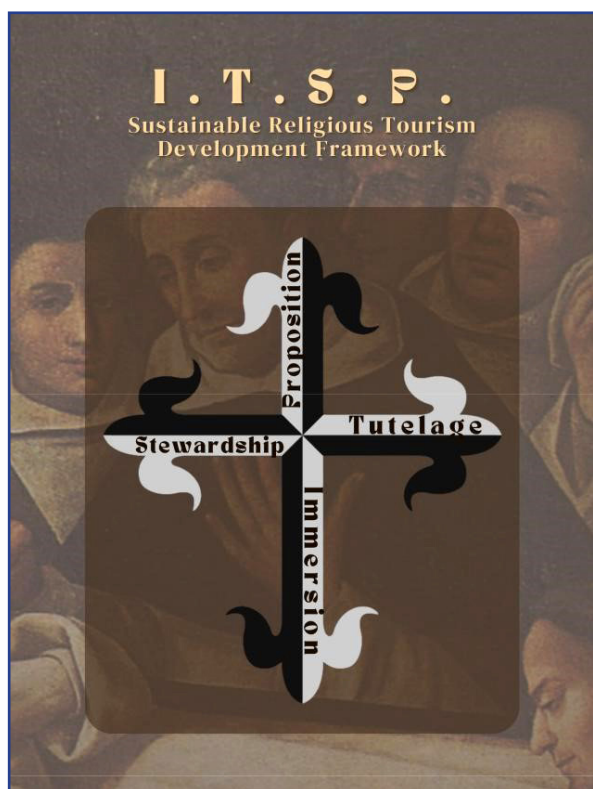
During the data collection, the researchers had to consider various ethical issues. The first and most important ethical standard is respect for the human subject, the key informants. They must be treated with respect since they exercised their free will to participate in the study. Consent forms were distributed before the FGDs started which indicated the purpose of the study, procedures, and the number of participants needed. Their involvement their level of risk and inconveniences were also highlighted. The confidentiality of the information to be gathered was explained, assuring participants that the collected data would be used for academic and policy-driven development purposes only. The signed forms also indicated consent for a photo, video, and voice recording needed for the discussion's transcript.

Another significant ethical standard that was considered and adopted by the researchers was the anonymity and confidentiality of personal information, and protection of privacy of the key informants.

Mode of Analysis

The data and information of the key informants were analysed in the study using a Repertory Grid. As stated by Bell in 2003, a Repertory Grid is a measurement device with a solid conceptual basis. It provides a succinct representation of how a person construes their world or some aspect of it. The conduct of the interview in the interviewee's language, and highlighting the key informants' responses that are relevant to the study's objective are important. These key informants' perspectives and comments are presented in a three-column tabular format to facilitate analysis. The grid is read from right to left, where the rightmost column consists of the chosen statements transcribed from the key

Figure 4: Visual Representation of I.T.S.P.: Sustainable Religious Tourism Development Framework



(Conceptualised by the researchers)

informants' responses that address the study's objective. It is followed by the categories within which the responses are grouped depending on the statements and themes that describe them. In this research, significant statements by the key informants were set as bold to easily identify the topics. The researchers identified four key themes and under each of those themes are three to four categories.

Findings

The researchers generated the I.T.S.P.: Sustainable Religious Tourism Development Framework after assessing the key informants' insights on the sites. This framework presents an in-depth assessment of the viewpoints of the key informants on the existing situation of the selected Philippine congregation-managed Marian shrines, illustrating four themes identified by the research study (*Immersion, Stewardship, Tutelage, and Proposition*). It also presents their ideas, aspirations, perspectives, and recommendations to establish sustainable religious tourism management at the shrines. The governing authorities of these Marian shrines could use this framework as a guide as they continue

establishing the shrines as sustainable tourist destinations. The framework was conceptualised through the key informants' perspectives during their daily operations before and during the pandemic and the new normal condition. Figure 4 presents a figural representation of the framework conceptualised by the researchers.

Immersion

Under the Immersion theme, locals and tourists are motivated by their devotion and spiritual wellness. It has also been their custom to visit churches and attend liturgical services and Mass. On the other hand, shrines are also seen for their religious, artistic, and social value. The collaboration between the different sectors related to the management of the shrines is important in creating awareness and partnerships that benefit everyone involved. The church's congregation has organised different programs to engage with both tourists and the community the church belongs to. Feeding programs have been a part of parish activity and these offer not just to Catholics but also to non-Catholics.

