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**ADVANCING THE SDGs THROUGH VISAYAN MUSEUM PRACTICES:
A FOCUSED ETHNOGRAPHY TOWARD ASEAN
SOCIO-CULTURAL COLLABORATION**

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04 April 2025

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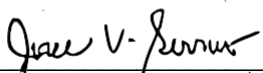
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Acceptance Page

This thesis of **ASPEN DOLENE C. MARTINEZ** titled: **“ADVANCING THE SDGs THROUGH VISAYAN MUSEUM PRACTICES: A FOCUSED ETHNOGRAPHY TOWARD ASEAN SOCIO-CULTURAL COLLABORATION”** is hereby accepted by the Faculty of Management and Development Studies, U.P. Open University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of ASEAN Studies.



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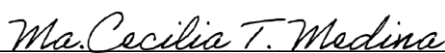
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Biographical Sketch

The author was born on April 4, 1997 in Iloilo City and was raised in Manila. Her academic journey reflects her passion for communication, education, and global development. She earned her undergraduate degree in Bachelor of Science in Development Communication at West Visayas State University – Main Campus and later pursued Diploma in Teaching in the same university, both refining her ability to empower others through knowledge-sharing and communication. This inspired her to explore the world of teaching, allowing her to work closely with diverse communities, including public and private sectors, marginalized communities, and underprivileged youth.

With a deep appreciation for culture and the arts, the author developed a strong respect for heritage and creativity, which has guided her to pursue a Master of ASEAN Studies program at University of the Philippines – Open University. Driven by her desire to contribute to cultural preservation, sustainable development, and the urgency of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), she was inspired to push through with this master's thesis to highlight the potential of cultural institutions in serving as catalysts for cultural preservation, education, sustainable development, and its implications for regional collaboration in the ASEAN region.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Daddy and Mommy, who have supported me throughout my education and life, and to my grandparents, Tatay and Nanay, whose passion for history and culture ignited my curiosity and passion for learning. Thank you for your unwavering love, sacrifices, and encouragement, which have inspired me to persevere and see this journey through to the end.

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Abstract

Museums within the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC) are recognized as vital sectors to drive Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, the link between museums and the SDGs remains unclear, particularly in terms of how local museums can make tangible contributions. Hence, this ethnographic study explored the practices, challenges, and opportunities in Visayan museums for advancing the SDGs, contributing to creating an avenue for ASEAN socio-cultural collaboration. Eight museum employees and 12 stakeholders were selected using purposive sampling, and data collection and analysis followed Spradley's (1980) Developmental Research Sequence (DRS). Participant observation, ethnographic interviews, field notes, multimedia tools, and artifacts were used as primary data collection tools. The findings revealed five main themes or practices in Visayan museums: prioritizing education, fostering empowerment and inclusivity, promoting cultural awareness, promoting environmental awareness, and engaging stakeholders in heritage conservation. The study also identified three main challenges on economic sustainability, physical space, and community awareness. Moreover, four major opportunities were identified, such as community engagement, partnerships and collaborations, cultural and economic development, and institutionalization of policies, which further underscored implications for ASEAN socio-cultural collaboration. Recommendations include enhancing existing initiatives aligned with the SDGs, formalizing SDG-related policies, and facilitating knowledge-sharing platforms.

Keywords: *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); ASEAN socio-cultural collaboration; ASEAN Studies; ethnomuseology; sustainable practices*

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Museums are not merely repositories for artifacts and exhibits; they are essential platforms for spreading knowledge and fostering cultural understanding (Sharmin & Haque, 2024). Although global cultural institutions face increasing pressure to address sustainability challenges, museums are uniquely positioned to advance the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) through education, community engagement, and policy advocacy (McGhie, 2019).

The ASEAN Complementarities Report (2017) explicitly frames cultural institutions like museums as vehicles for "people-centered and inclusive sustainable development," aligning with the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community's (ASCC) recognition of Southeast Asian museums as catalysts for regional sustainable development (ASEAN, 2021). This was reaffirmed at the 31st ASCC Council Meeting in Lao PDR in March 2024, which highlighted the role of culture and the arts in promoting inclusion and sustainability while enhancing preparedness for emerging challenges, trends, and opportunities (ASEAN Secretariat, 2024). This alignment is further reinforced by the 2015 ASEAN Charter, which states that "sustainable development serves as the core focus of the ASEAN community-building process" (Varrall, 2023).

Previous studies have focused on the interconnectedness of museums to their communities, considering broader cultural contexts in cultural preservation (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property [ICCROM], 2024). Several studies have examined the importance of

museums for spreading knowledge, noting their role in engaging the public to ensure sustainable efforts are not passively consumed by the citizens, such as in the Sustainable Singapore Gallery (The Sustainable Singapore Gallery, 2024).

Other studies have focused on the role of museums in attracting visitors seeking immersive experiences and profound historical connections, further contributing to cultural preservation (Sharmin & Haque, 2024). In the Philippines, for instance, the National Museum of the Philippines (NMP) Central Museums recorded 3,162,779 total visitors from January 2024 to January 2025 (see Table 1).

Table 1

January 2024 - January 2025 Visitation Data

	Local Students	Foreign Students	Local Tourists	Foreign Tourists	TOTAL
Jan. - Dec. 2024	1,224,253	5,277	1,101,155	103,132	2,433,817
Jan. 2025	160,287	-	556,280	12,395	728,962

Note. January 2024 - January 2025 Visitation Data. Numerical data provided by the National Museum of the Philippines (NMP) Central Library and Archives. Own work.

To accommodate this growing demand, the NMP is enhancing its frontline workforce (Ong, 2025), in line with Republic Act (RA) No. 11333, also known as the National Museum of the Philippines Act, to “operate on a non-profit basis in supporting social and economic progress for the benefit of the current and future generations” (National Museum of the Philippines, 2023).

Additional studies have underscored the significant link between museums and the SDGs, where museums significantly enhance the importance of cultural and natural heritage (Mcghie, 2019). For example, the first SDG Museum (Change

Maker 2040) in Parañaque City, Philippines, aims to make the Filipinos know the importance of achieving the 17 goals (Severo, 2023). University museums, such as the Institute for Climate Change and Environmental Management (ICCEM) in the Central Luzon State University (CLSU) also aims to serve as a platform for an educational campaign on protecting the environment and for the stakeholders to increase their awareness of the ecological and economic importance of biodiversity (Central Luzon State University, 2022).

Few studies identified museum challenges and opportunities in advancing the SDGs, such as frameworks to guide sustainability education in museums and their effectiveness (Hansson & Ohman, 2022). Despite the recognition of museums in addressing the SDGs, the connection with it is unclear as to making concrete contributions and playing a crucial role in achieving them (SEAMEO SPAFA Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts, 2014). Although SDGs provide a global framework, existing literatures only have focused on museums in larger cities in ASEAN, such as in Metro Manila, leading to minimal research attention towards the regional museum practices and a limited understanding of how these goals are adapted and implemented at a local level, especially in the Visayas region.

Existing literatures predominantly employed case study approaches for a “revealing status feature” of the existing situations (status quo) within the museums (Altintas & Kozaner, 2020). In contrast, focused ethnography goes beyond policy checklists by constructing cultural meanings and contesting narratives (Wall, 2015), analyzing participants, such as the museum employees, as distinct subcultures with shared practices through participant observation. This approach, incorporating Spradley’s (1980) Developmental Research Sequence (DRS), enhances participant observation through multiple research techniques.

By applying these methodologies, this study identified effective practices, challenges, and opportunities for local museums in the Visayas in advancing SDGs, enhancing understanding of their contribution to regional cohesion and creating avenues for ASEAN socio-cultural collaboration. The findings also contribute to the advancement of SDG 4: Quality Education, as museums provide learning opportunities; SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, as museums contribute to cultural preservation and community engagement; SDG 13: Climate Action, as museums address environmental issues; and SDG 17: Partnerships for Goals, as museums collaborate with other organizations.

Statement of the Problem

This study explored the practices in the Visayan museums for advancing the SDGs toward the ASEAN socio-cultural collaboration. Specifically, it aimed to address the following questions:

1. How do Visayan museum employees and stakeholders integrate and interpret the SDGs within their cultural and institutional contexts?
2. What are the perceived challenges of Visayan museum employees and stakeholders in the alignment of practices with the SDGs?
3. What opportunities and strategies were identified by the Visayan museum employees and stakeholders for advancing the SDGs within ASEAN socio-cultural collaboration?

Objectives

Guided by the research questions, this study also aimed to systematically

examine the role of Visayan museums in advancing the SDGs within the ASEAN socio-cultural framework. Specifically, it sought to:

1. analyze how Visayan museum employees and stakeholders interpret and integrate the SDGs into their institutional and cultural practices;
2. investigate the perceived challenges faced by Visayan museum employees and stakeholders in aligning their practices with the SDGs; and
3. recommend actionable strategies to enhance SDG implementation and ASEAN socio-cultural collaboration

Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined conceptually and operationally:

Visayan Museums. The word “museum” in “Visayan museum” originally reflects the Greek goddesses of inspiration, the nine Muses. In ancient Alexandria, the term “Museion” is used to refer to a university, including libraries, rather than only a place to display objects. Museums are more than containers of things; rather, they are complex reflections of the cultures that produced them, including their politics, social structures, and systems of thought (Rodini, 2023).

Furthermore, a museum is a permanent, non-profit institution dedicated to serving the society through preserving, researching, and displaying both tangible and intangible heritage. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally, and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection, and knowledge-sharing to foster sustainability (Madina, 2022).

In this study, Visayan museums referred to the institutions that primarily

exhibit, collect, and interpret works of art and cultural artifacts, encompassing various forms of visual arts. These served as the primary setting for the research investigation and included the National Museum of the Philippines (NMP) - run museums and contemporary art museums in Visayas, Philippines, where practices related to sustainability and SDGs were observed, analyzed, and evaluated in the ASEAN region. Specifically, it covered the NMP - Iloilo, NMP - Dumaguete, NMP - Cebu, and Iloilo Museum of Contemporary Art (ILOMOCA).

Practices. Practices are a working method or set of working methods that is officially accepted as being the best to use in a particular business or industry (Cambridge University Press & Assessment, 2024).

In this study, practices referred to the specific strategies, methods, and activities employed by Visayan museums to engage with and communicate issues related to sustainable development and the advancement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It encompassed exhibitions, educational and public programs, digital and social media engagement, outreach initiatives, and collaborative projects. The data were collected from the informants of the study through focused interviews using open-ended questions, observations, and records and documents.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Approved by all member states of the United Nations in 2015, the 17 SDGs represent a universal call to action to alleviate poverty, safeguard the planet, and strive to achieve a world with peace and prosperity by 2030 (United Nations Development Programme, 2023).

In this study, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) referred to the guideline maps for museums to focus their practices and emphasize their roles in advancing these goals through raising awareness, inspiring action, and fostering

dialogue among diverse audiences.

Scope and Limitations

This study aimed to provide a significant description of the practices employed by Visayan museums in advancing the SDGs.

A focused ethnography approach was employed in this study to examine museums in the Visayan region of the Philippines and explored diverse perspectives on economic, social, and ecological practices related to sustainability and the SDGs. It encompassed the National Museum of the Philippines (NMP)-run and contemporary museums in Iloilo, Cebu, and Dumaguete, which enabled a comprehensive examination of practices in advancing SDGs across different museum types. Since Visayan museums are cultural institutions rather than ethnic communities, focused ethnography allowed targeted data collection, aligning with Spradley's (1980) 12-step Developmental Research Sequence (DRS).

The primary Informants in this study were eight museum employees who had the best understanding of the practices and 12 museum stakeholders to ensure data triangulation. They were selected using purposive and snowball sampling through a predefined set of criteria.

Primary sources were collected through semi-structured interview guides, formal and informal interviews, observations, and focused-group discussions, while secondary sources were obtained from official documents, such as reports, social media postings, and publications. Data were transcribed and analyzed using the four types of Spradley's (1980) Ethnographic Analysis: Domain Analysis, Taxonomic Analysis, Componential Analysis, and Theme Analysis.

The researcher took into account the ethical considerations in conducting the study, ensuring that the participants were treated with utmost respect and given the right to privacy and confidentiality of their given information.

The study was specific to Visayan museums and may not be readily generalizable to museums in other regions or countries. Comparisons with museums outside the Visayas region were not the primary focus of this research. Due to constraints in time, budget, and access to information, this study did not comprehensively cover all aspects of sustainability practices in Visayan museums. Certain practices or initiatives were not fully explored, and gaps in data existed.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study may benefit the following entities:

Visayan Museums Employees and Administrators. The results of this study may benefit the Visayan museum employees and administrators by gaining insights into effective strategies for communicating sustainability and advancing the SDGs. Also, this may enhance their role as agents of change in addressing global challenges and engaging their audiences.

Museum Stakeholders. The study may benefit the museum stakeholders as this research underscored how Visayan museums are integrating the SDGs into their exhibits, programs, and community initiatives. This may raise awareness about critical global issues such as climate change, social inequality, and cultural preservation. Visitors, in turn, become more informed and empowered to take action in their own lives, contributing to the achievement of the SDGs.

Government Agencies. The findings of this study may help the government

agencies to inform policy decisions and promote the integration of sustainability initiatives within cultural institutions. Also, it may help them in leveraging their communication capabilities in promoting sustainability and identifying potential partners and strategies for such collaborations.

Non-Government Organizations. This study may help the non-government organizations to advocate integration of effective museum practices and collaborate with museums to develop joint initiatives in advancing SDGs and sustainability.

ASEAN Socio-cultural Community (ASCC). Insights from this study may be beneficial in the creation of policies on the integration of museum practices into broader sustainability practices for promoting a more cohesive approach in advancing the SDGs. Furthermore, the study highlighted the best practices of the museums, which may be utilized to encourage the adoption of the methods across the ASEAN region to achieve regional collaboration.

Future Researchers. This study may serve as a foundation for future research by highlighting areas where further investigation is needed. This may help future researchers to explore specific aspects of museum practices and their contributions to advancing SDGs in greater depth, especially in other museums in the Philippines and in the ASEAN region.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Museums are institutions that are best at modeling ideas on sustainability to a wider audience. They play a crucial role in achieving the Agenda 2030, as they are essential for preserving both human history and natural environments (Weller & Ostman, 2021). In the Visayas, museums are regarded as cultural hubs, which are “vessels of important historical knowledge and cultural heritage” (Legarda, 2019) and educate the public, especially in this contemporary time (Pasigan, 2025). However, while much scholarly attention has been paid to central museums, regional museums, such as in the Visayas, remain understudied, especially with their capacity to address the global goals or the UNSDGs.

Ethnomuseology

Museums today function as dynamic spaces of cultural understanding, transforming from its traditional role (Sharmin & Haque, 2024). The International Council of Museums (ICOM) crafted its first definition of museums in 1946 as a place where “collections were open to the public of artistic, technical, scientific, historical, and archeological material” (Lehmannová, 2020). Over time, it posited the definition of museums as “not-for-profit, permanent institutions in the service of society...” that “foster diversity and sustainability” (ICOM, 2022). While museums vary widely, they all share one essential responsibility, that is, the care and preservation of their collections (Campbell & Baars, 2019). Hence, the term “Ethnomuseology” is coined, concerning curation and conservation practices of “ethnographic materials using

methods that reflect social, cultural, spiritual, or religious aspects of objects” (Simpson, 2003).

Constructionism in Museums

Constructionism in cultural contexts is rooted in the works of Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1974), who posit that knowledge is constructed through social and cultural interactions. When applied to museums, this perspective shifts the traditional roles of these institutions from neutral repositories of artifacts to engaging spaces where meanings are continually negotiated through narratives. Clifford (1997) expands this idea by regarding museums as “contact zones,” redefining a museum as a space of intersection between different cultures and historical narratives. Karp & Lavine (1991) confirm this concept as the reinforcement of hierarchical distinctions between the observer and the observed in museums.

Hall (1997) provides a critical lens for understanding how museums serve as communicative systems. He emphasizes the concept of “representation” in museums, highlighting the influence of curatorial choices on public perceptions and historical identities. Hall argues that museums are “like a language,” as they use objects or collections to create meanings about the theme of the exhibitions. Representation, in this essence, only comes into play when “meanings are produced or constructed” rather than simply found, a core premise of the “social constructionist approach.” The approach serves as an important vehicle in shaping social subjects and historical events. It involves constructing knowledge about a particular topic or practice, determining “what is and is not appropriate, as well as what is considered useful, relevant, and true.”

To exemplify, Hughes (2020) highlights how the classification of artifacts is not inherent in the objects themselves but reflects situated powers. Additionally, Hall

(1997) also explains how the meanings of museum collections are produced, signifying the practices involved in arranging them rather than the simple layout in an illustrated journal.

The Politics of Representation

Lidchi (2013) relates how the meanings are implicated in power, “especially between those who are exhibiting and those who are being exhibited.” It concerns ethnographic museums that feature ethnographic objects of other cultures as not just resting places of historical significance, but also explore the link between the knowledge of other cultures and identity. While practices vary across regions, this process is evident in the practice of some ASEAN museums with ethnographic or colonial-era collections. The National Museum of Indonesia, having a strong colonial perspective, houses archeological artifacts collected during the Dutch colonial period, which reflect colonial classifications of indigenous cultures (Estudiantin, 2024). Lidchi’s argument on the implication of power is also evident in the National Museum of Anthropology (Manila, Philippines), where it reframes the significance of the collections from the indigenous groups gathered during the American period (National Museum of the Philippines, 2021).

Building on the concept of Lidchi, Kreps (2003) explains that representation is deeply rooted in ideology and social control, highlighting the agency of museum workers in navigating institutional constraints and transforming conventional practices. It also reveals how museum practices are influenced by institutional policies and community expectations, especially in museums where colonial legacies and national identities collide.

The National Museum in Bangkok, Thailand, reflects what Peleggi (2017)

coined “cultural memory as palimpsest,” where the curation reveals how histories are rewritten. Various artifacts and artworks were addressed as products of cultural memory, from temples to civic monuments in 1930, representing the meanings of memories from each era. In the Philippines’ Visayas region, the Museum of Philippine Maritime History in Iloilo curates galleries that narrate different parts of the nation’s vast maritime history and culture (Guanco, 2023). On the other hand, museums and heritage sites in the cities of Cebu, Mandaue, and Talisay feature archeological excavations all over the province in 1985, focusing on the human dimension of museum work that is often overlooked (The Kabilin Center, 2022).

Hence, ethnomuseology, as an interdisciplinary practice, is vital as it confronts the idea of representation. Unlike traditional museology, which often imposes external narratives on cultural artifacts, ethnomuseology centers the voices of source communities (Kumar & Soni, 2021). This approach challenges colonial legacies by reframing heritage not as “specimens of the past” but as living traditions actively shaped by Indigenous knowledge holders.

Museums as Constructed Spaces

Museums construct narratives through curation, architecture, and exhibition designs. Bennett (1995) highlights the museums as spaces that shape social behavior through structured observations, aligning with Hall’s (1997) emphasis on representation, where every curatorial choice implicitly communicates what is valuable.

Karp and Lavine (1991) show how exhibition choices dictate visitor experience. Exhibitions are carefully curated to convey specific narratives, whereas decisions on what to display reflect power dynamics. For example, ethnographic

museums historically frame non-Western culture through a colonial perspective. Ting (2018), on the other hand, offers narratives in the lens of Singapore, mirroring how museums legitimize dominant ideologies through selective displays. To exemplify, the Green Décor Hu Ewer with a snake-shaped handle and dragon-head lid from the Tang Shipwreck Collection symbolizes the ewer's Chinese origin and maritime recovery and highlights Singapore's ancient trade ties.

Duncan (1991), as cited by Lee (2019), also argues that meanings are constructed through the physical layout of museums. Artifacts, such as the indigenous ones, are placed in the natural history section rather than art galleries, perpetuating colonial hierarchies. It demonstrates how sequencing imposes a "script" that the visitors unconsciously follow. Furthermore, Loh (1998) also explains the linear progress narratives in Singapore. It forces a chronological walkthrough from "pre-colonial fragments" to "post-independence prosperity", where visitors unconsciously absorb a teleological myth.

Additional findings of Clifford (1997) expose how ethnographic work on museum collecting practices affects legitimization. A case in point of Wang (2020) explains the selective display of Asian art in a whitened context by stripping them of their original sacred and cultural contexts, reframing them as secular art objects. For example, the Khmer Buddha heads are displayed as "masterpieces of Angkor art" without acknowledging they were looted during French colonial rule in Cambodia (19th–20th centuries), whereas the labels omit the violent history of extraction. On the other note, Mideo Cruz's *Poleteismo*, which critique religious hypocrisy, colonial impositions, and cultural hybridity, was deemed "illegitimate" by conservative groups and the Catholic Church, leading to its removal (Datuin et al., 2016). This aligns with Clifford's (1997) understanding that institutions police boundaries of "acceptable"

art, often privileging colonial or state-approved narratives.

Extending these theories, the architectural pedagogy of Fleming (2005) frames museums as active pedagogical environments where spatial design itself educates. It challenges traditional boundaries of museum spaces by arguing that the visitor's engagement begins long before physical entry. His assertion that "*the whole point of marketing and publicity and image-building and branding is to prepare people to make contact with a museum.*" For instance, the Penang State Museum in Malaysia involves local Peranakan communities in curating exhibits, turning the building into a co-taught space (Ahmad, 2015), while the Kabilin Center in Cebu, Philippines, serves as a hub for community collaboration (The Kabilin Center, 2022).

Museums as Agents of Change

The UN Member States adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, which set eight targets to be achieved by 2015. Later, these were replaced by the 17 SDGs with a 2030 target achievement. All ASEAN Member States (AMS) endorsed the SDGs, as outlined in the 2015 ASEAN Charter, prioritizing sustainable development and community well-being (Varrall, 2023). ASEAN's vision, supported by its three pillars, highlights the creative economy, such as the museums under the ASCC, as key drivers to socio-economic growth and sustainability (ASEAN, 2021).

To highlight the creative economy's role in sustainable development, there are initiatives underscoring creativity's potential to drive economic growth, social progress, and environmental conservation (Mcghie, 2019). In order to comprehend the profound role of museums towards advancing sustainability, the frameworks of the UNSDGs and the concept of Education for Sustainability (EfS) are considered

convenient. As the museum professionals embrace these concepts, it allows them to enhance sustainability efforts and collaborative support around their institutions (Weller & Ostman, 2021).

While large museums are well-funded to be at the forefront of these initiatives, smaller regional museums often lack support. For example, the European perspective of Petti et al. (2020) addresses a critical gap in the intersection of cultural heritage and the SDGs. It highlights the necessity of local monitoring systems to ensure the successful integration of heritage into the sustainable development framework of small museums. Andina (2024) poses challenges faced by local museums in Indonesia, where funding relies solely on ticket sales, while sponsored museums, such as those in the Visayas region of the Philippines, have struggled after some equipment was taken by the government for "private purposes" (Yap, 2024).

Additionally, Pop et al. (2019) argues that "cultural sustainability is increasingly being perceived as a fourth dimension of sustainable development," proposing econometric models to assess heritage exposure, environmental behavior, public accessibility, and the effectiveness of cultural heritage preservation. Their findings highlight key relationships among these variables, reinforcing the role of museums in sustainability. Similarly, Cerquitte & Montella (2021) find that seven SDGs (4, 8, 10, 11, 12, 16, and 17) are integrated into Italian national museum evaluations, yet they emphasize the need for deeper analysis of sustainable practices, recommending a holistic approach involving external stakeholders and local contexts to enhance museum sustainability efforts.

These disparities highlight a critical gap, that is, the role of museums in advancing the SDGs is well-documented in global contexts; however, there is little research on

how regional museums in the Philippines, particularly in the Visayas, navigate these challenges.

Museums as Educational Hubs

Museums are essential for preserving both human history and natural environments. By raising awareness about the importance of our heritage, museums encourage individuals to contribute to its preservation and sustainable development, playing a crucial role in enhancing public education and participation with the SDGs (McGhie, 2019).

One promising avenue for museums is they serve as hubs for cultural exchange, education, and fostering social cohesion. Through the programs they conduct, museums engage with sustainable practices and educate visitors. For example, the integration of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into the museums empowered marginalized communities through programs, such as creating artworks. It highlights the need to weave sustainability into both academic frameworks and daily life, ensuring a more inclusive and sustainable future (UNESCO, 2023).

Ioakimidis & Stavros (2021) confirm that the Greek thematic museums (Open-Air Water Power Museum and Industrial Gas Museum) have effectively adapted to their evolving roles. With the goal to align their offerings to SDGs and enhance their educational programs to address issues outlined in the 2030 Agenda, both institutions include hosting film screenings, debates, conferences, and workshops to keep the public and local communities informed about relevant topics. Additional findings from the research project of CIMAM – International Committee for Museums and Collections of Modern Art (2023) reveal that museums play a key

role in advancing the SDGs through communication, education, and capacity building, aligning with public views on their potential to promote sustainability. The study highlights how social, environmental, and economic practices intersect with the opportunities and challenges faced by museums as cultural institutions.

In the ASEAN context, the Malay Technology Museum in Brunei employs interactive water village dioramas featuring the village from the late 19th century until the mid-20th century to teach SDG 6: Clean Water, aligning with Hall's (1997) idea on representation. The museum provides historical documentation of diverse architectural influences in Kampong Ayer's traditional houses. It features traditional fishing gear used by the water village community and showcases traditional boat-building craftsmanship, and demonstrates *sago* making techniques (Muzium Teknologi Melayu, 2023).

The Sustainable Singapore Gallery plays a significant role in engaging the public in sustainable development efforts, providing an overview of the different aspects of the country's sustainable development through interactive exhibitions. Each zone consists of stories explaining the sustainable plans associated with advancing the SDGs. To illustrate, Zone A of the gallery involves an initial quiz about the carbon footprint emitted every day. After which, a video prompt will pose a question: "Will you take action for climate change? Then, interactive screens are shown to delve into climate change information and Singapore's climate change plan. Zone F of the gallery challenges the audience to commit themselves to a sustainable Singapore, utilizing the learnings from the previous zones in the gallery. (The Sustainable Singapore Gallery, 2024).

The Cooperative Orthotic & Prosthetic Enterprise or COPE Museum of Laos uses prosthetic limb-making workshops to address SDG 3: Health and Well-being.

Specifically, visitors witness limb production, linking exhibits to active rehabilitation efforts (Hotaling, 2025). Additionally, the Indonesian Museum at Taman Mini Indonesia Indah also exemplifies the role of museums as educational hubs that preserve and interpret archipelago cultures. Through artifacts, community collaborations, and workshops, such institutions align with SDG 4 (Quality Education) while fostering cultural literacy (Awaloedin et al., 2024). However, the study of Awaloedin et al. (2024) also reveals a critical gap in prioritizing tourism-oriented displays over participatory pedagogy, limiting their potential as inclusive learning spaces. It underscores the need for regional museums to adopt more interactive educational programs that transform passive spectators into active learners.

Museums utilize online platforms to offer immersive digital experiences, including virtual collections and searchable databases, enhancing education, research, and creativity through digital heritage (Barekhan & Peter, 2023). Additionally, digitizing archive management reduces physical storage needs, minimizes artifact loss risks, and ensures sustainable cultural preservation (Collecte, 2024).

As demonstrated in the study of Jung (2024), new technologies have been rapidly integrated into museums, enhancing the dissemination of cultural heritage through VR and other methods. This explains Mosako's (2022) argument that South African museums have the potential to be conducive information communication technology (ICT) platforms to facilitate cultural education and contribute to fulfilling Target 7 of SDG 4. They created innovative ways to disseminate cultural and historical information globally through digital technologies, including hybrid spaces, such as theme-based exhibitions, to engage on-site visitors and online users and

significantly contribute to achieving the 2030 SDGs.

Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Cambodia, which, with UNESCO's support, digitize over 60,000 documents to create an accessible online database (UNESCO, 2021). This initiative not only safeguards memory but also transforms archives into tools for global education, fostering historical awareness and peacebuilding. By upgrading preservation facilities and training staff in digitization, the museum ensures these records endure as pedagogical resources, reinforcing its role in educating future generations about past atrocities to prevent recurrence.

In concordance, Nguyen, T. D.'s (2024) study on the challenges of the Vietnam National Museum of History emphasizes the importance of museum staff proactively engaging the community with museums rather than diverting their attention. Leveraging technology was a key factor, offering museum staff opportunities to learn and apply digital tools in presenting museum collections and educational programs.

Cultural heritages risk being lost and extinct without preservation efforts, as modernization, assimilation, and globalization threaten their survival. In response to this, the study of Suaib et al. (2020) provides an overview of the existing efforts to safeguard the cultural and heritage treasures in Malaysia, as documented in literature. The study explores digital preservation methods, pointing out the potential contributions of computer graphics, media scientists, and practitioners as alternative approaches to preserving culture and heritage.

Phichai (2023) also asserts that establishing virtual museums replicates in-person exhibitions and their artifacts, enabling continued learning beyond physical museum visits. Her study explores learning theories applicable to developing educational content and immersive experiences through VR exhibits for visitors. The same was found in the study of Sakulngam (2024) on NSM AR development in the

National Science Museum in Thailand. NSM AR is an application developed based on the science museum's existing content that operates on iPad or tablet platforms. Its features allow visitors to interact with exhibits, models, display panels, and other various scientific learning activities. It also serves as an "*educational enhancement*", acting as an extension that "*adds value to museum exhibits*".

