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Gendering the Informal Tourism Sector toward Inclusive and Sustainable Growth: The Case Study of Boracay Island

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and Eylla Laire M. Gutierrez*



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Abstract

Boracay Island, Malay is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the Philippines. Over the years, its sustained growth as a top tourist destination has been substantially supported by the island's informal tourism sector—that is primarily women dominated. While tourism products and services are provided by both men and women, differences are observed in their occupational choices and the options made available for them. For this reason, concerns about the sustainability of tourism development vis-à-vis gender inclusivity have been raised. In an attempt to bridge this gap, this study investigated the involvement of women in the informal tourism of Boracay Island. This study specifically looked into their working conditions, the challenges and issues they face, along with the national policies that govern and regulate their participation in the informal economy. By utilizing the Women's Economic Empowerment Framework, the macro, meso, and micro dimensions of women's involvement in the informal tourism economy was analyzed. To do so, the authors conducted key informant interviews in three phases: first, with members of the local government units (LGUs) of the Municipality of Malay and the Boracay Island; second, with women informal workers serving in the food and beverages, souvenirs, excursions, and services sector in the Boracay Island; finally, with experts in tourism and informal economy at the national level. Findings of the study suggest that informal workers in the Island are organized, recognized, and registered under the LGU.

Despite attempts to facilitate their transition to the formal economies, these women workers were found to prefer to operate under the informal economy for two reasons: first, their educational background which forces them to engage in informal work to help provide for their families; second, their personal choice to engage in informal work given the flexible and convenient work arrangements it offers them. For these workers, concerns about their dependence to the seasonality of tourism activities prevailed. Policy recommendations are outlined to provide a better understanding of women's involvement in the informal economies in Boracay Island.

Keywords: tourism, informal sector, gender and development, value chain analysis, inclusive growth

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List of Acronyms

The following table defines the significance of the acronyms applied in the study. The terms have been described as how each one has been generally defined (i.e., organizations) and has been utilized for the purpose of the said study.

APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
BSP	Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
CARCAP	Carrying Capacity
CBTOs	Community-based Tourism Organizations
COVID 19	Coronavirus disease 2019
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment
DOT	Department of Tourism
DOT-GFPS	Department of Tourism- Gender and Development Focal Point System
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
F&B	Food and Beverage
GAD	Gender and Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ID	Identification Card
ILO	International Labor Organization
IPEF	Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGU	Local Government Unit
MSMEs	Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

NGAs	National Government Agencies
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PESO	Public Employment Service Office
PSA	Philippine Statistics Authority
PTTA	Philippine Tourist and Travel Organization
P2P	Point-to-Point
QR Code	Quick Response Code
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TNAs	Trainings Needs Assessment
TourISM WORCS	Tourism Integrates, Supports, and Minds Women's Respect and Child Safety
UN	United Nations
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
WEE	Women Economic Empowerment
WEF	World Economic Forum
WTO	World Trade Organization

Gendering the Informal Tourism Sector toward Inclusive and Sustainable Growth: The Case Study of Boracay Island

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1. Introduction

The presence of the informal sector in economies globally has become a critical and complex development puzzle waiting to be solved. Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) more recently announced its key research areas for 2023 and 2024 which emphasize the value of expanding discussions on the informal sector and its actors. The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), specifically Pillars 1 (Trade) and 2 (Supply Chains), for example, highlights the need to develop innovative approaches in removing barriers to empowerment and facilitating the transition of informal workers to the formal economy. The framework emphasizes the value of ensuring that inclusive growth translates to the involvement of all segments of society, including informal workers and women. The same priority is echoed in APEC 2024's theme of "empowering people and businesses towards inclusive and sustainable growth" which specifically stresses the value of empowering individuals (e.g., informal actors and women) to facilitate their transition to the formal and global economy to ensure sustainable and inclusive development. In acknowledging the importance of this matter, Philippine President Marcos echoed the same sentiments by stressing the importance of tourism in driving economic recovery in the country (Romero, 2022). Underpinning this is the value of promoting equal opportunities for economic actors in the Philippine tourism industry including women and informal economy workers (Department of Tourism [DOT], 2022).

Against the backdrop of the pandemic, tourism was considered one of the sectors mostly affected by the pandemic where approximately 120 million tourism jobs were put at risk. With women comprising 54% of the tourism workforce, they were categorized to be most at-risk (UN World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2021). With the prospects of the gradual reopening of borders and economies, tourism has been identified to play a major role in the recovery of economies and global trade. Accordingly, priority areas in tourism's recovery were identified including the gradual transition of informal economic workers to the formal tourism sector, promotion of women's economic security, improving sector resilience, among others (ILO, 2022; UNWTO, 2022).

1.1. Rationale

In this study, the authors aim to examine the informal tourism economy in the Philippines using a gender perspective. The tourism industry was selected as the focus of this study given the prevalence of informal tourism workers in the sector (ILO, 2018), and the relative importance

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of the industry to the Philippine economy (Tirona, 2021). In tourism, the informal economy includes economic activities engaging directly or indirectly in tourism that are often not registered under government authorities, formal organizations, and associations (Slocum et al, 2011). Its workers offer an array of products and services including street vendors, handicraft and souvenir producers, transport providers, unregistered tour guides, homestay providers, entertainers, and other services.

To do this, the authors will look at the case of Boracay Island, an internationally recognized tourism destination in the Philippines. Boracay island, situated in the municipality of Malay in the province of Aklan, is one of the top tourist destinations in the country, receiving 2 million tourists in 2019 (Arnaldo, 2022). Out of the 17,229 recorded workers in the municipality of Malay, approximately 85.9 percent of the total workers were found to be employed in the island and operating in various sectors including accommodation, food and beverage, passenger transport, laundry shops, tour operation, travel agency, among other miscellaneous industries (Reyes et al, 2018). The temporary closure of Boracay last 2018 revealed that there are approximately 19 thousand informal workers on the island (Reyes et al, 2018). In the context of the post-pandemic recovery, recent data reporting tourist arrivals suggests that the island is back in business after reporting 1.17 million tourist arrivals within the period of January to August 2022 (Arnaldo, 2022). Yet, issues of informality in tourism work remain. For these reasons, Boracay proves to be an interesting and suitable case to examine.

1.2. *Statement of the Problem*

The authors are motivated to examine the informal tourism economy in the Philippines using the case of Boracay Island. Due to the prevalence and vulnerability of women as informal workers, a gender perspective will be used to capture the nuanced experiences of women in being involved in the informal tourism economy. As noted in Wahnschafft (1982), the disparities in socio-economic development across sectors and demographic groups (i.e., gender) have causal relationships with the integration of individuals into formal economies. With this, the main research question posed in this study is: “How are women involved in the informal tourism economy in Boracay Island?”

To answer this, several other sub-questions are posed, namely:

1. What are the working conditions of women as informal tourism workers: their challenges and issues in relation to their participation in the formal tourism economy?
2. Are there existing national policies and regional frameworks on women and the informal economy in tourism?
3. How can the data that will be gathered help in the empowerment of women in the informal tourism sector?

Due to the dearth of data monitoring and describing informal economic activities, this study employs a case study approach. This case study attempts to examine the socioeconomic environment of a tourist destination in terms of its informal economy. This empirical investigation provides a nuanced perspective on the conditions and experiences of informal workers in the tourism industry. This study further aims to supplement existing research on the informal economy in the Philippines and in APEC.

1.3. *Research Objectives*

To address the outlined questions, this study aims *to examine the involvement of women in the informal tourism economy*. In doing so, several specific objectives are also addressed:

1. Map the roles of women as informal tourism workers and to understand their working environment;
2. Determine the challenges and issues of these women in relation to their participation to the formal tourism economy through the case study of Boracay island;
3. Survey the local, national, and regional policy environments for the empowerment of the women informal tourism workers; and
4. Produce case studies, strategies, recommendations, and framework which could be replicated in studying different informal tourism workers across the APEC region.

1.4. Scope and Limitations

This study's practical importance lies in providing crucial and first-hand information about the informal economy. An understanding of the informal sector offers insights in providing solutions to growing problems of socio-economic inequality. The availability of such information enables effective assessment of existing national and regional policies in relation to employment and economic growth. The findings of this study can help address knowledge gaps to empower informal workers in transitioning towards the formal and global economy.

This study also intends to introduce a gendered perspective on the informal sector following the need to recognize the vulnerabilities and risks uniquely faced by women as informal workers. To date, data on this aspect of the informal economy is lacking. The authors believe that bridging this gap is an important step in the achievement of inclusive and sustainable development.

Finally, this study aims to stimulate further research in this crucial but relatively unexplored subject—women and informal economies. While focusing on the experience of Boracay, the approach used in this study is designed to be applied and replicated to other destinations, industries, and countries.

2. Related Literature

The review of related literature is divided into three (3) parts: (1) Tourism in the Philippines through the years; (2) an overview of informality and women in tourism; and (3) local, national, and regional policies on tourism.

2.1. Tourism in the Philippines Through the Years

Tourism has been contemplated as a profound catalyst for cultural, social and economic gains which contributes in income-generating, employment and livelihood (Martins, Carvalho & Almeida, 2021; Huang & Zhang, 2022; Suntikul, et al., 2016). A tourism destination has been defined as “a physical space with or without administrative and/or analytical boundaries in which a visitor can spend an overnight. It is the cluster (co-location) of products and services, and of activities and experiences along the tourism value chain and a basic unit of analysis of tourism. A destination incorporates various stakeholders and can network to form larger destinations. It is also intangible with its image and identity which may influence its market competitiveness” (World Tourism Organization [WTO], 2019, p.10; Martins, Carvalho & Almeida, 2021, p.1). In the recent years, tourist destination competitiveness began to take shape in constructing market-positioning, aligned with the competing paradigms of six A's (Attractions, Accessibility, Amenities, Available Packages, Ancillary Services and Activities), to generate and sustain viable edge through taking advantage with technological, social,

cultural, political and legal indicators (Saxena & Tiwari, 2020; World Economic Forum [WEF], 2008).

In Pilapil-Añasco & Lizada (2014), Philippine tourism began to realize its potential as an important factor in the growth of the country's economy as early as 1950. In the same year, Philippine Tourist and Travel Association (PTTA) was established with the goal of enhancing accessibility among tourist sites, offering affordable tourism-related products and services, involving local culture in promoting travel destinations and leveraging the significance of tourism towards socio-economic development of the country. By virtue of Presidential Decree No. 189, the Department of Tourism (DOT) was formed as an executive department responsible for the regulation of Philippine tourism industry and promoting the country's pristine destinations. Years after, various tourism institutions and agencies were formed by the National Government to specifically regulate tourism-related operations and policies concerning properly managing the destinations, local community and stakeholders (ie Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippine Council for Sustainable Development and Philippine Convention and Visitors Association). Currently, the tourism sector has been primarily considered to stimulate inclusive socio-economic development, to reduce the percentage of poverty, to promote community building, gender equity and equanimity amongst stakeholders and to preserve cultural heritage and natural environment. As defined in the WEF (2008) and in Jasrotia & Gangotia (2018), tourist destinations usually compete on six A's- making destinations more attractive, feasible and profitable.

Recognized as one of the significant branches of the national economy, the tourism industry had driven Philippines towards sustained economic growth, social development [i.e. human resource and capital intensive] and catalyze with culture and heritage (Iacob, 2020; Pilapil-Añasco & Lizada, 2014). Prior to the onset of Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, Philippine tourism have exercised an upward slope as a result of high percentage of tourist inflow all over the world; whereas, these tourism target markets are mostly fascinated with the natural and cultural aesthetics of the country (Rivera & Gutierrez, 2019; Chin, et al., 2020). Thus, aside from the perspective that tourism influx served as an avenue to generate revenue, investment, foreign exchange, and employment, it was also viewed that tourism (ecotourism in particular) translates positive impacts on fostering conservation, involving stakeholders through community building, protecting natural heritage, and rising social integrity of the local residents (Ziegler, et al., 2021; Gutierrez, Rivera & Soler, 2021; Oracion & Hiponia, 2009; Varona, 2016). The marketing campaign as "It's more fun in the Philippines" has been planned aligned with the aggressive and progressive promotional strategy of the country in showcasing distinguished tourism destinations, promoting unique heritage and culture, magnifying destinations towards sustainability, recognizing the need for continuous human resource capacity building, and leveraging tourism products and services to value for experience.

The growth of tourism in the Philippines is largely driven by visits to natural attractions (Rivera & Gutierrez, 2019). As the hospitality and tourism industry begin to rethink tourism towards sustainability and inclusivity, businesses under the said sectors which have been affected by pandemic found opportunities in addressing this new era by identifying potential successful tourism products and new paradigm for destination planning involving women community (Pardo & Ladeiras, 2020). Domestic tourism is perceived to recover faster because of proximity and less travel restrictions; domestic travel destinations start to integrate path models examining interrelationships between destination image, perceived quality, satisfaction behavioral intentions (Binggeli, et al., 2021; Luan, et al., 2021). As recently dubbed by the

DOT with a tagline “Love the Philippines”-conceding with the country’s natural resources, abundance of storied history, richness in culture and diversity, a greater potential for domestic travel focuses more in reshaping and resetting tourism agendas in the context of supporting regional and domestic destinations, redefining community-based tourism, and addressing present-mindedness of travelers and operators (Rogerson & Baum, 2020). Tourism operators and destination managers begin to promote travel destinations aligned with post pandemic trend in customer behaviors and preferences, to evaluate tourist to various market segmentations and to consider the development of safety measures in tourism services and the platform of effective actions in restoring tourism (Stylidis, et al., 2017; Sánchez-Cañizares, et al., 2021; Ivanova, et al., 2021 Sánchez-Pérez, et al., 2021).