As shared by the key informants:

*The most common motivation is **spiritual wellness**; they have problems, are anxious, and some would like to change.*

*We are taking care of the shrine's artistic significance because of the **artistic value** because **it has been made and designed by national artists** or artists that are not necessarily national artists, but at least they were considered **maestros** during their time.*

*One of the activities we are holding regarding the parish activity for Catholics and non-Catholics is this **feeding program**.*

*We have a **Committee that coordinates** with the local government.*

Tutelage

The Tutelage theme focuses on protection and security for the churches and their people. The church organises a clean-up activity every week to maintain a sustainable environment. Proper waste disposal and management are also implemented, reminding everyone of the church anti-littering campaign. Before the pandemic, these procedures were already in place to maintain a safe

and secure facility. However, stricter regulations were implemented when the pandemic hit. There are various rules that visitors must abide by when visiting. Security also manages the movement of people and traffic and puts regulations in place throughout the church's various activities. These guidelines safeguard the sites' reputation and ensure that people respect the church. Below are the key informants' statements:

*We practice **proper waste disposal**.*

*We are implementing the ordinance of anti-littering. The penalty is only 80 pesos. Also, we prevent litter and maintain cleanliness through our janitor; and there is **signage**.*

*We are on the site for security and manage the movement the **traffic direction and control**.*

*For security, the fields are open, and there are **assigned guards**; the people who are entering, we advise that their **pets should be using pampers and balloons inside the church are prohibited**.*

All the time, we have security on duty. We roam around the church and guard all the gates.

Stewardship

Under the Stewardship theme, the focus is on recognising practices of Marian Shrines in the Philippines in maintaining and supporting their facilities, people, and operations. Considering that these churches are non-profit organisations, the only support they get to maintain their facilities and to provide income to their employees and members comes from donations, store income, voluntary contributions during Masses, and other fundraising activities. In terms of their operations, these church congregations designate staff members or personnel to effectively oversee their facility management and daily operations. However, the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the communities to suffer from a lack of assistance and funds from donors. As such, the churches were forced to adapt to technological advancements to raise funds for the maintenance of the facilities and to support their people. As stated by the key informants:

*We get our expenses for the maintenance from **masses, donations, store income**.*

*We joined the **GCash movement** (GCash*

is an online financial platform for monetary safekeeping, deposit and loan management, and allocation), advertised GCash bank accounts, and this was emphasised more because we already have a Facebook page.

*They have **assigned areas** [maintenance employees]; they are also expected to clean their area.*

The store's income is for the employees' wages.

Proposition

The Proposition theme centers on the opportunities set by religious tourism, sustainability, development plans, and recommendations to improve the shrines and their surroundings.

Opportunities abound to uplift the standard of living of the locals living in the vicinity of the shrines. Shrines help the tourism industry in the local area, most especially during liturgical events and their related celebrations. These serve as sites of intangible heritage, a way for culture and tradition to remain intact as the people experience it. The presence of shrines is a way of preserving the culture and tradition of the place, and gives local businesses revenue opportunities. However, shrines were also affected heavily by the COVID-19 pandemic. By allowing the shrine to explore the potentials of technology, Masses and donation drives were conducted online. something that was missed by the local businesses.

Likewise, the sustainability and development plans emphasise how locals and the shrines can provide better experiences to tourists and devotees through the expansion and improvement plans for their facilities. These developments include stricter implementation of security in relation to locals who forcibly sell their goods to tourists outside the shrines - while retaining religious tourism's cultural and heritage values while also supporting the physical / architectural structure to sustain the shrines.

Under this theme the key informants' recommendations focus on providing more opportunities for the locals, ensuring orderly businesses outside the shrines, and avoiding harassment where some locals take advantage of the tourists and devotees. The following are some of

the statements of the key informants:

*After celebrating the mass, they eat, so **the food stalls and establishments outside or in the vicinity have a higher chance to earn more.***

*The **standards of living** of the people here went high. Maybe because of the **influx of devotees** in the church during Sundays.*

*The museum will be transferred so that it can cater to more tourist ... aside from the church; **this will also be highlighted.***

*If we would build some buildings in the shrine, the design should be **seamless.** If you investigate the design of the cultural structure and landscape of the church, **it has only one specific architectural style.***

*When they enter the municipality, tourists get **harassed.** [Dealing with this] is one of the development plans that will nourish and materialise.*

Discussion

Theoretical Implication

The I.T.S.P.: Sustainable Religious Tourism Development Framework proposes four themes that correspond to discussions in the literature on sustainable religious tourism and its importance. It also highlights the distinctions from previously published research and its advantages.

