

Commercialization and Commoditization of Festivals in Calabarzon, Philippines

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Abstract

Five longest running festivals in CALABARZON, Philippines were studied in this research. The researchers identified and analyzed the effects of commercialization and commoditization on the festivals and the host community itself. A total of 31 respondents were selected using the snowball sampling, starting from the tourism officer of each local government that has jurisdiction of the festivals. The festivals were implemented for reasons distinct to the host communities. Each festival offers something unique, but each also shares features that are commercialized and commoditized. The researchers found out these had positive and negative effects on the communities and festivals.

Keywords: Community Participation, Festivals, Community development, Commodification, Commoditization

Introduction

A festival is known to most people as a day of celebration or festivities. There are many festivals celebrated throughout the world and the Philippines is no exception. Often, a province, town, or municipality celebrates a festival in the Philippines. Furthermore, a festival is viewed by the researchers as a means of sharing the history, identity and values of the place and people to others and the younger generations of the community. Moreover, a festival is also a way to attract tourists to visit the province, town, or municipality; therefore, a festival has an impact on the host place or community. The researchers believed that most of the impacts are good and a few may be bad, but nonetheless, all festival has an impact to the host communities.

A lot of festivals are celebrated throughout the world. The Philippines is not an exemption that is why it is very important to learn, understand, and measure their impacts on the host community. Falassi (1987) defines a festival as an event, a social phenomenon, encountered in virtually all human cultures. The colorful variety and dramatic intensity of its

dynamic choreographic and aesthetic aspects, the signs of deep meaning underlying them, its historical roots, and the involvement of the “natives” have always attracted the attention of casual visitors, have consumed travelers and men of letters alike. Only a few studies are available that analyzes the effects of commercialization and commoditization of festivals. Most of the time commercialization and commoditization are perceived as something that is negative. In this study, it was looked at in a neutral perspective.

Objectives of the Study

Festivals are annual events that take months of planning, creation of committees, and tapping of stakeholders to ensure the success of festivals. Furthermore, festivals bring in tourists whether local or foreign to the community that holds them. As most people think, they bring additional income to the community only during the celebration of the festivals. However, since festivals are annual activities, changes in the implementations are necessary for these festivals to survive and problems also comes along with these festivals.

This study aimed to:

- 1.) Determine the perceived changes as a result of commercialization and commoditization of the festivals;
- 2) Identify which among the five festivals are highly commercialized;
- 3) Identify the effects of commercialization and commoditization to the festivals and hos communities.

Review of Related Literature

Commoditization and Commercialization of Festivals

In the late 1990's to the early 2000's, there was a sudden burst of festivals in the Philippines. A lot of festivals were born and created during this time that tried to feature a product, a ritual, a tradition, a place, or the history of a group of people, a town/locality in the Philippines and thus this also drags the problem of commercialization and commodification. In the creation of festivals that showcase a ritual, a tradition, a place, and event, or the history of a group of people or the community there will always be a danger that the festival might commodify or commercialize that ritual, tradition, event, or the place and it may have adverse effects on the people or the community that holds the festival and it also leads to negative consequences (Cole, 2007). According to Quinn (2006) and Richards (2007), “festival tourism” is an important element in “event tourism”, so much so that the term “festivalization” has been coined to suggest an over-commodification of festivals exploited by tourism and place marketers. According to Beasley (2014), the commercialization of the Atlanta Pride Festival has affected the atmosphere and experience of the festival. Commercialization has good and bad effects on the participants as it simultaneously causes participants to feel validated and proud. But at the same time, they felt oppressed as they are taken advantage of by being marketed by the sponsors of the pride festival. Commercialization may also lead to creating a ritual or a tradition for the sake of creating a festival for public consumption (Bankston III & Henry, 2000).

Over the past four decades in the Philippines, tourism development has been the subject of various academic research activities but most of the studies and publications related with tourism development attempted to define its characteristics, assess its economic impact, but there are few that evaluated its contribution/role to national, local, and community development (Antohilao, 2004). Furthermore, Antohilao (2004) discussed that among these studies, a special

concern has been given to the adverse impact of using culture and traditions as tourist attractions, especially in developing countries where local cultures are generally conceived as 'vulnerable'. Particularly, the use of traditional rituals and local celebrations as tourism spectacles has created serious resistance from those who think that they are legitimate cultural expressions that should not be "prostituted" as a "commoditized" experience according to Hornendo (1998) as cited by Antohilao (2004). Pieper (1965) believed only religious rituals and celebrations could be called festivals and numerous forms and themes of festival are possible, and the term festival is often misapplied and commercialized. Festivals also create negative impacts such as commodification and commercialization, which may lead to the bastardization of culture, including loss of indigenous authenticity and exploitation of local resources (Whitford, 2008). However, in the study of Frew & Ali-Knight (2010), festivals have maintained their original philosophy even when the festival organizers of their study favored some artists to be featured in some of the festival events.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

This study endeavored to identify; 1) the reasons why the festivals were conceptualized and how they were implemented, 2) determined which among the festivals were commercialized/commoditized, and 3) aimed to determine the effects of commercialization/commodification on the communities that held them both positive and negative.