The rise of social media has given opportunity for influencers to play a significant role in representing cultural heritage (Yudhawasthi, 2024). Since the potential of social media for spreading cultural resources is frequently underestimated, strategies are advanced to leverage social media for effective cultural dissemination (Vidaurre-Rojas, 2024).

Yudhawasthi (2024) advances this concept through her study designed to investigate how heritage influencers generally shape the visual representation of Indonesian museums through social media content, particularly TikTok. The research employed a qualitative approach consisting of key informants possessing the characteristics of advancing culture and supporting informants who were museum managers.

Museums for Environmental Awareness

With museums at the center of information dissemination, must consider sustainability of the visitor experience. A sustainable experience can play a part in engaging the audience or visitors towards achieving a goal, using it to support and balance its mission and goals. For instance, the National Maritime Museum of France, one of the largest museums in the world, has a mission to inspire and give awareness to the visitors regarding the importance of the sea to the world. They

included a multisensory experience when designing a museum strategy, harnessing emotions and imagination to raise visitor awareness about the critical ecological, economic, scientific, and military challenges that underscore the sea's profound significance for humanity's future (OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR MUSEUMS TODAY, 2022).

The Finnish Museum LUSTO (2024), on the other hand, exhibits the significance of forests in everyday life. It embodies the concept of “forest lives in us” and the values of sustainability along with authenticity and courage through practices of sustainable options (principles) in their operations, such as producing their own solar power, considering energy efficiency, and using public transportation.

The Children's Museum of New Hampshire in Dover worked with local partners and considered a three-pronged approach in advancing sustainability education. The activities encourage local families with their kids to explore the natural environment and support the museum's programs (Weller & Ostman, 2021). The museum itself is a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified museum in the state, paving the way to sustainability commitments through changes such as switching out plastics for paper or wood products for project and event supplies. This has a ripple effect on the local residents and families, highlighting sustainable features and programs of the museum (ReVision Energy, 2024).

Molly Zegans of the Maria Mitchell Association also adds that museums should consider what the visitors can take, such as balancing individual actions with messages on ways the community can collaborate. Zegans mentions sample activities like driving less often and creating bike paths, paving a way towards getting

zero emissions and individual changes. This fosters understanding for visitors in a complex world while providing ways for change (Weller & Ostman, 2021).

Fostering Empowerment and Inclusivity

Museums, long accustomed to shedding light on social issues and catalyzing action, have showcased this commitment through exhibitions held worldwide over the years. One such exhibition, titled *Kutmaan* at Leighton House Museum, boldly addresses inequality and injustice by delving into the experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals forced into exile due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Featuring predominantly men from Iraq or Iran, photographed in Syria or Turkey after displacement from their homeland, families, and communities, the exhibition shed light on their struggles. It exemplifies how museums utilize their platforms to raise awareness of overlooked issues and advocate for change, serving as powerful tools for making impactful statements (Museums Association, 2024).

Museums across ASEAN are transforming into dynamic spaces for social advocacy, combining storytelling, education, and direct action. The Vietnam Women's Museum contributes to the country for its initiatives and achievements in promoting the country's development, especially for gender equality. For example, the exhibition named "17 Faces of Action of Vietnam for Sustainable Development" opened in 2023 to promote the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and to acknowledge and motivate women globally to actively contribute to socio-economic development and the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals. Specifically, it features 17 visual stories showcasing women from across Vietnam, highlighting their roles in various fields including science, education, business, military, medicine, diplomacy, art, engineering, activism, and community leadership

(Nguyen, H., 2023).

Malaysia's Pucuk Rebung Cultural Gallery, are using exhibitions to challenge historical erasure and promote marginalized voices. These institutions go beyond static displays, actively engaging with issues like gender equality, disability rights, and post-conflict reconciliation. Teh Chin Boon, the artist in this exhibition explains the intention to "bring to life the cultural exchanges observed in Malaysia to a wide audience." This aims to reinforce the idea that ASEAN's diversity is a strength, not a division, aligning with ASCC 2025 Blueprint on social cohesion, heritage preservation, and inclusive development (Yiheng, 2023).

Museums also contribute significantly to advancing Goal 16 by promoting public access to information and safeguarding fundamental freedoms. In this context, Xiang et al. (2025) presented a specific study investigating the approaches, methods, and tools being deployed in managing museums for building a peaceful and inclusive society and promoting justice. The results of the study demonstrated that the role of museums in advancing SDG 16 can be analyzed as a nexus between museums and SDG 16, key for information access and a promoter of social sustainability.

Platforms for Local Artists

Art institutions respond to advance the Sustainable Development Goals by showcasing local art and providing platforms for local artists, fostering community resilience. As art is at every turn in Singapore, The National Gallery Singapore and Singapore Art Museum collaborated for an initiative titled *Proposals for Novel Ways of Being* (August 2020), a response project to the changes brought by COVID-19, including 10 local art institutions and over 170 artists. The initiative includes both

physical and digital platforms to ensure continued access to art. This highlights the solidarity within the art community and the role of art museums in proposing new possibilities for a changed world (National Gallery Singapore, 2020).

Collaboration and Accessibility

Accessibility is everyone's responsibility; that is, accessibility and collaboration have become a growing focus in the museum sector. However, there is no simple or universally applicable guide for enhancing these, leaving institutions to navigate this complex challenge on their own (Trainer, et al., 2022). For example, a report published by Balkan Museum Network (2024) provides guidance for museums to build inclusive environments, improve visitor experiences, and support social integration. It focuses on innovative practices that drive meaningful change and emphasize accessibility that extends beyond physical barriers.

Museums and sustainable development share a two-way connection or a "bidirectional relationship," where museums contribute to sustainable development, and in turn, sustainable development practices impact and shape museum operations (Ioakimidis & Stavros, 2021). To achieve sustainability, museums should assess the economic value and socio-cultural impacts through a mixed-method approach, incorporating both tourists' perceptions and insights from the local community (Orea-Giner et al., 2020).

González-Herrera et al. (2023) investigate the situation of accessibility in museums and other cultural spaces as alternative learning spaces through a comprehensive search of documents between 2015 and 2021. It followed Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses or PRISMA, the Web of Science (WOS), Scopus, and Dialnet databases. The results revealed a total of 17

documents showing the transformation of the cultural spaces, the improvement of their accessibility, and adaptation to the new times.

This reflects the study of Nguyen, D. T. (2024) on a participatory museum approach in the context of cultural preservation and community development within the two localities in Vietnam: Gia Lai and Thua Thien Hue provinces. Within this framework, community-based and sustainable tourism play a crucial role in promoting cultural preservation. As part of various activities, a community museum or cultural interpretation center serves as a focal point, showcasing traditional music, cuisine, handicrafts, and ritual ceremonies. This space provides visitors with immersive opportunities to experience and engage with the local culture.

Museum educational programs, along with strong community engagement initiatives, make museums awake and alive to the community, serving as catalysts for cultural revitalization and economic empowerment (Dulnuan, 2024). In this context, Dulnuan highlights the educational and cultural mission of the National Museum of the Philippines-Cordillera through its Museum Educational Program, which aligns with the study's focus on community engagement as a means to reconnect with heritage and foster community resilience. The program included educational tours designed to provide children with an immersive museum experience, as well as skills training courses for community members, such as weaving, yeast-making, and gong beating.

Museums undergo dynamic transformation to adapt to the growing societal demands through implementing policies designed to address pressing issues on reducing educational inequality.

In this context, Khamha (2024) presents a joint project of the National Science Museum (NSM) in Thailand and its stakeholders on the role of NSM in

promoting creative educational activities. The project promotes creative, locally themed education tied to elementary science curricula, focusing on developing students' analytical thinking. It trains teachers to use natural resources for low-cost, practical learning, boosting student achievement, and educates community leaders and tourism groups on biodiversity.

Additional study of Altintas & Kozaner (2020) explores active learning in museums. For this purpose, nine students (12 females and 7 males) studying social studies at a public university were grouped and given museum training for seven weeks. For data collection, Pre-Museum Evaluation Forms and Activity Evaluation Forms were utilized to determine the expectations of the students before and after the museum training. Results showed prioritizing intellectual engagement over emotional or sensory experiences makes a museum more effective.

Museums offer unique opportunities for experiential and social/emotional learning that are difficult to replicate in other settings. Despite this potential, schools and communities are not fully utilizing the rich resources and experiences these spaces provide. In light of this, Weber (2022) conducts a study on the role of museums in educational pedagogy and community engagement. Museum education departments and K-12 teachers in the Chicagoland area were surveyed and interviewed, collecting the documents, such as the available programs and feedback for improvement. The findings revealed a positive role that the museums play in creating well-rounded individuals, concluding an adoption of more active and informal pedagogies to attain a successful education system that is, having partnerships with museums.

Key Challenges in Advancing Sustainable Development Goals

The SDGs, as global policy, create both challenges and opportunities for cultural organizations, such as museums. The main challenge is to ensure the effectiveness of the contribution of cultural organizations to the global policy agenda.

Museums are major drivers of social and economic development and sustainability. However, unequal distribution of museums worldwide significantly impacts access to culture and knowledge. Furthermore, as museums face new challenges, including multipolarity, excessive industrialization, climate change, and increased fragmentation, many people are being excluded from them. Thus, museums must also be fully connected to the challenges of our times in order to meet the global requirements of sustainable and integrated development (OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR MUSEUMS TODAY, 2022).

To reflect this, Andina (2024) regards museums in Indonesia as educational institutions and research centers that support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), underscoring their role as providers of varied information and supporting specific SDGs, such as the SDG 4: Quality Education and SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure. Implementation of museum strategies is regulated by different ministries. However, it is also posed with challenges. Several aspects include weak museum management hampered by a lack of government support, human resources with inadequate relevant competencies, and funding solely relying on museum tickets. This often leads to minimal expectations, as affordable pricing can reduce anticipation of the museum experience.

Economic Sustainability Barriers

Most museums operate as nonprofits, seldom qualified for tax incentives

aimed at enhancing site sustainability. Grants serve as more practical and effective forms of funding to help museums achieve their sustainability objectives (American Alliance of Museums, 2025).

Although museums embody social value and impact in their mission, there's a gap between desired action and actual impact, due to cultural barriers and financial limitations. While museums are recognized as key contributors to a sustainable economy, they often lack economic sustainability themselves and sufficient support from public entities (de Vries, 2020). For example, Pichitkul (2024) emphasizes the role of digital technologies in improving resource management and creating new revenue streams, such as virtual exhibitions, online retail, and immersive experiences. Yet, Ong et al. (2023) acknowledge that the museum may not start the digitization process immediately due to challenges in funding for managing staff and purchase of equipment, presenting further challenges on skills decay, or a gradual decline of someone's skills and abilities when not actively practiced.

Cultural initiatives in public museums, such as in the Vietnamese Women's Museum, pose a critical challenge in funding (Hoa, 2017). Despite operating under Decree 43/2006/ND-CP, which promotes financial autonomy, the museum struggled with heavy reliance on state subsidies (covering only 22–32% of costs in 2013–2016), and limited revenue diversification through entrance fees and rentals, highlighting a broader gap in SDG financing. While macro-level research emphasizes global funding shortfalls, micro-level studies on institutional financial inefficiencies, such as mismanagement or lack of innovative models, remain lacking, particularly in cultural preservation. Addressing this requires hybrid financing solutions tailored to local realities, as demonstrated by the museum's untapped

potential in tourism and partnerships.

Similarly, Cambodian museums' struggles to reclaim looted antiquities tied to offshore networks pose significant barriers to sustainable museum development in Southeast Asia. The case of funneled Khmer artifacts into global museums highlights how reliance on unethical donations and the costs of repatriation drains institutional resources (Politzer et al., 2021). It underscores the need for enforced heritage laws, ethical funding models, and digital restitution to mitigate losses and ensure long-term sustainability.

Digitization Challenges

Challenges in conducting scientific research on historical museum specimens, such as those collected during the European colonization of ASEAN, were taken to European countries. It has driven natural history museums to digitize their collections (Nalinrachatakan, 2024). However, the report of Kim-Davies (2024) highlights the role of digital technology, recognizing that some museums successfully adopted digital tools. However, it also points out that the digital divide in regions where collections remain undigitized and online education is nearly unfeasible poses a significant barrier to maintaining museums' educational functions during closures. Although guidelines to digitize the national history collections (NHC) are encouraged at a minimal cost, further studies of Ong et al. (2023) identify major challenges in the digitization process of NHC museums in Malaysia, such as skills fade, data integrity, data sharing platforms, and data heterogeneity.

Community Awareness Issues

The International Council of Museums, or ICOM (2017), set minimum

standards of professional practice for museum employees and staff, including preservation, monitoring, and restoration. In accordance with ICOM's Code of Ethics for Museums, preventive conservation is a key aspect of museum policy and collection care, requiring professionals to maintain a protective environment for items in storage, on display, or during transit. Hence, museum employees must monitor collection conditions to identify when conservation or restoration by a qualified specialist is needed. The primary aim is to stabilize the item, with all procedures being documented, reversible, and clearly distinguishable from the original.

However, many museum visitors lack awareness of preservation practices, which can sometimes lead to accidental damage or destruction of collections by the public. Conservators share accounts of public mishandling of collection items, such as vitrines scratched by strollers, glass damaged by parents leaning on displays, or accidental incidents like a pencil falling from a pocket onto an exhibit backdrop (Hirsch et al., 2024).

Wahyudi (2024) includes an in-depth study examining ethical, cultural, and Tamansiswa-related concerns surrounding the Dewantara Kirti Griya Museum, a site that houses the intellectual legacy of Ki Hadjar Dewantara, the pioneer of national education in Indonesia. The research was inspired by an incident on June 4, 2023, which led to significant damage within the museum. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative research method with a case study approach, the study employed a combination of data collection techniques, including archival research, interviews, questionnaires, and observations.

A key aspect of the research involves analyzing the vandalism case at the Dewantara Kirti Griya Museum in Yogyakarta. Wahyudi argues that the youth in

Yogyakarta are facing a cultural crisis, as they appear increasingly disconnected from their own cultural and ethical heritage. The destruction of the museum is regarded as a troubling indicator of declining morals and ethics among young people, reflecting a lack of appreciation for the museum and its artifacts, which serve as vital symbols of the nation's cultural and historical identity.

The same notion is implied as a freelance artist posted a video in February 2023 on a scenario where two visitors at the National Museum of the Philippines were seen resting a cellphone on one of the sculptures while dancing for a TikTok video (Daily Guardian, 2023).

Opportunities in Advancing Sustainable Development Goals

Museums serve as crucial assets in tackling the challenges of the future, aligning with concrete objectives and overarching international policies like the UN SDGs and Agenda 21. Beyond fostering economic growth within their communities, museums play a vital role in fostering peaceful coexistence, particularly amidst heightened identity-related tensions. Their core mission of preserving and presenting heritage transcends mere aesthetics; they actively engage in addressing local socio-economic issues and contribute to broader diplomatic agendas on the global stage. The museum supports values of tolerance, inclusiveness, and diversity and actively engages with contemporary issues such as sustainable development (OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR MUSEUMS TODAY, 2022).

DiMaggio & Powell's (1983) institutional theory offers a valuable lens for understanding the opportunities to address challenges and advance sustainability in cultural institutions like museums. They highlight how organizations, including museums, adopt similar practices due to regulatory pressures, imitations of

successful models, and professional standards as influenced by institutional structure systems. Complementing this institutional perspective, de Certeau's (1984) concept of "the practice of everyday life" distinguishes between formal strategies and informal tactics employed by people in everyday life, and their ability to navigate and resist the structures of power.

Community Engagement

Local communities are essential in safeguarding their heritage - an opportunity many institutions have considered as they adopted a grassroots, consultative approach by involving them in the development of heritage programs. The study by Cabañes et al. (2024) explores the impact of the Cebuano community's participation in establishing the National Museum of the Philippines - Cebu. It assessed community engagement as a means to generate research and documentation opportunities and analyzed its alignment with relevant UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The study concludes that community involvement in the creation and sustainability of museums is highly significant, as it fosters a strong sense of ownership, pride, and shared identity within the community, promoting continuous engagement and active participation.

Digitization

The 2015 UNESCO Recommendation on Museums emphasizes protecting and promoting museums and collections, highlighting their societal role. It recognizes digital tools as vital for heritage preservation and knowledge sharing, stressing the need for support to enhance museums' core functions (Kim-Davies, 2024). Digitization is defined as the "process of creating digital data from the analog

data in a collection.” This includes processes such as generating 2D and 3D images, digitizing text, and analyzing image segments (Ong et al., 2023).

As included in the case study of Kim-Davies (2024) on Southeast Asia's shared heritage, featuring digital exhibitions with collections from ten museums across five countries showcased the region's cultural connections, fostering mutual understanding, cultural diversity, and intercultural dialogue among civil society, particularly youth.

The same opportunity is found in the study of Ong et al. (2023) on digitizing the natural history collection museums in Malaysia. Digitizing data at any level and making it globally accessible enables researchers to unlock greater insights from biodiversity data, benefiting the research community, the public, and the economy. To further the process of digitizing, guidelines are presented to local museums and digitizers at a minimal cost to implement the digitization activities yet provide results comparable to those in other standard museums or studios. This includes building staff capabilities to empower museums in their biodiversity data-sharing missions, such as creating a continuous engagement strategy to set up a technical group on a social network for technical support and sharing.

Additional findings of Nalinrachatakan (2024) on digitizing Thai bee's natural museum collection suggest the importance of the Thai bee digitization database, which supports the research community in remotely studying bees and bridging gaps in accessibility and research capabilities.

Pichitkul (2024) also explores the innovative experiences and approaches that can empower museums to navigate financial uncertainties while maintaining their ongoing operations. It emphasized the role of digital technologies in improving resource management and creating new revenue streams, such as virtual

exhibitions, online retail, and immersive experiences. Additionally, it examined the significance of strategic financial planning, including budgeting, forecasting, and risk management, and recommended adopting a proactive approach to anticipate and address potential financial challenges.

Funding

Ser (2024) examines the evolving role of museum shops in the creative industry, framing them as a central element in the "Museum as Mall" concept. The study explores how museum shops can be reimagined as a standout aspect of the museum business model in ASEAN. Theoretically, it analyzes the relationship between production and consumption culture and its influence on the financial sustainability of museums. From a practical perspective, it underscores the potential of museum shops to increase revenue, drive the creation of innovative products and services, and strengthen museum tourism across the region.

Visitor

Data

Collection

Thaung (2024) studies the sustainable development of museums, particularly the challenges and opportunities in the National Museum in Yangon, Myanmar. Using a mixed-methods approach, it identifies key challenges and opportunities for sustainability within the museum sector by combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. The findings highlight significant challenges in advancing sustainable development, emphasizing the need for multiple indicators to evaluate opportunities and challenges, such as the visitor data collected over time. Based on this analysis, the researcher concluded that it played a critical role in shaping the museum's sustainability trajectory.

For instance, the sharp 153% rise in total visitors in 2023 presents an opportunity to solidify the museum's role within the cultural tourism sector. On the other hand, fluctuations in visitor numbers were linked to underlying economic, political, and social factors affecting attendance.

Summary

Museums play an imperative role in advancing sustainability by modeling sustainable practices. By adopting frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) and Education for Sustainability (EfS), museums enhance their sustainability efforts and foster collaborative support within their institutions. These cultural organizations are uniquely positioned to influence behavior through their engagement with diverse audiences, offering relevant learning opportunities and fostering cross-cultural understanding. They help preserve human history and natural environments, serving as hubs for cultural exchange, education, and social cohesion, while making information about social, economic, cultural, and environmental issues more accessible and encouraging public engagement with sustainability.

Effective contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by museums often involve collaborative and innovative practices. Examples include the Sustainable Singapore Gallery in Marina Gardens, Singapore; the Vietnam Women's Museum; and the Science center's engaging sustainability-themed board games. Museums like the Finnish Museum LUSTO and the Alaska State Museum exemplify sustainable practices through energy efficiency and community projects. These initiatives, along with exhibitions addressing social justice issues and outdoor spaces promoting environmental awareness, highlight museums' capacity to foster

public education, participation, and sustainable development. Despite challenges such as financial limitations and the need for economic sustainability, museums continue to leverage opportunities to advance the SDGs through community engagement and innovative practices.

Epistemological and Theoretical Perspectives

Figure 1. Epistemology, theoretical perspective, and the methods of the study.

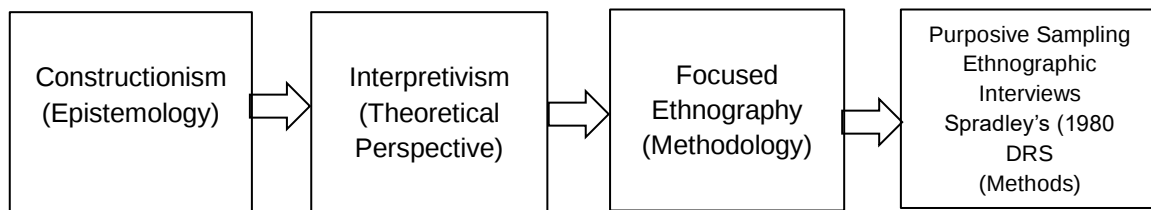


Figure 1 shows the epistemological assumption, theoretical research perspective, methodology, and methods that were utilized in this study. The foundation of this study was based on the epistemology of constructionism, which focused on the idea that the truth or the meaning arises in and out of social engagement with the realities of the world.

Guided by the theoretical perspective on interpretivism, this study is based on the assumption that meanings are constructed by humans as they engage with the world. Shaped by their own experiences and backgrounds, they interpret to understand the context and interpret what they find (University of Nottingham, 2024). Interpretivism centers on the social reality view that the meaning is obtained from the results of social interactions with other people. Creswell (2003), as cited by Syamsudin (2022), states that the perspective relies on the "participant's view of the situation being studied." This generally does not start with theory, but rather they "generate or inductively develop theories or patterns of meaning" during the

research process.

The articulation of the researcher's role in this process addresses the connections between the researcher and the participants or research sites that could potentially bias interpretations. This directs to challenges and imbalance between the data source and the researcher (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Consequently, I anchored this study on the belief that each individual holds multiple views to ground up codes, major themes, and perspectives. Given the experiences, there were several considerations regarding biases and potential effects on the research. The familiarity with museums and the SDGs led to a focus on themes and interpretations aligned with sustainable practices. While this offered valuable inputs, it also carried potential risks in narrowing the research scope. Thus, I addressed these biases through maintaining a reflexive journal and transparency about my background and biases.

The perceptions toward the SDGs and museums were shaped by exposure to the MDGs (now SDGs) as part of the undergraduate curriculum, which provides a comprehensive understanding of global development issues and sustainability. The engagement with contemporary art and museums, owing to the role as a teacher in contemporary Philippine arts and exposure to various museums, significantly provided a comprehensive understanding of museum environments, which enhanced the sensitivity to the context of the research.

The epistemological and theoretical perspectives informed the choice of focused ethnographic approach in this study, influencing the methods that were used for data collection and data analysis. Deep engagement with the Visayan museum employees and stakeholders aligns with nature of focused ethnography, and prolonged participation and observation captured context-dependent practices

in Visayan museums for advancing the SDGs.

To operationalize the focused ethnographic approach, the study employed ethnographic methods and followed Spradley's (1980) Developmental Research Sequence (DRS). Spradley's DRS prioritized naturalistic settings and allowed informant's behavior and interactions to reveal culturally embedded meanings (Paquiao, 2025). Specifically, informants were selected based on their direct involvement with museum sustainability initiatives and were interviewed to contextualize understanding. Moreover, the immersive engagement, through field notes, emerged culturally significant themes.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the systematic approach adopted to address the research questions and achieve the objectives of this study. It provides a detailed description of the research design, data collection methods, sampling techniques, and procedures employed.

Research Design

A focused ethnographic qualitative research design was employed in this study to determine the practices of Visayan museums in advancing the SDGs.

Conventional ethnography was first described by Malinowski in 1922 through a detailed investigation into the communities of New Guinea. It was called social anthropology as it was marked by the idea of the “marginal native” or “professional stranger”. Here, the researchers immerse themselves in a culture and conduct extensive participant observation to gain a deeper understanding of that culture’s social norms and structures. Malinowski highlighted an approach analyzing the surface of observations through consideration of the broader issues and interactions within a community and society (Ryan, 2017).

However, researchers from various disciplines are utilizing and modifying ethnography beyond its original purposes, forming one adaptation called “focused ethnography”. Mayan in 2009 defined the approach based on the idea that traveling to distant places is no longer a requirement in studying culture and culture is not solely defined by ethnic boundaries, instead, cultures are everywhere and may be

largely unrestricted. It typically addresses a specific problem within a particular context and is conducted within a sub-cultural group, rather than a cultural group that is entirely different from that of the researcher (Wall, 2015).

Knoblauch in 2005, as cited by Wall (2015), first introduced sociological focused ethnography as useful for social research in complexity and specialized fields. It has been primarily employed in disciplines that focus on practical applications as a practical and efficient method to capture specific cultural perspectives and apply that understanding effectively.

Specifically, the differences between conventional ethnography and focused ethnography are as follows:

Conventional Ethnography

- Involves essential elements, such as Interviews, extended participant observation, field notes, and document analysis;
- Researchers are traditionally seen as impartial, distant, reflective observers;
- Conducted by researchers who are not part of the cultural group, allowing them to observe the setting more objectively; and
- Researchers usually do not start with a predefined research question before entering the field.

Focused Ethnography

- Characterized by brief or infrequent field visits, a focus on a particular research question, a researcher with insider knowledge of the cultural group, and intensive methods of data collection and recording, such as video or audio recording.

Hence, focused ethnography is a valuable and essential approach due to its adaptability in investigating culture in new and important contexts. It maintains its

core principles and enables researchers to examine cultural settings that traditional methods cannot reach (Wall, 2015).

Informants and Selection Procedure

The primary informants of this study were eight museum employees who had the best understanding of the practices in advancing the SDGs, and 12 museum stakeholders were selected to cross-verify the data. Specifically, they were selected using purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling, through a specific set of criteria, was used to ensure that informants possess the necessary knowledge and experience to provide valuable insights into the practices employed in the Visayan museums for advancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The selection criteria for the informants are presented below.

For museum employees,

1. Informants should express their willingness to participate in the study;
2. Individuals currently employed as either directors, administrators, or officers responsible for operational or administrative functions who are directly involved in or have oversight responsibilities for museum activities, programs, or initiatives related to advancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within a Visayan museum;
3. Minimum of 10 months of continuous employment in their current role within the museum sector and demonstrates a good understanding of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their relevance to the museum's mission and activities; and
4. Based in the Visayas region of the Philippines, where the museum is situated and actively operating.

For stakeholders (museum visitors),

1. Informants should express their willingness to participate in the study;
2. Any individual who visit the museum for leisure, education, or cultural enrichment, such as university students, teachers, and professors who utilize the museum as an educational resource or domestic and international visitors who explore the museum as part of their travel experience or connected to the museum as part of advancing the SDGs;
3. Must have visited or connected to the museum at least two times in the past year, indicating a strong engagement and familiarity with the museum's exhibits, programs, and mission;
4. Shows awareness or interest in the museum's role in advancing sustainability and community-related initiatives; and
5. Must be reachable for follow-up or further participation in the study if needed, ensuring continuity and depth in data collection.

On the other hand, snowball sampling was used for a hard-to-reach population. Snowball sampling is one of the popular methods of sampling in social research, which sheds light on the conditions of the evolution of the idea of sampling from hidden or hard-to-reach human populations (Pasikowski, 2023).

In this study, a museum employee suggested interviewing a parent whose child participated in school-organized museum tours to gather insights from someone directly involved in the experience. Furthermore, the parent was also asked to identify other individuals with similar experiences for additional information. Letterman (2010), as cited by Creswell & Poth (2017), also suggests that ethnographic researchers should first mingle with the prospect group and select respondents based on the research questions. With this, I compiled a list of potential

informants, consisting of individuals who possessed the aforementioned criteria and agreed to take part.

Table 2

Informants' Background information (Museum Employees)

Informants	Willingness to Participate	Employment	Length of Experience During the Conduct of the Study	Museum Location
Informant 1	Yes	Administrative Officer V	12 mos.	NMP - Dumaguete
Informant 2	Yes	Museum Researcher II	10 mos.	NMP - Dumaguete
Informant 3	Yes	Information Officer II (COS)	23 mos.	NMP - Dumaguete
Informant 4	Yes	Museum Guide	14 mos.	NMP - Dumaguete
Informant 5	Yes	Museum Technician	23 mos.	NMP - Dumaguete
Informant 6	Yes	Information Officer III	24 mos.	NMP – Cebu
Informant 7	Yes	Museum Officer	24 mos.	ILOMOCA
Informant 8	Yes	Officer-In-Charge/ Information Officer III	72 mos.	NMP - Iloilo

Informant 1. A seasoned government employee with a decade of experience, Informant 1 joined the NMP - Dumaguete seeking for tenure and greener pasture, transitioning into a role that blends administrative oversight with team management. Her typical day starts with a pep talk with her team to ensure quality performance and attainment of museum goals. “I barely can stand up if I start my job”, was a statement she made to describe her role as an Administrative Officer and Officer-in-Charge. Her daily routine revolves around coordinating operations and ensuring performance targets are met. The best thing about the museum, she describes, is that tasks are made manageable through collaborative teamwork in what they consider a challenging yet supportive environment.