The **immersion** theme emphasises the importance of analysing the implications of tourist motivations to the tourism aspect of a shrine. While the literature underscored that millions of people visit holy and religious sites for spiritual reasons, with religion as their prime motivator (Wiltshier, 2019), the findings highlighted perspectives that there are other motivations besides it, such as the artistic and social significance of a shrine. Also, the historical essence of a shrine is another distinctive motivator since it attracts people's curiosity about the stories behind the architecture and paintings and their impacts on the identity of the community around it. Another aspect is the collaboration between those involved in the upkeep of the shrines. As stated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015), there is an urgent appeal to all, both

developed and developing countries, to work together on initiatives that benefit the people, tourists, and residents. This correlates with the shrines since it is essential to work closely with the different sectors of the community to develop laws and policies that will promote partnerships and projects that are beneficial to everyone. It also aligns with the definitions of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (2004) of sustainable tourism which presents a vision that takes full consideration of current and future economic, social, and environmental impacts - as seen by the shrine's different activities and programs that prove valuable to building a sustainable society. Furthermore, these programs and activities satisfy the spiritual soul since most are religious and sacred events like processions and celebrations of saints. Implementing these activities and programs must be done in a safe and peaceful environment, which leads to the next theme.

The top priority of a religious site is the protection and security of the churches, which is where the theme of **tutelage** comes from. It emphasises the security of tourists and stakeholders to promote a safer and more protected environment where they can go without fear of harm. Health safety is included in this, along with adequate waste disposal within and outside the religious site. As stated by Kasam *et al.* (2019b), solid waste management is crucial, and it needs attention to prioritise the cleanliness within the shrine's vicinity because it reflects the purity and holiness of the place. It is not merely maintaining a religious site's reputation; rather, it is emphasising the security and welfare of visitors, conserving and maintaining the sacred site. The religious site will benefit from appropriate waste management if given priority since this will create a healthy environment with designated garbage bins and signage to remind people to obey the rules.

Denton and Kleberg (2018) note that a religious community can suffer from theft of priceless fine art or silver works. This damages a community's cultural legacy. Theft can be prevented by providing sufficient protection for the church and guarding sacred relics. As per the findings of this paper, security personnel and tools are needed to secure these relics. Shrines have security guards on duty and Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) to record daily events inside and outside the religious site.

Under the **stewardship** theme, donations, store income, voluntary contributions during Masses, and other fundraising activities aid in the maintenance of the facilities and in the support of employees and operations. According to the study by Chiutsi (2017), maintenance and other fixed costs should still be covered even during the off-peak season, even if the facilities and equipment are not being utilised to full operation. It was noted in this paper that the shrines were able to cover maintenance and other fixed costs during COVID-19 with the help of the pilgrims who support the shrines by sending their donations through online platforms such as GCash and online banking. Chiutsi (2017) mentioned that poor staff training reduces service quality, thus affecting the satisfaction of visitors. In the sites examined for this paper, during peak season, the shrines do not employ seasonal workers; instead, volunteers from different sectors, such as the Local Government Unit (LGU), Philippine National Police (PNP), and the local community, offer their services to the shrine for free. Therefore, their operations are maintained, and no additional costs are incurred.

Lastly, the **proposition** theme emphasises the significance of opportunities, sustainability and development plans, and recommendations as contributions to managing sustainable religious tourism. This is linked to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (2015) to improve the planet and quality of human life by 2030. The COVID-19 pandemic, unintentionally propelled the advancement of technology which enabled the people to adapt to it, and this has led to different opportunities on social media platforms, not just for the benefit of the shrine but also for the community around it. The individual and collective insights this technology provides can serve as a springboard for evaluating the sustainable religious tourism management of the shrines and can be valuable when developing and implementing suitable governance approaches and measures.