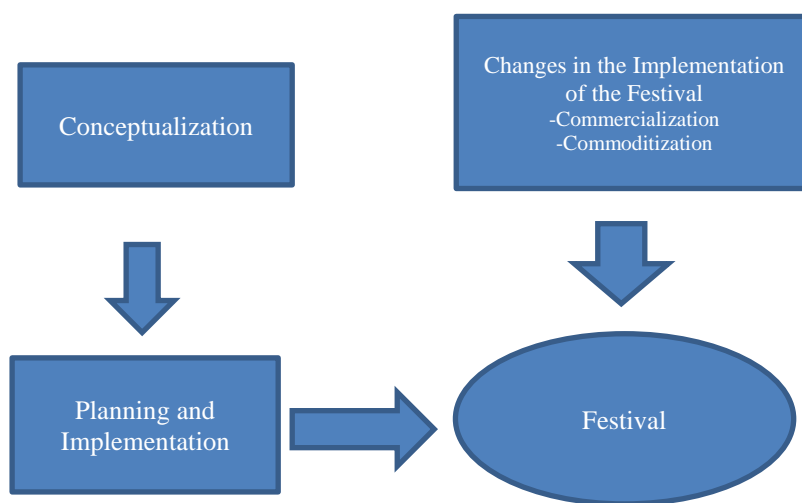


Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework of the Study*

Methodology

Research Design

To have comprehensive view of the selected festivals in the CALABARZON, the researcher employed a phenomenological approach in doing this study. According to Creswell (2007), phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. Phenomenologists focus on describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon (e.g., grief is universally experienced). The basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence (a "grasp of the very nature of the thing," van Manen, 1990, p. 177). To this end, qualitative researchers identify a phenomenon (an "object" of human experience; van Manen, 1990, p. 163). This human experience may be

phenomena such as insomnia, being left out, anger, grief, or undergoing coronary artery bypass surgery (Moustakas, 1994). The inquirer then collects data from persons who have experienced the phenomenon and develops a composite description of the essence of the experience for all the individuals. This description consists of "what" they experienced and "how" they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994).

This study particularly used Moustakas's (1994) transcendental or psychological phenomenology which is focused less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on a description of the experiences of the participants. In addition, Moustakas focuses on one of Husserl's concepts, epoch (or bracketing), in which investigators set aside their experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination. Hence, "transcendental" means "in which everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). Moustakas admits that this state is seldom perfectly achieved. However, according to Creswell (2007), he sees researchers who embrace this idea when they begin a project by describing their own experiences with the phenomenon and bracketing out their views before proceeding with the experiences of others. Besides bracketing, empirical, transcendental phenomenology draws on the Duquesne Studies in Phenomenological Psychology (e.g., Giorgi, 1985) and the data analysis procedures of Van Kaam (1966) and Colaizzi (1978). The procedures, illustrated by Moustakas (1994), consist of identifying a phenomenon to study, bracketing out one's experiences, and collecting data from several persons who have experienced the phenomenon. The researcher then analyzes the data by reducing the information to significant statements or quotes and combines the statements into themes. Following that, the researcher develops a textural description of the experiences of the persons (what participants experienced), a structural description of their experiences (how they experienced it in terms of the conditions, situations, or context), and a combination of the textural and structural descriptions to convey an overall essence of the experience.

The festivals that were studied in this research are the festivals that have been observed and celebrated for more than 10 years and/or sponsored or recognized or initiated by the provincial governments from each province in CALABARZON. Originally, there was supposed to be one festival from each of the provinces namely, Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon. These festivals are the: (1) Pahimis Festival of Cavite, (2) Anilag Festival of Laguna, (3) Parada ng Lechon/Lechon Festival of Batangas, (4) Higantes Festival of Rizal, and (5) Pahiyas Festival of Quezon. These festivals have been celebrated for more than 10 years and each offers a different angle. However, due to the current pandemic and non-cooperation of the tourism office/officer of Amadeo, Cavite, it was replaced by the Coco Festival of San Pablo City, Laguna. The place where the festival is situated has been recognized as a city since 1940, and the festival has been celebrated since 1996. Thus, it has been observed for more than 20 years, that is why the researcher deems that it fits as a substitute for the Pahimis Festival of Cavite.

Locale of Study

The locale of the study is Region IV-A, otherwise known as CALABARZON, which stands for Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, and Quezon. CALABARZON has five provinces, 123 municipalities, and 19 cities (1 of which is a highly urbanized city administered independently from any province). The total number of barangays in the region is 4,018. Originally, there will be one festival per province, namely: (1) Pahimis Festival of Cavite, (2) Anilag Festival of Laguna, (3) Parada ng Lechon/Lechon Festival of Batangas, (4) Higantes Festival of Rizal, and (5) Pahiyas Festival of Quezon. However, due to the current Covid-19 pandemic and non-cooperation of the tourism office of Amadeo, Cavite it was replaced by the

Coco Festival of San Pablo City, Laguna. Data gathering was conducted from July to October 2021.



Figure 2. Map of CALABARZON (taken from

<https://calabarzon.denr.gov.ph/index.php/about-us/regional-profile>)

Selection of Research Participants

The respondents of this study per festival are the (1) organizers and (2) participants. The organizers are either the officers/personnel and/or the head of the tourism office, or the members of the organizing committee of the festivals. The participants, who may be from the business sector or businessmen and/or local people who participated in the festival more than once, either by watching any of the events of the festival or being participant of the events/presentation/program of certain events of the festival. Furthermore, the respondents were identified by using the snowball sampling which started from the head of the tourism offices or its equivalent until saturation was reached. The tourism head/officers were asked to give two more respondents to be interviewed and those two respondents were asked again to give to more respondents each until saturation was reached.