Informant 2. As a relatively new Museum Researcher with 10 months at the museum in Dumaguete, Informant 2 represents the adaptive nature of museum professionals, transitioning from contract work to handling diverse responsibilities from fieldwork to social media content creation. His main responsibility is to identify points of research in Negros Island. While the approval of conducting research on a fieldwork basis depends on the central office, he assists the Administrative Officer and Information Officer for creating collateral materials, writings, and reporting. The museum lobby holds special significance for him as a transformative space where temporary exhibitions breathe dynamic life into the institution, suggesting his appreciation for how museums can balance permanent collections with evolving programming to stay relevant to communities.

Informant 3. Nearly two years into their NMP tenure, Informant 3 embodies the digital shift in museums as an Information Officer, managing the institution's online presence while maintaining roots in traditional visitor engagement through guiding. He started the museum engagement system in times when staffing was

limited, particularly Saturdays, serving as a museum guide and a responsibility he describes: “That’s actually one of my favorite parts...meeting the people who come to the museum, asking questions, because this is the best place to ask questions, and for them to learn more about the exhibits we have here.”

Informant 4. Informant 4’s fourteen-month journey from contractual work to a regular position as a Museum Guide at NMP - Dumaguete mirrors many cultural workers’ pursuit of stability in the sector. His daily interactions with visitors, handling statistics, bookings, and inquiries, position him as the museum’s public face, while his admiration for the institution’s free admission policy reflects a commitment to accessibility. The description of the museum as combining education with “pseudo social services” reveals his perception of cultural institutions as playing broader community roles beyond traditional preservation and display functions.

Informant 5. With nearly two years at NMP - Dumaguete, Informant 5’s transition from contract work parallels Informant 4’s career trajectory, though her specialized focus on artifact conservation as a Museum Technician. Her daily rounds to assess collection conditions represent the often-unseen preservation work that underpins museum operations. The enthusiastic declaration about this being the happiest point in her career suggests profound professional fulfillment found in museum work, highlighting how engagement with cultural heritage can provide deep job satisfaction that transcends employment precarity.

Informant 6. Informant 6, 36, is an Information Officer at NMP - Cebu. Her role centers on designing and managing public programs while assisting in frontline services to ensure accessibility and engagement for diverse audiences. Deeply invested in archaeology, she is particularly drawn to the museum’s pre-colonial collection, valuing its ability to reconstruct Cebu’s indigenous past through direct

interaction with artifacts.

Informant 7. Informant 7, who is in her 30s, humorously positions herself as the "oldest employee" among a young team, having served nearly three years as Museum Officer transitioning from her former role in operations and a teaching position at a private university.

A practicing artist by training, she approaches her administrative work with a creator's sensibility, her only lament being that managerial duties have temporarily paused her personal art practice. Her enthusiasm centers on the *Hulot Gallery*, a compact but dynamic space that epitomizes her professional values. This space, where she witnesses "kids and even adults interacting with everything," represents the convergence of her artistic background and community-oriented aspirations that drew her to museum work when recruited by ILOMOCA.

Informant 8. Informant 8 serves as Information Officer 3 and Officer-in-Charge at the NMP – Iloilo since 2018. With a background in media and a BA in History, she finds her career a perfect fit for her as it combines storytelling, education, and cultural preservation without the rigidity of formal teaching. Her typical day starts with administrative tasks, such as budget processing and creating proposals, gallery inspections, public program coordination, and guided tours, though Mondays are reserved for collections maintenance, ensuring artifacts remain dust-free and well-preserved. Moreover, she also oversees collections care, research, and exhibitions. Beyond the museum walls, she engages in off-site programs and she perceives the museum as a platform for untold stories, intersecting history, art, and culture in accessible, meaningful ways.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in four museums located in the Visayas region of the Philippines: the National Museum of the Philippines (NMP) in Iloilo, Dumaguete, and Cebu, and the Iloilo Museum of Contemporary Art (ILOMOCA). These museums were carefully selected for their roles in contributing to the advancement of sustainability.

Each of the chosen museums engages in a variety of initiatives that focus on cultural preservation, education, community engagement, and environmental sustainability. These initiatives align with key SDGs, such as Quality Education (SDG 4), Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11), and Climate Action (SDG 13).

Furthermore, the locales included museum employees who were directly responsible for developing and implementing sustainability programs and practices. These employees were considered ideal informants due to their firsthand experience and deep knowledge of the museums' sustainability efforts. Their insights were critical in understanding the practical role these institutions play in advancing the SDGs, offering a rich, in-depth perspective on the subject matter.

This approach followed Spradley's (1980) emphasis on selecting social situations with accessible, knowledgeable participants to ensure a collection of rich and relevant data. By focusing on individuals with direct involvement in sustainability initiatives, the study was able to gather comprehensive and accurate insights into how cultural institutions support sustainable development in the Visayas region.

Figure 2. National Museum of the Philippines – Iloilo.



Note. The National Museum of the Philippines - Iloilo. Own work. January 2025. Taken during field work.

Located at Iloilo Provincial Capitol Complex, Brgy. Danao, City Proper, Iloilo City, 5000, the National Museum of the Philippines – Iloilo (NMP – Iloilo) was originally the Prison of Iloilo, also known as Iloilo Provincial Jail or Iloilo Rehabilitation Center. Recognizing its significant architectural, cultural, and historical value, the National Museum of the Philippines (NMP) designated it as an Important Cultural Property (ICP) on December 16, 2016. The retrofitting and restoration, overseen by the late Guillermo Hisancha, former president of the United Architects of the Philippines, aimed to preserve its historical integrity. During the Province of Iloilo's 117th Foundation Day celebration on April 11, 2018, the facility was officially transferred to NMP under a 50-year usufruct agreement (National Museum of the Philippines, 2021).

Figure 3. Iloilo Museum of Contemporary Art.



Note. Iloilo Museum of Contemporary Art (ILOMOCA). Own Work. October 2024. Taken during field work.

The Iloilo Museum of Contemporary Art (ILOMOCA) is the Visayas region's inaugural museum dedicated to modern and contemporary art. Its mission is to enhance community life in Iloilo province through exhibitions and outreach initiatives. ILOMOCA utilizes exhibitions and public programs; the museum activates art's transformative potential and fosters dialogues about social issues. Situated at the Casa Emperador Building within the Iloilo Business Park Township, ILOMOCA spans approximately 3000 square meters across three floors, housing five exhibition rooms, a theater, and a souvenir shop. Megaworld Corporation, through its Megaworld Foundation, spearheaded the museum's development. ILOMOCA aims to establish itself as a regional venue for the inclusive appreciation and study of art (Iloilo Museum of Contemporary Art, 2019).

Figure 4. National Museum of the Philippines – Dumaguete.



Note. National Museum of the Philippines - Dumaguete. Own work. October 2024. Taken during fieldwork.

Located at the Old Presidencia Building, City Hall Grounds, Poblacion IV, Sta. Catalina Street, Dumaguete City, Philippines 6200, the National Museum of the Philippines in Dumaguete is housed in the historic Old Presidencia Building, which served as the seat of government for elected officials in Dumaguete since 1937. In 2017, a 50-year usufruct agreement was signed between the National Museum of the Philippines and the City of Dumaguete (National Museum of the Philippines, 2021). The museum is a cultural destination featuring "Kabilin sa Kinaiyahan sa Negros," which showcases the region's natural heritage in geology, zoology, and botany. It also highlights the area's rich archaeology with exhibits such as "Ang mga Lubong sa Banga" and "Karaang Edipisyo," emphasizing architectural heritage (Negros Cultural Foundation, Inc., 2024).

Figure 5. National Museum of the Philippines – Cebu.



Note. National Museum of the Philippines - Cebu. Own work. November 2024. Taken during fieldwork.

Located at A. Pigafetta Street, Cebu City, 6000 Cebu, in the heart of Cebu City, adjacent to Fort San Pedro in the historic Plaza Independencia, stands the "Aduana" building. Designed by William Parsons and completed in 1910, it functioned as the customs house for the Port of Cebu for 94 years, surviving World War II bombings mostly unscathed. The National Museum of the Philippines - Cebu showcases exhibitions that celebrate Cebuano culture and heritage, highlighting the island's diverse biodiversity, geology, archaeological treasures, art, ethnographic traditions, and maritime history. In addition to its five galleries, NM Cebu includes a lobby and reception hall adorned with Cebuano artworks depicting local culture and history, a terrace, a courtyard, and the NM's inaugural museum shop (National Museum of the Philippines, 2021).

Data Gathering Tools

The data sources will be gathered through the following:

Observations and Note-Taking

Observations are a way of collecting data by watching and noting the physical characteristics of people or events in their natural setting. This can be conducted overtly, where the subjects are aware that they are being observed, and covertly, where participants are unaware of the observation (Duke University Libraries, 2024). In this process, the researcher takes note of the activities and behaviors of the participants at the study locale, recording the data in structured, semi-structured, or unstructured ways where the participants can express themselves freely (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

On the other hand, note-taking is a process of jotting down essential information from an interview, which helps the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the whole interview. This includes deciding on the important information to include in the analysis and could help in answering the research questions (McMahon, 2023).

In this study, I served as both a participant and an observer, documenting my observations using an observational protocol sheet based on Creswell's (2013) Model (see Appendix E), that captured both descriptive and reflective notes. The descriptive notes included the actual happenings during the observation at the study locale, and the reflective notes included my experiences and learnings.

Interviews

Interviews are a way of gathering information where two or more individuals

exchange questions and answers. Questions are designed to gather specific information from participants on particular topics based on the research questions. Usually, interviews involve a face-to-face meeting between an interviewer and an interviewee, but they can involve more people and can also be conducted remotely (Mauldin, 2020).

In this study, I conducted in-person and online interviews using a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix C). An interview guide is a structured document or a set of topics and questions that the interviewer plans to discuss during the interview. It serves as a tool to ensure that all necessary topics are covered during the interview process (DeCarlo, 2018).

In this study, the semi-structured interview guide is divided into three sections:

Section 1, Consent Form, contained the informed consent and data privacy, covering the purpose of the study, selection of informants, overview of the data collection procedure, confidentiality, risks and benefits, voluntary participation, and consent statement;

Section 2, Interview Protocol, entailed a set of instructions used during the interview to ensure consistency of the structure during the interview process; and

Section 3, Interview Script, served as a detailed outline of the questions, flow of conversation, and instructions on how to handle situations during the interview.

Qualitative Documents

The collection procedures in qualitative research involve qualitative documents. The researcher collects documents (public and private), such as newspapers and official reports, to go beyond typical observations and interviews.

This enables the researcher to access information at a convenient time and serves as an unobtrusive way of collecting data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In this study, I examined organizational documents to gain contextual understanding of the practices of Visayan museums in advancing SDGs and to validate and cross-check the findings of the study. This encompassed official annual reports from 2023-2024 focused on visitation data and operational highlights, archival information, and other print documents.

Audiovisual Materials

Audiovisual material is a creative data collection procedure that involves photography, website pages, social media materials and postings, and any form of visual and sound. This provides an opportunity for the researcher to access direct reality from the respondents (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Audio recordings preserve the full depth of spoken communication, such as tone, volume, and pauses that are often lost or unclear in written transcriptions. In qualitative research, audio data can come from interviews, focus groups, naturalistic recordings, voice notes, podcasts, music, and more. Furthermore, participants of the study may be invited to contribute their reflections or insights on the topic given to be audio recorded (Hecker & Kalpokas, 2024).

The visual materials used in this study were photographs taken during fieldwork, Facebook postings, photos of pamphlets and collateral materials used in public programs, and photos from other stakeholders. On the other hand, audio recordings were collected from the key informants during formal interviews and underwent transcriptions for text analysis.

A set of principles and guidelines was also followed to ensure that the data

collection was conducted responsibly, with integrity and respect for the rights of the informants.

For ethical consideration, the respondents will be given consent forms and will be informed about the process, utilization, storage, and accessibility of the collected data. Key considerations include giving out consent forms, debriefing, respecting the autonomy of the informants, and avoiding conflicts of interest.

Table 3

Matrix of Research Questions, Data Sources, and Instruments

Research Questions	Data Sources	Instruments
Research Question No. 1: Practices for Advancing the SDGs	Museum employees and stakeholders	Observations, Formal and informal Interviews, Documents, Audiovisual Materials
Research Question No. 2: Challenges for Advancing the SDGs	Museum employees and stakeholders	Formal and informal Interviews, Documents, Audiovisual Materials
Research Question No. 3: Opportunities for Advancing the SDGs	Museum employees and stakeholders	Formal and informal Interviews, Documents, Audiovisual Materials

Research Methods

To gather necessary data for this study, the 12 steps in Spradley's Developmental Research Sequence (1980) were followed, including the Spradley's Ethnographic Analysis: Domain Analysis; Taxonomic Analysis; Componential Analysis; and Theme Analysis.

Figure 6. Steps in the Developmental Research Sequence (Spradley, 1980).

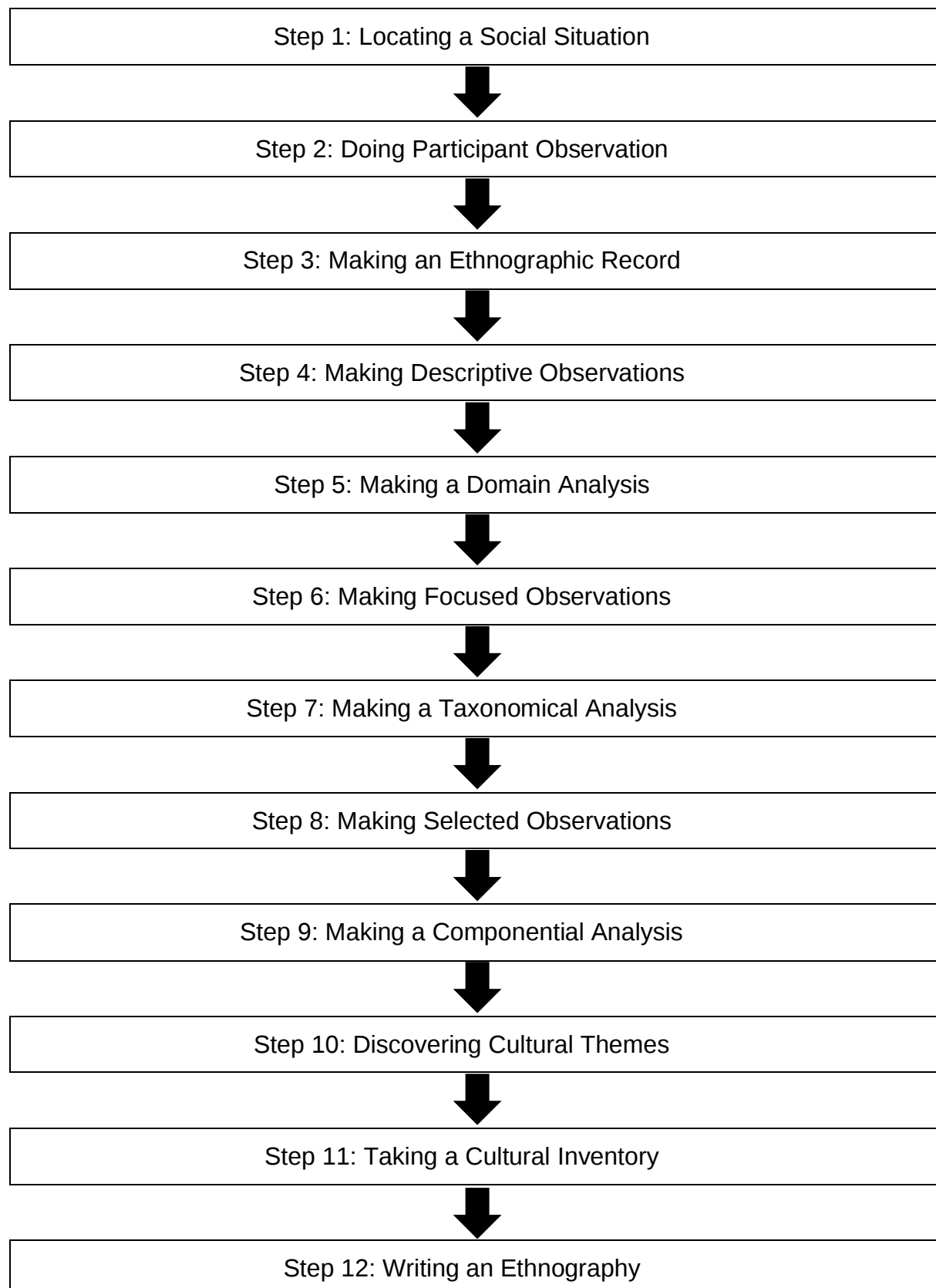


Figure 6 shows the data collection procedure and data analysis as suggested by Spradley in 1980.

Step 1: Locating a Social Situation. Social situations can be identified by the primary elements: *place*, where ethnographers position themselves in a specific location; *actors*, whom the ethnographers are involved with, and *activities*, which the ethnographers observe and take part in (Spradley, 1980).

In the context of this study, the research took place in four museums located in the Visayas region of the Philippines: the National Museum of the Philippines (NMP) in Iloilo, Dumaguete, and Cebu, and the Iloilo Museum of Contemporary Art (ILOMOCA). The museum employees and stakeholders themselves served as the actors within this social situation, and the primary activity observed was the practices of Visayan museums in advancing the SDGs or sustainability in regular days, with localized celebrations (i.e., festivals) and conducting public programs.

The initial inspection of the research locations took place on the following dates:

- November 26, 2023 - National Museum of the Philippines - Iloilo
- January 25, 2024 - National Museum of the Philippines - Dumaguete
- January 27, 2024 - National Museum of the Philippines - Cebu
- April 12, 2024 - Iloilo Museum of Contemporary Art

During the visit, I spoke with the employees and asked for their suggestions regarding the possibility of conducting research, choosing their museums as my research site.

Official letters for choosing the research site were sent via email on June 20-22, 2024. Approvals were made on the following dates:

- June 25, 2024 - National Museum of the Philippines - Iloilo

- June 26, 2024 - National Museum of the Philippines - Dumaguete
- August 14, 2024 - National Museum of the Philippines - Cebu
- August 19, 2024 - Iloilo Museum of Contemporary Art

While seeking approval for research sites, I encountered several challenges. One of the primary issues was the difficulty of getting in touch with the museum employees through traditional channels, such as email communication. As a result, I had to turn to their Facebook page to establish contact and obtain the necessary permissions. This alternative method proved more effective, but it also highlighted the difficulties of relying on email for timely communication in certain situations.

Spradley (1980) suggested that the best way to begin ethnography is to identify ways social situations can be related. This research aligned with the cluster of social situations approach as it examined multiple museums in specific locales (Iloilo City, Cebu City, and Dumaguete City) and how the museum employees implemented practices related to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, there are elements of a network of social situations that could enrich the analysis, especially when discussing shared challenges and opportunities.

Step 2: Doing Participant Observation. A participant observer needs to consider engaging in activities appropriate to the social situation and observe the people, activities, and physical aspects (Spradley, 1980).

Before having formal interviews with key informants, I started to engage in passive observation for weeks, where I was present in the locale or scene; however, I did not participate with the people involved. No one knew my identity or my true intent during the visit. Later, I became active and established close relationships with the guard, tour guides, and other employees. As a participant observer, I kept

a detailed record of both objective observations and subjective feelings that helped in developing the role, maintaining a dual purpose: experiencing the feeling of being both an insider and an outsider simultaneously.

Then, formal permission letters to conduct interviews were sent through the email addresses of the museum directors and officers-in-charge. Upon the approval of my request, I started looking for possible informants who are willing to participate in the study. All informants, museum employees, and stakeholders are qualified under the selection criteria.

A document that includes the purpose of the study, confidentiality agreement, risks and benefits, voluntary participation, and consent statement, as reflected in Appendix B, was presented to the informants, and they were asked to affix their signature.

In order to collect a sufficient amount of data, I had initial visits at the museums to observe their daily activities and during some public programs. Since the museums are situated in big cities in Visayas, I stayed for at least two days on my initial conduct of observations.

I first visited the NMP-Dumaguete in the second week of October 2024 to observe the daily interactions on the first day and conduct formal interviews with the museum employees the next day. Although the research locale was a medium-sized museum, I spent time roaming around just to listen to what the museum visitors said about the collections exhibited and their queries to the museum guide.

The second museum I visited was the NMP - Cebu. The entire process of visiting the museum proved to be quite challenging, as several barriers emerged while I tried to proceed with the fieldwork. Initially, the visit was scheduled for the last week of October 2024, but due to weather constraints, I had to reschedule. My

second attempt was planned for the first week of November. However, since the trip required traveling by land, I encountered difficulties crossing from one island to another. After being stranded for two days, I decided to cancel the trip. On my third attempt, I was finally successful, but I couldn't extend the fieldwork due to another weather-related issue. This also affected my ability to attend a public program that was scheduled during that time.

The third museum I visited was ILOMOCA, located in my region, making access easy. However, due to the entrance fee, I planned my visit carefully, scheduling fieldwork on regular days, during public programs, and other events to observe differences. I also utilized their free museum tours to compare social dynamics between regular days and free tours.

The last museum I visited was NMP - Iloilo, which is also located in the same region where I reside. Among all the museums I visited, this one presented the fewest challenges, allowing me to visit on any day and at any time without difficulty.

Furthermore, my subsequent visits to the NMP Dumaguete and Cebu museums were scheduled during major events, such as festivals, when they host large public programs. This was due to resource constraints that limited opportunities for fieldwork. For NMP Iloilo and ILOMOCA, I was also able to conduct follow-up observations during significant events, including festivals, as they organize localized public programs, extend museum hours, and foster broader social engagement.

Step 3: Making an Ethnographic Record. During the participant observation, I utilized ethnographic records and followed the principles of language identification, the verbatim principle, and the concrete principle as suggested by Spradley (1980). Field notes, such as condensed accounts, expanded accounts,

and fieldwork journals, will also be made every period after fieldwork, recording the major events and highlighting my experiences, ideas, problems, and breakthroughs during the observation.

During the data collection, I documented various types of data, including the regular activities and public programs in the museum, strategies in advancing sustainability or SDGs, and other details in completing the data. I utilized an observation guide and contact summary, took notes, and recorded the events through the use of multimedia recordings.

Step 4: Making Descriptive Observations. Prior to the observation, I prepared questions about the practices of Visayan museums in advancing SDGs, problems encountered, and opportunities perceived as effective. This is based on the participant observation guide of Spradley (1980), which states that the basic unit of ethnographic inquiry is the question-observation, where everything that an ethnographer sees and records is influenced by the questions in mind.

Further, I prepared a descriptive question matrix with each of the nine dimensions of social situation: 1) space; 2) actor; 3) activity; 4) object; 5) act; 6) event; 7) time; 8) goal; and 9) feeling, as reflected in Appendix I. Descriptive questions such as *“How do you use the physical spaces in this museum to promote awareness of SDGs, and what regional cultural practices could inspire these efforts?”* and *“How do cultural and institutional factors impact the ability of this museum to integrate SDGs into your practices?”* served as a guide for asking grand tour and mini-tour questions and utilized to expand understanding of the strategies employed by the Visayan museums in advancing the SDGs, challenges encountered, and opportunities.

The structured interview was conducted after the observation period, while

the informal interviews occurred during visits on regular days and the conduct of public programs. A semi-structured interview guide was used to gather data, such as the informant's profile, job designation, years in service, knowledge on sustainability or SDGs, and first activities or programs they have attended related to the advancement of SDGs.

Step 5: Making a Domain Analysis. Spradley's ethnographic analysis consists of four types: domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, componential analysis, and theme analysis. The analysis process begins with the identification of cultural domains, which are the basic units of every culture.

A cultural domain is a category of cultural significance that encompasses several smaller subcategories. Domains, as cultural categories, consist of three fundamental elements: a *cover term* or the name for a cultural domain, *included terms* or the names for all the smaller categories inside the domain, and the semantic relationship between them (Spradley, 1980).

In this study, data from audio-recorded interviews were transcribed manually and organized based on the location and specific day they were conducted. A thorough review of the transcript was conducted to gain familiarity with the informants' overall data.

The domain analysis began with identifying the semantic relationship as a starting point, considering the steps suggested by Spradley (1980): *Step One - Select a single semantic relationship; Step Two - Prepare a domain analysis worksheet; Step Three - Select a sample of field note entries; Step Four - Search for possible cover terms and include terms that fit the semantic relationship; Step Five - Repeat the search for domains using a different semantic relationship; and Step Six - Make a list of all identified domains.*

A Domain Analysis Worksheet (refer to Appendix F) was prepared to seek out cover terms and included terms that were aligned with the semantic relationship from the field notes. This process was repeated until a list of identified domains was collected.

Step 6: Making Focused Observations. At this stage, I have identified a few domains in selecting a focus for my study. Spradley (1980) proposed five criteria for selecting an ethnographic focus: personal interest, suggestions by informants, theoretical interest, strategic ethnography, and organizing domains.

I first considered theoretical interest as a guide in selecting my focus. I was primarily interested in how the practices of Visayan museums are framed within the theories of sustainability and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, as I went back to the objectives of this study, I realized that the suggestions by the informants and strategic ethnography criteria were the best to consider.

Suggestions by the local informants, specifically the museum employees, provided deep insights into the challenges they experienced in aligning their practices with SDGs and how socio-cultural collaboration could be improved. By listening to them, I have identified domains that are vital, and their suggestions further improved the focus of this study.

Additionally, the strategic ethnography criterion helped me in identifying domains related to institutional challenges, practices, and regional developments, focusing on strategic actions of Visayan museums in supporting SDGs and how they face the challenges. I considered these domains as not only theoretically interesting but also relevant to real-world outcomes.

Furthermore, the semantic relationship, cover term, and included term were verified through asking structural questions, such as *“What are the specific SDG*

goals that Visayan museums can prioritize based on their unique strengths, and how can these align with the cultural preservation and sustainability goals observed in the region?”, I was able to discover and unveil opportunities identified in Visayan museums for enhancing their role in advancing the SDGs and contributing to the strengthening of collaborations within the ASEAN socio-cultural framework.

Step 7: Making a Taxonomical Analysis. For this step, I carefully examined each domain and its corresponding semantic relationship. The goal is to identify the relationships among the included terms and cover terms within the cultural domain, as suggested by Spradley (1980).

In the context of this study, I reviewed each domain and its associated semantic relationship. From there, I selected one domain and explored the similarities among the included terms. I looked for the patterns and commonalities that helped me organize the terms into meaningful categories and divided the set of terms into smaller subsets.

Additionally, I considered the possibility of merging two or more domains into a single domain if they shared similar characteristics or themes. Similarly, I looked for larger domains that could encompass subsets of specific domains. Throughout this process, I constructed a tentative taxonomy (refer to Appendix F), mapping out the relationships among the terms within each domain.

Step 8: Making Selected Observations. Spradley (1980) conceptualized three types of observation as a funnel, where each type represents a different level of focus and specificity. Descriptive observation, as utilized in this study, captured a broad range of information without filtering the observations. It involves taking in all the details and aspects of the social situation being studied. On the other hand, the selective observation indicated a more focused and specific observation. In this type

of observation, I specified aspects or cultural categories identified through taxonomic analysis. The goal is to look for differences or similarities among these categories within the social situation of selected Visayan museums.

To identify differences among the categories, Spradley (1980) suggests using contrast questions, one of which is the dyadic contrast question. These questions are designed to elicit information about the distinctions between units within a particular domain.

Step 9: Making a Componential Analysis. Componential analysis, as described by Spradley (1980), involves identifying the attributes or components of meaning that are assigned to the cultural categories. These attributes or components represent the specific features or characteristics that people associate with the cultural categories they use.

In this study, the componential analysis encompassed eight dimensions of contrast for domains related to Visayan museum practices in advancing the SDGs, six dimensions for perceived challenges in advancing the SDGs, seven dimensions for implications regarding ASEAN socio-cultural collaboration, and seven dimensions for domains of opportunities in advancing the SDGs.

Step 10: Discovering Cultural Themes. Cultural themes, as defined by Spradley (1980), are the elements within the patterns that constitute a culture. They represent assertions or general semantic relationships that exist among domains. When conducting theme analysis, one approach suggested by Spradley is to search for a larger domain that encompasses the cultural theme.

In identifying the larger domains, Spradley suggested expanding experimentation through different approaches, perspectives, and strategies to unveil the patterns within a culture.

Step 11: Taking a Cultural Inventory. To prepare for writing the ethnography, I organized the data collected according to Spradley's suggestion. Transcripts belonging to each domain were grouped together, while interviews recorded were saved in folders named after the respective informants. Electronic copies of the data were stored in a designated folder on my Google Drive account. Additionally, I kept and organized other documents, such as observation guides. This systematic organization of data facilitates easy access to the relevant materials during the writing process.

However, it is imperative to take note of the possibilities of having technical problems, such as failure to access files and corrupted recordings. Thus, it is best to include multiple storage.