2.1.1. Case Study of Boracay Island

Tourism in Boracay island started to commence during mid 1970s with few lodging establishments which rapidly grew in the 1990s. The island’s popularity dubbed as one of the best beach destinations highly contributed to its economic growth however exhibited erratic slope in terms of tourists arrival (Carter, 2004). The growth of tourism in the island showed considerable seasonal fluctuation taking note of significant decline during unpredictable weather conditions, pollution, overtourism and crises. For the island to cope during these times, aggressive marketing campaigns have been utilized to target and attract previous tourists and new market to visit Boracay – strategizing with value addition and targeting adventure tourists. With this, products and services have to augmented based on demand and trend. Enhancing the products and infrastructure is adjacent in capacitating human resource and leveraging tourism MSMEs including those in the informal sectors.

In Mustafa et al (2020), tourism destination competitiveness has been measured among various dimensions namely nature, man-made destinations and attractions, culture and tradition, people and hospitality, basic infrastructure, tourism infrastructure, and safety and security. In conjunction with the context, there were perceived repercussions in sustaining tourism particularly in natural and cultural environments. Beach destinations serve as core tourist attractions in the Philippines. It has been highlighted in Rowan (2011) that Boracay is more susceptible to various consequences due to environmental fragility. Boquet (2017) mentioned that the Philippines has been patronized by international visitors mostly from Europe, America, Australia and among countries in Asia and really has the tourism potential in terms of landscapes, coastal areas and heritage. In Bautista (2021), it has been evident that impacts also constitute organizational and infrastructural weaknesses such as transportation, and lack of proper maintenance of tourism assets. Considering the closure of Boracay Island which happened six years ago, aside from the tourists, whom the six-month shutdown of the island markedly affected were the residents. Boracay island has been considered by the residents as a livelihood-basket for years until the island faced issues regarding improper waste management. When the shutdown of the island took place, the local residents were not prepared to embrace other means of living; thus, the pandemic was a double burden to the residents who have not yet coped with the aftermath of the closure of Boracay island. Tourism will always be on side, but with this depiction, sustainability really depends on everyone’s hands. Balancing environmental, cultural and socio-economic stability of the island needs to be exercised beyond visual cleanliness but to require comprehensive development and resilience among various tourism pillars including local community’s livelihood, leveraging employment, upskilling and educating local residents and capacity building (Ong et al., 2011).

2.2. *An Overview of Informality and Women in Tourism*

Interest in the informal economy remains as it continues to dominate global economies and has become a fundamental component of developing economies (Çakmak & Çenesiz, 2020). While a voluminous literature from various disciplines such as economic, ethnographic, sociological aspects of the informal economy has been undertaken (Biggs et al, 2012; De Soto, 2002; Wahnschafft, 1982; Williams, 2008), relatively little knowledge exists on the gender dynamics of the informal economy and its workers. Despite the prevalence of informal workers in tourism industries, studies on this subject remain limited (Kedir et al, 2018). In fact, little is known about the characteristics of informal tourism economies.

Discourses tackling the informal economy have in fact started as early as 1972 when development practitioners argued the need to recognize the informal sector as a viable alternative to address issues of unemployment resulting from the spillover effects of formal economic activities (Wahnschafft, 1982). As suggested by Çakmak and Çenesiz (2020), both formal and informal tourism economies are closely linked with each other—where the informal sector facilitates either an upward vertical exchange (where inputs to production are provided by the informal sector to the formal sector) or a downward vertical exchange (where the outputs of the formal sector and distributed as retail goods of the informal sector) (Tokman, 1978). Despite this seeming interrelatedness, perspectives in relation to informal economy's contribution to economic growth and development varied. On the one hand, the informal tourism economy, due its economic structure, is believed to contribute to higher multiplier effects and lower leakages on the local economy (Oppermann, 1993) by facilitating employment opportunities, skills development, absorption of unemployment population, and filling out service and product gaps created by the formal tourism economy (Biggs et al, 2012; Çakmak et al, 2019; Damayanti et al, 2017; Webb et al, 2009). On the contrary, other scholars noted the informal economy's adverse impact on the provision of public services and finances (Levy, 2010), along with the exposure of informal workers to economic shocks (i.e., due to the lack of protection and security) (ILO, 2014).

As the International Labor Organization (ILO) suggests, informal economic workers include “independent, self-employed, small-scale producers and distributors of goods and services (ILO, 2022).” They are workers operating in legal market activities that are not registered under the government for inclusion in taxation, labor and social security laws, among others (ILO, 2022). Meanwhile, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) defined the informal sector as “household unincorporated enterprises which consists of both informal own-account enterprises and enterprises of informal employers” (Cabegin, n.d., pg.1). As opposed to formal workers who are recognized and registered by formal institutions, informal workers are individuals who participate in economic work “without legal recognition or protection” (Wahnschafft, 1982, p.431). These are workers found in working environments characterized by small scale operations, unregulated and highly competitive markets, labor intensiveness, among others (ILO, 1972).

The pervasiveness of informal tourism workers in developing countries has become apparent since the 1980s (Wahnschafft, 1982). At present, the number of informal workers remains high globally. According to the recent report of ILO (2018), more than 60 per cent or 2 billion of the world's employed population operate in the informal economy. In Asia and the Pacific region, approximately 68.2 percent of its employed population are part of the informal economy. As a result, the contribution of the informal economic activities to gross domestic product (GDP) remains high across the globe (Ahlstrom & Ding, 2014). In Asia, the services

sector accounts for 47% of the informal economy (ILO, 2018), and where 75.4% of informal workers are women (Castillo, 2022). In the Philippines, an illustration of the realities of the informal economy remains bleak. In 2022, the Labor Force Survey of the Philippine Statistics Authority reported that 36.2 per cent or 17 million of the total number of employed Filipinos are from the informal sector (Department of Labor and Employment [DOLE], 2022). These workers are estimated to contribute around PHP 5 trillion to the country's economy (Senate of the Philippines, 2020). Other estimates suggest that a larger number of the population participate as informal workers (Castillo, 2022). Among informal economic workers in the country, women were found to be over-represented, with an estimated 6.6 million working in the sector (UN Women, 2022). To date, information about the informal economy proves lacking since the majority of its workers remain undocumented.

Hence, women remain to have a strong presence in tourism industries, specifically in informal tourism economies. Because of this, others have associated the term “informal” with women who act as individual entrepreneurs and informal workers (Fagertun, 2017). As suggested by Naami (2015), this phenomenon may be explained by the presence of low barriers to entry and the flexibility it offers to women who prefer to engage in economic work at their own free time and within the comforts of their homes. Women mostly opt to work in small-scale, usually informal activities, as a way of ensuring that they remain responsible for their duties at home (Tucker, 2007; Long & Kindon, 1997; Wilson, 2014). In most cases, women were found to be engaged in micro, small and family-owned businesses in tourism (Gibson, 2001).

As suggested by Fagertun (2017), the gendering of work is reflected in the informal sector, specifically in the types of work women are engaged in. In examination of women's work in Bali, for example, Fagertun (2017) found that women were generally on a “self-employed basis in the informal economy” (p. 7). They are mostly assigned to work that mirrors their domestic responsibilities including running small businesses, landladies, house maid, etc. In the informal tourism economy in Ecuadorian beaches, Pécot et al (2018) found that the tourism business sector is primarily composed of individual persons, mostly women. They are mostly engaged in food preparation, waitressing, billing operations, among others. Parker (2005), on the other hand, observed that in Southeast Asia, women generally take part in economic work, specifically in agriculture and trading work—which is still perceived as an extension of their domestic responsibility since it is rendered flexible and done close to home. Tucker (2007) also noted the prevalence of concerns in relation to gender and informal tourism economic activities in Mediterranean and Islamic areas where conservative patriarchal structures remain. In the case of Turkey, for example, women are limited by Islamic codes that prohibit them from participating in certain economic and social activities. As noted in the case of beach vendors in Acapulco, Mexico.

Mixed experiences were observed among women involved in the informal tourism economy. For some, they were found to be content with the work they are engaged in, while others have wished they could work elsewhere (Wilson, 2014). As expected, with little to no education, they remain marginalized and unable to transition to the formal economy. As Garcia-Ramon et al (1995) argued, the continued prevalence of women in informal work reinforces established gender division of labor. As argued by Fagertun (2017), excluding the gendered aspect of work means ignoring its impact on social inequality. Arguably, this is reflected by the fact that women's domestic work remains invisible from the perspective of productive work. Those engaged in informal work are individuals who are often insecure about their wage and their ability to keep their job which makes them accept longer shifts, lower wages, among others (Fagertun, 2017). On the other hand, Cone (1995) noted that women's involvement in informal

economic activities allowed them to reinvent themselves. In some cases, women's self-employment in the informal economy enables them to have greater autonomy. Wilson (2014) found that women's engagement in informal income-generating activities plays an important role in their household's economy.

2.3. Local, National, and Regional Policies on Tourism

Appropriately planning of destinations to optimize even-handed benefits to local communities and minimize unfavourable impacts of tourism, are the arising concerns during the rapid growth of ecotourism (Xu, et.al., 2014). Having a multitude of tourism destinations and a lot more to be discovered, Philippines begins to configure readiness towards the alignment of policies and regulations in developing ecotourism sites towards paramount sustainability. However, deviation among set standards were observed and promptness to attain rationality haven't been addressed well amongst environment, social, economic and institutional aspects (Bautista, 2021).

According to Gunn's (2014) theory on complete travel, tourism development is more than the accommodation, roads, airlines, ships, and access to the destinations but the tourists perceptions and reactions on the entire experience. The development also varies per destination given the unequal level of development and modernization of each. Regardless of this reality, tourism development must be sustainable and all stakeholders must be a part of it. One of the main reasons why sustainability should be a priority in tourism development is the issue of climate change. The Philippines is one of the largest archipelagic countries having the advantage of having a huge tourism potential but disadvantaged in terms of being climate change vulnerable. These realities must be addressed through effective and institutionalized governance systems of planning (Bautista, 2021). Hidalgo (2015) stated that the Philippines towards the country's tourism growth largely depends on nature-based destinations yet communities need to capacitate their social and human capital in addressing climate change impacts affecting their livelihood, natural environment, and properties

Supporting Gunn's observations, Yu et. Al. (2014) highlighted that the destinations have different markets and strategies for tackling the climate change. However, there are already a range of sustainable tourism measures in place such as policies, programs, human resources, and offices to address the climate change and tourism relationship in the future.

Some examples can be seen from Kirillova, et.al. (2013), a destination is considered to be admirable if it possesses aesthetic judgement to tourists. Paramount among these aesthetic dimensions is the presence of a clean and green environment. Tokai, et.al. (2015) added that waste management policy is crucial yet effective on the waste management system. The idea requires the involvement of all stakeholders - the host community, the government and the tourists, to work altogether. In the case of Taman Negara National Park, a famous ecotourism destination in Malaysia, due to massive infrastructure development, the National Park faced environmental issues like loss of habitats of fauna and decreasing number of fauna due to pollution. A solution to this incident is establishment of "wasteaware" benchmark indicators. Wilson, et.al. (2014) developed a comprehensive analytical framework applicable to cities and small towns' solid waste management system divided into two overlapping triangles- physical components (collection, recycling, disposal) and governance aspects (inclusivity, financial sustainability and sound institutions and policies).

Furthermore, Bautista (2021, p. 4) stated that the concept of carrying capacity (CARCAP) has called increasing concerns about natural environments. The Department of Environment and

Natural Resources (DENR) has regulatory manual regarding the computation of the carrying capacity of ecotourism sites in protected areas, encouraging destinations to regulate the influx of tourists to ecotourism sites and manage activities to maintain visitor's level of satisfaction and at the same time preserve and protect the ecological conditions of the areas. Similarly, after the rehabilitation of Boracay island, and in compliance with the post-pandemic regulations, the island (including all destinations in the country) started to properly regulate the influx of tourists through CARCAP estimates. Furthermore, Bajs (2013) advocates for three (3) essential concepts to support a successful and feasible tourist destination - perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty. It was observed that there was a significant out-turn of perceived value on satisfaction and intended future behavior of tourists.

2.3.1. Philippine Commitments in APEC regarding tourism

With its mandate towards better posterity for the people, APEC has been committed to sustainable, inclusive and balanced economic integration in the Asia Pacific. APEC presented unique opportunities concurrent with the advancement of national and regional interests. Aligned with this context, APEC could stimulate and magnify competitiveness of domestic sectors in the country. Philippines, on the other hand, to set forth initiatives in upgrading domestic facilities and services to align with global standards and regulations, in equipping grassroots initially with proper communication and through education, in fostering MSMEs' involvement in regional and global economy, in capacitating human resource, and in developing sustainable and resilient communities (Medalla, 2015).