Data Gathering

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all mass gatherings were prohibited, thus, all the festivals cannot celebrate it with their usual extravagance. Therefore, this research was limited to studying the festivals based on the experiences of the people who have been part and have witnessed the festivals for at least three times from July up to November 2021. The original intention of this study was to gather all the data during the actual celebration of the identified festivals and would include a focus group discussion. Again, because of the pandemic and prohibition of mass gatherings, all the data were gathered in the period in five months via personal interview, phone calls and video call. The researcher used key informant interview (KII) and focus group discussion (FGD) through personal interviews and calls (fb messenger and zoom) to determine the reasons behind the formation and implementation of the festival. Furthermore, through the KII and FGD, the researcher was able to identify whether the chosen festivals the perceived problems (effects of commercialization/commodification) encountered in holding the festival were also identified. The use of open-ended questions allowed probing-questions and semi-structured questions; and these questions are thematic and based on the

objectives of the study. Discussed below are the specific details on the how data were gathered from each of the five festivals.

Data Analysis

Since this is a qualitative social science study that dealt with a large amount of data, the researcher used NVIVO (License key: NVP12-LZ000-7702-770Q0) to identify themes and clustering of data. In addition, the researcher used the analysis designed by Moustakas (1994) as discussed by Creswell (2007). The researcher described the personal experiences of the informants with the festivals under study; the researcher developed a list of significant statements; the researcher took the significant statements and then grouped them into larger units of information (meaning units/themes). Lastly, the researcher wrote a description of “what” the participants experienced with these festivals (textural description).

In addition, the researcher also compared all the festivals. The reason for this is that the researcher believed it was important to compare these festivals to deduce and fully understand the process of planning and implementation of the festivals.

Results and Discussion

The Anilag Festival

The Authentic Anilag Festival

The original intention of the Anilag Festival as to why it was conceptualized is to feature the agricultural products of Laguna during the term of Gov. Joey Lina (1992-2001). According to the tourism officer of Laguna:

“The Anilag was conceptualized by Joey Lina (Former governor of Laguna) to feature the agricultural products of Laguna”-Male, 55 yo

“Anilag Festival is short for Ani ng Laguna (harvests of Laguna), which features the agricultural products of Laguna.”- Male, 55 yo

Changes in the Anilag Festival

It has evolved into a festival that promotes the products, history, culture, and the natural wonders of all the towns of Laguna. One clear commercialization effect is that every town was required to feature a product that is uniquely theirs, and in the case of Sta. Cruz, Laguna, the respondents mentioned that most people think that the “Kesong Puti” is a product that is uniquely theirs, however, it is not. It is a product of Lumban, Laguna but because of the festival, people tend to assume that the product is a product of Sta. Cruz, Laguna. On another side, if a town does not have a product that is uniquely from their town, they have nothing to show in their booth just like for example the case of Rizal, Laguna as the respondents mentioned:

“Like in Sta. Cruz, Laguna, white cheese is really a product of Lumban, Laguna but because there are a lot of sellers here (Sta. Cruz), it seems like it is better known in Sta. Cruz, but it is not really a product of Sta. Cruz, Laguna. Eventually, the festival grew and did not only feature agricultural products, but they made it an event for the whole province.”-**Male, 24 yo**

To ensure the success of the festival, the organizers have about 30 programs under that festival that tap participation of the different sectors in Laguna. One of the reasons for this is to secure sponsorship from the different businesses (local or national), as these businesses will

see that the festival is one good event to market their products to the tourists or locals. According to the tourism officer:

“Sometimes there are 30 programs. We have events for LGBT, there are also for senior citizens, and if I am not mistaken it is called Beautiful Grandma and there is also a beauty pageant for the LGBT as well.”-Male, 55 yo

“We convince (businessmen) them with the potential of the festival for their business and convince them to invest in the festival, then sometimes they help by inviting investors.”- Male, 55 yo

One of the unique characteristics of the Anilag Festival is that for a time, the festival’s name was changed into the La Laguna Festival during the administration of Gov. E.R. Ejercito. Its aims as to why it was formed was also different, it was more focused on the Laguna Lake, which is the largest lake in the country. The date of the celebration was also changed. When Gov. ER was replaced by Gov. Ramil Hernandez it was changed back to the Anilag Festival. According to the tourism officer:

“For a time, it was named La Laguna in connection with ER”- Male, 55 yo

Table 1. *Thematic analysis of the KII and FGD on the authentic aspects and change related to commercialization and commoditization of the Anilag Festival.*

Question	Direct Quotations/ Nvivo	Theme
What is the Anilag Festival	Anilag, short for Ani ng Laguna (harvest of Laguna), features the agricultural products of Laguna.	Aim of the festival/Authentic
	White Cheese (kesong puti) is a product of Lumban Laguna, but because of the festival, people think that it is a product of Sta Cruz, Laguna	Change in the festival that can be attributed to commercialization
	Other aspects were added to the festival such as promotion of heritage sites in the different towns of Laguna, the different services, and natural wonders.	Change in the festival that can be considered a political impact
	For a time, it was named La laguna in connection with ER.	Change in the festival that can be attributed to commercialization
How many programs?	It is also a venue to showcase the talents of the people of Laguna.	Change in the festival that can be attributed to commercialization
	The festival was used to address one problem of the province (knife fish outbreak in the Laguna Lake) training and workshops were done to teach people how to turn the fish into burger patties, tocinos, kikiams, and fishballs	Change in the festivals that can be attributed to commoditization
	Around 30, there are programs for the LGBT, senior citizens, children, health and fitness enthusiast, young, middle aged.	