Step 12: Writing an Ethnography. The twelfth and final step of the Developmental Research Sequence (DRS) is the writing of the ethnography. In this step, I focused on translating and communicating the patterns and cultural meanings I discovered from the social situations within the selected Visayan museums. This process required balancing the perspectives of both the informants and the audience—incorporating explicit descriptions provided by the informants while also addressing the implicit knowledge held by the audience.

To achieve this, levels of ethnographic writing must be taken into account, including *Level One: Universal Statements*, *Level Two: Cross-Cultural Descriptive Statements*, *Level Three: General Statements about a Society or Cultural Group*, *Level Four: General Statements about a Specific Cultural Scene*, *Level Five: Specific Statements about a Cultural Domain*, and *Level Six: Specific Incident Statements* (Spradley, 1980). Levels one, two, four, and six were mostly utilized in writing this ethnographic study.

For Level One, I included universal statements for the introductory part of each domain, describing either the key participants, the culture, or the social situation. Statements, such as “*museums, in general, serve as repositories of information to leverage learning experiences,*” were reflected in writing. Level Two includes statements, such as assertions, from two or more societies. For instance, statements, such as “*across cultures, museums conduct programs that empower marginalized groups, such as women, indigenous communities, and economically disadvantaged individuals,*” were highlighted. For Level Four, I presented the themes and used informant quotations. Although this level included a general statement of the cultural scene, the informant quotations provided a link between the culture and the reader. Lastly, for Level Six, I presented specific incident statements for the readers to immediately see things happening in a social situation. In this context, I included specific and direct quotations from key informants, tables, figures, and photographs to provide detailed descriptions of the observed and analyze the details of the meanings encoded in the culture and social situation.

Validity Strategies

To check the accuracy of the findings, a procedural perspective or discussion of multiple validity strategies was utilized in this study.

Triangulation

Triangulation involves examining the evidence from data sources to build further supplementary support for the themes to add to the validity of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). In this study, data triangulation was utilized, involving different data sources to further understand the theme through interviews,

observations, and documents. The data were gathered at different times and locations to check if patterns hold across different contexts and to assess the consistency of the findings.

Detailed Descriptions

Utilizing vivid descriptions can immerse the readers and provide a sense of shared experience, enhancing the validity of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). In this study, detailed descriptions were included to solidify the framework for future comparisons. Specifically, real-life evidence, such as discrepant or contradictory information surrounding the themes, was presented.

Convey Bias

In a qualitative study, the researcher should clarify the bias he or she brings to the study to create an open and honest narrative (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, the interpretation of the findings was shaped by the experiences and exposures. This also included the reflective notes during observations.

Reliability Strategies

To check if the research approach is consistent throughout the study, transcriptions were included to ensure consistency in understanding the codes, comparing the data with notes, and accurately representing the respondents' experiences. This benefits future researchers to follow the procedures and achieve comparable results.

Ethical Considerations

The following were the points considered in the study:

Beginning the Study

- Gaining local permission to conduct a study in a site that will have no vested interest in the outcome of the study;
- Contact respondents and express the research objectives clearly, both verbally and in writing, along with an outline of how the data will be employed for them to comprehend it fully.
- The researcher should not pressure the participants to sign consent forms, but obtain appropriate consent.
- Respondents should be treated with high respect. They should know what the researcher's interests are and that they should give their permission to the researcher to proceed.

Collecting Data

- Introduce the proponent of the study and emphasize the invitation for the informants to participate in the study, and that he or she can take time to reflect whether to proceed or not.
- Discuss the: purpose of the study, type of research, participant selection, voluntary participation, procedures, duration, benefits, and confidentiality.
- Convey the anticipated disruption in gaining access to data and how it will be used.
- Unless otherwise agreed by both parties, all the identities of the respondents should always be protected, such as by hiding their identities.
- Researchers should also be honest with the respondents and should inform the respondents if they are being recorded using a video or any other type of recording device.

- Provide rewards to the respondents.

Analyzing Data and Reporting

- Report honestly.
- The researcher should ensure multiple perspectives and contrary findings in the research report, presenting different viewpoints and highlighting any conflicting results from various sources.
- Assign fictitious names or codes to respondents consistently throughout the document to ensure anonymity and avoid confusion.
- Share the results of the study with the respondents.

Chapter IV

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This chapter presents the results of the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from the informants of the study. At its core, the findings reveal how Visayan museum employees and stakeholder interpret and integrate practices with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including: perceived challenges in aligning these practices with SDGs, opportunities to enhance their role in advancing the SDGs, and implications for ASEAN socio-cultural collaboration. The major themes held deep significance for the informants as these practices formed part of their daily routines, enabling authentic observations and natural behaviors during fieldwork.

Practices in the Visayan Museums and Its Integration with SDGs

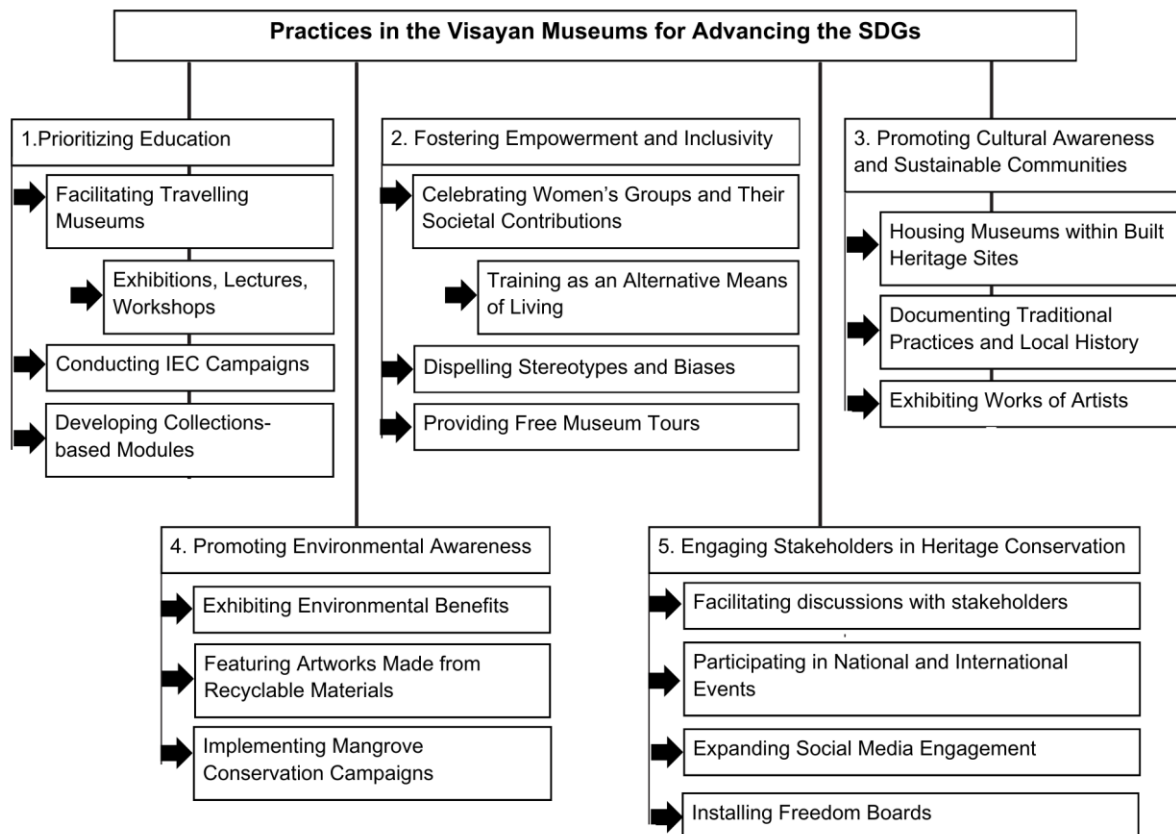
To Spradley (1980), a cultural theme can encompass multiple subdomains. He highlights the significance of cultural domains as fundamental units within a culture, which are defined as categories (referred to as cover terms) connected by semantic relationships to other subcategories (known as included terms). Each domain comprises three essential elements: the included term, representing smaller categories; the semantic relationship, which links two categories together; and the cover term, denoting the name of the cultural domain itself.

Prior to investigating these domains, all key informants were thoroughly briefed and provided written consent forms to acknowledge their voluntary participation in this study. Transparent agreements were addressed to ensure mutual understanding and to analyze how cultural domains were enacted in their

practice, while preserving its authenticity.

This section explains the five major domains or ways in which the practices in Visayan museums are interpreted and integrated with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within their cultural and institutional contexts while considering broader regional practices. It explores the ways in which these institutions align their practices with global sustainability frameworks while navigating local realities

Figure 7. Practices in the Visayan Museums for Advancing the SDGs.



Note. Major themes/practices identified in the Visayan museums for advancing the SDGS. Own work.

1. Prioritizing Education

The educational pulse of four Visayan museums manifests through their strategic locations in prominent urban areas, centering them as cultural and pedagogical hubs within their respective cities, aligning with SDG 4: Quality Education. In the cyclical rhythms of some museum's day, museum employees were gathered for a morning briefing before public hours to: prepare the month's exhibit, arrange educational displays, anticipate potential curation challenges, and remind visitors to fill out feedback forms. Travelers from other regions who have timed their visits to maximize the day were often drawn during morning openings. Their backpacks deposited in the museum's baggage counters, souvenir tote bags, and snatches of other languages not local to the area marked them as outsiders.

Midday typically transformed some museum spaces as local school groups arrived in uniformed waves. Teachers guided students through galleries, blending their lessons with the museum's curated narratives about local heritage. Tour scripts, prepared by the museum guides and information officers, revealed the museum's dual role as both local educators and cultural ambassadors during guided tours. And, as more quiet rhythms settled during closing hours, elderly locals often claimed this time for leisurely visits, pointing out personal connections with artifacts.

These daily patterns collectively demonstrated how Visayan museums served as living institutions where education occurred through designs and happenings - whether through a visitor's morning discovery of shared heritage, a student's excitement on the connection between the textbook and artifacts, or a local's moment of reminiscence before a familiar display.

Facilitating Travelling Museums

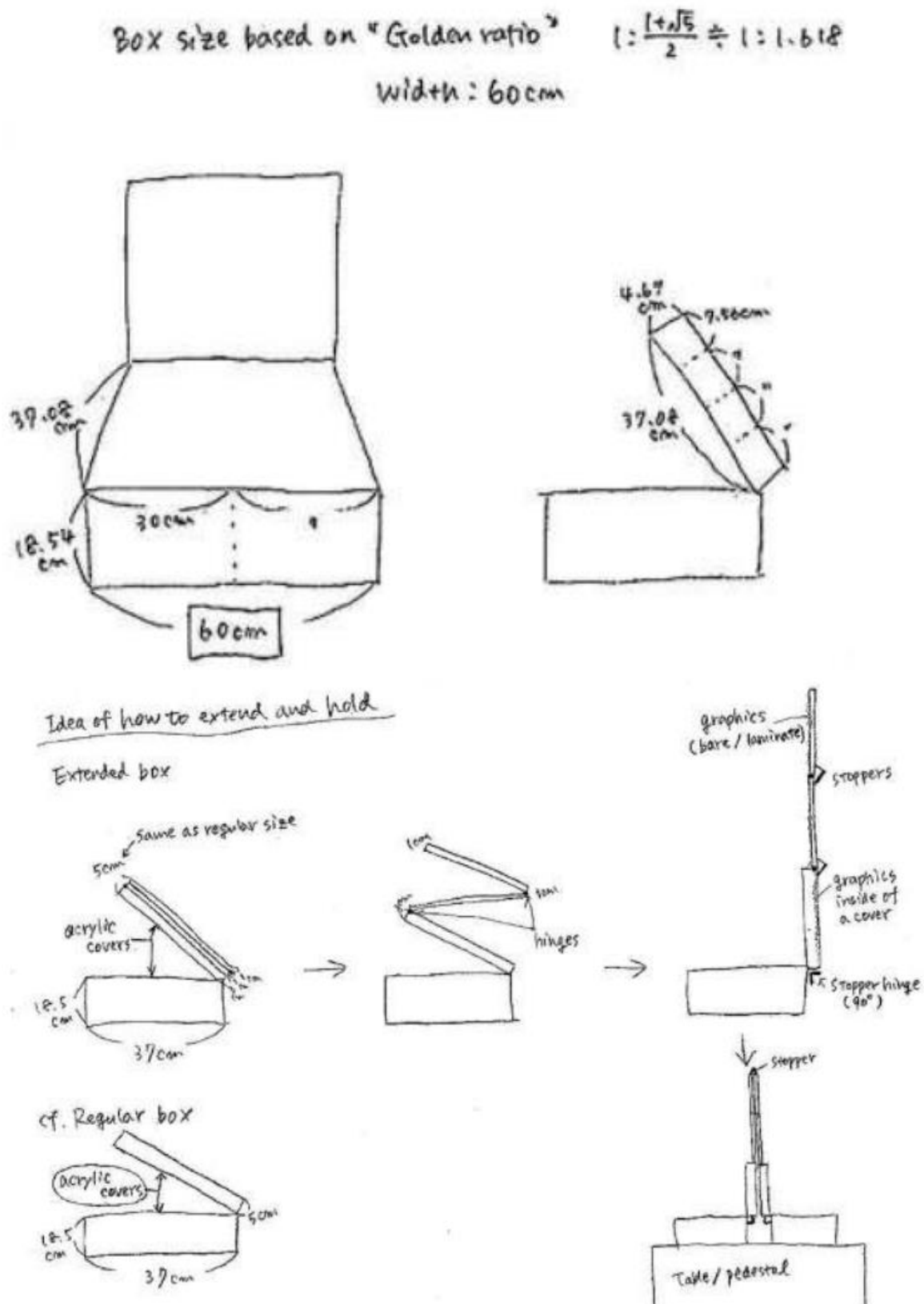
Figure 8. PAMBANSANG MUSEO SA BARANGAY YEAR 2.



Note. Pambansang Museo sa Barangay Year 2, by the National Museum of the Philippines - Iloilo. 2023. Facebook.

The rhythms coexisting with outreach programs became hallmark practices across the four Visayan museums. Most notable were the travelling museums, where the local collections are mounted in customized museum boxes called the *Mobile Museum Boxes* (MMB). Started in 2015, the National Museum of the Philippines, with its international partners, first launched this initiative to address the challenges of accessibility, ensuring that the audiences outside the walls of a conventional museum can take part in cultural activities and receive educational resources. This reflects Clifford's (1997) "contact zone", where MMB initiative transforms Visayan museums into mobile space of cultural learning.

Figure 9. The Mobile Museum Box Design.



Note. The Mobile Museum Box dimensions and mechanism. From *MOBILE MUSEUM BOXES: Conserving the Natural History of the Visayas Region* (2nd Ed., p. 4), by

The MMBs in general include customized boxes designed to minimize the setup time and effort of installation. The boxes are designed using the golden ratio and maintained uniform outer dimensions (Figure 9) to guarantee visual harmony, even when the arrangement or number of box combinations is altered for various exhibitions (Pascual et al., 2022).

Not everyone, even those who live in areas where the museums are located, still can't come due to the distance and other cross-sectional reasons. As I examined the MMB's design (Figure 9), I was impressed by the golden ratios and dimensions utilized. However, I questioned if the standardized measurements would cater to efficiency over local adaptability. To specify, there were questions to ponder if these museum boxes would fit in small-scaled classrooms during school visits. This expresses the argument of Fleming (2005) on museum designs as pedagogy. While the MMDs are functional, the approach on size uniformity overlooks spatial realities.

A seasoned museum Information Officer, Informant 8, typically divided her workdays for social marketing strategies and facilitating academic collaborations. Her specialized background in history, culture, fine arts, and collections story-telling significantly informed the museum's philosophy on outreach programs. During a formal interview, she articulated the ethos behind travelling exhibitions *"kasi sa travelling exhibition, pumupunta ka sa areas na walang access sa museum* (Through travelling exhibitions, we go to areas that don't have access to the museum)". This perspective reflected her dual commitment to both cultural preservation and educational equity - a tension she navigated daily through careful program design.

Conversely, my initial assumption on accessibility blinded me. Informant 10, a history and contemporary art instructor at a private institution, embodied this revelation. His teaching philosophy revolved around breaking classroom walls through museum engagement, turning theory into lived practices. He recounted his Sunday ritual describing how he would visit different museums in the city and regional museums.

Figure 10. Interview with a museum stakeholder.



Note. A photo during an interview with a museum stakeholder. Own work. December 2024. Photo taken with consent.

"Kita mo ni (you see this)?" he said, scrolling through his tablet to show me photos of architectural designs and artifacts displayed under imperfect lighting in provincial museums, which he later projected during lectures. *"My students might never visit these places, but that doesn't mean they shouldn't know what's there."* His excitement heightened as he described how he framed each shot, angling the lens to

include museum labels for context. The use of his device to bridge gaps for students who cannot visit museums exemplifies de Certeau's (1984) "tactics" or improvised strategies to avoid constraints.

It was only through listening to Informant 10 that I recognized MMB's portability alone couldn't overcome barriers without the inclusion of community partners. In organizing traveling museums, the museum employees do not work alone; there are also stakeholders, such as interns, who contribute to the success of the exhibitions. Informant 10 also highlighted the role of interns in bridging gaps: *"We have students, interns at the museum, who helped bring the museum to high school students outside the city area."* These interns often serve as cultural translators, adapting curatorial narratives. The role of the interns in facilitating outreach underscores how youth engagement can maximize museum's reach, a practice echoed in the study of Nguyen, T.D. (2024) on Vietnamese museums.

Figure 11. Mobile Museum Boxes.



Note. NMP MOBILE MUSEUM BOXES PROGRAM NOW OPEN!, by the National Museum of the Philippines - Dumaguete. 2024. Facebook.

It should also be noted that the traveling museums have three components: exhibitions, which bring the museum collections to *barangays* or areas where people lack access or are geographically distant from the main museums; lectures, which raise awareness on the importance of protecting the environment and empower the participants to contribute to conservation efforts; and workshops, which provide hands-on experience to the participants.

Exhibitions. It is necessary to mention that Visayan museum visitors are deeply moved by the exhibitions, which served as a bridge to the treasures of the local people. To illustrate, the museum guide during the fieldwork first asked the museum visitors, “*what is one of the most foul-smelling flowers that you can find on this island?*”, pointing out to the photo of *Rafflesia*, a giant but foul-smelling flower that can be found on the island of Panay. While this technique is one way of introducing the visitors to the rich biodiversity of the region, I noticed how the question remained urban-centric. As someone who grew up in a Visayan province myself, I recognized my lapse in awareness that all museum visitors would share a common knowledge of the local flora. This underscored the importance of exhibits in bridging the gaps in understanding local identities.

Lectures. Accompanying the exhibitions are talks or lectures focusing on the conservation of the environment. Informant 8, a museum employee, recounted, “*hina-highlight namin is biodiversity conservation. Paano ka ba makakatulong para huwag, masirang ang ating kalikasan, parang ganyan* (What we highlight is biodiversity conservation. How can you help to prevent the destruction of our environment, something like that).” The emphasis on the aforementioned biodiversity conservation underscores environmental stewardship.

The lecture format revealed hierarchical knowledge systems, where museum employees, positioned as experts, deliver information to audiences. I initially appreciated the alignment with SDG 15: Life on Land; however, it prompted me to revisit my field notes through a critical lens. I noticed a slight lapse in delivering the information through technical jargon, alienating local audience and underscoring Lidchi's (2013) critique of institutional power in representation. Later, I analyzed this not just by the number of audiences but also by how museum employees adapt to the local language.

Workshops. The third part of the travelling museums initiative is the workshops that the Visayan museums conduct for the participants to enjoy the art. Workshops are conducted to complement the display of artifacts and exhibits. This serves as a means to deepen understanding, foster skill-sharing, and engage communities in hands-on learning to ensure that knowledge is not only observed but actively experienced and internalized.

Figure 12. Art Workshops.



Note. PAMBANSANG MUSEO SA BAROTAC VIEJO (1), by the National Museum of the Philippines - Iloilo. 2024. Facebook.

By way of example, attendees or participants in the traveling museum are taught basic embroidery techniques, reflecting the traditional craftsmanship of the indigenous people from the region. The workshop revealed one of the most essential outcomes, the intergenerational exchanges they facilitated. Furthermore, it is a means to enhance static displays with dynamic and participatory elements that promote deeper engagement and cultural transmission, which aligns with Kreps' (2003) emphasis on community agency.

What struck me the most was the accessibility of the workshop and how it was democratized to art-making. While students from partnered schools are all engaged with the materials they have at their own pace, it is important to note that these students were not forced to take part in the workshop; they were the ones who presented themselves as participants. This challenges my initial assumption about who participates in cultural workshops. Moreover, participants continued to integrate these techniques in their daily lives. Some passed on the knowledge to their younger siblings, while others applied it to simple possessions, such as handkerchiefs, creating lasting ripple effects.

Conducting Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) Campaigns

Museums have conventionally been perceived as static repositories of historical and cultural artifacts; however, over a period of time, their role evolved to become dynamic centers of education and interactions for visitors. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has called upon its member states to participate in international museum campaigns to adopt interactive and innovative approaches not just to inform the public on the services of the museums, but to raise awareness among community members on the importance of

museums in cultural preservation, lifelong learning, and community development (UNESCO, 2023).

Visayan museums designed Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaigns to inform, educate, and engage the public on the role of museums in cultural preservation. The goal of IEC campaigns is to make knowledge and information accessible to the people via engaging activities, workshops, and educational materials (Orais, 2023).

To share information on their collections, exhibitions, and programs, the Visayan museums use several platforms, including social media engagements, collateral materials, and community visits. In particular, Informant 2 has served as a Museum Researcher for almost a year. His primary duty is to identify research opportunities within Negros Island, yet, since fieldwork requires approval from the central office, his current tasks are more auxiliary while awaiting official research assignments. In the interim, he supports the museum through administrative works, content creations, and collaboration with the information officer for public engagement. With this, he finds the museum lobby particularly meaningful, as it has served for temporary exhibitions and public programs: *“on top of the exhibitions, we also conduct information, education, and communication campaigns (IEC) campaigns. We target the two sets of demographics, one is the PUV operators and elementary students in public schools.”*

Informant 3, currently serving the museum as an Information Officer II, identifies direct interaction with visitors as the most rewarding aspect of their work. He described the museum as a “best place to ask questions” and emphasized its role as a dynamic space for dialogue. He also added, *“our logic there is that what would be the best way to promote the museum is through everyone.”*

Figure 13. Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) Campaign.



Note. GO FOR A RIDE TO THE MUSEUM, by National Museum of the Philippines - Dumaguete, 2025, Facebook.

As the goal is to be universally accessible, regardless of demographics, Visayan museums expanded their efforts to include not only participants from the education sector and government agencies but also individuals from all walks of life, such as public utility vehicle (PUV) drivers and operators. Engaging the PUV operators and drivers, as the first point of contact for tourists, enhances the visibility of Visayan museums. Informant 3, recounted *“marami kasing nagtatanong sa mga driver dito. Saan sila pwede mag lakwatsa? Where can they go aside from the usual spots like the waterfalls or the restaurant, they could also visit the museum? Our PUV operators could help us promote the museum* (Many people often ask the drivers here, 'Where can they go for leisure?)." This illustrates the concept of Fleming (2005) on museums

as pedagogical environments, where engagement begins in everyday spaces rather than just within the museum walls.

Since the traffic management offices conduct yearly renewal for PUV operators and drivers, the Visayan museums conduct IEC campaigns on the first Monday of every month and provide collateral materials, such as stickers to be displayed on vehicles, to sustain continuous dissemination of information.

“We actually printed the collateral, na parang sticker sya. Kanang “Dayun” or visit the museum. They might be able to forget everything that we shared. Pero, when they paste it sa kanilang sasakyan or sa tricycle. They will be able to be reminded “oh okay, we can bring the visitors to the museum.” That makes it sustainable (We actually printed collateral materials in the form of stickers, like those that say “Dayun” or “Visit the Museum”), said Informant 3.

In an informal interview with Informant 12, a PUV driver (museum stakeholder), he shared, *“Merong mga seminars, makikinig kami sa kanila, ug modawat mi og mga sticker para ipilit sa among mga tricycle* (There are seminars where we listen to them, and we receive stickers to stick on our tricycles).” It is also at this moment that I comprehend how opportunities to deepen community ownership could be more improved. While Informant 3 emphasized their logic to be universally accessible, reliance on collateral materials only directs the attention of PUV drivers to museums as “tourist spots” rather than cultural spaces. This is consistent with Clifford (1997) on creating interfaces between museums and communities, and DiMaggio & Powell’s (1983) adoption of best practices.

During fieldwork, to add, stickers - typically positioned as “sustainable reminders”, were observed partially detached. While this instance represents only a

one-time occurrence, it may contribute to an unaccounted material waste stream, underscoring how well-intentioned local initiatives may unintentionally undermine environmental commitments. Additionally, the PUV drivers' ability to reinterpret museum messages diverges from the idea of de Certeau (1984) of tactics as it remains untapped.

Hence, to fully advance SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, the museums may partner with the PUV drivers to co-create exhibitions to center narratives on transit labor history.

Developing Collections-based Modules

Museums, in general, serve as repositories of information to leverage learning experiences. And as a universal practice of museums, developing a *collection-based module* or educational materials designed for educators, students, and parents bridges the gap between cultural heritage and formal education. With this practice, it underscores the role of museums as educational institutions that support cultural preservation.

In the Visayan museum context, plans for developing a collections-based module are tailored to local cultural and historical narratives and long-term plans to facilitate learning while aligning to curriculum standards of the Department of Education (DepEd). They collaborate with educators to align with DepEd's curriculum standards. These modules are designed to help teachers and parents use museum collections as teaching tools, making learning more interactive and culturally relevant. Highlighting the practical application of museum collections in formal education, Informant 8, a museum employee, emphasized the role of museums in enriching the learning experience:

“Ito ay magagamit ng mga teachers or mga educators or even the parents yung museum collections para turuan yung mga bata or para-irelate sya sa curriculum (This can be used by teachers, educators, or even parents to teach children using museum collections or to relate them to the curriculum).”

The plan to curate culture-based modules, aligning with the DepEd's Curriculum, reinforces the idea of McGhie (2019) on museums as pedagogical spaces, enhancing public education through linking heritage to formal learning. UNESCO's (2023) emphasis on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is also reflected to make collections “culturally relevant” for stakeholders. With this, it reveals the connection of the findings to the suggested participatory museology of Kreps (2003), stressing co-creation with local stakeholders. Ioakimidis & Stavros' (2021) findings on Greek museums also aligns as Visayan museums recognize the critical role of educator partnerships for integrating museum collections into classroom set-up.

While the vision is compelling, the actual implementation remains in the planning phase with several challenges yet to be addressed, contrasting the emphasis of Hall (1997) on museums as dynamic communicators. One key challenge is securing consistent collaboration between museums and educators, especially since there will be changes in administration as the 2025 election approaches. The concern over these reflects the findings of Andina (2024) on how limited funding and change in governance hinder the sustainability-related initiatives and long-term projects of regional museums.

2. Fostering Empowerment, Social Justice, and Inclusivity

Across cultures, museums conduct programs that empower marginalized groups, such as women, indigenous communities, and economically disadvantaged individuals. Efforts of the Visayan museums are tailored to local needs, aligning with the global goals on SDG 5: Gender Equality and SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities. Visayan museums collaborate with local institutions and communities to create programs that address gender-based violence and provide alternative livelihood opportunities.

Celebrating Women's Groups and their Societal Contributions

Training as an Alternative Means of Living

Through exhibitions, workshops, and special programs, the Visayan museums highlight the contribution of women to the society. One such program is the *Super Inday*, a program began in 2014 where fine arts students collaborate with incarcerated women to create marketable crafts. As a Museum Officer and former Fine Arts professor, Informant 7 embodies the transformative intersection of art and social advocacy through initiatives like Super Inday. An interview with her challenged my initial assumption on the educational purpose of museum's programs when I witnessed how skill-building workshops could directly transform lives. She, then, accounted how inmates support their families through craft production:

“This project of Super Inday started way back in 2014, where the students of the Fine Arts Department had workshops with inmates. And then with these products, they would sell them outside. The income will go back to those inmates so that they will support their families that they have left behind before they were taken in.”

The collaboration between the students and incarcerated women illustrates the ethnomuseological principles of co-creation. “*The income will go back to the inmates..*” supports Kreps (2003) and Kumar & Soni (2021) community-centered economic model. This is consistent with McGhie (2019) and Weller & Ostman (2021) where Visayan museums operationalize the UN’s global goals through local partnerships.

Aside from training vulnerable sectors, such as victims of VAW (Violence Against Women), to have alternative means of living, Visayan museums conducted exhibitions featuring stories of women survivors of abuse and exploitation. Through exhibiting these stories, women are empowered and future generations are inspired as it challenges the traditional stereotyping. My subsequent interviews became more attentive to these unspoken psychosocial benefits. While demonstrating how such practice can deepen understanding of program impacts beyond their stated objectives, some expressed discomfort about framing such cases as “success stories”, diverging from the insights of Hall (1997) and reveals tension in representation.

To the museum employees handling programs like this, they consider the generational impact being apparent as they encounter families of the participants. This fundamentally shifted my understanding of sustainable development; what began as skills training had blossomed into intergenerational resilience building, aligning towards SDG 5: Gender Equality and SDG 8: Decent Work.