Relevant with the various roles of tourism service sectors in the growth and evolution of APEC economies in trades in goods and services, Philippines may capacitate tourism value chain comprising of a wide spectrum of tourism-related services and participation of internal and external stakeholders in uplifting the economic growth – as services are integral in the tourism value chain.

Tourism in APEC has been rapidly growing and waving upslope in the new era. As business began to regulate in full operations, people-to-people (PTP) tourism has been expected to grow with greater economic integration among member economies. This PTP tourism can be defined through the movement of people from one nation to another, of which purposes are inclusive of (1) capacity building and education, (2) research and development, (3) safety and security, (4) risk management and resilience, (5) health, (6) disaster or calamity management, (7) environmental protection, (8) cross border regulations, and (9) cooperation among member nations.

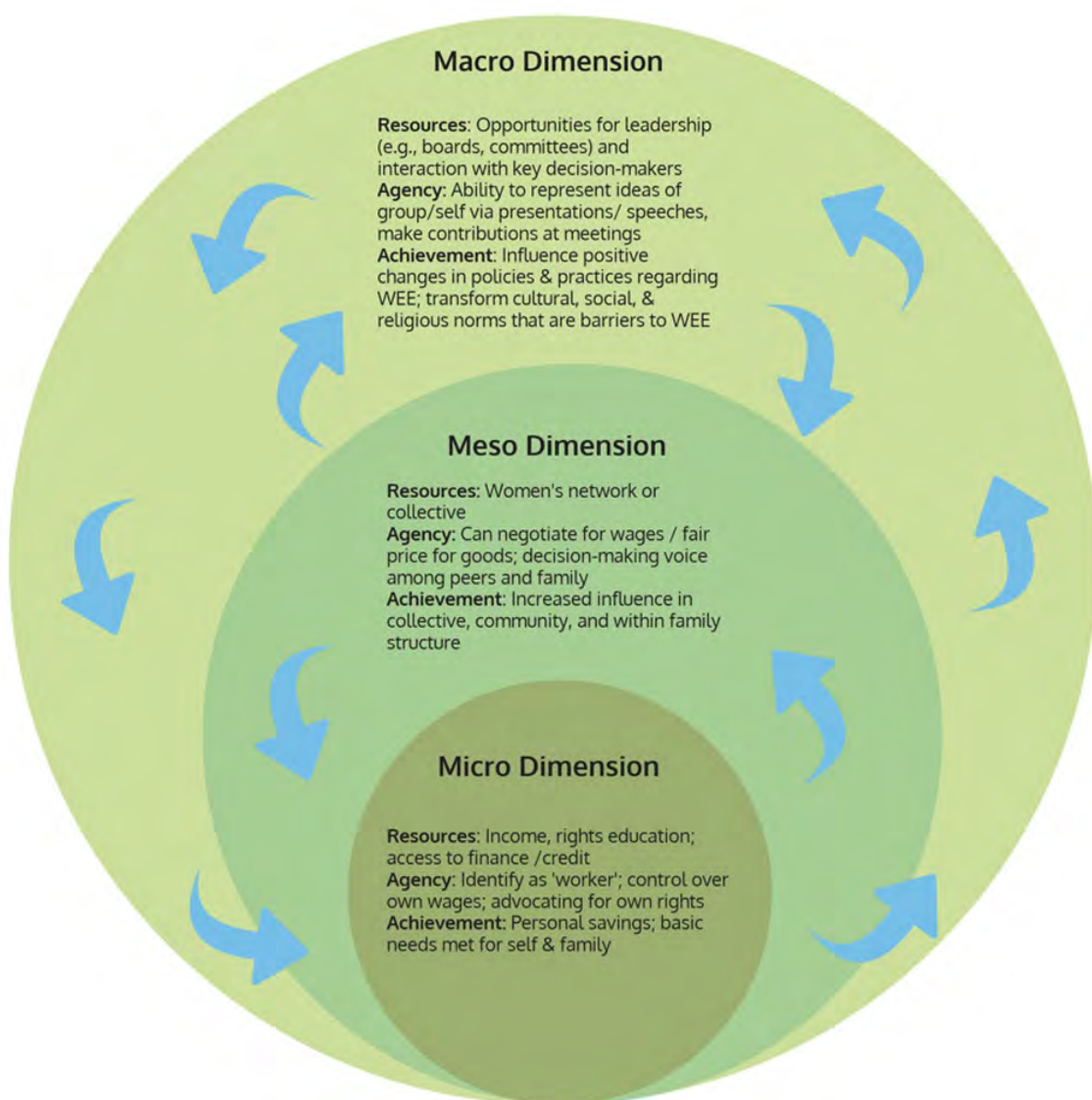
3. Frameworks and Methodology

3.1. Theoretical Framework

The authors will utilize the framework developed by Duguid and Weber (2019) in their study entitled “*Women Informal Workers and the Empowering Nature of Collectivizing and Collectives: An Evidence Synthesis*”. The question their study aimed to answer was how do women informal workers' participation in various types of collectives intersect with increases in their empowerment? Through their frameworks investigating women informal workers collectives; collectivizing women empowerment within the informal sector; and the ecosystem for enabling women informal workers to collectivize (Duguid and Weber, 2019).

Furthermore, Duguid and Weber (2019) highlighted that the foundational notion of women's empowerment is a process by which women redefine and extend what is possible for them to be and do, in situations where they have been restricted compared to men, from being and doing. They further defined the cornerstones of empowerment as the knowledge of and ability to protect/uphold rights; autonomy; agency/influence; and access to resources, are also key to women's economic empowerment. Economic empowerment of women works towards women having equal access to economic resources; employment in safe and supportive conditions; agency within personal to local to global economic spheres; and voice/representation in key decision-making forums (Duguid and Weber, 2019).

Figure 1. Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Framework



Source: Duguid and Weber (2019)

To further elaborate, Duguid and Weber (2019) coined the Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Framework which takes place on three dimensions that are interrelated and overlapping:

- (1) Micro dimension is at the individual or personal level (e.g., understanding rights / law, getting paid fair wages, control of own wages, identifying as a 'worker', access to finances/credit and education/training) (Duguid and Weber, 2019)
- (2) Meso dimension takes place on the relational level (e.g., belonging to a women's network or a collective, negotiating work, influence among family / kin) (Duguid and Weber, 2019); and
- (3) Macro dimension are outcomes in the broader, societal and institutional context (e.g., active participation and leadership on boards / committees; leading mobilizations; representing their group when presenting to key institutions). Within each dimension of WEE are three interrelated elements that need to be addressed – resources, agency, and achievements. If women can access resources (income, networks, assets, etc.) and have the agency (power, decision-making, self-confidence, skills) needed to use (or to access) those resources, then the outcome is an achievement (e.g., basic needs are met, women's wellbeing, children's health, elimination or reduction in violence) (Duguid and Weber, 2019).

This framework and its dimensions will be the basis for the analysis of the authors of the data that will be collected for this study.

3.2. *Schematic Framework, Research Design and Methodology*

Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized for this study. The primary data was gathered through the conduct of structured Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) guided by the WEE framework. Having multiple data sources is needed to eliminate biases and to paint a clear landscape. The secondary data were scraped from the official websites of the key agencies, news articles, official documents and reports, and other studies, among other sources.

The authors employed qualitative methods to secure primary and secondary data. To collect primary data, the authors conducted three phases of Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with the following stakeholder groups:

Phase 1: Local Government Unit (5 representatives)

- Municipal, Tourism Officers, Barangay Officials in Boracay Island, Malay

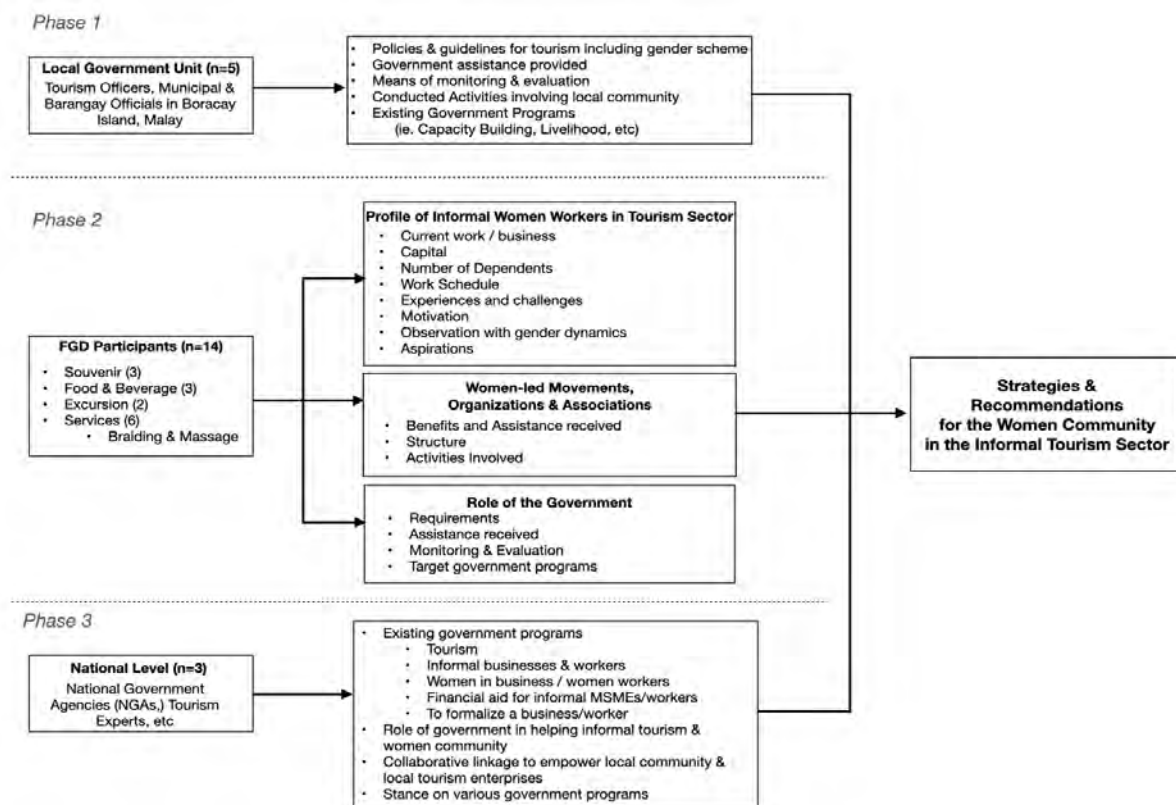
Phase 2: Informal workers from the following stakeholder groups (Rivera & Gutierrez, 2018) in Boracay Island, Malay (14 representatives):

- Food and Beverages (3)
- Souvenirs (3)
- Excursions (2)
- Services (braiding, massages, etc.) (6)
- Transportation (0)

Phase 3: National-level stakeholders (3 representatives)

- (National government agencies [NGAs] and experts concerned with tourism, informality, and others)

Figure 2. Schematic Framework



Source: Constructed by the authors

The first and second phase KII participants (i.e., LGU members and informal workers) were identified by utilizing a mix of purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques. The authors first reached out to the local government of Malay and its tourism office to identify the LGU representatives. From these representatives, some members of the informal tourism group were identified. The fieldwork in Boracay island was conducted for four (4) days, from 19-22 April 2023. These were dedicated to the conduct of the KIIs with the LGU officials of Malay and Boracay Island, along with the women informal workers in Boracay Island. Meanwhile, the third phase KII participants were identified using purposive sampling given their expertise and experience in the field. For these participants, the KIIs were primarily conducted via Zoom as per the participant's request.