Commoditization of the Anilag Festival

A lot has changed since the first Anilag Festival was implemented. These changes were necessary to ensure the success of the festival. The organizers of the festival have adopted some of the other festivals’ programs and strategies. Aside from the booths that feature the unique products of each of the towns of Laguna, it also features its natural wonders and history. The

organizers of the festival have many programs/events that are common with most of the festivals in Region IV-A (Table 1). These events are street dance competitions, parade, beauty pageants for men and women, beauty pageants for the LGBTQ members, fun run, and programs for the senior citizens such as ballroom dancing, singing competitions, allowing of food stalls at night that serves alcoholic beverages while live bands are performing. These events are generic with the other festivals. However, even if some of the events are generic, the festival has been able to maintain what was the original aim of the festival, to feature its agricultural products. As mentioned by the tourism officer above.

The Lechon Festival

The Authentic Lechon Festival

Originally, the parade of roasted pigs (lechon) is a practice done by the people who resided on the west side of the town of Balayan, who are rich. The pigs are paraded in the town plaza and anyone who wishes to take a piece of the lechon may do so. It was done to celebrate significant family events such as when someone in the family finished his/her study, someone passed a licensure examination, someone got married, or to simply give thanks for the blessings that they received for the year. It was later adopted by those who resided on the eastern part of the town, then it was later incorporated in the feast of Saint John the Baptist as early as the 1900s. However, the festival, as it is known today, actually started in 1959, when the brotherhood of San Juan Bautista (Hermandad) was formed. By this time, it included many programs. Most people think it is the official feast of the town of Balayan but it is actually not, their official feast is the feast of Immaculate Conception. The festival is still initiated and controlled by the brotherhood of San Juan Bautista up to the present. However, it is heavily supported by the local government of Balayan. The LGU is part of the planning and implementation; however, the final decision is up to the brotherhood and the person that they call the Hermanad. According to the tourism officer of Balayan (**Female, 28 yo**):

“The western part of Balayan is full of prominent families, rich people, and ancestral houses. When they have graduates or someone in the family has a big achievement, they parade roasted pigs (lechon) in the plaza. It was later adopted by the families in the eastern part of the town, so when someone graduates in the family, or someone has a big achievement they will also parade roasted pigs.”

“It was only in 1959 that the brotherhood was formed for San Juan Bautista (Hermandad). It was only then that programs were added. As to who conceptualized it, I do not know the specific person, but for sure the elderly in the western part of the town until it became a tradition. It used to be only in the western part of the town, meaning Barangays One, Two, and Four, until it became LGU wide. People think that this is the official town feast of Balayan, actually it is not. It just overshadows the official town fiesta.”

“Until now it is not implemented and controlled by the LGU, the hermandad is still in full control of the festival.”

Changes in the Lechon Festival

A significant change in the festival is the way the lechons are being paraded. During the early years of the festival, the lechons were carried by the people who are part of the family/group/business who are participating in the parade and people who are watching may freely take a piece of the lechon. Now, the lechons are on vehicles while being paraded. As observed by one of the respondents, it is not as happy as before. They feel that there is somewhat a disconnect with the parade and those who are watching it. According to the tourism officer:

“Just like before the roasted pigs were just carried by the family/group/organizations and anyone who is watching the parade may take/grab a piece of the lechon. Now, the roasted pigs are on top of vehicles and people who are watching the parade cannot go near them anymore. Although it is still fun, but it is not as fun as before. There is a disconnect from those who are parading the pigs and those who are watching the parade. One thing I noticed is that people aren't as wet as before, which is an indicator of how fun the feast is. Another thing I noticed is that the participants of the festival do not finish the route of the parade. When the parade goes by their club house or near their area, they tend to dislodge themselves from the parade. In the end, those who started the parade will not be as many as those who finished the parade. That is my target, I want to increase the number of participants again just like before. And I want to be able to keep them in the parade from start to finish.)-**Female, 28 yo**

Some of the lechons(roasted pigs) that are being paraded now in the festival are coming from big companies that are also invited by the organizers in exchange for sponsorships. You will see in the town plaza advisements of the products of these big companies. It sometimes overshadows the locals who are also participating in the parade. According to the participant and business owner:

“The organizers usually approach companies/institutions to participate in the main event which is the parade of lechon. The parade serves as a medium to advertise the companies' services and or products by participating and donating funds to finance the events.” - Male, 53 yo

“They offered advertisement for our business by placing our logo in their shirts, tarpaulins and announcement in their programs held at the plaza.”-Female, 49 yo