Dispelling Stereotypes and Biases

Several entities worldwide, including museums, serve as platforms for promoting inclusivity and challenging societal stereotypes. They address historical and contemporary issues by creating spaces for dialogue, reflection, and education.

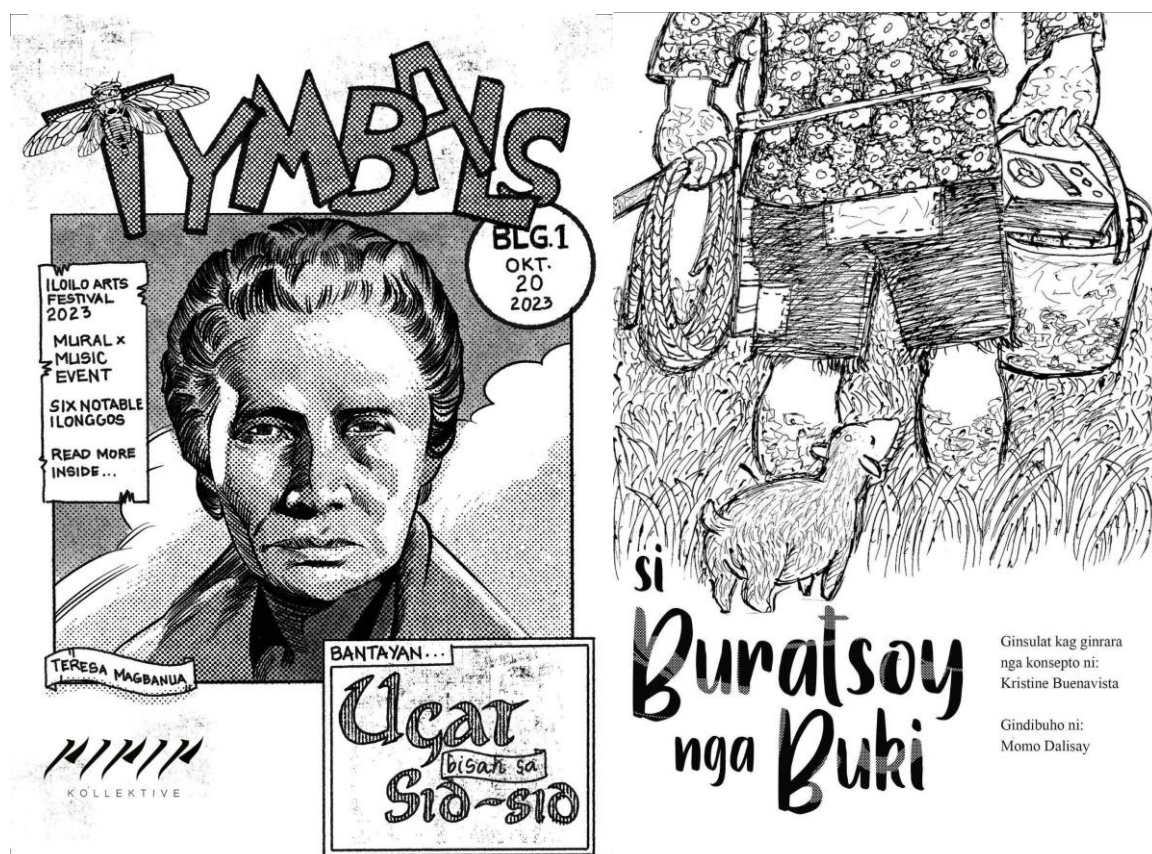
Visayan museums conduct programs that celebrate diversity. For example, Visayan museums organize programs for *PRIDE month*, where activities, such as *Color Your Pride*, engage the visitors to write messages on colored paper and place them on a specific side of the PRIDE flag, completing the colors of it.

The PRIDE Month activities revealed another layer of reflection. While celebrating the museum's visible support for LGBTQIA+ communities, I questioned whether these efforts reached beyond urban, English-speaking audiences. Terms like “queer” felt foreign compared to their local identity. This moment exposed issues in the understanding of identity, questioning myself: “Was I interpreting these programs through a Western academic lens, or was I truly capturing their grassroots impact?” In this context, Informant 8’s question resonated:

“Paano mo magagamit yung collection mo to attain peace? We also had a public program, lecture siya, na tinackle yung concept ng “Buki” (How can you use your collection to attain peace? We also had a public program, a lecture about the concept of “Buki”). You know the challenge is the status quo, how to make the public and the cultural workers think of that. That can be more.”

For a focused achievement of goals, Visayan museums also curate activities in a localized context to encourage visitors to have a meaningful engagement and challenge preconceived notions to better understand complex societal issues.

Figure 14. Pamphlets used during the dialogue-workshop for inclusivity.



Note. A copy of pamphlets used during the dialogue-workshop for inclusivity. Tymbals by Kikik Kollektive (left) and Si Buratsoy nga Buki' by Kristine Buenavista and illustrated by Momo Dalisay (right). January 2025. Copy given by Kikik Kollektive.

As I documented the Visayan museums' efforts to combat prejudice through programs like Color Your Pride and the Buki dialogue workshops, I found myself confronting my own deeply personal relationship with these issues. I was able to observe someone called "buki", a term meant to mark as "backward" or "provincial." Visayan museums involve activities, such as a dialogue workshop on cultural perception to the use of the term *buki* to describe persons, as aforementioned, addressing the stigmatization of rural communities and exemplify kreps' (2003) participatory approach. This also highlights the limitation Hall (1997) identifies in institutional representation when programs remain urban-centric.

Providing Free Museum Tours

Museums worldwide strive to make cultural heritage accessible to the public - a universal commitment to inclusivity to ensure that museums are not perceived as exclusive spaces for the elite but as educational and cultural institutions open to everyone.

The majority of the Visayan museums included in this study are government-operated. This means they offer free admission as part of their mandate to promote cultural heritage and ensure that museum collections are accessible to all, aligning with SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities. Privately-run Visayan museums, although charging a fee to sustain their operations, also implement initiatives by providing free museum tours. A specific example of ensuring accessibility is the effort by Visayan museums to welcome visitors regardless of their attire or background.

Informant 7 shared, *“welcoming the general public because another thing is, people, when they see museums, they will think it's just for the elite. I don't want to go in there. Sometimes there are people who would ask, pwede magtsinelas sa sulod? pwede magshorts lang ko? (Can I wear slippers inside? Can I just wear shorts?) Of course, we welcome the general public. We also tried our best to make the whole space interactive.”*

Critical concerns emerge in dismantling the perception of visitors towards the museum as for the elite. As noted by Informant 7, many potential visitors still hesitate to enter, a concern rooted in the historical association of museums with exclusivity. The museum's way of welcoming the visitors in all walks of life demonstrates the argument of Fleming (2005) that accessibility begins with psychological inclusion, embodying the principle that cultural participation should not require cultural capital.

There are multiple instances where this approach was translated into genuine access. During my fieldwork and during the schedule for free museum tours for teachers, the lady guard patiently reassured hesitant visitors in slippers that they are welcome to visit the museum. This targeted approach ensures that people in marginalized sectors still have access to the collections and resources of the museums, while ensuring financial stability. Demonstrating this while monetizing special exhibitions and workshops demonstrates how cultural institutions can creatively negotiate public service and economic realities.

The distinction between government-run and privately run Visayan museums is obvious; however, their approach to accessibility reflects a universal commitment to inclusivity and maximization of educational experiences for all members of the society. Government museums rely on public funding to maintain free entry, while private museums advance free basic tours with paid special exhibitions, mirroring the econometric models employed by Pop et al. (2019). Consistently, it resonates with Weller & Ostman's (2021) idea on museums as catalysts for change and the community-centric practices as argued by Kreps (2003). However, it contradicts the critique of Bennett (1995) on museums as tools of social control where they actively subvert the "elite" idea through informal access policies.

3. Promoting Cultural Awareness and Sustainable Communities

Housing Museums within Built Heritage Sites

As custodians of cultural heritage, preserving the history, traditions, and identity of communities, museums are housed within built heritage sites to ensure the preservation of culturally significant structures while fostering a deeper connection between people and their heritage. This symbiotic relationship between museum

collections and historic architecture reinforces the narrative of place, allowing visitors to experience heritage in its original context.

Repurposing heritage sites as museums is a common strategy to preserve historical structures and promote cultural awareness in the Visayas region. It is particularly significant as it preserves culturally significant buildings, such as old prisons, customs houses, and government buildings, while transforming them into spaces for education and cultural engagement. This exemplifies an innovative approach to achieving SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities – particularly Target 11.4 or strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard cultural heritage, while simultaneously addressing SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, especially, Target 8.9 or sustainable tourism.

Figure 15. Museums Built in Heritage Sites.



Note. A collage of museums housed within built heritage sites. Own work.

The National Museum of the Philippines - Iloilo is located at the 1911 built-heritage Prison of Iloilo, or Iloilo Provincial Jail, the National Museum of the Philippines - Cebu is housed at the Aduana building near Fort San Pedro and served as the customs house of the Port of Cebu for 94 years, and the Old Presidencia Building, designed by renowned Filipino architect Juan Arellano and built in 1937, is now the home of the National Museum of the Philippines - Dumaguete.

My fieldwork revealed how these spaces facilitate “architectural pedagogy,” or where a physical environment itself turns into a tool for cultural transmission. Repurposing these heritage sites as museums contributes to the prevention of any form of deterioration or demolition, ensuring preservation for future generations.

Informant 20, a local resident, recalled how prisoners from the province were once held at the Iloilo Provincial Jail before its closure and was surprised to find out that it had been turned into a museum “*Dukaron daw ma lipay ka man bala hay makita mo dun jan ya mga makita mo sa bukid* (I was surprised to find out that it had been turned into a museum and it seems like you’d actually feel happy visiting because you can see there what you would normally see in the province).”

Museum visitors experience a deeper connection to culture and history as they explore local collections exhibited within authentic heritage sites. This ensures that the cultural treasures are preserved and shared while promoting sustainable tourism practices that respect the historical integrity, replicating the model of SDG 11, Target 3: inclusive urbanization.

The findings during the fieldwork reshaped my understanding of cultural communication, where museums might benefit from prioritizing experiences or traditional exhibition formats. Not to mention the success in transforming community perceptions as noted by Informant 20: “*ma lipay ka man bala hay makita mo dun jan*

ya mga makita mo sa bukid,” offers evidence for policy-making bodies to enhance similar interventions. Additionally, this may be adapted to other at-risk heritage structures throughout the ASEAN region.

Documenting Traditional Practices and Local History

Visayan museums actively document and showcase traditional practices and local culture in a multifaceted approach, such as conducting workshops and exhibitions on local treasures. This demonstrates a critical engagement with SDG 11, Target 4 or Safeguarding Cultural Heritage.

Conducting Workshops and Exhibitions on Weaving and Textile Art

Figure 16. Learning to Wear a Patadyong.



Note. Learning to wear a *Patadyong* crafted from *Hablon* fabric with the help of a museum intern. Own work. January 2025. Taken during fieldwork.

The native people have developed ways to create and use textiles to reflect their cultural identity. The practice of weaving and textile art is a universal activity that connects communities to their history, environment, and identity.

Across many societies, weaving and textile art are deeply intertwined with cultural traditions and local history. For example, in Southeast Asia, traditional woven fabrics, such as the *ikat* of Indonesia, *Pha Sin Teen Daeng* of Thailand, and *Krama* of Cambodia are not only functional but also carry symbolic meanings tied to rituals, social status, and community identity. In the Philippines, particularly in the Visayan context, weaving and textile arts are integral parts of cultural heritage. Exhibiting paintings that depict the native Visayan people wearing the traditional attire made of the signature weaves, such as the *Hablon* (Western Visayas Region), highlights the labor-intensive process behind traditional weaving and its cultural significance.

Aside from the exhibitions of these collections, Visayan museums also conduct workshops and public programs. Galleries from each Visayan museum have their theme or type of exhibition. Thus, several cultural resources from the province are not featured, leading to the conduct of public programs and art workshops. My initial assumption that these programs initially served educational purposes was reconsidered during fieldwork. Although I haven't experienced the workshop firsthand, informal interviews with workshop participants demonstrated how the expert weavers corrected younger participants, revealing how intergenerational dialogue went beyond skill transfer.

For instance, the *Lala Series* - a local Visayan term for weaving—is a program for promoting the different weaving traditions in Cebu. Workshops on these practices often focus on teaching participants the technical skills required for each stage, as well as the cultural significance of the patterns and materials used. Furthermore, the

support given to the local weavers contributes to sustainable livelihoods while preserving traditional crafts.

Informant 6, an Information Officer III with extensive experience in Cebu's cultural institutions, embodies Hall's (1997) theory of representation through their work bridging museum exhibitions with public programming. Her responsibilities center on crafting public programs that actively supplement static exhibitions:

“Aside from the exhibition that we have, the public programs kasi it is a way to supplement the museum exhibitions kasi hindi lahat na fi-feature kasi sa museum exhibit (Aside from the exhibitions that we have, the public programs serve as a way to supplement the museum exhibitions because not everything can be featured in the museum exhibits).”

While exhibitions highlight signature weaves like Hablon, many localized practices (e.g., sinamay weaving in Negros) remain confined to workshops due to spatial limitations, underscoring selective representation. It is only after certain formal interviews with the museum employees I grasp how exhibition choices can privilege certain practices, such as the Hablon weaving, over others.

Exhibiting Works of Regional and National Artists

Artistic achievements, whether in visual arts, film, or other forms, reflect the collective experiences and aspirations of a community. Visayan museums celebrate the contributions of regional and national artists, which reflect the cultural identity and history of regional traditional and contemporary arts in Visayas. Artists such as ceramicist Jana Jumalon, photographer Hersley Casero, and National Artist for Film Eddie Romero have made significant contributions to the arts, reflecting how museums serve as dynamic repositories of collective memory and aligning with SDG 4, Target

4: Skills for Cultural Literacy. Their works often address themes of identity, heritage, and social issues, making them valuable resources for education and cultural preservation.

Figure 17. Artistic Achievements of Local and National Artists.



Note. Plaque and bust for birth centenary celebration of Eddie Romero, a Dumaguete-born National Artist for Film and Broadcast Arts (left), *Huni sa Tubig* Exhibition by Jana Jumalon, local artist for terracotta and ceramics based in Dumaguete (right). Own work. October 2024. Taken during fieldwork.

As I documented the exhibitions featuring the artistic achievements of individuals like Jana Jumalon, local artist for terracotta and ceramics; Hersley Casero, illustrator and photographer; and Eddie Romero, National Artist for Film and Broadcast Arts, I was struck by how museums serve not just as galleries but as sacred spaces where art outlives its creators. These halls become vessels of collective memory, ensuring acknowledgement. For instance, during the fieldwork in one of the Visayan museums, I encountered the family members of the late artist featured in one of the

galleries. While I refrained from conducting impromptu interviews due to ethical considerations, the simple act of watching the artist's grandchildren press their hands against the glass display case containing their ancestor's work proved that these exhibitions aren't merely curatorial projects but active sites of intergenerational pride.

4. Promoting Environmental Awareness

The environment is a fundamental aspect of human life that provides resources, habitats, and cultural significance. Based on the universal goal, environmental awareness is a universal concern that directly impacts the well-being of all living beings. Museums, as educational and cultural institutions, have a universal role in fostering environmental stewardship by educating the public about ecological challenges and inspiring sustainable practices.

Conducting Exhibits and Activities on the Environmental Benefits and Challenges

Visayan museums integrated environmental themes into their exhibits and activities. They have taken proactive steps to address these challenges through exhibits and programs, such as a canopy exhibiting climate change simulations. Visayan museums inspire visitors to take action and contribute to the preservation of the environment as they serve as platforms for raising awareness about the impacts of climate change, at the same time, aligning with SDG 13: Climate Action.

Educational trips to museums provide valuable learning opportunities to museum stakeholders, such as the learners. Spaces in Visayan museums are built for visitors to experience and observe plant and animal structures. For instance, Informant 11, a parent and frequent museum visitor accompanying her son on school trips, represents how Visayan museums' environmental programming resonates beyond

traditional audiences, sparking intergenerational dialogue about ecological systems: “*Yung anak ko po kasi, mahilig siya mag-drawing. So, natatanong siya sa akin kung anong mangyayari if walang kulay yung flower o drawing* (My child loves to draw, so he asks me questions like, ‘What will happen if flowers do not have colors)’”.

Figure 18. Environment-related exhibits and activities.



Note. Photos of gallery *From Ground up to the Canopy: The Lowland Evergreen Forest* (left) and interactive space for coloring activities (right). Own work. November 2024. Taken during fieldwork with consent.

Displays that illustrate the effects of climate change, such as rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and biodiversity loss. These exhibits often include multimedia elements, such as videos, infographics, and simulations, to make the information more engaging and accessible. What become particularly striking is how visitors often pause longest at interactive stations. However, during the interview and further immersion with children on their coloring activities, I observed that these activities often prioritize awareness over actionability. As an illustration, while a child learns about the different

flora and fauna in the region through coloring, there is a lacking step toward supporting environmental conservation. Although, this is only in case of the aforementioned activity.

Featuring Artworks Made from Recyclable Materials

Creativity and innovation are essential aspects of human expression, often reflecting the values and challenges of a community. The use of recyclable materials in art is a universal practice that demonstrates the potential of reusing and repurposing waste, which highlights the importance of sustainability and environmental stewardship.

Figure 19. Mixed-media Artworks.



Note. Photos of mixed-media artworks named ETUDES (UNNATURAL HISTORY RECONFIGURED) by Alwin Reamillo (left), PIETA: POLYP by Leeroy New (right). Own work. January 2025. Taken during fieldwork.

For example, the Visayan museums focus on environmental conservation through exhibitions showcasing artworks made from recyclable materials, often incorporate plastic bottles and straws or local waste products, thus called mixed-media

art. This expression demonstrates the creative potential of reusing and repurposing waste at the same time, providing a platform for local artists to gain recognition and share their passion for sustainability with a wider audience. At the same time, it nominally aligns with SDG 12, Target 5: Waste Reduction.

However, this challenged the idea that sustainability is aestheticized rather than operationalized. During my fieldwork, visitors often praise the visual appeal of these pieces while overlooking their environmental message. In particular, while this idea may inspire museum visitors, the question revolves around its translation to reducing waste in their communities.

Implementing Mangrove Conservation Campaigns

Mangroves are vital ecosystems that protect coastlines and marine biodiversity. Campaigns on mangrove conservation are implemented across several institutions, such as museums, to address environmental degradation and promote sustainable practices. For example, in Southeast Asia, countries like Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines have launched large-scale mangrove reforestation projects to combat coastal erosion and restore marine biodiversity.

In the Visayan context, museums actively contribute to mangrove conservation through partnerships with academic institutions, government agencies, and local communities, representing a strategic alignment with SDG 14, Target 2: Marine Ecosystem Management. These campaigns serving as educational functions were challenged in a formal interview with Informant 8, a museum employee, emphasizing the role of public awareness: *“Kanugon lang sa mga mangrove conservation-related activities namun if indi maging aware ang public* (It’s a pity for our mangrove conservation-related activities if the public doesn’t become aware of it).” Questions

arose during fieldwork as these exhibits privilege urban museum visitors over coastal communities who interact with mangroves daily.

However, as engagement with museum employees deepened, Informant 6 explained how the campaign mobilized community members:

“We made a discovery with our partnership with the academe and the DENR, and the local government unit. We were able to find out that there is an existing mangrove forest here in Cebu City. So, with this at least we are able to facilitate campaigns on how to protect our environment and at the same time mobilize the community for them to help themselves.”

Moreover, the success of the campaigns lies in their ability to cultivate deep-rooted local ownership, reflecting a shift from dependency to agency.

5. Engaging Stakeholders in Heritage Conservation and SDGs

Heritage conservation and sustainable development are interconnected goals that require collective action and collaboration among diverse stakeholders. Museums, as cultural and educational institutions, foster collaboration, raise awareness, and encourage collective action toward sustainable development.

Facilitating Discussions with Stakeholders

Visayan museums have embraced the role of facilitating stakeholder engagement to address heritage conservation and sustainable development. They bring together stakeholders, including community members, government agencies, NGOs, academics, and private sector representatives, to discuss heritage conservation and sustainable development. Reflecting on my fieldwork, I found that

initiatives of cultural institutions, such as the Visayan museums, are not just about preservation, but also about the connections that emerge through engagement with stakeholders.

By creating a platform for dialogue, museums encourage stakeholders to share ideas, resources, and expertise, leading to more effective and inclusive conservation efforts. Visayan museums actively partner with different agencies and stakeholders to ensure the success and impact of their initiatives for every activity or public program to address complex issues and reach a wider audience.

Over time, my initial focus on institutional outcomes expanded to appreciate these micro-moments of co-creation, where, in public programs, such as *Tinukod nga Kabilin: A History of Cebu's Built Heritage*, the museum employees collect insights from different sectors on sustainability. Informant 6, a museum employee, shared:

"We have determined the different types of stakeholders like according to groups from environmental sectors, from the heritage workers, from the gender and development sector because we want to collect their insights as to how they can involve themselves in the creation of public programs for the museum and also help us improve our services through their insights."

These discussions lead to the creation of collaborative initiatives, such as community-led conservation projects or educational programs that address local needs. Furthermore, involving stakeholders in the planning and implementation of these activities ensures that programs in the museums are aligned with the goals and priorities of the community. To exemplify, feedback from heritage workers and environmental groups has led to more community-responsive public programs, strengthening both conservation and public trust.

Participating in National and International Events

Aside from the local programs, Visayan museums also participate in national and international events to foster knowledge exchange in sustainable museum practices and conservation efforts of different museums around the globe. Informant 8, a museum employee, shared:

“Kasi apat lang kami na fellows ng CollAsia. So, we're thinking of organizing a course, para maipasa namin yung natutunan namin dun sa communities ng museum workers dito sa Western Visayas (Since there are only four of us who are fellows of CollAsia, we're thinking of organizing a course to pass on what we've learned to the communities of museum workers here in Western Visayas).”

The CollAsia Programme of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) is a long-standing program that for over 20 years has united heritage professionals from Southeast Asia and beyond.

The engagement of some Visayan museums in the ASEAN Museum Forum 2024, emerged as a noteworthy development in a formal interview with museum employees. As noted, the forum provided opportunities for knowledge exchange and collaboration, which enable museums to enhance their programs and contribute to global efforts in heritage conservation and sustainable development.

Informant 6 shared: *“Recently, we just attended the ASEAN Museum Forum (2024) that was organized by Museum Siam in Bangkok where we presented a paper project on engaging with the grassroots in collecting their insights on how to improve the museum services in our exhibition.”*

Museum employees presented research papers during the ASEAN Museum Forum 2024 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the theme *Contemporary Challenges and Innovative Practices in Museums*. I was initially surprised yet profoundly impressed by how regional museums were recognized as participants of ASEAN cultural discourse, presenting a significant milestone in operationalizing ASEAN's socio-cultural collaboration, as Informant 6 added:

"It's interesting to listen to other museums outside of your country. You can learn so much from them because some of them are advanced in terms of their use of technology in their museums. I am just amazed at how their community is very cooperative in terms of strengthening their museums, especially in Thailand."

Participation in international events helps Visayan museums establish partnerships with global institutions, opening doors for collaboration and funding opportunities. What started as documentation of local programs revealed growth. A case in point was the secured funding from ICCROM.

"After training namin, the following year, si ICCROM ay nag bigay ng fund. Sila yung partner namin dun sa yung museum boxes (After our training, the following year, ICCROM provided funding. They were our partner in the museum boxes project)," Informant 8 said. This reshaped my understanding on the evolving expertise of regional museums in establishing international exposure and capacity-building.

Expanding Social Media Engagement

Communication and information-sharing are essential for fostering awareness, education, and collective action. Social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, have become universal tools for connecting individuals, enabling the

dissemination of knowledge and the promotion of shared goals. With this, museums leverage social media to engage stakeholders, raise awareness about heritage conservation, and promote sustainable development initiatives.

As this study employed a focused ethnographic research approach, I engaged in digital ethnographic methods by subscribing to or following all the research locales or Visayan museums' official Facebook pages, emphasizing Knoblauch's (2005) "intensive methods of data recording," especially relevant when analyzing viral museum posts. This digital immersion allowed me to observe how the Visayan museums perform their works across virtual spaces.

Initially, I approached this expansion as a standard modernization effort until I observed how these platforms facilitated several forms of engagement. To illustrate, Visayan museums utilize social media platforms to share educational content such as posts about exhibits, conservation projects, and SDG-related initiatives. This invites followers to share their experiences and participate in events at the same time and creates a space for dialogue.

Installing Freedom Boards

Across Visayan museums, freedom boards greet visitors in various forms: some soliciting feedback, others prompting reflection. But the SDG boards strike differently, illustrating Fleming's (2005) pedagogical space for active learning. Positioned near entrances with their bright colors and global goals, they ask more of visitors, not just to react, but to commit; not just to observe, but to participate in something larger. Featured prompts such as "How can you contribute to achieving the SDGs?" and "What does sustainable development mean to you?" Visitors were encouraged to write their responses to create a dynamic and interactive display. Over

time, these boards revealed patterns: middle school visitors often wrote personal prompts, young adults proposed grassroots actions, and older participants leaned toward policy-level solutions.

Figure 20. SDG Board.



Note. Photo of SDG Wall. Own work. October 2024. Taken during fieldwork.

Visitors often stop mid-stride, gasping “Wow!” as they walk toward the board. But a question hangs unanswered during their first encounter: “what should we do with this?”

A vibrant collage of handwritten notes flutters across the board, each colorful square representing a visitor’s voice. During fieldwork and observation hours, visitors, mostly students, paused thoughtfully before writing. During peak hours, it becomes a social artifact. Foreign tourists debating which goal to address, elementary school pupils giggling as they compete to write, and elderly visitors carefully smoothing their notes over others. As Informant 8, museum employee, watched visitor engagement with quiet pride: *“Ang first activity namin related to SDG ay yung paglalagay namin ng board (Our first activity related to the SDGs was putting up the board). “Meron yung parang call to action. Yung paano ka makaka contribute para ma-achieve yung mga*

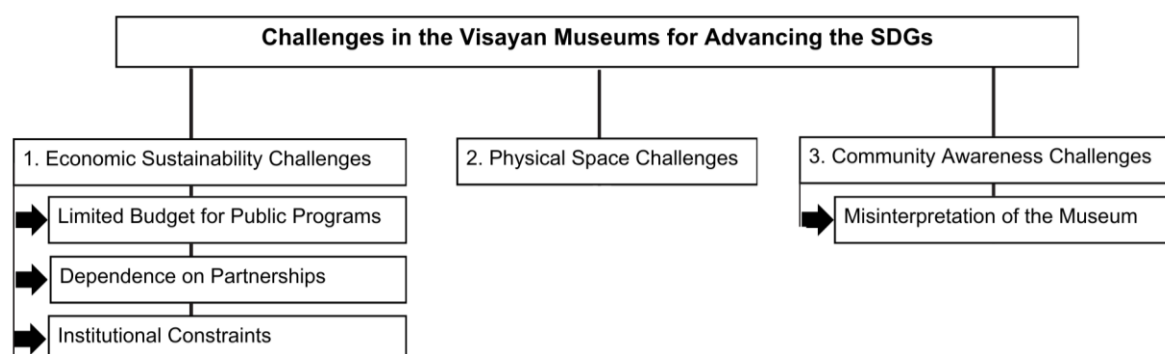
ganun (There's a kind of call to action - how you can contribute to achieving those goals)."

While others wrote climate pledges, some responses revealed a dissonance between the museum's intent and the public's interpretation: "Juan was here" or "I love dinosaurs". However, the organic spread of responses - from personal musings to call to action, reveals the unrealized potential of this display as a living archive of public consciousness. Although small adjustments could deepen the impact, such as having rotational questions or statements, like "share your water conservation tip" or "what's one sustainable habit you will change this month?"

Perceived Challenges and Its Implications for Regional Collaboration

This section explores the perceived challenges faced by Visayan museums in integrating the SDGs into their operations and programming. Additionally, the chapter explains how these challenges hinder the ability of Visayan museums to engage in meaningful collaborations within the broader ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). The ASCC, which emphasizes regional cooperation in culture, education, and sustainable development, provides a platform for museums to share resources, knowledge, and best practices. However, limited funding, institutional capacity gaps, and a lack of SDG-related expertise further intensify these barriers. Without addressing these issues, Visayan museum risk falling behind in contributing to the ASCC's shared goals of inclusive and sustainable cultural development.

Figure 21. Challenges in the Visayan Museums for Advancing the SDGs.



Note. Major themes/challenges identified in the Visayan museums. Own work.

1. Economic Sustainability Challenges

Limited Budget for Public Programs

Government-run agencies rely on local or national government, thus competing with other sectors, such as the health, education, and infrastructure sectors, for limited budgets. As a result, government-run Visayan museums receive insufficient funding to create or expand public programs. As Informant 8, noted:

“Heritage conservation hindi sya priority. Ang mga priority ay social services, infrastructure. Parang ganito lang yan. Uunahin mo ba yung art kaysa sa pagkain (Heritage conservation is not a priority. The priorities are social services and infrastructure. It's like this: Would you prioritize art over food?).”