Practical Implication

Religiously motivated tourism is a global phenomenon as old as religion itself (Wiltshier, 2019). Tourists have their own reasons for traveling; as Henama and Sifoloin (2017) mentioned, the religious aspect could be one of the

main reasons for traveling. As the two selected shrines in the country attract numerous devotees and tourists from all parts of the world, it is essential to assess how these shrines **immerse** themselves in sustainable tourism management. This will lead to better understanding of the common motivations that attract tourists and devotees, resulting in better activities and programs where visitors could engage. It could also lead to better collaboration and communication between and among the congregation, the local government, and local communities in contributing to the sustainable development of the shrines and their social significance to their communities.

Stewardship is needed so that the congregation will responsibly manage their resources, operations, and people. It could help in developing the shrines into more visitor-friendly destinations that cater to the needs of devotees and tourists. It could also contribute to the community by providing livelihood opportunities to their people. However, the management of religious tourism presents many unique challenges. It is therefore vital to create tailor-made guides and programs that cater to tourists' different behaviors and motivations (Hassan *et al.*, 2022).

Tutelage helps mitigate some of the severe problems that a shrine could face. According to Abdulredha *et al.* (2018), millions of pilgrims join different religious gatherings yearly. With this, large volumes of municipal solid waste are produced, compromising the host towns' management structures and decreasing their appeal. Philippine shrines have different waste disposal management practices to protect the environment and to support the seven-year green initiative called the *Laudato Si* Action Program of Pope Francis. In addition, different policies and security measures are strictly implemented in the vicinity to ensure the shrines' and tourists' protection and safety - thereby maintaining the shrines' sacred ambiance.

With this, it can be said that there are no conflicts in the visitation of tourists since the religious sites practice proper waste disposal. Trash cans are distributed around the area, and there are ordinances that should be followed; otherwise, penalties will be imposed. Moreover, according to Mahanti (2022), religious tourism is a lucrative industry that helps the residents by creating jobs. The growth of the businesses near the destination

may be aided by the increased number of tourists who are potential customers for such enterprises, and are drawn by religious tourism, which can be the primary source of revenue of a nation with a weak economy. The two selected shrines have the potential for marketing as there are collaborations with different sectors to create programs and to develop the shrines to cater to more devotees and visitors.

The presence of the **proposition** will help develop and improve the religious tourist sites. However, threats may be unavoidable as there may be possibilities that local businesses and other activities outside the churches could be disorganised. Chiutsi (2017) posited that the negative impacts could greatly outweigh the positive impacts on a tourist destination. Thus, these negative impacts need to be minimised with the help of stakeholders such as businesses, locals and government agencies, especially during events where a much larger influx of tourists is expected. The shrines should also maintain the good governance of the stakeholders and provide a stricter implementation of security and regulations, especially in relation to local businesses outside the shrines who forcibly sell their goods to tourists. Hassan *et al.* (2022d) stated that religion is an essential cultural element linked to different aspects of people's lives. Therefore, stakeholders should ensure that the facilities are adequately managed to secure sustainability and preserve the ambiance for the tourists to have a great experience long into the future.

Conclusion

This research focuses on evaluating the sustainable tourism management of two Philippine Marian Shrines managed by a religious congregation as they adapt to the current situation. As discussed in the findings, an I.T.S.P.: Sustainable Religious Tourism Development Framework was conceptualised to highlight the different governance approaches and strategies that need to be managed to control the impact of tourism activities in the vicinity of shrines. First, the framework highlighted the tourists' motivations, significance, and collaboration programs (**Immersion**) that are relevant to building awareness and fruitful partnerships that will be helpful to everyone involved. Second, it presented the importance of upholding the protection and security of the churches

(**Tutelage**) as it is vital in safeguarding the stakeholders' and tourists' health and well-being. Third, it discussed the various practices of maintaining and sustaining facilities, people, and operations (**Stewardship**) that are critical to the sustainability of the functions and services of the shrines. Fourth, it presented an overview of opportunities presented by religious tourism, sustainability and development plans (**Proposition**), and recommendations that are essential in further improving the sacred and tourism essence of the shrines and their surroundings.

The resultant framework can be used as a guide as the stewards continue to establish the shrines as sustainable tourist destinations and in building a collaborative relationship with the different related sectors to launch a collective goal of promoting social, environmental, and economic growth within the area. These goals could be achieved with proper coordination, implementation, and monitoring with adequate assistance from the national and local government units and the local community. All these can be beneficial contributors toward the growth of sustainable tourism management of Marian Shrines.

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