Commoditization of the Lechon Festival

What has been unique about the Lechon Festival is that its control is still with the private group that has started it ever since. However, it has also implemented programs to ensure the participation of most of the people of Balayan which develops in the community a sense of belonging and ownership of the festival. Since the festival has events for almost all the members of the community, it contributes to the success of the Lechon Festival every year. According to the tourism officer, the festival has more than 40 programs/events under it. The main attraction of course is the parade of the “lechons”. Some of the programs that are generic with other festivals are dance competitions, Ms. Gay, beauty pageant for men and women, ballroom dancing for the senior citizens, got talent, fun run, fun ride, battle of the bands, booths that sell different products at day and booths that serve alcoholic beverages at night while live bands are performing. According to the tourism officer:

“As I can remember, around 40.”-Female, 28

“There are dance contests, Ms. Gay, Mutya ng Balayan, there is even a ballroom dancing, there is got talent like the usual when there is a fiesta, those are fun runs before the fiesta, fun rides.”- Female, 28

The Higantes Festival

The Authentic Higantes Festival

Originally, the Higantes Festival was celebrated in conjunction with the feast of St. Clemens and it was consisted of only three “Higantes” (A family). One story of its origin is that it was being done as a mockery of the hacienda owners of Angono. Another story is actually it is done to mock the caretaker of the haciendas. Lastly, another story on why there

are giants being paraded was to uplift the morale of the people of Angono, which was devastated after World War 2. According to the son of the considered father of the Higantes Festival and the tourism officer, respectively:

Table 2. *Thematic analysis of the KII and FGD on the authentic aspects and changes related to commercialization and commoditization of the Lechon Festival*

Question	Direct Quotations/ Nvivo	Theme
What is the Lechon Festival?	<p>To give thanks and to share the blessings of the families in the western side of the town received by parading roasted pigs for anyone to take a piece.</p> <p>In 1959, the Hermandad (brotherhood for San Juan Bautista) was formed, and the festival as we know it today, was implemented.</p> <p>Up to now, the programs and total implementation of the events under the festival is with the Hermandad, the LGU is just there to support them in anyway.</p> <p>The organizers usually approach companies/institutions to participate in the main event which is the parade of lechon. The parade is a medium to advertise companies' services and or products by participating, and donating funds to finance the events.</p>	Aim of the festival/ Authentic
How many programs?	<p>Now the roasted pigs are on top of vehicles and those who are watching the parade cannot take a piece anymore. The pigs are solely for the participants of the parade.</p> <p>Around 40, these include: dance competitions, Ms. Gay, Mutya ng Balayan, ballroom dancing, Balayan got talent, fun runs and rides.</p>	<p>Changes in the festival that can be attributed to commercialization</p> <p>Changes in the festivals that can be attributed to commoditization</p>

“Higantes Festival is from the feast of Angono.”-**Male, 39 yo**
 “There used to be only three giants, a family.”- **Male, 39 yo**

“The story is because this hacienda used to be compared to the owner of the hacienda. But there is another story that after World War 2 the festival was used to make the people happy because after the war the people needed to be happy.”- **Male, 52 yo**

However, it may be argued that the father of the current setup of the Higantes Festival is local artist Perdigon Vocalan. He proposed that instead of being an event under the feast of St. Clemens, it should be celebrated on a separate day and should include more “Higantes”. It was controlled and implemented by the local artists of Angono. It aimed to feature the local artists of all the barangays of Angono, of which they conducted a workshop to teach those who want to participate how to make the giants. According to the son of the founder of the Higantes Festival:

“My father proposed the project to the NCCA, why not multiply the giants and make it a festival. Back then it was celebrated under the feast of San Clemente, so my father said why not make the celebration of the Higantes Festival another day. So, all the barangays had a

workshop on how to make giants, and it was open to anyone who wanted to join, there is a contest.”- **Male, 39 yo**

Changes in the Higantes Festival

The festival is now being implemented and headed by the local government of Angono, Rizal. It now lasts for the whole month of November and is usually consists of 20-30 programs of which the highlight is the parade of the “Higantes”. According to the son of the founder of the festival and the tourism officer, respectively:

“Until the number of Higantes grew and that was when the LGU has acquired the festival.”

“The Higantes Festival lasts for the whole month of November. We start by the end of October, but as early as August we were meeting for the whole activities of the festival. The formal start of the festival is October 31 with a Halloween party, then the rest of November we have events.”- **Male, 39 yo**

“The most I can remember is 20-30 programs.)- **Male, 52 yo**

The local government is also tapping social media influencers, T.V. personalities and stations to cover the festival to ensure its success. However, as a result of these may be seen in a negative way, is the participation in the festival is too much that it causes confusion, and the community of artists are being left out as supposed to the original intension of the festival, which was to feature the local artists of Angono, Rizal. According to the tourism officer and the participants of the festival, respectively:

“We have partners, we have a group of social media influencers, we have TV personalities, even TV stations come to us to cover or make a story or content for our festival, all of them go through the LGU.”-**Female, 28 yo**

“Sometimes there are too many participants that the others who signified they will join the festival will not be part of the official list come the day of the actual festival.”-**Male, 39 yo**

“We are not aware, it looks like they are just the LGU, it was taken away from the community.”- **Male, 39 yo**

“Because for me the purpose of the festival is for every barangay or community to join, what is happening now is the LGU is now making their own Higantes, it looks like they are the stars of the festival.”- **Male, 39 yo**

Commoditization of the Higantes Festival

The control of the festival has been transferred to the LGU of Angono from a private group. It has now around 20-30 programs that are implemented under it that are common with the other festivals in Region IV-A. It has events like Ms. Gay, beauty pageant, street dance competition, singing contest, fun run, dance contest, concerts of local and national bands, booths that sell different products at day and booths at night that serve alcoholic beverages while live bands are performing to delight the crowd. According to the tourism officer:

“The most was 20-30 programs.”-**Male, 52 yo**

“About the participants we take into consideration all sectors of the community. For example, we have a program for the LGBT, for the senior citizens, for the PWDs. So, almost

all sectors we give them the opportunity to highlight and be included in the programs that we will feature during the festival, so almost everyone.”-Male, 52 yo

Table 3. *Thematic analysis of the KII and FGD on the authentic aspects and changes related to commercialization and commoditization of the Higantes Festival*

Question	Direct Quotations/ Nvivo	Theme
What is the Higantes Festival	Done to mock the caretaker/landowner of the haciendas in Angono. To uplift the moral of the people of Angono post World War 2.	Aim of the festival/ Authentic
	It was proposed that the Higantes be multiplied (from just 3) and moved to a different date from the town feast. To feature the local artists of Angono which is the Art Capital of the Philippines	
	It was fully controlled by the group of local artists. Full control is now with the LGU. The date of the festival was also changed.	
	It was taken away from the community. The LGU taps social media influencers, TV personalities are invited, TV stations are asked to cover or create contents about the festival.	
How many programs?	Around 40 programs that last for the whole month of November. This includes dance competitions, singing contests, Ms. gay, Mr and Ms ng Angono, ballroom dancing, Angono got talent, fun runs and rides.	Changes in the festival that can be attributed to commercialization Changes in the festivals that can be attributed to commoditization

The Coco Festival

The Authentic Coco Festival

The first Coco festival was held back in 1996 and was institutionalized by City Resolution No. 96-765. The main purpose of the festival is to highlight the city’s number one agricultural product, the coconuts. San Pablo City became a first-class municipality mainly because of the coconut industry and because of this, to show its importance to the city, it created the Coconut Festival. The main attraction of the festival is the *Mardigra*, a street dance participated by the different schools in San Pablo City and the participants must wear or use props that feature the different uses of the coconuts. According to the tourism officer of San Pablo City:

“We conceptualized to form the Coco Festival in 1996 it had a resolution, Resolution No. 96-765, which recognizes that this will be the festival of the City of San Pablo and reception of the festival was good. We have reached 25 years last year. Unfortunately, because of the pandemic we didn’t have any activity. The highlight of our festival is to give importance to the coconut industry. It’s because of this we became a first-class city, the first to be a first-class city in the province of Laguna.”-Female, 56 yo

The festival was conceptualized and fully controlled by the local government of San Pablo City. However, part of the reason that it is successful is that, it is heavily supported and

well participated by both public and private sectors in San Pablo City. According to the tourism officer:

“This means that the local government is in full control of the Coco Festival unlike in other places Cebu (Sinulog Festival). As far as I know, it is a private group that implements it. The Coco Festival is fully controlled and implemented by the local government of San Pablo City, but it is well participated by the public and private sectors.”- **Female, 56 yo**

Changes in the Coco Festival

Originally, the festival was celebrated for five days in conjunction with the feast of Saint Paul the Hermit. Now, it is extended to eight days. Many events were added and are being implemented under the festival so that the community members will have certain events that they can join into. Furthermore, because the festival has the capacity to attract tourists, the LGU was also able to attract big-time sponsors such as San Miguel Beer Corporation to sponsor the “beer plaza” event. According to the tourism officer:

“Previously it was 5 days then it became 8 days with the number of sponsors that we have San Miguel night sponsored by the San Miguel Company of our beer plaza.”- **Female, 56 yo**

Because every night the street plaza transforms into the beer plaza, drinking is legal, and there are unavoidable instances of fights. During the early years of the festival, bottles were being used as a weapon in the fights, so the organizers prohibited the selling of alcoholic beverages in bottles, and it worked. It worked because no more bottles were being thrown during fights, but there are still instances of fights during the recent festival. According to the tourism officer:

“There are incidents of fighting, because at the festival you can legally drink on the street so it's inevitable that those who drink will suddenly fight. They will suddenly throw a chair, it was like part of the festival with someone fighting, arguing. Due to this, the serving of beverages in bottles was banned, everything will be sold in cans and plastic bottles. Now we have plastic bottles for juices, bottled water, so that is it.”- **Female, 56 yo**

Aside from the coconuts, the city of San Pablo is also famous for its seven lakes, and according to the respondents, because of the festival, a lot has changed in the lakes. It is now more tourist-friendly as there are now cottages in the vicinity of the lake, and food is also now being offered while riding the boats in some of the lakes. According to one of the participants:

“The edge of San Pablo is the 7 lakes, I'm really happy because recently, if I'm not mistaken, the Yambo Lake also had accommodation the type you can do activities, you can take a boat there, you can eat on the raft. Sampaloc Lake is really known for running, the one with street foods, that's it.”-**Male, 26 yo**

Over the years, the handling of the organizers of the festival has improved. The organizers of the festivals added more programs to ensure the maximum participation of the residents of San Pablo which contributes to the overall success of the festival. According to one of the participants:

“The management of the Coco Festival has developed annually. Before there were only a few events but now they have added many contests and then they are promoting a lot, there are advocacies.”-**Female, 27 yo**

Commoditization of the Coco Festival

The Coco Festival is a project of the LGU of San Pablo City to feature its number one product which is the main reason why it became a first-class city. What makes it unique is the street dance that must feature coconut parts. However, it has implemented 20-30 programs that are common with the other festivals such as, beauty pageants for men and women and members of the LGBTQ community, street dance competition, dance competition, singing competition, ballroom dancing for senior citizens, fun run, fun ride, at night the plaza is transformed into the beer plaza with live bands performing left and right. As mentioned above by the tourism officer.