The common challenge in many developing or third-world countries is immediate physiological needs that take precedence over cultural or artistic endeavors.

In a formal interview of museum employees, I positioned myself to understand how they turn constraints into creative opportunities. For instance, Informant 1 has served as an administrative officer at the museum for over a year. Her role is multifaceted, encompassing both standard administrative duties and supervisory

responsibilities as the officer-in-charge of museum operations. A key insight from her revealed that the collateral materials or supplementary items used to promote or enhance main offerings of Visayan museums are given out sparingly or as rewards rather than being freely distributed: *“Limited yung budget kaya limited yung mga collaterals or mga brochures or pins na binibigay namin. So, ginagawa parang prize lang sya* (The budget is limited, which is why the collaterals, such as brochures or pins that we give out, are also limited. So, what we do is treat them like prizes).”

On the other hand, the privately-run Visayan museum depends on funding from private entities, donors, and profitability from their operations. To Informant 7,

“We’re under a private institution. We’re also under a corporate system. So, kung ma kwa kami budget, we don’t just simply give a piece of paper, give us a budget. No. It really has to go to the corporate system which is one of the challenges that we have (We are part of a private institution and operate under a corporate system. So, when we need a budget, we can’t simply request it by submitting a piece of paper and expect it to be granted. No. The process has to go through the corporate system, which is one of the challenges we face). “

Recognizing how these negotiations represent a form of institutional resilience that merits support. This contributes to the idea that these are not isolated problems but manifestations of broader structural conditions requiring ASEAN-level solutions. Informant’s 8 analogy “would you prefer art over food” diverges from Simpson’s (2003) emphasis on the significance of cultural dimensions of curation, limiting the budget for cultural activities which further undermines Clifford’s (1997) statement on the ability to engage with communities through participatory practices or being “contact zones”. Yet within these constraints, Visayan museums exhibit resilience through reliance on partnership and corporate systems as stated by Informant 7, mirroring DiMaggio &

Powell's (1983) institutional theory on the adaptation of organization to survive within dominant frameworks. Visayan museum's distribution of collateral materials as prizes as stated by Informant 1, reframes scarcity to ingenuity and echoes de Certeau's (1984) concept of tactical resistance in everyday life.

Budget constraints reveal systemic imbalance which requires intervention. Without enough funding, Visayan museums defer Sharmin & Haque's (2024) visions on the evolution of their role as dynamic spaces for cultural knowledge, maintaining a cycle where their SDG contributions remain incidental rather than strategic. Instead of negatively viewing budget limitations, it could be used for regional frameworks, such as informing an ASEAN toolkit for cultural institutions for systematized resilience. SDG-aligned funding mandates could also be leveraged to position the museums as catalysts for change, and sharing of adaptive strategies through platforms, such as the ASEAN Cultural Heritage Digital Archive.

Dependence on Partnerships

As several Visayan museums struggle with limited funding for public programs and operations, they heavily rely on partnerships with other government entities, non-government organizations, and international bodies. While partnerships can provide essential support, over-reliance on external entities can create vulnerabilities.

Administrative Changes

The insights on administrative instability and partnership dependence emerged solely from formal interviews rather than from direct observations. While this contributes to methodological constraints, it turned out to be a strength, as Informant 6, a museum employee, vividly explained election-cycle disruptions:

“When there's a change of administration, how do we sustain those kinds of initiatives?” I had to reconcile my perspectives with the power of the narrative data, aligning with Mayan's (2009) assertion that focused ethnography values intensive, context-specific insights.

On the other note, changes in partner priorities or funding cuts can disrupt museum operations and programs. The uncertainty of whether ongoing programs or projects will continue under new leadership is a significant issue, especially for long-term initiatives that require consistent support and funding. Informant 3, museum employee, explained: *“We are actually supposed to partner with another team sa Museums and Galleries Month for this month. Response was slow.”* This reliance on external partnerships mirrors a broader ASEAN challenge on unpredictable political climates.

Heavy dependence on partnerships reflects a limitation in cultural governance as Visayan museums undermine their autonomy to pursue locally relevant sustainability goals, linking to DiMaggio & Powell's (1983) coercive isomorphism and power imbalances which contrasts the idea of Clifford (1997) on transforming museums into spaces for intercultural negotiation. On the other hand, unpredictable changes in administrative structures mirrors a broader ASEAN governance challenge, where cultural policies lack continuity and impede Weller & Ostman's (2021) commitment to sustainability frameworks as key educators.

The findings also support Kreps' (2003) conclusions on local museum employees' demonstration of agency within constraints, such as cultivating multiple partnerships to buffer against any single point of failure. However, it does not align with the idea of Hall (1997) on the ability of museums to construct consistent sustainability message to visitors. While these insights surfaced from interviews, not

direct observation, their clarity aligns with Mayan's (2009) context-specific truths of focused ethnography, crystallizing structural flaws as reflected in the vivid phrasing of Informant 6 "how do we sustain those kinds of initiatives?"

Institutional Constraints

Institutional constraints refer to internal challenges within museum organizations, such as bureaucratic processes. These constraints slow down the implementation of programs and limit SDG-related innovation of Visayan museum operations. Fieldwork and formal interviews revealed an organic, if unconscious, alignment with global sustainability frameworks that merits deeper exploration. *"All I can say is although we do not have the SDGs in mind in creating the public programs, I think I can confidently say that many of our activities actually touched on Sustainable Development Goals"* Informant 2, a museum employee, said.

Many Visayan museum activities naturally align with the SDGs, even if they were not designed with these goals in mind. *"Parang naging incidental yung identification sang SDGs* (It seems like the identification of the SDGs became incidental)", Informant 3, a museum employee, furthered.

Such constraints can hinder their ability to fully integrate the SDGs into their practices and participate in regional collaborations that require long-term commitment and independence. Moreover, incidental alignments or unclear connections of the practices in the Visayan museums to SDGs lead to challenges in impact measurement. *"Ang missing sa namin is paano namemeasure yung impact. Wala kami tools that will measure the impact* (What we're missing is how to measure the impact. We don't have the tools that will measure the impact)." Informant 6, museum employee said.

Regional networks play a crucial role in fostering collaboration and resource-sharing among museums. However, the lack of clear frameworks and institutional support often limits the effectiveness of these networks. Informant 8, museum employee, said

“Kung may mga policy making bodies tayo na we can enlighten, institutions like the museums or yung mga galleries, SDGs, better, mas guided, parang mas alam natin yung targeting natin (If we have policy-making bodies that can enlighten institutions like museums or galleries about the SDGs, it would be better and more guided. It would help us understand our targets more clearly).”

This emphasizes the need for policy-making bodies, such as government agencies or regional organizations, to provide guidance to better align the Visayan museum practices with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and have clearer objectives to work toward.

Many museums lack clear frameworks or guidelines for incorporating the SDGs into their operations, programs, and strategic planning. This limits their ability to effectively evaluate their contributions to the SDGs or identify areas for improvement. The findings on organic but unconscious SDG alignment from the interviews with Informants 2 and 3 mirrors challenges documented by Andina (2024) where Indonesian museums contribute to sustainability goals without systematic frameworks. Bureaucratic barriers, such as the lack of impact measurement tools as stated by Informant 6 align precisely with Hoa’s (2017) findings on operational constraints.

While consistency across studies confirms the constraints on institutional SDG integration, the findings highlight how this manifest in the Visayan museums’ policies and resource environment. Developing clear SDG integration frameworks

tailored to the cultural and institutional contexts of Visayan museums can help bridge this gap, particularly providing practical tools for mapping museum activities to specific SDG targets, measuring impact, and reporting progress.

Informant 8 stressed the critical role of policy-making bodies in addressing this challenge, however, the current lack of prioritization for heritage conservation and cultural sustainability in national and regional policies limits the ability of museums to thrive. This is consistent with the documentation of Politzer et al. (2021) on how weak heritage policies compromise museum sustainability and ICOM's (2017) emphasis on the role of institutionalize policies in standardizing practices.

Furthermore, achieving cultural sustainability heavily depends on policy advocacy and institutional support, as these provide the necessary frameworks, resources, and recognition for cultural sustainability initiatives. Without clear policies or guidelines for cultural sustainability, museums and cultural organizations lack direction and support. This can lead to fragmented efforts, where initiatives are not aligned with broader sustainability goals or regional frameworks like the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC).

2. Physical Space Challenges

As museums serve as vital institutions for preserving cultural heritage, limited physical space significantly impacts a museum's ability to operate effectively and fulfill its mission towards advancing the SDGs. It restricts the number of artifacts or exhibits that can be displayed and reduces the ability of the museum to showcase its full collection or host large-scale exhibitions. Furthermore, insufficient storage space can lead to improper preservation of artifacts, risking damage or deterioration.

These challenges reflect the broader context of resource constraints in the Philippine cultural sector, particularly in Visayan museums. Informant 1 said:

“This is the only space that we have. We only have to utilize the space that we have which is the main foyer. That is where we conduct our public programs and temporary exhibits. The space was allocated for the memorabilia items of our National Artists.”

Despite these constraints, Visayan museums creatively utilize their available facilities to fulfill their mission of promoting cultural heritage and education. These efforts align with broader societal goals, such as achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to quality education (SDG 4) and sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11).

Clifford’s (1997) concept of museums as “contact zones” applies, where limited space forces Visayan museums to prioritize certain narratives often at the expense of others. While Informant 1’s focus on physical adaption of Visayan museums through prioritizing in-person engagement, it contrasts with the findings of Pichitkul (2024) who highlights the digitization as a space-saving solution.

This implies that the physical space constraints faced by some Visayan museums are not isolated challenges but a shared reality in the ASEAN region, where the cultural infrastructures in developing regions compete with the demands of the public, presenting opportunities for regional collaboration. Creating an artifact exchange program could address these concerns. For instance, ASEAN museums could share storage where they can rotate collections, such as Philippine museums could feature Thai ceramics, while Thai museums could feature Visayan artifacts.

3. Community Awareness Challenges

Visayan museums face some difficulties in educating their local communities about their role, purpose, and proper conduct within museum spaces. These

challenges can hinder the museum's ability to fulfill its mission and contribute to the SDGs.

Misinterpretation of the Museum

Some community members do not fully understand the purpose or value of a museum, which sometimes leads to misconceptions, such as perceiving it as only a place for old artifacts or thinking it is just for the elite. Informant 8, a museum employee, said:

“Many people misinterpret or misunderstood what ILOMOCA is. When you ask a PUV driver, “bal-an mo anong sa sulod sa ILOMOCA, sir? (Do you know what’s inside ILOMOCA, sir?” One of them will say “restaurant, mall. They don’t know that we exist. That’s one of the challenges that we have.

Misinterpretation reduces community engagement and support, making it harder for museums to attract visitors. Question of the general public, such as “*pwede magtsinelas sa sulod? pwede magshorts lang ko* (can I wear slippers and shorts)?” reflect a concern among some people that museums have strict dress codes or formal expectations, which might make them feel unwelcome or out of place.

In addition, Visayan museums faced challenges regarding museum etiquette and the need for public education on proper behavior within museum spaces. This can negatively impact the conservation and preservation of museum collections. Information 6, museum employee, shared:

“ We discovered na parang (like) they have to be educated as to how they should behave inside the museum because this is also an important factor to consider in terms of conservation have this one program wherein we would like

to go to schools to educate the students the youth about museums and how to yung mga proper museum etiquettes.”

These insights emphasize that the responsibility for conserving and preserving collections is not solely the duty of museum employees. Instead, it is a shared responsibility between the museum and the community. This implies capacity-building and knowledge-sharing are essential for empowering individuals and institutions to achieve their goals.

For museums, these initiatives are critical for aligning their practices with global frameworks such as the SDGs. However, a lack of technical knowledge and awareness about the SDGs can hinder museums from effectively contributing to sustainable development. To illustrate, incidental alignment of SDGs to the practices of Visayan museums is a significant barrier to SDG alignment and regional collaboration. Many museum employees struggle with technical knowledge towards SDGs, as Informant 1 said:

“We actually conducted a number of activities, yet, these were not identified by the body. As we move along with the things that we have performed or conducted we have identified that “Ah! Pwede pala sya dito I pupush or we can throw it to that SDG (This can actually be pushed here, or we can align it with that SDG).”

Misunderstood identity of Visayan museums as noted by Informant 8 aligns With ICOM’s (2017) battle perceptions of museums for elitist. Dress code concerns further reflect a disconnect between museum norms and community expectations, hinders SDG 4: Quality education as it limits public access to cultural learning, and echoes the study Wahyudi (2024) in Indonesian museums, where youth disengagement stemmed from perceiving museums as outdated.

Public awareness and engagement are essential for the success of Visayan museums. Informant 6 highlighted the need to educate visitors on proper behavior inside the museum to conserve collections. In Myanmar, for example, the illegal trade of antiquities is on the rise, driven by a lack of public awareness, insufficient understanding of relevant laws, and limited knowledge about the significance of documentation and preservation (Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture Myanmar, 2020). Similarly, in Visayan museums, many visitors may not understand how their behavior (e.g., touching artifacts, using flash photography) can impact conservation efforts or how museums contribute to sustainable development. This mirrors Hirsch et al. (2024) on global incidents of artifact damage from visitor mishandling. Enhancing public awareness through targeted outreach, educational programs, and interactive exhibits are universal strategies for bridging this gap and fostering a sense of shared responsibility for cultural preservation and sustainable development.

Moreover, museum employees limited technical knowledge of SDGs often leads to missed opportunities. Informant 1 admitted the later realization of practices aligned with SDGs, paralleling with Andina's (2024) observation of Indonesian museums incidental contribution to SDGs 4 and 9. Capacity building and knowledge-sharing initiatives, such as workshops in the study of Ong et al. (2023) that could train employees to map programs to SDGs through training programs and peer-learning networks. Additionally, fostering a culture of collaboration and knowledge exchange like adopting Guanco's (2023) model on school partnership to teach museum etiquette and to enhance the overall capacity of Visayan museums to contribute to sustainable development.

Opportunities for Advancing the SDGs and Enhancing ASEAN

Socio-cultural Collaboration

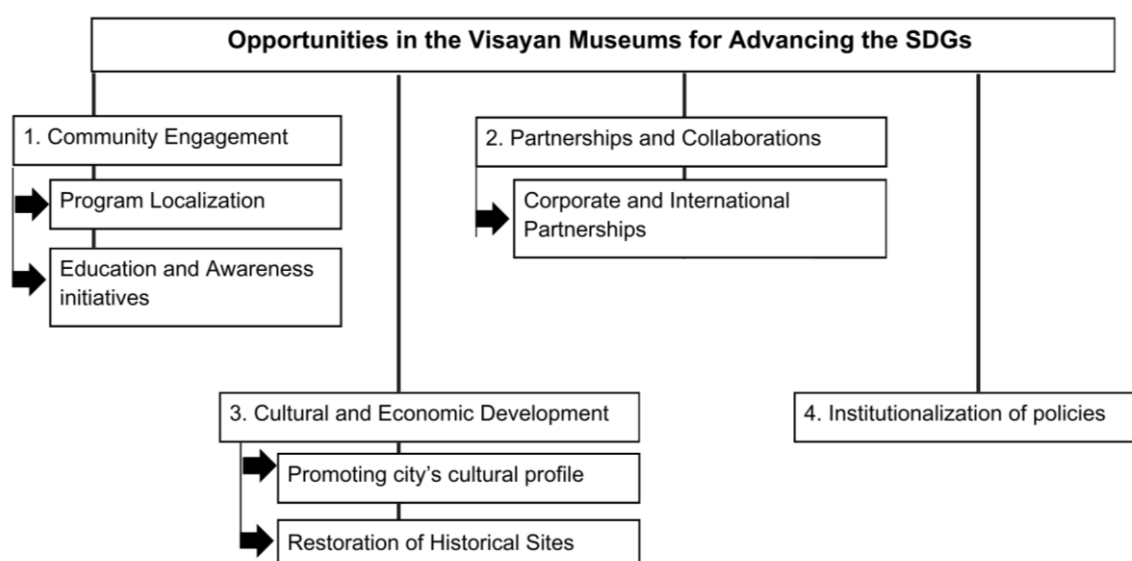
This section explores the opportunities for advancing the SDGs through the work of Visayan museums. It examines how these institutions can leverage their unique strengths—such as their role as custodians of cultural heritage and their ability to educate and inspire communities—to contribute to sustainable development.

The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025

Before delving into how the identified opportunities create avenues for enhancing the ASEAN socio-cultural collaboration, it is imperative to comprehend the contents of the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025 as the integration link between the opportunities and the ASCC framework.

The ASCC Blueprint 2025 serves as a strategic framework to foster regional socio-cultural integration within ASEAN, emphasizing five key characteristics and elements: A) Engages and Benefits the People, ensures active participation of stakeholders in ASEAN initiatives; B) Inclusive, reduces socio-economic and political barriers; C) Sustainable, focuses on biodiversity conservation, green cities, climate action, and responsible resource use; D) Resilient, enhances disaster preparedness and recovery and expands social protection for vulnerable groups; and E) Dynamic, promotes adaptability to global changes. This is further divided into 18 sub-sections, along with implementation and review mechanisms (ASCC Blueprint, 2025).

Figure 22. Opportunities in the Visayan Museums for Advancing the SDGs.



Note. Major themes/opportunities identified in the Visayan museums for advancing the SDGs and enhancing the ASEAN socio-cultural collaboration. Own work.

1. Community Engagement

Community engagement is a fundamental process that fosters collaboration, inclusivity, and shared responsibility. It involves actively involving individuals and groups in decision-making, initiatives, and activities that affect their lives and environments. Effective engagement ensures that diverse voices are heard, strengthening trust and ownership over collective outcomes. In the context of museums, this means co-creating programs with local communities to reflect their histories, values, and aspirations. When prioritized, such effort aligns with the SDGs, emphasis on participatory governance and equitable development. Beyond institutional benefits, meaningful engagement empowers communities to become stewards of their own cultural heritage and sustainable futures.

Table 4*2024 Visitor Data for National Museums in Visayas*

	Bohol	Cebu	Dumaguete	Iloilo	TOTAL
No. of Tourists	96,136	296,843	28,215	47,800	468,994

Note. 2024 Visitor Data for Visayas. Numerical data provided by the National Museum of the Philippines (NMP) Central Library and Archives. Own work.

Table 5*January 2024 to February 2025 Visitor Data for Contemporary Museum in Visayas*

	Local Visitors	Foreign Visitors	TOTAL
Jan.–Dec. 2024	40,729	2,127	42,856
Jan.–Feb. 2025	4,630	549	5,179

Note. Latest Visitor Data for *Contemporary Museum in Visayas*. Numerical data provided by the Iloilo Museum of Contemporary Arts. Own work.

The 2024-2025 visitor data for national museums and contemporary museums in Visayas reveals key opportunities to deepen community engagement. The high visitor numbers in 2024 present opportunities that strongly align with Cabañes et al.'s (2024) findings on community ownership models and Ahmad's (2015) work on participatory approaches. Community engagement is essential for ensuring that their programs resonate with the values, needs, and traditions of the people they serve. Especially with having high foreign visitors, it presents a chance to bridge local and foreign engagement. For instance, museum employees could advance collaboration through pairing the foreign visitors with local community guides, launching correspondent programs to document experiences in a local lens or developing SDG-

aligned tour packages that link museums to nearby heritage sites. Such initiatives not only enhance visitor experiences but also create economic opportunities for local communities, fostering sustainable cultural tourism. Furthermore, tracking visitor demographics and feedback can help museums tailor engagement strategies to diverse audiences, ensuring inclusivity while amplifying regional narratives. These efforts could be further strengthened through digital platforms that extend community participation beyond physical visits, allowing for ongoing dialogue and co-creation of content. Additionally, establishing regional learning exchanges among ASEAN museums would enable Visayan cultural institutions to share best practices while adapting successful models from neighboring countries.

Moreover, it aligns with the 2025 ASCC Blueprint's pillars of *Inclusivity* (Section B), *Sustainability* (Section C), and *Resilience* (Section D). By actively involving individuals and groups in decision-making, museums in the Visayas can contribute to ASEAN's goals of empowering people (A.2), reducing barriers (B.1), and promoting equitable access to cultural resources (B.2).

Community engagement, as an opportunity identified by the Visayan museums, can be capitalized on through the following:

Program Localization

Program localization tailors initiatives to the specific needs and traditions of local communities. For instance, Visayan museums acknowledge global observances such as Pride Month, which celebrates LGBTQ+ rights and visibility.

This aligns with SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities and ASCC's *Promotion of Human Rights* (B.3). However, the ethnographic data also reveals tensions on its current inclusion in museum programs that are often rooted in Western contexts. Hence, there

are plans to localize Pride Month celebrations by focusing on the history of LGBTQ+ activism and culture within the Visayas, as Informant 2 shared, “*For next year, we’re thinking of focusing on the history of pride here.*”

While the intent fosters authenticity and community ownership, I perceived that such programs could unintentionally exclude rural or conservative factions, complicating ASEAN’s *Reducing Barriers* (B.1) goal. This tension underscores the need for museums to adopt reflexive monitoring, ensuring their interpretations of "local" align with community self-definitions rather than institutional assumptions, and highlights the need for a grounded approach to ASEAN socio-cultural collaboration.

Interactive exhibitions and art activities

Visayan museums identified strategies to capitalize on the opportunity for community engagement. Museums can involve local communities in conservation efforts, empowering them to take ownership of preserving their heritage. Interactive exhibitions and inclusive art programs can be designed to reflect local narratives, making museums more accessible and relevant to diverse audiences. For example, during major regional celebrations such as the *Sinulog* Festival in Cebu and the *Dinagyang* Festival in Iloilo, museums offer interactive activities that engage the public and showcase local traditions. These initiatives are expanded through digital storytelling platforms, allowing community members to contribute personal stories and artifacts virtually, and further democratizing cultural representation. Additionally, partnerships with schools and youth organizations could foster intergenerational learning. This aligns with SDG 11 Target 4: Cultural Heritage Preservation, SDG 12 Target 5: Sustainable Consumption, and ASCC C.2: Sustainable Cities.

Figure 23. Handmade Decoratives.



Note. HANDMADE DECORATIVE CUTESIES, by National Museum of the Philippines - Iloilo. January 2025. Facebook.

The activities include making handmade decorative, such as accessories, and mixing and matching beads, wire, and feathers that resonate with the festive colors of major celebrations. Additionally, museums aim to promote sustainable art practices, such as using recyclable materials, to align with environmental sustainability goals while engaging communities in creative and eco-friendly initiatives, as Informant 2 discussed: *“The activities for next year, November to December, we have these recreational parols using native materials.”*

Program localization strongly supports the emphasis of Kumar & Soni (2021) on community-centered approaches to cultural representation. It validates the plan of the Visayan museums to refocus celebrations, such as the Pride Month, to local histories rather than in Western contexts. Clifford’s (1997) theory on “contact zones” explains the balance within multiple community perspectives and highlights the risk of Visayan museums becoming sites of cultural negotiation. Yet, it does not fully account

for the agency shown in localizing these programs as perceived by DiMaggio & Powell (1983) on isomorphic pressure.

Implications for ASEAN Socio-cultural Collaboration

Drawing from fieldwork interviews, developing guidelines for adapting global observances, such as Pride Month, to regional histories emerged as one of the strategies. Informant 2's account of plans to "*focus on the history of pride in the Visayas*" reveals a need for structured yet flexible frameworks. However, potential backlash from conservative groups could impair ASEAN's barrier-reduction goals. Using native materials in projects also aligns with environmental goals, and the need for metric to assess actual sustainability impact could be advanced as it was missing from the current data.

With this, partnering with ASEAN museums, along with local NGOs, to collect oral histories and conduct additional interviews would leverage existing fieldwork data from Visayan informants while supporting Element B.3 of the ASCC 2025 Blueprint ('Promotion of Human Rights Education') through baseline documentation. It may involve a publicly accessible digital archive with tagged regional narratives. To ensure the success of this initiative, pilot workshops may be conducted with 2-3 AMS with museum employees, PRIDE activists, and community representatives. Tracking contributions per country could also be advanced, such as identifying oral histories of PRIDE in Indonesia and the Philippines. Lastly, a dialogue-based toolkit with guidelines for adapting global themes may be included.

On another note, I realized how the hands-on activities deepen community ties and preserve intangible heritage during the interviews with museum employees. These insights carry important implications for ASEAN socio-cultural collaboration,

particularly in emphasizing the value of co-creating a certification system for eco-materials within the ASEAN region, specifically crafting regional criteria for making eco-friendly handicrafts. Furthermore, fostering cross-border apprenticeship programs to train young artisans from different academic institutions in sustainable practices would encourage regional collaborations.

Education and Awareness Initiatives

Museums are powerful platforms for education and awareness, effectively addressing a range of themes related to local cultural preservation, global sustainability goals (SDGs), and ASEAN socio-cultural integration. Through rotating exhibitions, programs, and campaigns, they can engage the public and offer valuable insights on sustainability and conservation. For example, Visayan museums conduct IEC campaigns that align with SDG 4: Quality Education and ASEAN's *Equitable Access for All* (B.2). It highlights the importance of museums and their role in preserving culture and promoting awareness.

Moreover, it facilitates community engagement, inviting people to join in meaningful discussions and actions. These initiatives are enhanced through mobile museum programs that bring exhibitions to underserved rural communities, ensuring wider accessibility to cultural education. Additionally, incorporating digital components make learning more engaging for younger audiences while preserving traditional knowledge in innovative formats.

Figure 24. Sample impactful message from museum exhibits.



Note. A photo of a conservation message from a museum exhibit. Own work. January 2025. Taken during fieldwork.

The ethnographic study reveals that Visayan museums are evolving beyond their passive way of educating the public; they serve as a call to action. By combining educational content with messages that inspire tangible change, museums can encourage visitors to adopt sustainable practices. This shift is particularly evident in how curators now design exhibits not just to inform. It affirms Weller & Ostman (2021) and Pasigan's (2025) assertions on museums serving as agents of change, where Visayan museums are becoming active platforms for sustainability education. For instance, exhibitions on the local products or plants and animals' endemic to the region or in the Philippines don't just raise awareness about biodiversity—they also issue a call to protect it. A simple yet impactful message like "Let's Keep It Green" can be a powerful reminder of collective responsibility to preserve the environment for future generations. Through these initiatives, they demonstrate institutional adaptability as

describe by DiMaggio & Powell (1983), mirroring global norms under regulatory pressures. Furthermore, it illustrates Hall's (1997) notion of representation where curatorial decisions shape what is felt and done, activating "scripted" visitor experience through guided thematic sequences. By incorporating educational messages with civic actions, these museums showcase how regional heritage can be a vehicle for global responsibility.

Additionally, this practice mobilizes tangible action, transcending awareness-raising by embedding calls to protect these species, aligning with SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and ASEAN's *Sustainable Production* (C.4). In this way, through adopting sustainability practices, museums become active participants in both education and action, motivating people to take steps towards sustainability while fostering a deeper connection to their local and global environments. This supports the idea of Simpson (2003) on ethnomuseology as Visayan museums not only preserve collections but also contextualize them through locally embedded narratives. Such practices could also seed the ASEAN Green Initiative, where Visayan models could inspire regional peers to pair exhibits with actionable steps (e.g., pledges to reduce plastic through the use of local materials), contributing to the idea that museum can set precedents that others emulate due to perceived effectiveness of practices.

Implications for ASEAN Socio-cultural Collaboration

During fieldwork, I noted that while banners or labels, such as "Keep it Green," were visible, some museums lacked recycling bins or only situated them at the entrance of the museums, highlighting the gap between rhetoric and practice. According to the ASCC 2025 Blueprint on *Sustainable Climate* (C.3) goals, there must be a prioritization of strict compliance over systemic change. To ensure accountability,

the ASCC could tie funding (D.5) to “verifiable actions” (e.g., those who adopt sustainable habits in the case of both museum employees and stakeholders). The *ASCC Review Mechanism* (III.D) could spotlight museums that pair workshops with waste audits, providing real-world institutionalization.

In addition, conservation initiatives can protect cultural and natural heritage, while technology-driven activities, such as digital archiving, can enhance efficiency and accessibility. Such examples are the use of digital kiosks in Visayan museums.

Informant 2, a museum employee, shared, “*We create our collateral sa posters, then dun na lang i popost sa screen ng digital kiosk* (then simply post them on the screen of a digital kiosk). That's one sustainability.”

The archiving projects through digital kiosks support SDG 9: Industry and Innovation and ASCC’s *Digital Transformation* (E.2). It could be anchored to ASEAN’s Cultural Heritage Digital Archive (ACHDA), creating opportunities for cross-border knowledge sharing while reducing the environmental footprint.

The study also reveals implications for the development of ASEAN policy in order for museums to maximize their potential as catalysts of sustainability and emphasizes the need to close the gap between sustainability messaging and institutional practices. A framework replicating the Visayan models would be beneficial if paired with measurable actions, such as conducting waste audits during the programs or workshops. Linking ASCC funding to verifiable sustainability practices in ASEAN museums would also ensure that ASEAN museums receive funding if tied with compliance to sustainability criteria. This may be leveraged through submitting sustainable reports before receiving funds and having ASEAN-approved assessors evaluate the museums sustainability.