Table 1. Framework and Data Sources

WEE Level	Data Sources
Micro-dimension Collective Economic Empowerment	KIIs with the LGU, and FGDs with Women Informal Workers
Meso-dimension Collective Economic Empowerment	KIIs with the LGU, and FGDs with Women Informal Workers Documents Review
Macro-dimension Collective Economic Empowerment	KIIs with the NGAs, LGU, and FGDs with Women Informal Workers Documents Review

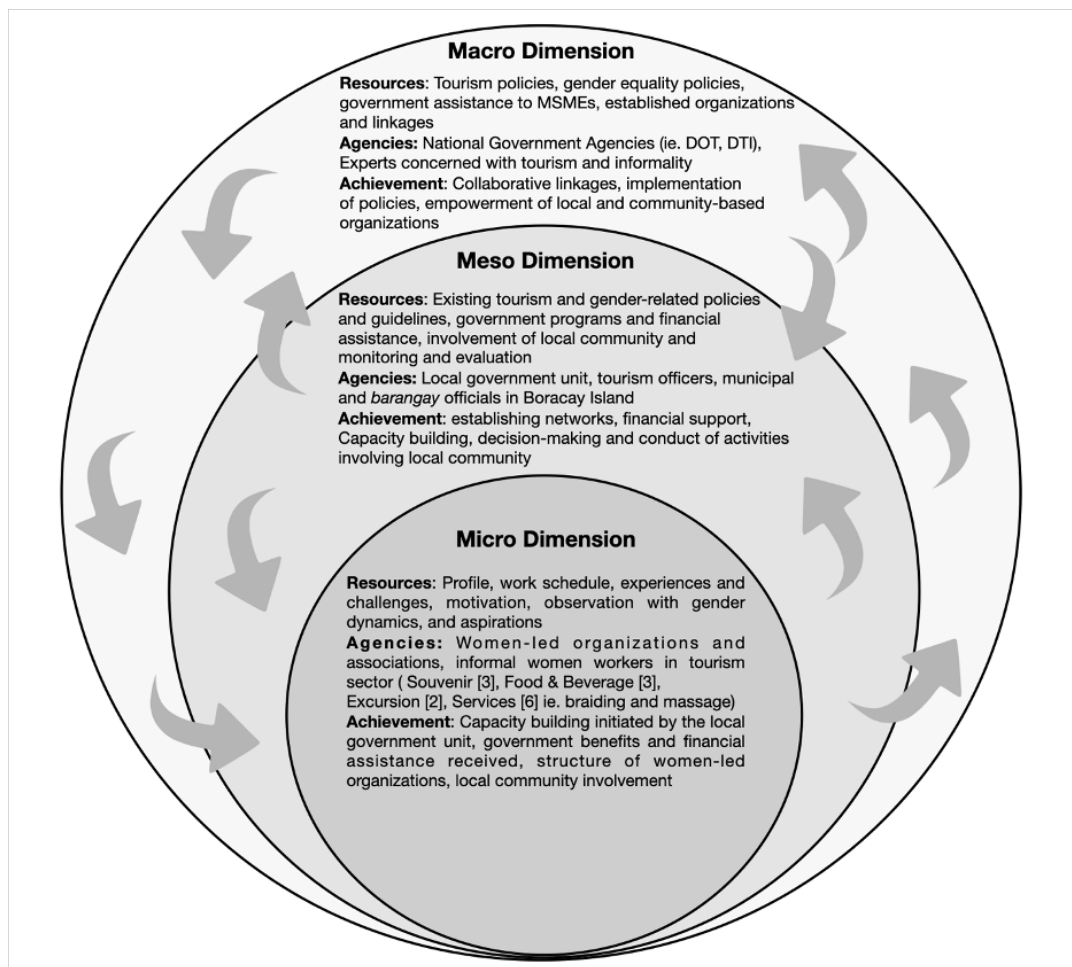
Source: Collated by the authors

The conduct of the KIIs was generally based on the data instrumentation/guide questionnaire and guided by the conceptual framework identified above. However, modifications were made following the initial findings made from the fieldwork conducted on Boracay Island. The primary data gathering was complemented by the conduct of a desk review of related literature, government and regional bodies' reports, news, and other sources.

3.3. Operational Framework

The operational framework has been patterned in Duguid & Weber (2019) to further analyze the mainspring of empowerment requisite to women's economic empowerment (WEE) taking into consideration equanimity in terms of economic access, privilege of taking part in decision-making, securing employment in a nurturing environment, and expanse for growth. The framework illustrates the overlapping facets on (1) Micro dimension, (2) Meso dimension and (3) Macro dimension.

Figure 3. Operationalization of the WEE Framework



Source: Collated by the authors

In this study, included in the **micro-dimension** are the women-led organizations and informal women workers in the tourism sector: Souvenir [3], Food and Beverage [3], Excursion [2], and Services [6]. The micro dimension assessed the profile of informal women workers and explored the role of gender dynamics adjacent to respective experiences, challenges, motivation and aspirations. The study also further traversed on collectively understanding their rights and access to various benefits such as financial and capacity building and in taking part in their local community through acknowledgement of organizations and/or associations.

The FGD participants were identified as women informal workers in Boracay Island. As per the provided specification, a total of 20 participants were identified, whereas 14 confirmed as FGD participants during the data gathering. In compliance with the data privacy act, the identity of the participants was kept anonymous. Participants were also well informed with the objectives, purpose and the questions which will be asked as indicated on conditions of the consent form provided prior to the conduct of FGD. Participants of the study were identified among various tourism-related sectors: services [massage and braiding] (6), souvenir (3), food and beverage (3) and excursion (2). Among the information and questions asked during the FGD were the profile of the participants, respective experiences and challenges, benefits and assistance they received, structure of various organizations and how they have been recognized

by the local government of Malay, community involvement and participation, and aspirations relating to their current state of work, status of living and for the Boracay Island.

Key informants and FGD participants were properly informed regarding the purpose of the study and topics were made sure to be relevant with the objectives of the study. Moreover, the questions were outlined as: (1) profile of women informal workers in the tourism sector, (2) role of government, (3) women-led movements, organizations, and associations, and (4) general recommendations relevant to their work/business.

The **meso-dimension** has been composed of the participants from the local government unit, tourism officers, and municipal and *barangay* officials in Boracay Island, Malay. In this dimension, existing tourism and gender-related policies and programs and financial assistance have been evaluated. The study also determined the involvement of the women community to various activities and how empowerment and growth have been capacitated through government programs and assistance provided. The agencies in this dimension have been observed with leniency in implementing tourism and gender-related policies however the scheme of monitoring and evaluation has been unobserved which results to improperly look over and track outcome of specific program or project whether the objectives have been met and sustained. The meso dimension has been significant in evaluating the benefits received by the women informal workers becoming a member of organization and local community, being supported by the government through financial assistance, and being involved in decision-making within the community, among peers and within family structure.

An initial coordination with the local government unit of Malay, Aklan has been conducted to formally seek permission and consent to conduct the study among key informants (ie. representatives from the LGU, tourism officers and *barangay* officials), to inform the purpose and scope of the study and the schedule of data gathering, and also to determine the informal women workers' organizations in Boracay Island. A letter with an attached consent form has been forwarded to the local government unit prior to the actual conduct of data gathering undergone last April 19-22, 2023.

Given the availability of the key informants, there were 5 representatives from the LGU, tourism officers and *barangay* officials who participated during the interview. Key informants were asked regarding the existing policies and guidelines mandated for the tourism sector including gender-related plans and approaches, the government assistance they have provided, the activities conducted involving the local community, existing government programs such as capacity building workshops and trainings, and livelihood programs, and various means used to monitor and evaluate the implementation and favorable accomplishment of the various programs, plans and policies regulated.

The National Government Agencies and experts in tourism and informality have been identified as significant in the **macro-dimension** of the WEE framework. The macro dimension is of broader societal and institutional context developing and implementing policies and regulations towards the actualization of various strategies. This has been requisite in enabling organizations through various support (ie. technical expertise, funding and mentoring). They have been viewed as a foundation in weaving tourism policies that could address empowerment and embed equality to all members of the community. These agencies and experts have been redeemed to grant women with various leadership roles as women have been viewed as parallel juncture of rights as a worker, as member of the community and as part of a family.

In the third phase of the study, key informants were invited through electronic mails. There were three (3) key informants from the national level including National Government Agencies (NGAs) and tourism experts including the academe who formally signified participation and signed consent form agreeing to take part as key informants of the study. The interviews have been scheduled depending on their availability and have been conducted using the Zoom platform with a duration of 30 to 40 minutes. Participants were asked regarding the existing tourism-related government programs, plans for the informal workers and MSMEs, respective roles in helping the informal tourism workers and women community, and presence of collaborative linkages to empower local community and local tourism enterprises.

Collectively, if the women informal workers were able to receive access to the said resources (assets, income and linkages) and agencies have appropriately organized, implemented and exhibited capacity building and empowerment, then achievement will be attained and realized across the dimensions.

4. Data Presentation

Informal workers in Boracay island are generally characterized as those who do not have legally binding contracts, who have seasonal work (i.e., dependent on tourism demand), are not entitled to social security and health benefits, are not obliged to pay government taxes, but have been working in the industry for years now. As opposed to formal workers, informal workers are given permits but are not necessarily required to pay taxes. The locals of Malay (i.e., Malaynons) are mostly employed in the informal sector since they are deemed less competitive, where most of the formal positions are filled out by outsiders and where locals occupy lower-level positions. For decades now, the number of informal workers has exponentially grown and have been found to contribute significantly to the tourism activities in the island. For this reason, along with the objective of maintaining and ensuring the quality and safety of services and products provided in Boracay, the government has been actively discouraging freelancing, and instead has been promoting the regulation and registration of informal workers. The registration process also facilitates safer tourism activities since the government can easily track which providers provided which services or products to tourists.

According to the APEC 11th Tourism Ministerial Meeting (2022), the 2019 World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) stated that the tourism industry alone generated more than 10% of global GDP and provided approximately 334 million jobs worldwide meaning that prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the tourism industry was growing significantly and contributed to the trade within the APEC region. During the crisis, the 2020 WTTC indicates that the tourism sectors have suffered a decline of 3.7% of global GDP and recorded a constant loss of 62 million jobs, leaving only 272 million employed. However, despite the impact of the crisis, the tourism sector has the potential to recover strongly due to the pursued integration and synergized efforts of regional tourism stakeholders to promote an integrated Asia Pacific through sustainable and inclusive measures (APEC, 2022).

The authors will use the three (3) dimensions of the WEE Framework in presenting the data. The data will be shown below are both from firsthand and secondary data: documents review and key informant interviews (KIIs).

4.1. Micro-dimension

Women-led organizations and informal women workers

Women were observed to have a crucial role in the sustained growth and development of tourism activities in Boracay Island. As suggested, women dominate the public sector and they play an important role in setting the direction and agenda for tourism development in Malay. Similarly, the informants suggested that there are more women than men working in the informal sector. Their prevalence in the informal economy has been attributed to two factors: first, their educational background which forces them to engage in informal work to help provide for their families; second, their personal choice to engage in informal work given the flexible and convenient work arrangements it offers them.

4.1.1. The Associations

Despite being categorized as informal workers in the tourism sector of Boracay Island, these workers were still subjected to comply with various government-mandated requirements (ie. business permit, police clearance, medical clearance including drug test, health certificate, and acquisition of Public Employment Service Office [PESO] ID) prior to operating business or working. The said requirements were aligned to properly monitor all tourism workers in the island, in addition to which is being a member among the recognized organizations in Boracay such as the Malay Boracay Vendors, Peddlers, Masseurs, Manicurist, Hair Braiders (MABOVEN) Inc. Also, only the residents of Malay were recognized to legally operate business and work in Boracay Island.

According to the respondents, all of them, except for food and beverages vendors, are part of an association, initiated by the local government. Furthermore, there are some associations of informal workers, however, women were prohibited from joining. In these associations, women are merely assigned for secretarial work. Despite this observation, the government suggested that there are no rules on gender segregation of work that they are aware of. Similar monetary benefits and training were also provided by the government. The island also has a lot to offer to its local residents when it comes to livelihood and employment. Yet, there are still those who considered operating and working in the informal sector to get away from tax payments and other fees collected by the government. However, work also depends on seasonality and the influx of tourists on the island. These workers also have to cope with the slope of demands and strive for competition in the formal sector.

Table 2. List of Tourism Associations/Organizations in Boracay Island

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Services</i>
Aquanaut Diving Assn Inc. (Formerly Brai)	Helmet Diving
Association Of Stand Up Paddle Boracay Inc.	Stand Up Paddle/Kayak
Boracay Business Administration Scuba Shops	Scuba Diving
Boracay Island Hopping Adventure Multi-Purpose Cooperative	Island Hopping
Boracay Fire And Led Dancer Association	Fire And Led Performer
Boracay Island Travel & Tour Operators Association	Travel And Tour
Boracay Land Transport Multi Purpose Cooperative	Land Transportation Services
Boracay Mabuhay Host Association Inc.	Tour Coordinator /Tourist Transfer Services

Boracay Photographer Association Inc.	Photography
Boracay Water Sports Association Inc.	Water Sports Activities
Caticlan Port-Vendors Multi-Purpose Cooperative	Pasalubong /Pastries
Caticlan-Boracay Transport Multi-Purpose Cooperative	Sea Transportation Services
Malay Boracay Hair Braider And Trades Association Inc.	Hair Braiding
Malay Boracay Vendors, Peddlers, Masseurs, Manicurist Association	Massage, manicure/pedicure, souvenir, fruit vendor, peddlers
Malay Motorbike Services Multi-Purpose Cooperative	MotorBike Rental
Malay Ports Services Multi- Purpose Cooperative	Porterage
Malay Tour Guide Association	Tour Guide
Malay Tricycle Operators And Drivers Multi Purpose Cooperative	Mainland Transportation
Masboi Sailboat Multi-Purpose Cooperative	Paraw Sailing Activity
Boracay-Malay Kayak Association Inc.	Kayak Rental
Boracay Sand Castle-Maker Association Inc	Sand Castle-Maker
Boracay Picnic Activities Association	Picnic
Boracay Muslim Traders And Vendors Association Inc.	Traders And Vendors

4.1.2. *The Women Workers*

Informal workers are generally characterized as self-entrepreneurs, small-scale operators, individual or family-ventured businesses, operators of highly labor-intensive activities, and are dependent on local resources, expertise and abilities acquired outside formal economy (Monterubbio, 2021; Slocum et al., 2011; Timothy & Wall, 1997). In the context of this study and in Boracay Island, informal workers are identified as individuals who are working in the tourism sector—recognized by the government and organized under tourism associations, but are not employed under formal tourism-related enterprises (i.e., hotels, restaurants, spa, etc.). They are also classified as non-tax paying workers and are not formally registered in the local and national tax systems. According to Rivera & Gutierrez (2018), informal workers are classified as the following stakeholder groups in Boracay Island, Malay: excursions marketers and workers; souvenirs vendors; food and beverages; other Boracay services (braiding, massages, etc.); and transportation.