2. Partnerships and Collaborations

Corporate and International Partnerships

Museums worldwide recognize the importance of partnerships and collaborations to enhance their capacity and impact. By forging alliances with corporations, international organizations, and educational institutions, museums can secure funding, resources, and expertise to advance their goals. In the Visayan context, it includes partnerships with ASEAN universities, research institutions, and international organizations to facilitate studies on shared cultural and natural heritage. These collaborations foster regional cooperation and promote cross-cultural understanding, aligning with the broader goals of the ASEAN socio-cultural framework.

Through collaborating with international organizations, Visayan museums are securing important resources while advancing the heritage goals. For instance, the International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration (ICCR) grants museum collections to Western Visayan urban poor communities through the mobile museum boxes to raise public awareness and inspire deeper appreciation of Filipino heritage among Western Visayans while addressing SDG 4: Quality Education, ASCC B.2: Equitable Access, and SDG 17: Partnerships for Goals. This supports the literature of Cabañes et al. (2024) on grassroots participation in museum development which helps build shared ownership of cultural spaces.

These collaborations reveal essential insights on how Visayan museums create sustainable funding beyond government support. Yet, it requires careful balancing of commercial and cultural priorities, needing structured frameworks to ensure community benefits remain central.

Participation in forums such as the ASEAN Museum Forum 2024 has enabled Visayan museums to strengthen their role within the ASEAN Socio-Cultural

Community (ASCC) through sharing best curatorial practices. The ethnographic data shows how these exchanges foster professional capacity while strengthening ASEAN cultural narratives. During fieldwork, interviews reveal the participation of two informants from this study in the ASEAN Museum Forum 2024. They shared their notable experiences and argued that the collaboration not only enhanced their own institutional capabilities but also contributed to a deeper understanding of shared histories and cultural narratives across ASEAN.

Digital platforms are also transforming the outreach of Visayan museums in sharing their collections, research, and educational programs with a broader ASEAN audience. As evidenced by Informant 12, a foreign visitor based in the ASEAN region, *“Our teacher saw an announcement for a workshop about pottery on Instagram. So, as part of our tour, we went here (museum) to experience it. I am very happy about the experience.* In addition, visitors from outside the ASEAN region enrich the cultural exchange and highlight the appeal of the Visayan museum as a destination for global visitors interested in the unique heritage of the region. For example, Informant 19, a Korean museum visitor, shared, *“Me, my teacher in the academy, and some chingu deul (friends) visit the museum here in the region as part of our culture learning. The museums are quite gamay (small) compared to Korea, but the culture is very rich.*

The reference to online engagement shows how Visayan museums key opportunities highlighted by Kim-Davies (2024) and Ong et al. (2023) as this platform enable inclusive access, such for international visitors, and demonstrate adaptive strategies for outreach. This is especially essential for regional museums that may lack the physical infrastructures of central museums.

Implications for ASEAN Socio-cultural Collaboration

These initiatives support SDG 9: Industry Innovation and ASCC E.2: Digital Connectivity and imply strategic recommendations to further ASEAN socio-cultural collaboration through dedicating financing mechanisms for joint conservation projects of ASEAN museums, formalizing community knowledge transfer through transport networks such as conducting educator programs for PUV drivers, and creating digital cultural corridors to centralize platforms for sharing Visayan collections across the ASEAN region.

As the Visayan museums serve as nodes for ASEAN collaboration, this can be furthered through certain ASEAN policy implementation pathways, such as conducting pilot monitoring partnerships with at least three ASEAN museums, institutionalizing exchange programs, and embedding partnership metrics in the Review Mechanism of the ASCC 2025 Blueprint (III.C).

3. Cultural and Economic Development

Museums can contribute to the cultural and economic development of their cities by promoting the city's cultural profile and positioning themselves as cultural destinations. It can be achieved through the restoration of historical sites and the documentation, preservation, and promotion of indigenous knowledge and practices. Cultural and economic development as opportunities identified by the Visayan museums highlight how museums can contribute to sustainable development by leveraging cultural heritage to drive economic growth, promote local industries, and foster community well-being. Specifically, it drives SDG 8: Decent Work/Economic Growth, SDG 11 Target 4: Cultural Heritage Protection, and ASCC Blueprint 2025 E.1: Open/Adaptive ASEAN.

Promoting city's cultural profile

The universal practice of museums to promote cultural profiles underscores the importance of museums in shaping cultural identity and attracting recognition on national and international platforms. In the Visayan context, initiatives like UNESCO's Creative Cities Network recognize cities for their contributions to several aspects, such as literature, design, and gastronomy.

Visayan museums are partnering with local governments to highlight the city's heritage and its bid to become one of the Creative Cities. Initially, I viewed the Visayan museums' UNESCO Creative Cities bid (Figure 25) as primarily an economic development strategy. Informant 4, a museum guide with 14 months of experience. His daily tasks revolve around visitor engagement, managing inquiries, bookings, and special requests, while also tracking attendance statistics. Drawn by the museum's unique identity as the first free public museum in the region, his emphasis on "promoting literary heritage" revealed a deeper cultural intentionality, which intertwines their hands-on visitor work with the museum goals.

Through extensive documentation of literary heritage and culinary traditions (Figures 25-26), these museums provide the substantive content required for UNESCO applications while simultaneously boosting local tourism, a mission Informant 4 champions by ensuring the space remains open and connected to the community it serves. Moreover, Informant 2, noted the application process, *"The application is already there. I think it was already approved. So completion na lang of other requirements for the city to finally get its title,"* highlights how the work goes beyond mere certification, systematically elevating regional identity on global platforms. Choosing to represent culinary heritage and literary identity aligns with Hall's (1997) theory of representation, where meaning is constructed, not inherent.

Figure 25. Site validation of Officials from the Philippine National Commission for UNESCO.



Note. EMBRACING OUR LITERARY HERITAGE, by National Museum of the Philippines - Dumaguete. January 2025. Facebook.

Moreover, the Visayan museums capitalized on the opportunity to promote the city's profile through food-themed exhibitions. Major exhibitions are hosted featuring artworks related to the local cuisine and culinary traditions of the area. It exemplifies how Visayan museums are innovatively leveraging intangible cultural heritage for community development and simultaneously preserving traditional knowledge systems while creating new cultural tourism products. Documenting community-rooted representations, like culinary traditions, honor living traditions, in line with Kumar & Soni's (2021) advocacy for culturally embedded curatorial practices. Moreover, as it touches the power of museum narratives in framing cities for global recognition, it represents the concept of Lidchi (2013) on the power in representation while highlighting certain aspects.

Figure 26. Food-themed Exhibit.



Note. A photo collage of *Timplada: Creative Culinary Expressions*, a major exhibit showcasing the local cuisine of the City of Gastronomy. Own work. January 2025. Taken during fieldwork.

The idea mirrors successful models in the ASEAN region, such as the City of George Town in Penang, Malaysia, as the City of Literature (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2025) and Phuket, Thailand, as the City of Gastronomy (Phuket Gastronomy, 2019), suggesting opportunities for regional knowledge exchange and demonstrating how cultural institutions can serve as anchors for sustainable urban development.

The gastronomy-themed exhibitions demonstrate a "virtuous cycle" where cultural promotion fuels economic benefits that in turn fund further preservation. To exemplify, the *Timplada* culinary exhibition (Figure 26) demonstrates innovative

approaches to safeguarding intangible heritage through documentation, stimulating local food economies, and positioning Visayan cities as ASEAN cultural destinations. Physical staging of exhibitions like the *Timplada* reflects Duncan's (1991) notion on museum's practice to direct the attention of visitors, and aligns with Bennett's (1995) argument that museums influence social behavior by directing attention to what is valuable in a city's identity, such as literary and cuisine traditions.

However, through fieldwork and interviews with Visayan museum employees and stakeholders, critical gaps were identified, focusing on the need for systematic measurement of how cultural programming translates to economic impact. These findings position Visayan museums as innovative models for ASCC's E.3 vision as the Creative, Responsive ASEAN, demonstrating how cultural institutions can simultaneously preserve authentic heritage, generate sustainable livelihoods, and strengthen regional identity.

Implications for ASEAN Socio-cultural Collaboration

Building on these findings, strategic recommendations for ASEAN collaboration were identified. Structuring programs linking UNESCO-designated cities across ASEAN member states and sharing standardized indicators measuring both cultural and economic outcomes, such as revenue and visitor counts. These strategies directly address current gaps while capitalizing on demonstrated successes in the Visayan context and resonates with de Certeau's (1984) concept of everyday cultural practices. Moreover, the study revealed that conventional economic indicators alone cannot capture museums' full developmental impact. Hence, it suggests how policy implementation pathways could be developed: through immediate actions, such as including ASEAN museums in tourism development plans, developing ASEAN

heritage corridors (e.g., gastronomy and literary), and integrating culture-economy metrics into ASCC review mechanisms.

Restoration of Historical Sites

The restoration of historical sites is a collaborative effort involving museums, governments, and local communities. In the Visayan context, it includes initiatives like the preservation of a culturally significant landmark, driving SDG 8: Decent Work/Economic Growth, SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, SDG 11.4: Cultural Heritage Protection, and ASCC A.1: Engaged Stakeholders.

During fieldwork and formal interviews, I was struck by how this project embodied both institutional and grassroots efforts. Watching teenagers take photos at the construction site, I realized restoration's power to make heritage relevant across generations. The informal engagement suggests the heritage's evolving function.

Informant 3, a museum employee, also shared how their efforts to restore and conserve built heritage fall under SDG infrastructure. Informant 3's framing of the restoration as part of "SDG infrastructures" initially surprised me, as I had not considered heritage conservation as falling under SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure. The findings reshaped my understanding of how local actors align with global frameworks even without formal directives. These efforts constitute vital SDG infrastructures that provide skilled employment opportunities in conservation trades, enhance urban landscapes through culturally sensitive revitalization, create tourism anchors that stimulate local economies, and foster intergenerational connections, as observed in youth engagement at restoration sites. It not only preserves built heritage but also contribute to sustainable tourism and community development, aligning with global goals for infrastructure and innovation and ASEAN's *People-Oriented* (A) pillar.

The findings demonstrate both alignment and contradiction with the key theories from the literature review. Informant 3's emphasis on SDG infrastructures signifies the institutional theory of DiMaggio and Powell (1983) on local actions standardized by global frameworks. On-site observations revealed organic community-engagement, such as teenagers taking photos of the restoration site for social media content. This represents Clifford's (1997) "contact zones", where heritage spaces become arenas for negotiating meaning. Nevertheless, unlike critiques of top-down representation of Lidchi (2013), Visayan museum restoration initiatives showed participatory curation as it is a product of collaboration of regional museums, local architects, and central offices. This challenges the "palimpsest model" of Peleggi (2017) on overwriting memory, instead, it suggests multivocal storytelling.

Additionally, the initiative largely supports the argument of Bennett (1995) that cultural landscapes shape social behaviors, as observed in how restoration sites influence community engagement across generations. Its function as both economic drivers and cultural spaces illustrates de Certeau's (1984) concept of tactical resistance, where communities ascribe their own meaning of heritage.

Implications for ASEAN Socio-cultural Collaboration

Restoration of historical sites offers lessons for regional collaboration under the ASCC Blueprint. The findings suggest a cross-border knowledge exchange that could be enhanced by digital repository systems. For instance, Visayan museums could consider collaborating with Malacca, Malaysia, on tourist flow management for restored monuments (Abdullah et al., 2024). Such collaboration would activate the ASCC Blueprint's *Engaged Stakeholders* (A.1) while addressing SDG 17, Target 6: Knowledge sharing.

Moreover, the findings imply formalizing heritage restoration as sustainable infrastructure development. Given that restoration projects generate economic benefits while preserving cultural identity, conducting regional body tracking to both economic and social returns on heritage investments could be advanced to ensure that efforts are assessed not just for their tourism revenue but also for the impact on community and intergenerational learning.

Policy implications for ASCC could be enhanced by creating digital repositories, adapting Singapore's *My Heritage Portal* to report restoration projects and enable real-time monitoring. Visayan museums could pilot a digitally crowdsourced platforms, presenting restoration projects like the Bell Tower, to ensure transparency and public participation. For such, it would empower communities to engage directly in heritage governance, aligning with ASCC's commitment to people-centered development.

4. Institutionalization of policies

To ensure long-term impact, museums must formally align their operations with the SDGs. This involves integrating sustainable development principles into their policies, strategies, and daily practices. Within the cultural scene of Visayan museums, the institutionalization of SDG-aligned policies is something that they look forward to as a strategic priority. As I analyzed the museums' efforts to institutionalize SDG-aligned policies, I found challenges in formal compliance and organic adaptation. While interviewing a museum employee, I noticed how museums were retroactively mapping existing programs to SDGs while simultaneously trying to proactively redesign policies.

Documented through their social media posts, it reveals how global frameworks are being localized. For instance, they now highlight how their activities and programs

contribute to advancing specific SDGs, such as SDG 4: Quality Education. By sharing these initiatives online, Visayan museums are raising awareness about their role in achieving global goals and inspiring their audiences to engage with sustainable development efforts.

The museums' use of platforms like Facebook to examine SDG messaging became an unexpected site of ethnographic observation. By monitoring which posts garnered engagement, I witnessed real-time policy refinement. This aligns with ASEAN's *Innovative ASEAN* (E.2) emphasis on digital adaptation. This strategic alignment not only enhances the museums' relevance but also ensures that their work contributes meaningfully to the achievement of global goals, fostering a more sustainable and equitable future.

The theoretical stance emerged from the findings of the study signifies the institutional theory of DiMaggio & Powell (1983), where museums adopt SDGs due to normative pressures and replicating best practices from global peers. Yet, while SDG language is adopted, day-to-day operations may lag behind. On the other hand, SDG messaging on platforms like Facebook manifests around the constructed meaning around sustainability as argued by Hall (1997) and Vygotsky (1978). For example, posting workshops as advancing SDG 4: Quality Education socially construct museums as educators, not just culture preservers, and social media audience engagements such as the likes and shares act as feedback loops which shape meaning-making.

Implications for ASEAN Socio-cultural Collaboration

Through the institutionalization of SDG-aligned policies, Visayan museums are demonstrating their commitment to creating long-term, impactful change while

addressing local challenges and promoting cultural heritage. This approach implies an ASEAN collaboration and could be streamlined through having a standardized yet adaptable template for ASEAN museums to align programs with both SDGs and ASCC Blueprint pillars, structuring exchanges between Visayan museums and other ASEAN museums, such as in Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia, facing similar institutionalization challenges, and using analytics or regional platforms to track how museums communicate and implement SDGs to identify best practices.

Chapter V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The general purpose of this study was to provide a significant description of the strategies employed by Visayan museums in promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This study employed an ethnographic approach to gather and code data from the museum employees and stakeholders of four Visayan museums located in Iloilo City, Dumaguete City, and Cebu City. Then analysis using Spradley's DRS followed to discover the cultural themes related to practices in advancing the SDGs, challenges encountered, and opportunities identified. Various themes emerged from evidence, including the multitude of practices in Visayan museums for advancing the SDGs while considering broader collaborations within the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.

Specifically, this study sought to address the following questions:

1. *How do Visayan museum employees and stakeholders integrate and interpret the SDGs within their cultural and institutional contexts?*

The findings of this study revealed five major themes or practices in the Visayan museums and their integration with SDGs:

- a. *Prioritizing Education.* This theme includes initiatives, such as facilitating travelling museums which encompass three key components: exhibitions, lectures, and workshops. Additionally, it involves conducting Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaigns and developing collections-based modules.
- b. *Fostering Empowerment, Social Justice, and Inclusivity.* This theme focuses

on actions, such as celebrating women's groups and their societal contributions, giving training as an alternative means of living, dispelling stereotypes and biases, and providing free museum tours.

c. *Promoting Cultural Awareness and Sustainable Communities.* Key efforts of Visayan museums include housing museums within built heritage sites, documenting traditional practices and local history through exhibitions and workshops on weaving and textile arts, and exhibiting works of regional and national artists.

d. *Promoting Environmental Awareness.* This is accomplished through conducting exhibits and activities on the environmental benefits and challenges, featuring artworks made from recyclable materials, and implementing mangrove conservation campaigns.

e. *Engaging Stakeholders in Heritage Conservation.* This theme is highlights conducting programs that facilitate discussions with stakeholders, participating in national and international events, expanding social media engagement, and installing freedom boards.

2. *What are the perceived challenges of Visayan museum employees and stakeholders in the alignment of practices with the SDGs?*

The findings of this study identified key challenges by Visayan museum employees in aligning their practices with SDGs and explored their potential implications for collaborations within the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. These are the following:

a. *Challenges in Funding and Resources.* This is characterized by limited budgets for public programs and collateral materials, dependence on partnerships, administrative changes, and institutional constraints.

b. *Physical Space Challenges*. The limited physical space in Visayan museums encompass restriction on the number of artifacts or exhibits that can be displayed.

c. *Community Awareness Challenges*. Misinterpretation of the Visayan museums impact the full understanding of the general public on its purpose and value.

Furthermore, these challenges have potential implications for collaborations within the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. The results revealed key implications for strengthening regional networks, such as the need for policy-making bodies, capacity building and knowledge sharing, policy advocacy and institutional support, and enhancement of public awareness.

3. *What opportunities and strategies were identified by the Visayan museum employees and stakeholders for advancing the SDGs within ASEAN socio-cultural collaboration?*

The findings of the study revealed opportunities identified by the Visayan museums for advancing the SDGs. To capitalize on this, Visayan museums tailor initiatives, such as:

a. *Community Engagement*. This includes program localization through interactive exhibitions and art activities, and employing education and awareness through sustainable practices, such as technology-driven activities.

Implications for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Collaboration

- Develop guidelines for adapting global observances through baseline documentation.
- Conduct pilot workshops with 2-3 AMS with museum employees, PRIDE activists, and community representatives.

- Track contributions per country, such as identifying oral histories of PRIDE in Indonesia and the Philippines.
- Include a dialogue-based toolkit with guidelines for adapting global themes.
- Emphasize the value of co-creating a certification system for eco-materials within the ASEAN region.
- Foster cross-border apprenticeship programs.
- Tie funding to “verifiable actions” of ASEAN museums.
- Support digital archiving.

b. Partnerships and Collaborations. This theme highlights the importance of corporate and international partnerships and strengthening ASEAN Socio-Cultural collaborations.

Implications for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Collaboration

- Dedicate financing mechanisms for joint conservation projects of ASEAN museums.
- Formalize community knowledge transfer through transport networks.
- Create digital cultural corridors to centralize platforms for sharing Visayan collections across the ASEAN region.

c. Cultural and Economic Development. It focuses on enhancing the city’s cultural profile and Restoration of Historical Sites.

Implications for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Collaboration

- Structure programs linking UNESCO-designated cities across ASEAN member states and sharing standardized indicators measuring both cultural and economic outcomes.
- Include ASEAN museums in tourism development plans.

- Integrate culture-economy metrics into ASCC review mechanisms.
- Consider collaborating with other AMS on tourist flow management for restored monuments.
- Formalize heritage restoration as sustainable infrastructure development.
- Conduct regional body tracking to both economic and social returns on heritage investments.
- Create digital repositories to guide other cities.
- Advance community monitoring tools.

d. Institutionalization of Policies. This theme emphasizes the establishment and implementation of formal policies to support sustainable practices and governance within Visayan museums.

Implications for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Collaboration

- Develop a standardized yet adaptable template for ASEAN museums to align programs with both SDGs and ASCC Blueprint pillars.
- Structure exchanges between Visayan museums and other ASEAN museums facing similar institutionalization challenges.
- Use analytics or regional platforms to track how museums communicate and implement SDGs to identify best practices..

Conclusion

Exploring the significant practices in the Visayan museums, which are integrated with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), addressing pressing challenges on cultural, social, and environmental aspects, and identifying opportunities underscores the potentials of these museums to contribute to

advancing the SDGs and strengthens collaboration within the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.

Specifically, the researcher concluded that this study provided a comprehensive understanding of how the practices in the Visayan museums are interpreted and integrated into the advancement of the SDGs within their cultural and institutional contexts, while considering broader regional practices. It highlights diverse initiatives, mainly focusing on prioritizing education, fostering empowerment and inclusivity, promoting cultural and environmental awareness, and engaging stakeholders in heritage conservation. This not only reflects their commitment to sustainable development but also demonstrates their potential to contribute to the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.

On the other hand, the findings identified critical challenges that hinder the role of Visayan museums in advancing the SDGs. Gaps on limited funding and resources, physical space constraints, and community awareness pose barriers to the efforts of the museum employees. With this, implications for regional collaborations capitalize on the need for policy-making bodies, capacity-building initiatives, and enhanced public awareness campaigns to strengthen the role of museums within the ASEAN framework.

Regardless of these challenges, the study uncovered significant potential for Visayan museums to enhance their contributions to the SDGs. Leveraging strategies such as community engagement, partnerships and collaborations, cultural and economic development, and the institutionalization of policies offers pathways for museums to amplify their impact and position themselves as key players in the global pursuit of sustainable development.

Moreover, the findings of the study concur with and provide theoretical and

practical implications.

Theoretical Implications. The implications of this study extend to the Associazione Civita's bottom-up approach and museum independence and two instrumental approaches: *museums for sustainability* and *sustainability for museums*.

According to Associazione Civita (2024), when museums are publicly owned and rely on various higher authorities for their operations and management, they often face complex decision-making processes. In other terms, the success of sustainable policies depends on the awareness and active involvement of all participants in the process.

The results of the study align with this approach as it emphasizes the participation of stakeholders. By involving the local communities, Visayan museums ensure that the practices contribute to the advancement of the SDGs while being culturally relevant. Moreover, despite being administratively dependent on central units, the Visayan museums showcase a degree of functional autonomy by tailoring initiative to local contexts. This furthers the bottom-up approach through highlighting the importance of functional autonomy in enabling museums to innovate and adapt to local needs and empower local communities to take ownership of their cultural heritage.

The identified practices in Visayan museums provide a strong basis for exploring theoretical implications of instrumental approaches pointed out by Pop & Borza (2016) and Pop et al. (2019): *museums for sustainability* and *sustainability for museums*.

The approach to museums for sustainability focuses on how museums can contribute to the three pillars of sustainable development (social, economic, and

environmental) by becoming culturally sustainable. It emphasizes the role of museums and cultural heritage in enhancing quality of life, fostering economic growth, and addressing contemporary societal challenges (Pop & Borza, 2016). Visayan museums contribute to the three pillars by enhancing the cultural profile of their cities, restoring historical sites, and fostering cultural tourism. It also demonstrates how Visayan museums can act as agents of social change by addressing systemic biases and empowering communities through celebrating women's contributions and providing free museum tours to enhance social equity and cohesion. Moreover, Visayan museums highlight how museums can integrate environmental education and advocacy into their operations, supporting global environmental goals and emphasizing the importance of preserving cultural heritage as a pillar of sustainable development.

On one hand, *sustainability for museums* examines how museums can adopt sustainable practices in their own operations to ensure their long-term survival and effectiveness. It highlights the importance of sustainable management in enabling museums to fulfill their cultural missions (Pop et al., 2019).

The results show that Visayan museums build stronger community connections and increase their relevance. It aligns with the approach as it emphasizes the importance of building relationships with diverse stakeholders to ensure the financial viability of museums. Moreover, implementing environmentally sustainable practices highlights how museums can reduce their environmental footprint while enhancing their cultural mission.

The two approaches are not contradictory but rather complementary, or they cross-fertilize to generate mutual benefit by contributing to the mission of the museums (Cerquetti & Montella, 2021). Hence, the study supports the

complementarity of the two approaches through emphasizing the interdependence of different components within a system, specifically, how Visayan museums operate within a broader ecosystem of sustainability, where their contributions to sustainable development and their own sustainability are intertwined, and advocates balance of dimensions through their practices and operations.

Practical Implications. The outcomes of the study highlight the potential benefits of adopting the following:

1. *Enhancing Museum Practices.* The identified practices of Visayan museums, such as traveling museums, community engagement programs, and stakeholder collaborations, provide actionable strategies for other museums to align their operations with the SDGs. These practices can be replicated or adapted by museums in similar contexts to amplify their impact.

2. *Addressing Resource and Awareness Challenges.* The study's identification of challenges, such as limited funding, physical space constraints, and community awareness gaps, offers practical insights for policymakers and museum administrators. For example, governments and funding bodies can allocate more resources to museums, while museums can develop targeted campaigns to improve public understanding of their role in sustainability.

3. *Institutionalizing policies.* The study's emphasis on institutionalizing policies for sustainable practices provides a roadmap for museums and governments to formalize their commitment to the SDGs. This includes developing guidelines for integrating sustainability into museum operations and governance.

4. *ASEAN Socio-Cultural Collaboration and Integration.* The findings emphasize the need for practical steps to enhance regional collaborations, such as establishing policy-making bodies, facilitating capacity-building workshops, and

promoting knowledge-sharing initiatives. Moreover, it reveals the potential of Visayan museums to strengthen regional collaborations within the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community. By addressing shared challenges such as funding limitations, resource constraints, and community awareness gaps, museums can serve as platforms for knowledge sharing, capacity building, and policy advocacy across the region. This suggests that fostering partnerships and collaborations among ASEAN member states can enhance the role of museums in promoting cultural and environmental sustainability. Additionally, the study highlights the need for regional frameworks that support the integration of SDGs into cultural practices, enabling museums to contribute more effectively to the ASEAN socio-cultural agenda. By leveraging these opportunities, Visayan museums can play a pivotal role in advancing regional integration and sustainable development.

For Future Research. This study raises several questions that warrant further investigation.

1. *Comparison with other regions.* Since the study is only focused on the practices for advancing the SDGs within the Visayan region, there is a need to further compare the practices of Visayan museums with those in other regions or ASEAN countries to identify best practices and challenges in aligning with the SDGs.

2. *Challenges in Museum Practices and Regional Collaboration.* The findings This study revealed key challenges in aligning the practices in Visayan museums with the SDGs and their implications for regional collaboration, particularly within the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). Hence, it is necessary to conduct a comparative analysis of the common barriers and identify potential solutions, specifically, the potential of ASEAN Socio-Cultural collaborations in addressing

common challenges, such as funding constraints and resource limitations.

For regional collaboration, there is a need to advance exploration on the impact of corporate and international partnerships on the practices in Visayan museums for advancing the SDGs.

3. Cultural and Economic Development. Visayan museums contribute to promoting cultural and economic development of the region. With this, it is essential to investigate the role of museums in promoting cultural tourism and its impact on regional economic growth.

4. Impact Measurement. Based on the results, there is also a need to explore how Visayan museums develop and apply frameworks for measuring the impact of museum practices on sustainable development and regional collaboration.

Recommendations

In light of the findings and analysis of the study, several recommendations have been identified:

1. For Visayan Museum Employees and Administrators. Museum employees and administrators should enhance existing initiatives aligned with the SDGs, such as:

Program Enhancement. Programs such as traveling exhibitions, interactive workshops, and educational campaigns should emphasize local cultural heritage while incorporating global sustainability themes to attract wider audiences.

For Iloilo,

Ilonggo heritage such as the *Paraw* Sailboat models may be featured, alongside interactive stations demonstrating traditional stellar navigations and oral histories from fishermen, such as in Gigantes Island, highlighting traditional maritime

practices, alongside SDG 14: Life Below Water. Public programs on weaving may be enhanced through partnering Ilonggo weavers from Miag-ao and Calinog to develop STEAM (Science, Engineering, and Mathematics) – based workshops for student visitors where they measure *Pinya* fiber tensile strength (Physics) and calculate geometric patterns in *Hablon* weaving (Mathematics). Furthermore, this approach may be added in developing collections-based modules, such as creating a “Math Kultura” toolkit, aligning with SDG: Quality Education.

For Cebu,

Since pre-colonial gold artifacts were featured in galleries, they may be partnered with a workshop on ethical jewelry-making using recycled metals and collaborate with local metal smiths to advance both sustainability and promotion as a Creative City of Design. Additionally, a “heritage run” may be pursued around the historic sites in Cebu, such as in Colon, with QR codes posted in every station linking to oral histories of urban vendors.

For Dumaguete,

As the city advances its bid to become UNESCO’s Creative City of Literature, interactive story stewardship boards may be added next to a major collection, inviting visitors to respond creatively or pledge to tangible actions to protect featured ecosystem through micro poetry or flash fiction. Prompts, such as:

“As a future UNESCO City of Literature, we write to protect. Complete this poem: Rafflesia whispers through the vines..” or “Write a 3-line ‘survival haiku’ from a bird’s perspective.”

Leverage Technology. Integrating online exhibitions or virtual tours to increase accessibility and engagement with diverse audiences may be advanced

for broader outreach. On-site technology, such as digital kiosks, may be incorporated with Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications to convert submissions into regional languages to foster cross-cultural dialogue. Collaboration with other local museums may be also considered to create a gamified application or activities. This may encourage visitors to complete challenges and earn badges, such as submitting SDG-related pledges or prompts like “visit at least three Visayan regional museums virtually”. Furthermore, “AI Sentiment Analysis” may be utilized on visitor feedback to detect emerging SDG interest. For example, rising climate change queries may serve as a guide in prioritizing SDG 13: Climate Action programs.