- **Excursion**

The informal women workers facilitating excursion activities in the island mentioned that earnings depend on seasonality; they earn from 2,500 pesos to 3, 500 pesos during off peak season, and minimum of 5,000 pesos weekly during peak season. However, the weekly earnings were not enough to supplement daily necessities, especially those who have dependents. But they deemed to be motivated as this was their primary source of income. Informal tourism workers in excursion were dubbed as “marketers” who advertise or promote activities and excursions to various land and water activities. Hence, freelance marketers are earning on commission basis while employed marketers are still earning daily minimum wage. When asked regarding their observation with gender dynamics and other challenges or issues encountered as related to their job, participants mentioned that they perceived equal opportunities have been practiced among all genders. Yet, not all land and water activities may be applicable to women, as participation were mostly limited in promoting, collecting payments, assisting tourists but not in facilitating actual land activities (such as ATV ride) and water activities (i.e., parasailing, crystal kayaking, boating, and helmet diving).

Regardless if marketers were freelance or employed, similar benefits and assistance were provided by the government among all Malay residents. Participants mentioned that respective associations also helped them especially in terms of financial necessities. The government also supports local residents through community programs and training such as tour guiding and first aid training as requisite to the requirements prior to the acquisition of permits. Yet after the rehabilitation of Boracay Island, the government mandated to have designated areas for workers and properly organize their locations so as not to compromise with the tourists' activities and to systematize the outline of Boracay island considering distance from the shoreline. Participants have also mentioned that there are still other freelance marketers who have intentionally not registered as legal workers in the tourism sector but are still working. They have expressed that these residents are not capable of paying for various fees to acquire the required documents. A participant also emphasized that this may sound unfair on their behalf because authorities were not keen in monitoring and implementing their mandate.

The tourism industry in the Boracay island had significantly helped the local residents to earn and to have livelihood. However, the pandemic and the six-month closure of the island imparted lessons with them as well; tourism dependency also compensates implications; aside from tourism-related jobs, they are also striving with other forms of living to cope with daily needs and as contingency to unpredictable situations or events which may happen.

According to the interviews, women are not members of some associations or allowed to work on numerous excursion related work, such as operating boats, kayaking, paragliding, *paraw* sailing, and other water activities since it requires strength and some safety issues. Therefore, it was cited that those works were exclusive for men. Seemingly, women workers also aspire to participate in these excursion-related activities, yet for those women categorized as informal workers, what they hope for is a financial assistance (fees they pay to be legally recognized as a worker in the island) to settle fees for the application process in their municipality and continuous training to capacitate local guiding services.

- **Souvenirs**

Like the experiences of other informal workers, souvenir providers also operate under specific associations with respective by-laws that regulate their operations. Souvenir providers have flexible working arrangements given the nature of their work. Their income comes in the form of salary and commission (e.g., Php 300-1,000 daily on average). For most of these vendors, the income they make complement their husband or family's income. In general, they become involved in the industry through the influence of their friends and relatives who recruit them.

In terms of the issues and challenges they face, the informants suggested issues in relation to the seasonality of tourism demand, issues on stall or space allocation, competition among other souvenir providers since most of the vendors and stalls almost sell the same items, increased living expenses (i.e., rent), and some form of harassment from tourists and fellow sellers (i.e., haggling prices, disrespect, catcalling, etc.). When asked about their relationship with the government, they seemed to be generally satisfied with the support and platform the government provides to improve their work conditions.

However, it is a different set-up for souvenir workers working for a shop and/or informally employed by their "amo". They said that they face a lot of challenges, since they are not part of an association, such as: expensive lodging in the island; low salary; being discriminated against since they are mostly not from the island; and being away from their families. Per

observation, there are more women workers than men. The interviewees responded that because women tend to be more trustworthy for the customers and can attract more people to buy.

With their work-related aspirations, they were hopeful that the local government of Malay could provide financial capital to sustain their livelihood, and to help them promote local souvenir products. These women workers mentioned about the previous livelihood programs provided by the local government, and they were hoping that more programs and workshops will be facilitated to elevate skills in making local handicrafts. While, their aspiration for the island is a continual tourist influx despite seasonalities.

- **Food and Beverage**

Unlike the other sectors under the tourism industry in Boracay Island, informal workers in food and beverage were not required nor subjected to be members of various locally organized associations. Food and beverages tend to have different requirements from the government because instead of providing services, they provide goods. Moreover, food and beverages shall go through sanitary, safety, and other requirements. Some interviewees do not have permits required to sell food and beverages. Those women who own their own stall and/or supply the food or beverages earn more but also depend on the season. They also work on flexible work hours depending on their availability.

Moreover, some *Paluto* restaurants also have marketers and mostly they are women. Hence, similarly to the souvenir workers, they were more approachable and trustworthy. However, unlike those who are employed, the scheme of their livelihood is no work, no pay. Compared with the other sectors, there are more competitors in food and beverage. Informal workers must withstand competition among the big player restaurants and establishments, yet pricing strategy cannot be considered as an advantage these days since price range is not far from the price scheme and menu selection of competitors in the formal sector.

Agreeably, food and beverages is one of the sectors that earn well. Their primary concern is displacement of their stalls and competition. Despite the regulatory emplacement and mapping of the local government with respective tourism sectors in the island, workers included in the food and beverage sector expect coequal privilege in marketing local cuisine and in continuously training F&B services staff.

- **Transportation**

Given that the Boracay Island offers different modes of transportation, from ferry, *habal-habal*, tricycle, P2P bus, e-jeepneys, small jeepneys, and among others. The authors were not able to locate a woman working on the informal transportation despite employing a snowball method and inquiring with the locals and barangay unit. Hence, they cited that women in the transportation work in ticketing offices and are formally employed.

- **Services**

Boracay Island offers diverse tourism services such as hair braiding, henna tattoo, and massages. It was mentioned earlier that workers on these services are required to be part of an association. They are required to wear identification cards to be official workers, though they are still considered as informal workers.

One of the unique traits of the masseuse is that they are all certified and professionalized. Some of the challenges they face are their lack of clients, threat of displacement, retirement, sexual harassment, gossiping and badmouthing, and being looked down upon. At home, they are seen as breadwinners of their families. Some cited that their husbands and family are very considerate in terms that they know that they use their hands at work, so they are not required to do some household chores such as laundry and washing dishes. Furthermore, they are very proud of their profession and they want people to know that masseuse professionals should not be stereotyped and looked down on.

Hair braiders, though they did not have formal training, took years in learning the skill. They also face similar challenges such as competition, threat of displacement, retirement, sexual harassment, and gossiping and badmouthing. Though they cited that if it's peak season, they earn really well and they hold their own time. The main challenge is how they manage their earnings. Majority of the braiders are women. Unfortunately, the authors were not able to locate a woman who is doing henna tattoos.

The trend of distribution of work in different sectors is still based on gender stereotypes. Most of the respondents identified that some work are for “men” such as operating water sports and transportation and some work are for “women” such as braiding, massaging, and among other services.

These women also said that they are now more empowered financially and that they are aware of programs and laws that protect them. They cited that before, they endure sexual harassment and domestic violence, but now they know where to report and they do not see themselves as helpless anymore. This awareness is due to government orientation and interventions.

Almost all the interviewees mentioned that they have been displaced after the several unforeseen challenges their island faced such as the rehabilitation programs, series of strong typhoons, and the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. These shocks disrupted both their livelihoods and lives. When asked regarding their future aspirations for their job on the island, participants answered that they still long for improvement and wish to have the opportunity to be included in the formal sector to earn regularly and receive a similar share of employee benefits.

4.2. Meso-dimension

Local government unit, tourism officers, and municipal and barangay officials

The municipal government of Malay has been actively engaging informal workers in Boracay since 2013. As per government records, there are a total of 23 organizations (i.e., 14 associations, 9 cooperatives) providing various products and services on the island. Through the active involvement of the government, tourism in Boracay Island operates under a strict “no accreditation, no operation” policy which requires all providers to be accredited under the LGU and the Department of Tourism (DOT). As revealed in the interviews, informal workers are organized under people’s organizations following local laws that aim to promote the inclusivity of tourism development.

Furthermore, following the local ordinance by the LGU mandating the registration of informal workers, a formal registration process is established to facilitate the accreditation of informal workers in associations. Upon registration, the informal workers are given identification cards

(IDs) and QR codes which are required to be presented and worn when offering services to tourists. Some of the benefits of registering under the government include the following: (a) permission to offer products and services on the Island (i.e., legality of their work), (b) provision of financial aid when needed (i.e., pandemic financial aid), (c) training on range topics (i.e., customer service, handling complaints, operations), (d) eligibility for service award (i.e., entails financial rewards and incentives), (e) organized business environment for tourists and providers (i.e., no fixers, no smoking), and (f) eligibility for health-checkups. In organizing the workers through associations, the government noted the informal workers' ability to collectively bargain for their demands from the government which facilitated better communication between both parties. To ensure their active engagement, monthly tourism frontliners meetings and council meetings are done quarterly.

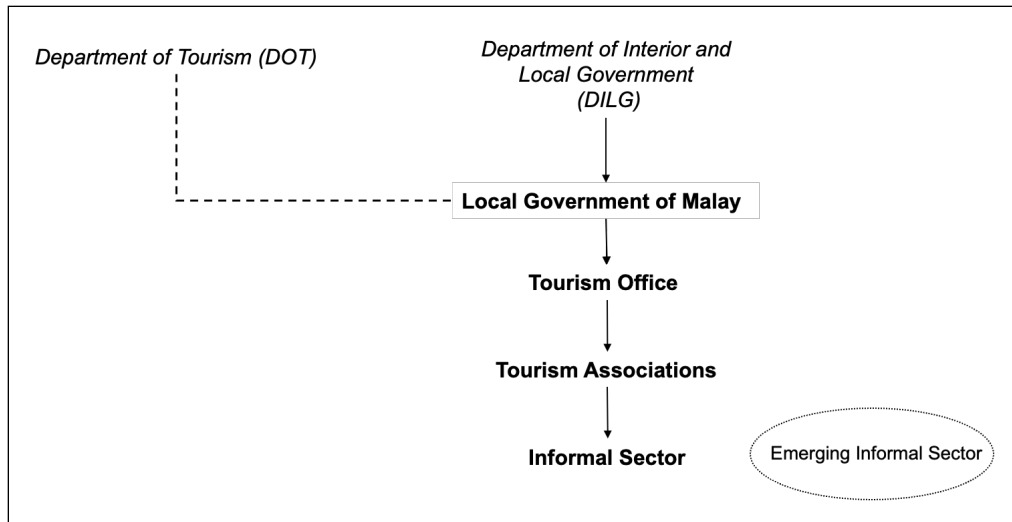
Part of the efforts in engaging the informal sector is reflecting their needs in the Comprehensive Land Use Map where tourism zones (i.e., creation of more affordable housing spaces for informal workers) are designated. For example, each association is organized spatially to assigned locations (i.e., signified by flag or tower every 200 meters). Other government initiatives including training programs and incentives (i.e., Project Pristine) are also provided.

Alongside efforts to accredit the informal workers, several challenges in organizing them were cited including the prevalence of factions, "*inggitan*" (envy), among others. Fortunately, such issues do not hinder their preference to be organized formally given the collective bargaining power they receive from cooperating and working collectively under the by-laws that regulate how they relate with each other. Despite the government's active engagement, they cannot meddle in how the organizations are governed from the inside. As proudly stated by the informants, the informal workers themselves recognize the value of accreditation in maintaining the quality and sustained growth of tourism activities on the island. As suggested, the informal workers realize that it is their collective obligation to protect tourists and tourism. As cited, the informal workers check on themselves to ensure the accountability (i.e., calling out those unregistered) and safety of tourism products and services provided to tourists. The associations, for example, voluntarily clean up the area themselves as they realize the value of tourism in their livelihood.

Despite these efforts, the government still acknowledges that challenges still prevail in terms of the emergence of a new segment of informal workers that are yet to be regulated. As suggested, emerging providers (i.e., beach mat vendors) remain to be unregulated. While the municipal government recommends the formalization of informal workers to ensure the stability of their jobs and income. They recognize that it would be difficult to convince the informal workers to transition into the formal economy (i.e., working for the municipality, for tourism businesses). As suggested, informal workers are not willing to transition into the formal economy because of the convenience and higher income they receive from working in the informal economy. For informal workers, their work is considered very flexible where they receive more income (e.g., hair braiders earn PhP 300-900 per head on the average) on top of the tips they receive from tourists.