Inclusive Programming. Museum employees and administrators may partner with local labor groups, such as PUV drivers, to co-create exhibitions, which may be titled “Wheels of Change”, featuring oral histories from PUV drivers and operators and including interactive maps tracing historic routes (linked to SDG 11: Sustainable Cities). To add, participatory curation may be advanced to ensure exhibits reflect diverse perspectives.

Strategic Partnerships. Actively seek partnerships with local and international organizations, governments, and businesses to secure funding and resources that support sustainable practices. Collaboration with universities, NGOs, and other institutions may also enhance capacity-building efforts.

SDG Impact Tracker. Developing systems may be developed to track and measure the impact of museum activities on the community and SDG outcomes. This may help provide evidence of the museum’s contribution to sustainable development and make it easier to attract further support from stakeholders. Moreover, case studies may be created, such as focusing on how clay pot making workshops increased artisan incomes by 10% (supporting SDG 8: Decent Work)

and sharing infographics on social media to attract funders. See Appendix L for a sample concept for focused monitoring tracker.

Professional Development Programs. Museum employees may undergo continuous professional development programs that emphasize sustainability, community engagement, and SDG integration. Training in areas such as project management, environmental sustainability practices, and cultural heritage preservation will help ensure that employees are well-equipped to drive SDG initiatives.

2. For Policy-Making Bodies. Policymakers may create frameworks that incentivize museums to adopt sustainable practices. It could include offering grants, tax incentives, or subsidies to museums integrating SDGs into their operations. Policies that advocate for environmental sustainability, social equity, and cultural preservation should be prioritized. Policymakers can create regulations that encourage museums to formalize their SDG-related policies and practices. This includes integrating sustainability into museum planning, operations, and governance.

3. For the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC). The ASCC may continue to facilitate knowledge-sharing platforms where museums in ASEAN member states can exchange best practices, challenges, and strategies for implementing SDGs. It may include regional conferences, workshops, or virtual platforms for museum professionals. The ASCC may advocate for policies that support the integration of SDGs into the cultural and educational sectors across ASEAN nations. Regional frameworks may be developed to streamline sustainability practices in museums and cultural institutions within the community. The ASCC may support museums by offering capacity-building workshops that

focus on SDG integration, sustainability practices, and museum management. It may help ensure museums in ASEAN countries are equipped to contribute effectively to the SDGs.

4. For Future Researchers. Future researchers may explore and compare how museums in different regions or ASEAN countries are aligning with the SDGs. Identifying best practices and shared challenges will offer valuable insights that can guide museums in their future endeavors. Research may focus on developing frameworks for measuring the impact of museum practices on the local community, cultural preservation, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion. Understanding the measurable outcomes of SDG-related activities may help museums refine their strategies and demonstrate their contributions to sustainable development. Future studies may continue to examine the challenges faced by museums in aligning their practices with the SDGs, particularly in resource-limited contexts. Research may focus on addressing barriers such as funding, space constraints, and community awareness. Future research may explore how museums can further contribute to regional integration within ASEAN, particularly in the context of socio-cultural goals. It may include investigating the role of museums in fostering regional identity, cultural exchange, and cooperation on sustainability issues.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A

Sample Permission Letter

August 10, 2024

Museum Officer

Mandurriao, Iloilo City

Dear _____,

Greetings!

I am Aspen Dolene C. Martinez from Iloilo City, taking up Master of ASEAN Studies at the University of the Philippines - Open University. I am writing to formally request permission to conduct qualitative research at your museum for my study titled *Advancing the SDGs through Visayan Museum Practices: A Focused Ethnography toward Socio-cultural Collaboration*. I have chosen your museum as my research locale due to its significant role advancing sustainability in the society.

The purpose of my research is to: 1) determine the practices in Visayan museums for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); 2) identify key challenges in Visayan museums for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and 3) identify opportunities existing in Visayan museums for enhancing their impact in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, the research will involve participant/s who will be selected using inclusion criteria for an in-depth interview that will be conducted one of the days from the last week of July to December 2024.

During my research, I may need access to SDG-related documents, programs, and initiatives. Rest assured that I will adhere to all museum policies and procedures. I am committed to maintain the integrity of the museum's collections and will handle all materials or documents with the utmost care and respect.

I kindly request permission to visit the museum one of the days from the last week of July to December 2024 to conduct my research. Additionally, I would appreciate any guidance or assistance you can provide regarding access to collections, relevant literature, or contacts within the museum who may offer valuable insights for my study.

Please find the enclosed copy of my research proposal and any necessary documentation. I also included the receiving copy of my request in this email.

Thank you for considering my request. I look forward to your positive response. Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at _____ or email me at _____.

Sincerely,

ASPEN DOLENE C. MARTINEZ
Researcher

Noted by:

DR. JOANE V. SERRANO
Research Adviser

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

Advancing the SDGs through Visayan Museum Practices: A Focused Ethnography toward Socio-cultural Collaboration

Informed Consent and Data Privacy

The Republic Act 10173 or Data Privacy Act of 2012 safeguards the privacy rights of individuals in relation to their personal data. The researcher, Aspen Dolene C. Martinez, taking up Master of ASEAN Studies at University of the Philippines - Open University, has put in place procedures that ensure compliance of Data Privacy Act.

Dear Informant,

This consent document provides you with essential information to help you decide whether you wish to participate. It covers the purpose of the study, procedure, respondents, confidentiality, risks and benefits, and voluntary participation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide a significant description on the practices employed in the Visayan museums for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, addressing following questions:

1. How are the practices in Visayan museums interpreted and integrated with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within their cultural and institutional contexts while considering broader regional practices?;
2. What are the perceived challenges in Visayan museums in aligning their practices with the SDGs, and their potential implications for collaborations within the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community?; and
3. What opportunities and strategies are identified in Visayan museums for enhancing their role in advancing the SDGs and contributing to the strengthening of collaborations within the ASEAN socio-cultural framework?

Informants

The informants of this study will be the museum employees, specifically to be selected using a purposive sampling through a specific set of criteria to ensure that participants possess the necessary knowledge and experience to provide valuable insights into the practices and strategies employed by Visayan museums in advancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The selection criteria for the informants will be the following:

- Individuals currently employed as museum employees, including directors, administrators, or officers responsible for operational or administrative functions within a Visayan museum;
- Minimum of 10 months of continuous employment in their current role within the museum sector;
- Based in the Visayas region of the Philippines, where the museum is situated and actively operating; and
- Individuals who are directly involved in or have oversight responsibilities for

museum activities, programs, or initiatives related to advancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Procedure

Data will be collected from a series of interviews (focused interview and follow-up interviews: face-to-face and online) and observation during events starting October 2024. Specifically, details of museum practices in advancing SDGs, challenges, and opportunities will be collected.

Confidentiality

Unless otherwise agreed by both parties, all the identities of the informants should always be protected such as hiding their identities. Only the researcher will have access to your personal information.

Risks and Benefits

There are no known risks associated with your participation. The benefits of participating include gaining insights on the effective strategies for advancing SDGs. Also, this may enhance their role as agents of change in addressing global challenges and engaging their audiences. Additionally, informants who contribute to the detailed analysis of the data may be offered co-authorship if the study results are published. The results of the study will be communicated to the museum either face-to-face or online.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.

If you have any questions about the study before or during your participation, please feel free to ask.

Consent Statement

I, _____ (Informant's Name), have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I understand that I can withdraw at any time and that my responses will remain confidential.

- I understand the procedures of the researchers to ensure compliance of the Data Privacy Act.
- I permit the researcher to utilize my personal data and information for the specific objectives of the research.

Signature

Date: _____

APPENDIX C

Interview Guide

Interview Protocol

Initial interview will be done only after the schedule has been finalized with the informant regarding the date, time, and place of interview. Available means of communication may be used to contact the informants for a scheduled interview. The researcher will ensure to prepare and rehearse the necessary questions and materials, such as battery and memory storage for audio recording, digital camera, video camera, cellphone, field notebook, and interview schedule before the actual interview.

Advancing the SDGs through Visayan Museum Practices: A Focused Ethnography toward Socio-cultural Collaboration

Opening:

Good day! I am Aspen Dolene C. Martinez, taking up Master of ASEAN Studies at the University of the Philippines - Open University and currently conducting research as a partial requirement for the subject ASEAN 300 - Thesis Making. The study will focus on practices in Visayan museums for advancing the SDGs. Specifically, this interview will include four parts: 1) Personal Information; 2) Practices of Museums in Advancing SDGs; 3) Key Challenges in Advancing SDGs; and 4) Opportunities in Enhancing the Impact of Museums in Advancing SDGs.

In this regard, I ask for your cooperation and participation in this interview. Rest assured that your personal information and the data gathered will be confidential and only be used for the sole purpose of research. Should you have any questions and clarifications, please let me know prior to the start of the interview.

Possible terms to be defined:

- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Sustainable Practices
- Challenges
- Opportunities

Interview Script:

I. Personal Information

- “May I ask for your full name and designation in this institution?”
- “How many years have you been working as _____ (designation) here?”
- “How did you start as _____ (designation)?”
- “How do you spend your typical day in this museum?”
- “What’s your favorite part of the museum?”

Profiling

Demographic Profile

- “Can you provide data on the number of ASEAN nationals who visit your museum annually?”

- “Do you track the nationality of your visitors? If so, what percentage of them are from ASEAN countries?”

II. Objective 1: How do Visayan museums interpret and integrate the SDGs within their cultural and institutional contexts?

Sub-questions:

1. How do Visayan museums use their physical spaces to promote awareness of SDGs, and what regional cultural practices could inspire these efforts?
2. Are there specific objects or exhibits in Visayan museums that directly relate to SDGs, potentially reflecting broader regional values in cultural preservation or sustainability?
3. What types of activities or events are organized by Visayan museums to address SDGs, and how could these activities resonate with cultural practices in neighboring regions?
4. How do the activities in Visayan museums contribute to the achievement of specific SDGs, and how might they align with broader cultural initiatives in the region?
5. Are there specific events or programs in Visayan museums that focus on SDGs, and could these events help create connections with cultural trends in nearby communities?
6. How do Visayan museums integrate SDGs into their long-term plans and strategies, considering regional cultural and sustainability priorities?
7. Who are the key individuals or groups within Visayan museums responsible for implementing SDG initiatives, and might there be opportunities to learn from cultural practices in the region?
8. What are the specific SDG goals that Visayan museums are prioritizing, and how might these align with cultural and sustainability goals observed in similar institutions in the region?
9. How do visitors to Visayan museums feel about the museum's efforts to promote SDGs, particularly in light of shared cultural heritage with communities in the region?

III. Objective 2: What are the perceived challenges of Visayan museum employees and stakeholders in aligning Visayan museums' practices with the Sustainable Development Goals?

1. Are there any limitations in the physical space of Visayan museums that hinder the implementation of SDG-related initiatives, and how might regional collaboration help overcome these challenges?
2. Do Visayan museums have access to the necessary resources and materials to effectively address SDGs, and how could partnerships with regional institutions help acquire these resources?
3. What challenges do museum employees and stakeholders face in organizing and implementing SDG-related activities, and are there broader regional initiatives that could support their efforts?
4. How do cultural and institutional factors impact the ability of Visayan museums to integrate SDGs into their practices, and how do these challenges compare to those faced by other regional institutions?
5. Are there any challenges in organizing and implementing SDG-focused events or programs, and could regional collaboration provide viable solutions?
6. What are the time constraints or limitations in addressing SDGs within Visayan museums, and how could regional partnerships help manage these

constraints?

7. Are there any conflicts or disagreements among museum employees or stakeholders regarding SDG initiatives, especially in the context of wider cultural trends in the region?
8. Are there challenges in setting and achieving specific SDG goals within Visayan museums, and could regional cultural frameworks provide guidance?
9. How do museum employees and stakeholders feel about the museum's progress in addressing SDGs, and do they see potential for learning from regional practices?

IV. Objective 3: What opportunities and strategies do Visayan museums identify for enhancing their role in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals, based on their unique cultural and community contexts?

1. How can Visayan museums utilize their physical spaces more effectively to promote SDG-related messages, potentially drawing inspiration from regional cultural policies or practices?
2. What new objects or exhibits could be developed to address specific SDGs, reflecting cultural values that may be shared with neighboring regions?
3. What innovative activities or events could Visayan museums organize to engage the community in SDG-related issues, while also fostering connections with regional cultural narratives?
4. How can Visayan museums leverage their unique cultural and community contexts to contribute to the achievement of SDGs, and what regional initiatives might serve as resources or guides?
5. What types of events or programs could Visayan museums organize to raise awareness and mobilize support for SDGs, and could these events align with broader cultural exchange opportunities?
6. How can Visayan museums allocate resources and time more effectively to address SDGs, potentially benefiting from regional cooperation?
7. Who are the key individuals or groups that Visayan museums can partner with locally and regionally to advance SDG initiatives?
8. What are the specific SDG goals that Visayan museums can prioritize based on their unique strengths, and how can these align with the cultural preservation and sustainability goals observed in the region?
9. How can Visayan museums create a positive and inclusive environment that fosters engagement with SDG-related issues, while also contributing to regional cultural dialogue?

Closing:

Thank you so much, Mr./Mrs./Miss _____. Rest assured that the data will be kept confidential. If needed, I hope you are available for further interviews in the future. The results of the study, recommendations, and/or suggestions will be shared with you through email.

APPENDIX D

Additional Informants' Background information (Museum Stakeholders)

Informants	Willingness to Participate	Type of Stakeholder	Museum Visits	SDG Awareness	Further Participation
Informant 9	Yes	SHS Student (Iloilo)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Informant 10	Yes	University Instructor (Private) (Iloilo)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Informant 11	Yes	Parent (Cebu)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Informant 12	Yes	Parent/ PUV Driver (Dumaguete)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Informant 13	Yes	University Instructor (SUC) (Iloilo)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Informant 14	Yes	Local Resident (Dumaguete)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Informant 15	Yes	Local Resident (Cebu)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Informant 16	Yes	SHS Teacher	Yes	Yes	Yes
Informant 17	Yes	Foreign Visitor	Yes	Yes	Yes
Informant 18	Yes	Foreign Visitor	Yes	Yes	Yes
Informant 19	Yes	Chinese Teacher	Yes	Yes	Yes
Informant 20	Yes	Local Resident (Iloilo)	Yes	Yes	Yes

APPENDIX E

Sample Observational Protocol Sheet

Observational Protocol Sheet	
Study Locale: National Museum of the Philippines - Dumaguete	
Date and Time: October 16, 2024; 9:00 a.m. - onwards	
Length of Activity: Approximately one (1) hour of interview for FGD	
Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
Conducted through Focused-Group Discussion or FGD (circular form) at the second floor of the museum. Five employees from different departments were included. They were given consent forms, asked to sign prior to the interview, and asked to take photos and recording the whole interview. Languages used were English, Tagalog, and Bisaya. Objective 1: How do Visayan museums interpret and integrate the SDGs within their cultural and institutional contexts? 1. How do Visayan museums use their physical spaces to promote awareness of SDGs, and what regional cultural practices could inspire these efforts? *Informant 1 shared her answer in English and Tagalog. She clarified that their strategies were incidental to the alignment of SDGs. She explained that they use their space for exhibitions, such as of local and National Artists. However, the space was small. *Informant 2 seconded the answer of Informant 1 and justified that their space was for temporary exhibitions and art workshops. They also planned to conduct a clay workshop on the last week of October 2024. Most of the answers of Informant 2 were in English and Bisaya, with a little translation in Tagalog. *Informant 4 shared some examples on how they utilized their space, such as having museum tours. Sometimes, they also cater wedding pictorials. No interruptions in the conduct of FGD in the first set of questions. However, one museum employee catered some guests upon arrival.	Challenges 1. Some of the answers were in Bisaya. Needs translation. 2. On-the-spot realizations of the employees that the practices connect to the SDGs Preliminary Theme The space is utilized for exhibitions and workshops.

APPENDIX F

Sample Domain Analysis Sheet

Domain Analysis Sheet		
Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Terms
Research Question No. 1 How are the practices in Visayan museums interpreted and integrated with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within their cultural and institutional contexts while considering broader regional practices?		
Facilitating travelling museums Making Exhibits and Programs Publicly Accessible developing collections-based modules	is a way to	Prioritize education
Celebrating Women's Groups and Their Societal Contributions through exhibits and programs Conducting programs highlighting LGBTQ+ rights and history Training inmates to have an alternative means of living providing free museum tours	is a way to	foster empowerment, social justice, and inclusivity
Housing museums within built heritage sites Documenting traditional practices and local history Exhibiting works of National Artists	is a way to	Promoting Cultural Awareness and Sustainable Communities
educating visitors about the impacts of climate change Exhibiting mobile museum boxes featuring artworks made from recyclable materials Implementing mangrove conservation campaigns	is a way to	promote environmental awareness
Conducting program that facilitates discussions with stakeholders Organizing outreach programs on museum etiquette and conservation Participating in international museum forums Expanding social media engagement Installing freedom boards	is a way to	Engaging Stakeholders in Heritage Conservation and SDGs

APPENDIX G

Taxonomy of Ways Visayan Museums Interpret and Integrate SDGs in their Practices (Outline Form)

Objective No. 1

How are the practices in Visayan museums interpreted and integrated with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within their cultural and institutional contexts while considering broader regional practices?

Interpreting and Integrating Visayan Museum Practices with the SDGs

- A. Prioritizing Education
 - 1. Facilitating travelling museums
 - 2. Making Exhibits and Programs Publicly Accessible
 - a. Conducting IEC campaigns
 - 3. developing collections-based modules
- B. Fostering empowerment, social justice, and inclusivity
 - 1. Celebrating Women's Groups and Their Societal Contributions
 - 2. Conducting programs highlighting LGBTQ+ rights and history
 - a. addressing historical and contemporary issues through exhibitions and programs
 - 3. Training inmates to have an alternative means of living
 - 4. providing free museum tours to underprivileged individuals
- C. Promoting Cultural Awareness and Sustainable Communities
 - 1. Housing museums within built heritage sites
 - 2. Documenting traditional practices and local history
 - a. Conducting workshops and exhibitions on weaving and textile art
 - b. Exhibiting works of National Artists
- D. Promoting environmental awareness
 - 1. educating visitors about the impacts of climate change
 - 2. Exhibiting mobile museum boxes
 - 3. featuring artworks made from recyclable materials
 - 4. Implementing mangrove conservation campaigns
- E. Engaging Stakeholders in Heritage Conservation and SDGs
 - 1. Conducting program that facilitates discussions with stakeholders
 - a. Organizing outreach programs on museum etiquette and conservation
 - b. Participating in international museum forums
 - 2. Expanding social media engagement
 - 3. Installing freedom boards

APPENDIX H

Paradigm Worksheet

Domains (Practices Interpreted and Integrated in the Visayan Museums)		Dimensions of Contrast							
		Mobility/ Portability	Accessibility	Active Outreach Methods	Targets Marginalized Groups	Engages with Current Societal Issues	Focuses on Local/ Indigenous Culture	Promotes Environmental Sustainability	Encourages Public Participation
Prioritizing Education	Facilitating travelling museums	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes
	Making Exhibits and Programs Publicly Accessible	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
	developing collections-based modules	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Fostering Empowerment, Social Justice, and Inclusivity	Celebrating Women's Groups and Their Societal Contributions	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
	Conducting programs highlighting LGBTQ+ rights and history	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
	Training inmates to have an alternative means of living	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
	providing free museum tours to underprivileged individuals	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Promoting Cultural Awareness and Sustainable Communities	Housing museums within built heritage sites	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
	Documenting traditional practices and local history	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Promoting Environmental Awareness	educating visitors about the impacts of climate change	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
	Exhibiting mobile museum boxes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
	featuring artworks made from recyclable materials	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	yes	Yes
	Implementing mangrove conservation campaigns	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	yes	Yes
Engaging Stakeholders in Heritage Conservation and SDGs	Conducting program that facilitates discussions with stakeholders	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
	Expanding social media engagement	No	yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
	Installing freedom boards	No	yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes

APPENDIX I

Sample Transcript of Interview

Transcript of Interview

Type of Interview : Semi-structured

Date of Interview : October 17, 2024

Place of Interview : National Museum of the Philippines - Cebu via Google Meet

Informants' Profile :

36 years old, been working in NMP - Cebu since 2022. Worked for Museo Sugbo since 2010 and been involved with programs of the Cebu Provincial Government patterned to Sustainable Development Goals. In-charge of the public programs on an average day and helps in front line services. Favorite part of the museum is the archeological collection because of the first hand experience of discovering the pre-colonial history of Cebu.

Is there any activity or program, probably, initiative that is specifically related to the advancing of the SDGs?

Informant

Yes, we have. In fact, the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly among SDGs *ba yun yung sa* quality education and *yung sa* partnership. *Yun talaga yung* we get inspiration from public programs *namin*. Take, for example, one program that we have established which is called *Lala Series*. *Lala* is a local term we use for weaving. It's a Visayan term for weaving. And it's not really that popular of a term for this generation *kasi parang matatanda nalang yung nagsasabi ng* term na *Lala*. It's kind of a deep Cebuano for this generation. Pero if you talk to the elders, *yung sinasabi parin nilang* term referring to weaving is *Lala*. So we came up with this program as our way of promoting the different weaving traditions in Cebu.

And we have partnered with the Department of Social Welfare, particularly those belonging to the vulnerable sectors, as our participants of this product demonstration. And in this manner, we are also able to strengthen, empower our cultural communities in Cebu, our stakeholders, especially the cultural bearers. So it's like hitting two birds at the same time now. We strengthen our culture bearers and at the same time, we are able to pass their tradition, their weaving traditions to a new generation. And then we are able to train these vulnerable sectors to have an alternative means of living. Kaya lang since we just started out with this program, we have yet to establish a means of verification in terms of the impact of this program to the communities because *yung sabi namin*, we want to empower them.

Say, for example, for the ones in the Social Welfare Haven for Women, the vulnerable sectors *nga VAWC victims*, *yung aim kasi sana namin nila* is when they go out of their facilities after their rehabilitation *parang ganon*. Magkaroon sila ng at least knowledge na they can use if they want to have an alternative means of living. Pero for now, we're still setting up, we're still warming up for the program and we still have yet to find ways of verifying the impact of this program to the community.

And we also have this program called *Kulu Kabiling*. It's *kulu kabiling*, *parang kulu kabilido sa kabiling*.

APPENDIX J

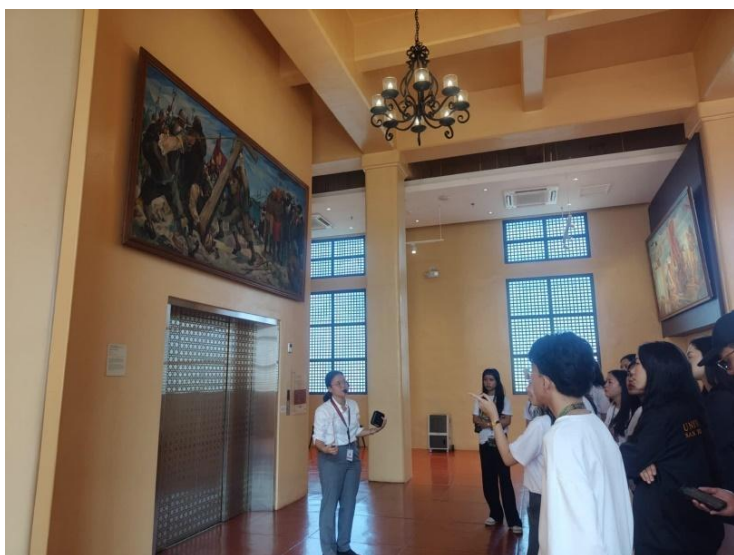
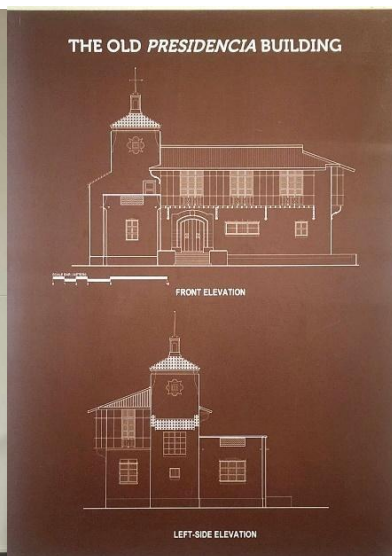
Sample Descriptive Question Matrix Based on the Nine Dimensions of Social Situation

	Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3
Space	How do Visayan museums use their physical spaces to promote awareness of SDGs, and what regional cultural practices could inspire these efforts?	Are there any limitations in the physical space of Visayan museums that hinder the implementation of SDG-related initiatives?	How do the physical spaces in Visayan museums be effectively utilized to promote SDG-related messages?
Actor	Are there specific objects or exhibits in Visayan museums that directly relate to SDGs, potentially reflecting broader regional values in cultural preservation or sustainability?	Are there any conflicts or disagreements among museum employees or stakeholders regarding SDG initiatives?	Who are the key individuals or groups that Visayan museums can partner with to advance SDG initiatives?
Activity	How do the activities in Visayan museums contribute to the achievement of specific SDGs, and how might they align with broader cultural initiatives in the region?	How do cultural and institutional factors impact the ability of Visayan museums to integrate SDGs into their practices?	How can the unique cultural and community contexts in the Visayan museums be leveraged to contribute to the achievement of SDGs?
Object	Are there specific objects or exhibits in Visayan museums that directly relate to SDGs?	Are there necessary resources and materials accessible in the Visayan museums to effectively address SDGs?	What new objects or exhibits could be developed to address specific SDGs?
Act	What types of activities or events are organized by Visayan museums to address SDGs?	What challenges do museum employees and stakeholders face in organizing and implementing SDG-related activities?	What innovative activities or events could Visayan museums organize to engage the community in SDG-related issues?
Event	Are there specific events or programs in Visayan museums that focus on SDGs?	Are there any challenges in organizing and implementing SDG-focused events or programs?	What types of events or programs could Visayan museums organize to raise awareness and mobilize support for SDGs?
Time	How do Visayan museums integrate SDGs into their long-term plans and strategies?	What are the time constraints or limitations in addressing SDGs within Visayan museums?	How can Visayan museums allocate resources and time more effectively to address SDGs?
Goal	What are the specific SDG goals that Visayan museums are prioritizing?	Are there any challenges in setting and achieving specific SDG goals within Visayan museums?	What are the specific SDG goals that Visayan museums can prioritize based on their unique strengths and capabilities?
Feeling	How do visitors to Visayan museums feel about the museum's efforts to promote SDGs?	How do museum employees and stakeholders feel about the museum's progress in addressing SDGs?	How can Visayan museums create a positive and inclusive environment that fosters engagement with SDG-related issues?

APPENDIX K

Some Photos Taken during Fieldwork





APPENDIX L

Sample SDG Impact Tracker

Participatory Tracker for *Weaving* Programs

Concept: Create a focused monitoring system to quantify traditional weaving initiatives in advancing the SDGs, combine real-time data, community voices, and certification rewards.

Part 1: Dashboard

Indicator	Measurement Tools	SDG	Target
No. of Artisans Receiving Fair Wages	Sales Records and Surveys	SDG 8: Decent Work	25 Weavers
Kg. of Textile Waste Reduced during the Program	Supplier Logs	SDG 12: Responsible Consumption	100 kgs.
No. of Youth Trained during the Program	Sign-up Sheets	SDG 4: Quality Education	70 Trainees

Part 2: Pre/Post Program Surveys

Sample Questions:

- *Did this program change the way you valued handmade textiles?* (Indicators: 1-5)
- *Will you purchase handmade textiles to support weavers?* (Indicators: Yes/No)

Part 3: Loom Legacy Certification

Bronze: Train 20 weavers + use 30% upcycled materials

Silver: Add SDG educational modules + reach 60% youth trainees

Gold: Export partnership with at least one ASEAN museum

APPENDIX M

DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBLE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

If you used AI in any of your course requirements, copy this declaration, insert your signature, and paste this on the last page of your submission:

As a student of the University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU), I hold myself to a high standard of integrity, and by signing/accepting this declaration below I reaffirm my pledge to act ethically by honoring the UP Principles for Responsible and Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence, and UPOU Guidelines on the Use of AI in Teaching and Learning.

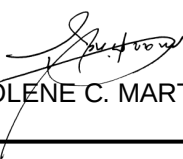
I hereby declare that I used AI **only** for the following purpose/s (please check all that apply):

- ☒ finding information about activity, assignment, and report
- ☒ writing a draft outline
- ☒ checking grammar and syntax
- ☐ generating ideas for titles of research papers, etc.
- ☐ checking codes
- ☐ generating voice/text-to-speech
- ☐ others: _____

I acknowledge that the work I submit is largely the result of my own intellectual effort.

I am fully accountable for any breach of the UP Principles for Responsible and Trustworthy Artificial Intelligence, and UPOU Guidelines on the Use of AI in Teaching and Learning.

In accordance with the rules and regulations of the University of the Philippines on student conduct and discipline, I certify that all my answers here are my own work, and that I have cited all references that were used in this assignment:*


ASPEN DOLENE C. MARTINEZ

As approved by the BOR at its 876th meeting on September 2, 1976 and as amended at the 923rd BOR meeting on January 31, 1980 and 1017th BOR meeting on March 8, 1988 and further amended at the 1041st BOR meeting on July 4, 1991 and 1051st BOR meeting on June 25, 1992