4.2.1. Structure of Local Governance in Boracay Island

Figure 4. Local governance structure in Boracay Island



Source: Illustrated by the authors

The local governance structure in Boracay Island, vis-à-vis tourism development and activities, is illustrated in Figure 1. As observed in the illustration, the informal tourism workers of Boracay Island are directly managed by the tourism associations organized by the LGU of Malay through its tourism office. Following the mandate of DOT as outlined in Republic Act 9593, Section 5. Mandate, it is considered the “*primary planning, programming, coordinating, implementing and regulatory government agency in the development and promotion of the tourism industry...in coordination with attached agencies,*” it supervises and coordinates the implementation of tourism plans and initiatives, through its regional office in region 6. Similarly, DOT is in consultation with LGUs in formulating tourism activities while monitoring the latter’s compliance with national tourism standards. DOT is also mandated to provide technical assistance to LGUs in tourism development, among other tourism-related activities and policies. Thus, together with the LGU of Malay, DOT shares the responsibility of assisting the tourism office of Malay in the tourism development of the island. Within this established structure, the emergence of a new segment of informal workers and the persistence of unregistered tourism workers remains unregulated.

4.3. Macro-dimension

National government agencies and experts in tourism

The substantial contributions of the informal tourism industry to the sustained growth of the Philippine tourism industry have been well-recognized. Despite this, obtaining specific information and data on them remains a challenge for the public sector. Hence, they are often categorized under the programs dedicated to micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and community-based tourism organizations (CBTOs). While there are no programs or initiatives targeted specifically for informal workers, educational training programs aimed towards growing their businesses, capacity-building programs aimed at diversifying their offerings (i.e., tour guiding, homestays, food preparation, etc.), and some advocacy programs such as the Filipino Brand of Service Excellence (i.e., customer service program), TourISM

WORCS (Tourism Integrates, Supports and Minds Women's Respect and Child Safety), among others are made available to all members of the tourism industry. As per DOT's initiatives in engaging and assisting informal tourism workers, they specifically work with and through the respective LGUs in tourism destinations. DOT therefore acts as a guiding body in the conduct of programs and interventions—which are based on the training needs assessments (TNAs) provided by the LGUs.

While there are no women-specific programs, at least 45 percent of women (i.e., along with the mandated 5 percent budget allocation on GAD-related programs) are targeted to become recipients of training initiatives and programs that are aimed at empowering them to ensure that tourism is beneficial for them. TNAs and GAD Committee decides on what type of programs are implemented.

Moreover, it was emphasized by the tourism experts that performance indicators vary among different sectors and stakeholders of the tourism industry, whereas women workers, from both informal and formal sectors, have specified roles in policy making and actualization of various strategies. The local government unit also has the responsibility of allocating equal opportunities to all working units of tourism. Thus, other agencies include the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and Department of Tourism (DOT)-which facilitates specific tourist destinations in the country. The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) has nationwide deployment to easily cater help in providing financial aid for informal MSMEs/workers. In addition, there are also various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) who voluntarily provide financial assistance and capacity building programs to these workers of all genders.

Government units are structured differently and no particular linear approach has been established in addressing the specific concern on gendering the tourism sector. There are some regions and localities which highly converge on women workers, highly focusing on gender, yet some government units would not specifically enrich policies to particular gender like women workers and instead incorporate gender as requisite with respective frameworks in general, whereas gaps still exist in measuring the said guidelines.

All government agencies have Gender and Development (GAD) programs embedding women empowerment and gender equality. In looking after women rights, the Philippine Commission on Women offers welfare programs and services for Filipino women. Agencies and guidelines may vary from one another but importantly giving importance to gender equality and women protection and empowerment.

Also, the local government units should be keen in assessing the receipts received by the informal women in tourism whether proper compensation is being provided adjacent with labor, hard work, creativity and craftsmanship. The position of informal women workers, and even children in some provinces, should be emphasized as well considering their contribution and significance in the industry. The government should further consider looking into the protection and social security of these workers, as the government plays a substantial role in evaluating and monitoring tourism workers, allocating capacity building and package opportunities to improve the community. The plans should not only be written into paper but instead be taken into tangible actions.

The tourism workers, the academe, NGOs and the respective government units are working altogether through various dialogues considering convergence of ideas. Linkages also play a significant aspect in organizing policies, guidelines towards actualization. Thus, the government cannot work alone because a comprehensive tourism plan may also involve the private sectors which function as intervening variables between the industry and informal workers.

The role of the academe is also critical since not all would redeem focus on gender. The concept of gender has been delved into general context and similarly, no specific measurement in addressing challenges and gaps that each of the gender represents. The role of the academe is to educate all Filipinos including grassroots level and at the same time provide support that enables the community to recognize inclusivity and equality. In the context of tourism, different transitions have been perceived since people are more critical of inclusivity, fairness and equality. Thus, if people are less educated, things will be accepted as it is and will not be well informed that certain agencies could protect them, will not be aware of various entitlements they should receive- reiterating that the focus is not limited with women alone, but with the intersectionality of all gender spectrum. The bottom-line will always be on educating the people in the community which can be incorporated as aligned with the educational system in the country. To cite an example, the tourism curriculum has been developed embedding gender inclusivity adjacent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) with various subjects and programs as reflected on course plan or syllabi.

While training is provided by the government, there are no programs specifically targeted for women. For training programs, the majority of them are conducted by the LGU along with other government agencies such as the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). These programs are focused on enhancing the skills of women in handling businesses, creation of handicrafts, participation in the wellness industry, gardening, among others. Such programs allow women to diversify their sources of income (i.e., to ease their dependence on seasonal tourism work). These programs for women are targeted towards single parents, women associations, among others which all assist women to be integrated in economic sectors.

4.3.1. Current Policy Environment

The tourism sector in the Philippines includes several public sectors (Department of Tourism [DOT] and various agencies, and local government units; and non-public sectors including business enterprises among areas of tourism, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), academic institutions and local communities. Gender and Development (GAD) policies mainstream to tourism-related programs and projects of tourism stakeholders. Gender-related tourism aspects were included in the GAD checklist paying attention to program and policymakers and policy developments in compliance with Republic Act No. 7192 (Women in Development and Nation Building Act), Republic Act 9710 (Magna Carta of Women), DOT and GAD Interagency Committee under Administrative Order No. 94-07 which monitors continuous implementation of various GAD programs, projects, activities aim to address gender-related issues and concerns in the tourism sector. The Department of Tourism- Gender and Development Focal Point System (DOT-GFPS) advocates strategies in addressing men and women concerns and experiences towards integral facets of the economic spheres, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs benefiting all genders equally across all areas and at all levels.

The tourism industry has been recognized as labor-intensive, offering numerous income-generating and livelihood opportunities, and a vast range of employment possibilities which is openly accessible to everyone even with vocational skills training. Tourism also helps small entrepreneurs to scale up economic prospects as many support services have been established. Adjacent with these strategies and as instructed by DOT, policies have been developed to eliminate discrimination and abuse to women as they should also have a voice in representing women's groups in decision-making and policy-making.

Relatively, as reported during the Earth Summit (2002), several work-related gender issues in tourism have been identified to address globally: *gender-role stereotyping, gender inequalities in occupational distribution, limited access to capital of woman micro entrepreneurs for tourism-related enterprises, negative impacts of tourism (ie. prostitution, sexual objectification and some environmental effects), and issues pertaining to tourism management (ie. limited representation, sex-disaggregated data and information, sexual harassment, and lack of awareness of gender issues).*

Emphasized in these policies is a requisite training to tourism agency staff and workers in the tourism sector, including hotel and homestay operations, and relevant tourism-related services such as local guiding services or tour guides. Public and non-public organizations managing tourism destinations prohibit marketing and promotional strategies which portray women as sexual objects.

Several plans have served as interventions to arising and current issues addressing tourism projects equally benefit men and women. Local Government Units were also encouraged to develop tourism-related products and services streamlining community-based approaches. The following were set some of the outcomes resulted from the changes made to address gender issues: (1) increased employment of women, (2) realistic portrayals of women and children in advertising campaigns, (3) safer workplaces, (4) elimination of human trafficking, (5) improved productivity, (6) access of women to higher credit levels and technical support, (7) improved representation of women in tourism development and related organizations, (8) elevate awareness of gender issues, (9) more active promotion of gender equality, and (10) increased skills and knowledge of tourism industry employees and applied Gender and Development in policy-making and decision making.

4.4. Summary of Data

Women have been found to substantially contribute to the sustained growth of tourism activities on Boracay Island. The same case is observed in their involvement in the informal tourism economy where they were also found to dominate the specific sub-sectors including hair braiding, massage, souvenir, food and beverage, and excursion (i.e., as marketers) products and services. **Table 2** illustrates a summary of women's involvement in the informal tourism economy.

Table 3. Characteristics of Women Informal Tourism Workers

Indicators	Souvenir	Food and Beverages	Excursion	Services	Emerging Tourism Segment
Nature of Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sellers of souvenirs such as keychains, accessories (e.g., bracelets, necklaces, anklets), t-shirts, bags, among others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often characterized as "street vendors" or "food marketers" for <i>Palapa</i> restaurants. They are not required to be members of organized associations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Marketers" who advertise or promote activities and excursions to various land and water activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes massage therapists and hair braiders on the island. Massage therapists are licensed professionals who require formal training prior to providing their services. Hair braiders receive informal training from other hair braiders (e.g., often family members, friends, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes beach mat vendors who rent out beach mats to tourists. An emerging tourism provider since the implementation of the 25+5 easement of Boracay Island Considered "illegal" and "unregistered" product sellers
Estimated Income (weekly)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Php1,200 (off-peak) Php5,000-7,000 (peak) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission-based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earns daily minimum wage and commission Php2,500-Php 3,500 (off-peak) Php5,000 (peak) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Php500-Php1,000 per massage service Php300-Php1,000 per hair braid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Php500 per beach mat (unlimited use)
Challenges and Issues Faced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seasonality of demand for tourism activities Inconsistent policy implementation to unregistered/illegal workers Competition with other souvenir providers Designated location by government Living expenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seasonality of demand for tourism activities Competition with formal tourism establishments Displacement of stalls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seasonality of demand for tourism activities Competition with unregistered freelance marketers Designated location by government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seasonality of demand for tourism activities Competition with formal tourism establishments (i.e., pricing strategy) Sexual harassment "Looked down upon" Threat of displacement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seasonality of demand for tourism activities Sexual harassment Fear of being policed (i.e., since they are deemed illegally operating)
Relationship with the Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfied with the support of government in improving work conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have little to no interaction with government (i.e., not required to register under government) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government's support was felt substantially in the form of training programs, financial support, among others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deems government's programs and campaigns effective in raising their awareness about their own protection from sexual harassment, domestic violence, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have little to no interaction with government (i.e., not required to register under government)
Relationship with Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfied with their involvement in their respective associations; others choose to be freelancers without memberships to associations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not required to be members of tourism associations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women were not members of some associations offering excursions (i.e., primarily deemed exclusive for men due to strength requirements and safety issues) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally satisfied with their membership with their respective tourism associations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not required to be members of tourism associations
Perception of Formal Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some degree of desire to be formally employed as "re-sellers" of souvenir items for a more stable source of income 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceives formal establishments as direct competitors. Others expressed desire to be employed under formal establishments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressed desire to be included in the formal economy in order to attain employee benefits and security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressed desire to be included in the formal economy in order to attain employee benefits and security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressed desire to be included in the formal economy in order to attain employee benefits and security

Source: Collated by the authors

Women informal workers in the tourism sector of Boracay are characterized as individuals who have been engaged informally due to their educational background and their personal choice given the flexible and convenient work arrangements it offers them while being able to provide additional income to their families. Despite this, however, most of the women informal workers suggested that their income was not enough to supplement their own and their dependents' daily necessities.

Women informal workers are generally perceived to be “trustworthy” by customers and, hence, are believed to be more efficient providers of products and services. Despite this, across the sub-sectors, women experienced some degree of sexual harassment (e.g., catcalling, sexual advances, etc.) from both tourists and other tourism workers. Despite dominating some informal tourism sub-sectors, women are prohibited from specific work opportunities such as operating excursions (i.e., paragliding, parasailing, and other water activities) which have different skills/strength requirements.

Across the sub-sectors, some of the commonly cited challenges they face include the following: seasonality of demand for tourism activities; competition with other informal workers, and formal establishments were also deemed a common concern (except for beach mat vendors); designated location by the government (i.e., which limits their interaction with tourists). Women informal workers also face some issues in relation to sexual harassment and prejudice in their work (i.e., being looked down upon). Others also cited their concern about the continued presence of unregistered informal workers who also disrupt their operations.

Except for unregistered informal workers from the food and beverage, and emerging tourism segments (i.e., beach mat vendors), informal workers from other sub-sectors expressed their satisfaction with the programs offered by the local government to improve their work conditions, support the advancement of their skills and provision of products and services, raise awareness about their rights, etc. The same trend is observed in examining their relationship with their respective tourism associations where they generally found their membership somehow helpful in their operations. Across the sub-sectors, the informal workers expressed their desire, in varied degrees, to be integrated into the formal economy to ease their concerns about their job security, and income stability, among others.

5. Analysis, Conclusion, and Recommendation

The last chapter of the study aims to straightforwardly discuss each research objective and offer ways forward. Furthermore, the authors will summarize the study using the dimensions of the collective economic empowerment framework. Below are the analysis per research objective and recommendations:

5.1. Map the roles of women as informal tourism workers and understand their working environment

Mapping the role of women as informal tourism workers, they are still highly concentrated in jobs stereotypically assigned to women and could be categorized as lower income than their male counterparts. In the association format, women are still not welcome in jobs such as operating water sports or activities and transportation since they are seen as the “weaker” sex and therefore cannot operate heavy machinery and be in charge of safety. On the opposite side of the coin, women in the informal economy in Boracay Island are more empowered now, they know the existence and make use of the Barangay anti-violence against women and their

children (VAWC) program and acknowledge that they are the breadwinners of their families. During the pandemic, when men lost their jobs in the tourism sector, they took over that role by improvising. For example, most of the respondents made use of digital platforms such as facebook and messenger to buy and sell clothes, shoes, and beauty products while others sell food online.

The working environment of women informal workers, as described in the data, involves a lot of worries about displacement. This could be associated with the following: first, trauma due to the several months closure of Boracay Island and enforcing new policies such as not allowing them to conduct their services and business on the beachfront. Therefore, they lost their market and venue to conduct business (e.g. braiding and massaging). The women wished that both the local government and national government offered them alternatives where to conduct their business.

Second, following the closure of the Island due to the onslaught of typhoons and the COVID-19 lockdowns that made them lose their access to income. The women said that these unforeseen phenomena really took them by surprise and were not able to help them prepare. These shocks left the families relying on the tourism sector to be in deeper poverty. Women cited that they accessed informal loans during these moments since they do not have any idea how to access government loans and support for their informal businesses. Therefore, the loans with loan sharks have higher interest and there is always a threat of harassment and insecurity when they cannot pay back. The only support they got from the government was the mandatory “ayuda” per family. Their associations served as their networks to access loans and support systems during the trying times. However, the association set-up is very personal in nature therefore could be used as a tool to alienate and disassociate others who do not have good relationships with the group of some individuals in the association. The women informal tourism workers in Boracay Island rely mostly on personal relationships with their competitors and their association with the local government. The pitfall is that decisions about the existence of their business could be arbitrary.

Lastly, in the current set-up of the women informal tourism workers their biggest issue is the accessible location to conduct their business. The two (2) main issues are: due to the commercialization of the Island with the increase in demand for land, they cannot afford to pay rent for their businesses; and the they cited that the local government, through the bargaining of the associations, still does not follow-through with their promise to help them identify a place for them to conduct business.

Recommendations:

- ***Location.*** First, the local government should follow through with their promise to the associations to provide them guidance and support where they could set-shop. Displacement is their number one insecurity, they currently have problems in getting an affordable location with access to the market.
- ***Gender Sensitivity and Empowerment Training.*** For the local government unit to give gender sensitivity training not only for the LGU workers but also for the associations. Gender stereotypes persist through generations. The women informal tourism workers showed capacity to learn from training and apply them in real life, for example, their training on anti-VAWC. This training may start their awareness that women can also do the work of men, and vice versa without the fear of shame and discrimination. Women, with the substantial role they play in tourism activities in Boracay island, are envisioned to be more skilled and capacitated so they can contribute further to the

development of Malay as a city. The women themselves cited the need for younger women to be educated and empowered to support their career development.

- **Safety nets.** The format of associations allowed the women informal tourism sector to access some benefits of being in the formal economy at the same time the flexibility of being in the informal economy. However, safety nets are still lacking for them especially in the time of shocks. Their associations cannot provide for their members' needs at the time of crises since they do not have the funds. Some examples are health problems of the workers, retirement age, and shocks. Hence, there could be a drive where these women could be empowered to enroll in PhilHealth, SSS, PAGIBIG, and other measures with the initial subsidy of the government.

5.2. *Determine the challenges and issues of these women in relation to their participation to the formal tourism economy through the case study of Boracay island*

The authors asked these women informal tourism workers if they want to shift to the formal economy, they implied that they want to have the same privileges such as access to training and programs, formal channels of loans, and support from the government whenever there are shocks in their businesses. However, they also enjoy the freedom and flexibility of informality offered to them due to their multiple burdens, being responsible for homemaking, being a breadwinner, and maintaining good relationships in the community and their association.

The association format could be seen as one of the strategies in helping these women to have both: the perks of formality and the flexibility of informality. The challenge, as the authors want to highlight, is that these associations rely mostly on "personal relationships". Furthermore, it could also be attributed to the local government leadership even with the tourism workers. Maybe for now, the associations enjoy good relationships with them. The local government and tourism workers right now could be seen as highly skilled, passionate, and knowledgeable of how Boracay Island functions as a tourism organism that has its own life. The women informal tourism workers see them as both an ally and detractors. They see them doing their best empowering their associations and businesses but they fear that it could change easily.

Definitely, informality is really a big part of the tourism sector and most of these are women. Organizing them to have collective bargaining could be seen as a compromise. The main challenges if the government impose to them the formal structure would be: (1) ease of doing business: time, money, skills, and know-how to register their business; (2) access to capital and human resource; (3) finding a location, investors, and right business model; (4) multiple burdens as a woman; and (5) among other issues that businesses and women face in establishing a business.

Recommendations:

- **Grievance Committee.** As part of the by-laws of the associations, a grievance committee shall be formed. Since it was established that relationships matter most on this set-up, whenever there are disputes and need to be impartial, the grievance committee shall be empowered within the association. Furthermore, the local government should on-board a community organizer, on top of the tourism workers. He/she could oversee the associations and serve as dispute resolution pertaining to the tourism economy.

- ***Business Models and Ease of Doing Business.*** In case some women want to explore shifting to the formal economy, a seminar on how to create a business model, ease of doing business, and experience sharing from other women with MSMEs will be conducted in the association for women informal workers.
- ***Involving the Private Sector.*** The private sector plays a vital role in the local tourism economy in the Island. They could be both adversary and ally of these informal workers. Hence, as part of the effort if some women informal workers want to shift in the formal work, the private sector could prioritize open house for women to explore possible career tracks, on-board the products/services of these women, and or at least conduct a roundtable discussions with women leaders in business with the informal workers so they could take a glimpse for opportunities beyond their current work.

5.3. *Survey the local, national, and regional policy environments for the empowerment of the women informal tourism workers*

As per the key informant interviews with the local and national government are mandated to empower the tourism sector. Resources for the existing policies and programs are vast.

The local government of Malay has indicated the lack of policies specifically targeting women informal tourism workers in the island. In adapting a more generalist approach to managing the work environment of these workers, assistance and training from other government agencies such as the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Agriculture (DAR), among others, are being provided to women associations and cooperatives in the island. Most of these initiatives are targeted towards promoting alternative livelihoods for women (i.e., souvenir-making, agricultural production, etc.).

For the national government, there are existing laws and policies that empower the tourism sector. For the APEC region, the Tourism Working Group (TWG) also addresses the issues of gender and informality. According to the 11th APEC Tourism Ministerial Meeting (TMM 11) in 2022:

“the future of tourism is one that ensures tourism contributes to all elements of wellbeing locally. It is regenerative in nature, and this means that it does not do harm, but instead gives back, responds to change and continues to thrive. Economies are encouraged to consider the following to support their travel and tourism sectors. Tourism comprises components that cut across other policy sectors. Therefore, tourism policy needs to be considered within its broader policy context, with leadership from policymakers at the highest level, whose support can help ensure that the impacts on tourism of related policy initiatives (for example cultural policy, workers’ rights, gender equality and women’s empowerment, and agricultural policy) are also considered. As such, policies need to be actionable, fully consider expected trade-offs and complementarities with related policy areas, and whether they are likely to enhance or detract from the four (4) pillars of well-being (economic, social, cultural, and environmental). Adopting a more holistic approach to policy making will also help identify policy solutions that promote economic growth and economic inclusion. A well-mixed approach between bottom-up and top-down approaches will

strengthen place-based economic development; this is where impacts must be measured, and people partnerships can mutually exchange the values of local wisdoms⁴”.

APEC (2022) also highlighted that gender equality and women’s empowerment are important to inclusiveness, connectivity, and better tourism. The COVID-19 crisis has disproportionately impacted women who are the majority of the tourism workforce with a concentration in the lower paid, lower status jobs. Therefore, crucial, gender-responsive policies should be put in place to ensure women’s full and equal participation with an emphasis on leadership in tourism enterprises during the pandemic recovery, and to ensure women-owned and led businesses, especially Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs), have equitable and sustained market access and linkages (APEC, 2022).

The combination of the policies, programs, and attention of the local government, national government, and the APEC as a region seem promising for the women informal tourism workers. The APEC Philippine National Secretariat, led by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) works closely with the Department of Tourism. DOT also participates in TWG and TMM. Furthermore, the DTI also has its office at Boracay Island and has a close relationship with the LGU. Furthermore, when the Philippines hosted APEC in 2015, the Boracay Action Agenda to Globalize MSMEs (BAA) was held and adopted. Hence, where could the policy gaps be?

APEC (2022) TMM 11 advocates for “*a well-mixed approach between bottom-up and top-down approaches will strengthen place-based economic development; this is where impacts must be measured, and people partnerships can mutually exchange the values of local wisdoms*” . The local government spearheading the organizing of the informal workers through associations and cooperatives is definitely a platform to involve them in the political processes. Champions from the associations per sector play a vital role in collective bargaining. However, the questions are: to what extent are these champions; do they really carry the advocacies and needs of the group; and does the government choose their own champions rather than them emerging from the people themselves?

Further for the local government, the women informal workers also raised the “over regulation” affecting their day to day business and feeling of insecurity. To what extent do they trust the local government not to be biased and how frequently do they change the policies.

For the national government, could this format, forming associations for the informal sectors be replicated to other tourism areas in the Philippines? Forming associations, collective bargaining, and community organizing are proven to be effective to local communities to participate in formal economy and political processes. Would the case of Boracay Island be the model to involve the women informal tourism workers effectively in the system?

⁴ Policy Recommendations for Tourism of the Future: Regenerative Tourism. 11th APEC Tourism Ministerial Meeting (TMM 11). <https://www.apec.org/meeting-papers/sectoral-ministerial-meetings/tourism/11th-apec-tourism-ministerial-meeting/policy-recommendations-for-tourism-of-the-future-regenerative-tourism>

Recommendations

- **Education through Malay Colleges.** In acknowledging the issue of competitiveness of the locals of Malay in providing tourism products and services, the government has recently established Malay Colleges which provides scholarships to locals. Given the importance of tourism to the locality, tourism and hospitality courses are offered. The hope is that by educating more locals, more Malaynons will be employed in the formal sector in the Island.
- **Training and capacity-building programs.** The vision of the government is for the informal workers to have a stable income while improving the business in the island. To do this, several programs and partnership with other government agencies is necessary. As suggested, a diverse set of programs in line with entrepreneurship, innovation, marketing, training of informal women workers is necessary. Because informal workers often receive inconsistent flow of income with little to no awareness on the concept of savings, programs on financial literacy were also cited. Additional budgets to further engage and train informal workers were also suggested. In the future, programs covering financial literacy need to be conducted to assist informal workers in handling their finances. Training in guest management, guest feedback, and tourism monitoring were cited as important factors to improve the services provided. They also play an important role in assisting the municipality into cityhood. These could both target the LGU workers, the associations, and women informal workers.
- **Facilitating the transition from municipality to cityhood of Malay.** It is the hope of the informants for the municipality and Boracay to be globally competitive and be recognized as a city. To do this, more funding from the national government is required not only to ensure the safety of tourists but also the welfare of the locals.
- **Utilizing technology to facilitate sustained and inclusive tourism development.** Technology is now being explored to help organize and access informal workers through the “Boracay Info Guide” which was launched last 28 May 2023. Digital literacy for the stakeholders including the associations, informal workers, and the implementers themselves are needed. This could also possibly create a digital divide, only benefiting those that have the know-hows and capacity to avail technology, so the national and local government should stay on top to avoid it.
- **Tailor-fitting of GAD indicators for tourism.** Given the prevalence of women in the industry, it is necessary to translate existing GAD indicators into the context of tourism to facilitate a more efficient and effective monitoring and assessment system.
- **Community Organizing and the Academe.** The Malay Colleges and the Local Government could tap experts from the University of the Philippines, Diliman- College of Social Work and Community Development (UP-CSWCD) to come-up with a community organizing framework and best practices for the associations. With the technical expertise and experiences of UP-CSWCD in helping associations and community organizing in different sectors, coupled with the local knowledge, familiarity, and home grown organizing skills of Malay College and LGU. It could lead to a framework that could be replicated throughout the Philippines and possibly APEC region. Hence, funding can be provided by the LGU, DOT, and the PIDS could support through research and dissemination. Other Universities with Community Development may also be involved.

5.4. Summary

Gender equality has been dubbed as one of the vital components of sustainable development goals and as a significant indicator in evaluating regional sustainable development. However, the impact of tourism towards this context still remains uncertain (Zhang & Zhang, 2021). Considerably, as the tourism industry started to realize upslope after the pandemic, an increased participation of women in various tourism-led enterprises and employment was also observed (Raihan et al., 2022). Majority of women among developing countries were employed to various tourism and hospitality-related sectors, thus tourism contributes a considerably large percentage in the Philippine economy. In terms of employment in the Boracay Island, tourism was able to provide various employment and livelihood advantages to the women community – addressing to alleviate gender inequality in the island as there are numerous tourism-related opportunities involving women in both formal and informal sectors. In Tristani et al., (2022), women’s roles have been emphasized as concentrated in low-skill and low-paid sectors.

As revealed in the findings of the study in conjunction with the existing guidelines of the government, women’s skills were relatively dominant in terms of services (particularly in massage & braiding), making and selling souvenirs, and vending food. The context deviates the stigma notion that women participation would be limited within the domestic environment and eradicates discrimination among genders and their involvement in various tourism jobs and enterprises. However, the sense of job-stereotype in women still remains as embedded and deeply engraved within the social notions of the women community in the Boracay Island that there were specific jobs or forms of livelihood or employment that were intended for women while others were mainly men-dominated. Aside from this, not all women in the informal sector were working on a full-time scheme but instead of a flexible work schedule as they have also stated that they have other responsibilities in their household after working.

In terms of educational profile, most women informal workers were on primary and secondary level of education, and some purposely intended not to pursue their studies. With a notion that the influx of tourism in Boracay Island will remain, local residents were shaded in seeing further opportunities of tourism in the formal sector with high paying positions. It has been mentioned that “they were currently content” with their current business or work despite stating that the income they generated was not enough. Awareness with the supplementary opportunities of tourism in the destination lacks and instead tend to become overdependent with tourism, notwithstanding the sudden decrease of tourism influx and other unpredictable scenarios which may occur. Financial literacy is another aspect requisite for these informal women workers to understand and properly and effectively utilize resources, specifically the income they generate, towards stability of living.

The local government of Malay has been eagerly supportive to its residents especially in providing livelihood and employment opportunities, training and other tourism related workshops in support to the enrichment of skills of the local residents involved in the tourism sector. After the rehabilitation of the island and the pandemic, the LGU ratified a mandate governing policies and regulations inclusive to all sectors, which could mutually benefit all stakeholders. However, institutionalizing gender dynamics as requisite to inclusive tourism development and coequal strategies has been perceived as deficient. The participation of women could significantly reduce gender inequality and eradicate gender-stereotype among the job opportunities. Strategies have to be rooted with awareness that is transparent among all stakeholders including the women community in the informal sector.

As aligned with the objectives of the study, the working conditions of women as informal tourism workers has been assessed including the challenges and issues these workers encountered in the formal tourism economy. The study has also evaluated the existing national policies and regional frameworks related to women and tourism informal economy.

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Annex 1: Gendering the Informal Tourism Sector toward Inclusive and Sustainable Growth: The Case Study of Boracay Island: Key Informant Interview Guide (KIIG)

INTRODUCTION

This KIIG aims to examine the informal tourism economy in the Philippines using a gender perspective. The tourism industry was selected as the focus of this study given the prevalence of informal tourism workers in the sector and the relative importance of the industry to the Philippine economy. In tourism, the informal economy includes economic activities engaging directly or indirectly in tourism that are often not registered under government authorities, formal organizations, and associations. They include economic actors offering an array of products and services including street vendors, handicraft and souvenir producers, transport providers, unregistered tour guides, homestay providers, entertainers, and other sectors that emerged due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This KIIG is intended for women who are engaged in the informal tourism sector on the Boracay Island and other stakeholders such as government officials from the barangay, local government units, and national government agencies.

The objectives of this research are the following:

1. To map the roles of women as informal tourism workers and to understand their working environment;
2. To determine the challenges and issues of women in relation to their participation to the formal tourism economy through the case study of Boracay Island;
3. To survey the local, national, and regional policy environments for the empowerment of the women informal tourism workers; and
4. To produce case studies, strategies, recommendations, and frameworks which could be replicated in studying different informal tourism workers across the APEC Region.

The Key Informant Interview (KII) will last for 20 minutes and is divided into six (6) parts, namely: (1) informed consent form; (2) personal information; (3) profile of the women informal workers in the tourism sector; (4) role of the government; (5) women-led movements, organizations, and associations; (6) recommendations and ways forward.

PART I: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

During the KII, we will ask you to provide some personal data (optional) which may directly or indirectly identify you as an individual or your business. Rest assured that the information you will be providing will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous and will only be used for this research. You also have the right to be informed, object to processing, access and rectify, suspend or withdraw your data, and be indemnified in case of damages pursuant to the provisions of the Republic Act No. 10173 of the Philippines, Data Privacy Act of 2012 and its corresponding Implementing Rules and Regulations.

Sa panayam, hihilingin namin sa iyo na magbigay ng ilang personal na data (opsyonal) na maaaring direkta o hindi direktang kilalanin ka bilang isang indibidwal o ang iyong negosyo. Makatiyak ka na ang impormasyong ibibigay mo ay mapanatiling confidential at gagamitin lamang para sa pananaliksik na ito. Nais din naming ipagbigay-alam sa iyo na may karapatan kang ipagbigay-alam, tumutol sa pagproseso, ma-access at maitama, suspindihin o bawiin ang iyong data, at mabigyan ng bayad sa kaso ng mga pinsala na alinsunod sa mga probisyon ng Batas Republika Blg. 10173 ng Pilipinas sa Pagkapribado ng Data ng 2012 at ang mga kaukulang Pagpapatupad ng Mga Batas at Regulasyon.

By signing this form, you confirm your voluntary participation in this research and give the researchers explicit consent to collect and process your data, and personal and business information. And that you understand that you can withdraw from this research at any time:

Sa pamamagitan ng pagpirma, kinukumpirma mo ang iyong kusang paglahok sa pananaliksik na ito at binibigyan ang mga mananaliksik ng tahasang pahintulot na kolektahin at iproseso ang iyong data, at personal at impormasyon ng negosyo at naiintindihan mo na maaari kang umalis mula sa pananaliksik na ito sa anumang oras.

I voluntarily agree to participate in the research project being conducted by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS).

Ako ay kusang-loob na pumapayag na makibahagi sa pagsasaliksik na isinasagawa ng Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS).

I have understood the objectives of the project and the relevance of my participation as discussed to me/as stated in the letter provided by the PIDS researcher/research team. I have also been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

Nauunawaan ko ang mga layunin ng proyekto at ang kahalagahan ng pakikibahagi ko rito, ayon sa tinalakay sa akin/nakasaad sa liham na ibinigay ng mga kawani ng PIDS. Ako ay binigyan ng pagkakataon na magtanong tungkol sa proyekto.

I understand that I may withdraw and discontinue my participation at any time and will not be penalized for doing so.

Nauunawaan ko na maari kong bawiin at hindi na ipagpatuloy ang pakikibahagi ko sa proyekto sa anumang oras/sandali, at hindi ako papatawan ng anumang kaparusahan kung ako ay magpasyang hindi na makibahagi sa proyekto.

I understand that the personal and sensitive personal information data that will be collected by PIDS will be kept strictly confidential.

Nauunawaan ko na ang aking personal at sensitibong impormasyon na makakalap ng PIDS ay pananatiliing kompidensyal.

I agree to:

Sumasang-ayon ako:

- audio-recording
- taking photos
- video- recording
- collection of personal information
- collection of company/affiliation information

Name : _____

Sector : _____

Signature : _____

Date : _____

PART II: PERSONAL INFORMATION

Question	Notes
Name (Optional)	
Age	
Educational Background	
Current Work or Sources of Income	
Work/Business/Sources of Income History	
Number of Dependents	
Marital Status	
Household Structure and Sources of Income	
Residence and Place of Origin	
Other Questions	

PART III: PROFILE OF THE WOMEN INFORMAL WORKERS IN TOURISM SECTOR

Question	Notes
What is your current work/ current business in the tourism industry? Please identify the sector (e.g. beverages, food, services, etc.)	

When did you start with your current work/business?	
How big is your business/work? E.g. number of workers/employees, how many estimated customers per day, how much was the capital?	
Where/Who did you find out about the work/business? Referral, headhunting, saw others doing it, saw it on social media or physical posters, etc.	
If business, where did you get your capital?	
Do you have any registration with the government, SEC, contract with your employer, etc., work permit, etc.? If yes, how were your experiences, challenges, etc.? If in process, what are your experiences?	
What got you to your business/work? Motivation, reasons, etc.	
What is the range of your weekly income (100-1000; 1000-5000; 5000-10000; others)?	
Is that enough to provide for your and your dependents' needs?	
Do you have a physical store/office? Where and how many?	
Do you engage in online promotion, payments, advertisements, and other online platforms for your work/business? Please elaborate.	
What is your business model/ work schedule?	
How does your work/business affect your family?	

What do you see as the major challenges you face with regards to your work/business?	
<p>What are your perceptions on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition with other businesses/ workers • Large companies providing the same products/ services as you (eg. Jollibee, Starbucks, Nuat Thai) • Advantages • Disadvantages • General satisfaction 	
If your business was already open/ or if you are working on the same establishment before the COVID-19 lockdown, please tell us the differences and similarities with before, during, and after the lockdown regarding the performance of the sector you are engaged with	
Aspirations for your work/ business	
Do you face any gender based discrimination/ harassment on your work/business?	
Do you have any observations regarding gender dynamics? For example, do clients or the government prefer men-led/men workers than women ones?	

PART IV: ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT

Question	Notes
If you answered that your business is not registered/do not have a contract with your employer, what may be the hindrances? Is this by choice, if yes why? If not, what are the reasons?	
Do you have any plans to formalize? Have a business permit, register to the government, have a contract with the employer?	

What are your general perceptions of the government?	
What are the general observations of the government to the gender dynamics in the informal sector? Do you have any data on women, informality, etc.?	
Are there any monitoring and evaluation systems for the mentioned programs?	
Are you aware of any government programs targeted to have you registered/protection of workers, for women, COVID-19 aid, etc.?	
Have you ever asked the government for any assistance?	
What do you wish the government will do to assist you as a woman in the informal tourism sector?	
For the Government	
<p>Are there existing government programs/guidelines targeted for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism • Informal businesses • Informal workers • Women in business/ women workers • Financial aid for informal MSMEs/workers • To formalize a business/ workers <p>If yes, please give us examples.</p>	
Are there any existing programs or people from the government in charge of community organizing specifically on organizing informal workers/business, women in general, and other associations to help empower the sector?	
<p>Do you conduct regular consultation and/or regular meetings to inform and elicit inputs from the women community? How do LGU officers coordinate with them? (service/operations)</p> <p>Do you facilitate community programs / training as means of support to income generation and employment? How do they properly monitor the programs conducted?</p>	

<p>What are fees being collected and how these were utilized or allocated?</p> <p>How does LGU help in creating, in promoting and in expanding local community enterprises?</p> <p>How does LGU continuously support the women community in terms of livelihood and employment?</p> <p>Were the informal tourism sector encouraged to apply for various certifications or accreditation such as TESDA, DOT, etc? How often?</p> <p>How do linkages play a role in collaborating with other government agencies and sectors to empower local community and local tourism enterprises?</p> <p>Are there existing guidelines / policies as regards to the local tourism sector and women community?</p>	
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PART V: WOMEN-LED MOVEMENTS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND ASSOCIATIONS

Question	Notes
Are you a member of any organization e.g. women and/or related to your work/business? Coop, association, workers union, etc.	
Do you have any experiences in forming a local group or women organization to assist in the operations of the informal tourism segment in the island?	
If yes, can you tell me about its structure, mandate, activities, etc.? What is your role?	
Have you ever been part of a movement? Consultation, bargaining, meetings with the government? etc.	
If not, would you be interested to be a part? Also, do you know any association, organization, movements related to your sector?	
For the Government	
Do you have any data on women, informal sector, tourism groups/associations, or cooperatives in your area? Please cite case studies	
How do you think organizing helps the sector?	
Do you have a point person in the government to assist them in organizing? Do they need to register with the government?	
Do you know any cases of informal associations, coop, etc?	
Are there policies, programs, and rules in establishing an association/coop/etc.?	

PART VI: RECOMMENDATIONS, WAYS FORWARD, AND FINAL NOTES

Question	Notes
Do you have any visions for your work/business in the next five (5) years? If so, what is it?	
What are your general recommendations for the government to assist you in fulfilling that vision?	
Final notes for the study team	
For the Government	
What is your vision/ aspirations for the women informal tourism workers/businesses in the next five (5 years)?	
What programs and support should be in place, continued, and discontinued to make it happen?	
Final notes for the study team	

End of Questionnaire

Annex 2: Summary of WEE Collective Economic Empowerment

<i>WEE Collective Economic Empowerment</i>	<i>Women-led organizations and informal women workers</i>
<i>Micro-dimension</i>	
Practical Needs	Working in the informal sector though has challenges is financially empowering for the women workers. They have means to live a life with dignity and some level of security.
Local and Soft Solutions	
Worker Identity	
A Collective “We”	
<i>Meso-dimension</i>	
Networks	
Financial Support	

Decision-making	
<i>Macro-dimension</i>	
Moving from through the empowerment dimensions	
Enabling Organizations	
Gender Equity Policies	
Scaling Up	