Table 4. *Thematic analysis of the KII and FGD on the authentic aspects and changes related to commercialization and commoditization of the Coco Festival*

Question	Direct Quotations/ Nvivo	Theme
What is the Coco Festival?	Conceptualized in 1996, backed up by a resolution; aimed to highlight the number 1 agricultural product of San Pablo City, the coconut.	Aim of the festival/ Authentic
	Fully controlled and implemented by the local government of San Pablo City.	
	The street dance (Mardigra) is the highlight where the costumes of the contestants (private and public schools) are made up of coconut materials.	Change in the festival that can be attributed to commercialization
	Back then the festival was celebrated in just five days, then it became eight days due to the number of participants and sponsors.	
How many programs?	Bottled drinks were prohibited to be sold during the beer plaza event to reduce the throwing of bottles if in case fights occur.	Change in the festival that can be attributed to commercialization
	Because of the festival, the Yambo Lake now has accommodation and those who will stay overnight can engage in different activities.	Change in the City that can be attributed to commercialization of the festival
	Around 20-30, there are programs for the LGBT, senior citizens, children, health and fitness enthusiast, young, middle aged.	Change in the festivals that can be attributed to
	There is an event for all the sectors of community.	Commoditization

The Pahiyas Festival

The Authentic Pahiyas Festival

In terms of origin, the Pahiyas festival is the oldest among the five festivals covered by this study. It may be arguably the oldest festival in the Philippines. The Pahiyas was already a practice of the natives of Lucban prior to their conversion to Christianity. When they were converted, the Catholic Church integrated the tradition into the feast of San Isidro Labrador without losing its objective, to give thanks for the bountiful harvest of the year. Farmers would bring their harvest to the church to be blessed by the parish priest however, due to the volume of harvest being brought to the church, it was decided that the parish priest will go around the

homes of the farmers to bless their harvest. Thus, the Pahiyas Festival as we know it was born from this decision of the church. The houses of the farmers were designed with colorful kipping. According to the tourism officer (**Female, 45 yo**):

“Celebrated during the feast of San Isidro Labrador, it is thanksgiving to the patron saint of the farmers for the bountiful harvest of the year. It has been believed that even before the conversion of the natives to Christianity (1500) they were already giving thanks for their bountiful harvest. When the natives were converted, the church found a way to integrate the festival into the feast of San Isidro Labrador, still not losing its main objective, which is to give thanks for the bountiful harvest of the year.”

“During the festival, farmers would bring their harvest to the town church, the church will bless them, as time progressed the church can no longer accommodate all the harvest, it has been agreed that instead of bringing them to the church, they will be displayed in the houses of the farmers, thus the priest goes around the town.”

“It is considered the most colorful and most festive festival which showcases the lovely and meticulously adorned houses with colorful kipping or rice wafers (payas) and native materials that will surely delight the tourist and visitors.”

Changes in the Pahiyas Festival Attributed to Commercialization

The festival is now officially controlled by the local government unit of Lucban. However, it is still in partnership with the local parish church. It is now heavily funded and sponsored by local businesses, personalities, and big companies (local and national). The route of the festival changes every year, it depends on the decision of the local government. In turn the houses that will be part of the route must join the festival by designing their houses with kipping. According to the participants:

“The festival has been institutionalized and has been under the supervision of both the local government and the Catholic Church. Aside from the annual budget, it is heavily sponsored by local businesses, personalities, and big companies both local and national.”-**Male, 27 yo**

“It depends on the local government, the route changes but there is like a standard are to be circled, a small part of town here in Lucban as you can see there are sitio's, there are barrios which are far fetch areas so they are never part of the route.”-**Male, 27 yo**

Cash prizes are now also being given to the house with the best design. As much as P220,000.00 is given to the 1st prize winner. Because of the amount of cash prize, some homeowners go to the extent of hiring professional designers to do the designs of their houses. According to the respondents this also leads to the loss of the essence of the festival, which is to give thanks to San Isidro Labrador for the bountiful harvest. And the tradition of the family members and relatives would help the homeowners in the putting up and overall designing of their houses. According to one of the participants:

“The festival has too much sponsorship mainly because to attract and get more and more investments. Because of this, there is too much content that will be included in the festival. The essence of gratitude to San Isidro Labrador is somewhat lost. There are awards and prizes for the best designed house. Prizes sometimes reach PhP220,000.00 in cash. There is 1st, 2nd, 3rd prizes and then there is the best twinkling lights. As a result, some homeowners

resort to hiring professional designers. The practice of decorating the houses with the help of relatives is slowly disappearing because of this.”-**Male, 27 yo**

Since the festival is a sponsor and tourist magnet, it cannot be avoided that politics will also be involved in the festival. Whenever there is a change in leadership (mayor) the tendency is to imprint their names in the festival, as there are cases of comparison from the former mayor to the current mayor. Each mayor would like to make a mark in the festival, which is again, losing the main point of having the festival, which is to give thanks to San Isidro Labrador. Since a lot of programs have been inserted in the festival, people who are also attending it, especially the younger generation, also seem to forget as to why the festival is being celebrated in the first place. According to the participants:

“Originally the concept is to be celebrated religiously but then since it is mixed with other factors like economic and political factors, the religious factor is disregarded in celebrating of the festival because it is mostly to show off. The solemnity of the celebration and gratitude are disappearing.”-**Male, 26 yo**

“In terms of religious side of the celebration, people tend to forget especially the younger generation, why are we making the ornaments for, now it is just to show off, the meaning why we are making the ornaments is disappearing.”-**Male, 27 yo**

Commoditization of the Pahiyas Festival

The control of the festival is now with the LGU of Lucban but still in partnership with the local parish church. It is one of the most famous festivals in the Philippines. To ensure the success of the festival and maximum participation of the locals of Lucban, the organizers have implemented programs that are common with other festivals: beauty contests, parade, singing contests, dance contests, ballroom dancing, fun run, fun ride, and boots day and night that sells different products. At nights, these booths serve beer and live bands perform to delight the people who are in the booths drinking. According to the participants:

“In my observation the celebration of the Pahiyas festival is not just one day as I mentioned earlier. It is a week-long celebration. Aside from the highlight, there is an activity for everybody, young, old, LGBTQ.”-**Male, 27 yo**

“We already have some arches standing here, signs like “I Love Lucban”, where we can have more photo opportunities.”-**Male, 26 yo**

“There is an event for all the sectors of society.”-**Female, 33 yo**

All the festivals offer something different; the Anilag was formed to feature all the agricultural products of Laguna; the Lechon Festival was a practice to give thanks for the blessings that the people of the western part of the town of Bayalan, Batangas received for the year; the Higanes Festival was created to feature the local artists of Angono, Rizal, being the art capital of the Philippines; the Coco Festival was created to showcase the coconut industry, the number one product of San Pablo City, Laguna, the main reason why they became a class one city, the first in Laguna; and for the Pahiyas Festival, to give thanks for the bountiful harvest for the year. This confirms the finding of Getz (1989) that festivals offer tourists glimpses of local uniqueness and diverse cultural experiences.

However, according to Hornendo (1998) as cited by Antohilao (2004), the use of traditional rituals and local celebrations as tourism spectacles has created negative effects such

commercialization and commoditization which may lead to a loss of the main reason as to why the festival is being celebrated in the first place. Among all the festivals in this study, the Pahiyas Festival and the Higantes Festival can be considered as highly commercialized, as they are the only two festivals that changed or the control/decision making was transferred from the church (Pahiyas Festival) and the private group of artists (Higantes Festival) to the local government. According to Antohilao (2004), at one point there was a struggle for control of the Pahiyas Festival between the church and the local government as part of the reason is who will gain control of the money earned from the sponsors of the festival. It was also mentioned that the house owners that will be part of the route of the Pahiyas are hiring professional designers so that they will win the big cash prize involved in the competition, somewhat, this partly loses the original tradition that the houses will be designed and decorated by the relatives and close friends of the house owner.

Table 5. *Thematic analysis of the KII and FGD on the authentic aspects and changes related to commercialization and commoditization of the Pahiyas Festival.*

Question	Direct Quotations/ Nvivo	Themes
What is the Pahiyas Festival?	Farmers would bring their harvest to the town church; the priest will bless them; as time progressed the church can no longer accommodate all the harvests. It has been agreed that instead of bringing them to the church, they will be displayed in the houses of the farmers, thus the priest goes around the town.	Aim of the festival/ Authentic
	The route of the festival depends on the local government but there is like standard group to be circled out. It is a small part of town. These are changes in the festival that can be attributed to its commercialization.	
	Prizes sometimes reach P220,000.00 in cash; there are 1 st , 2 nd , and 3 rd prizes. As a result, some homeowners resort to hiring professional designers. The practice of decorating the houses with the help of relatives is sometimes lost because of this.	Change in the festival that can be attributed to commercialization
	Some families resort to overspending in celebrating the festival/feast Too much sponsorship, and this sponsor overshadows the content of the festival. Some locals specially the youth tend to forget/ do not know why the festival is being celebrated.	
How many programs?	Politics sometimes has an impact on how the festival will be celebrated.	Change in the festival that can be attributed to politics
	Aside from the Pahiyas itself there are programs for the LGBT, senior citizens, children, health and fitness enthusiast, young, middle aged. There is an event for all the sectors of community.	Change in the festivals that can be attributed to Commoditization
What is the Pahiyas Festival?	It is celebrated during the feast to San Isidro Labrador; it is a thanksgiving to the patron saint of the farmers for the bountiful harvest of the year. It is considered the most colorful and most festive festival which showcases the lovely and meticulously adorned houses with colorful kiping or rice wafers (payas) and native materials.	Aim of the festival/ Authentic

For the Higantes Festival, according to the local artists, it feels that the festival was taken away from the community of local artists when the local government took over the

control of the festival. It also now features artists who are not from Angono and as a result of this, the artists feel sometimes that they are excluded and that the festival has now been politicized, something that can be considered negative. This confirms the conclusion of Hall (2005) as cited by Getz (2010) that the governments also play an important role at the planning level, by regulating and coordinating the efforts with the local actors.

Furthermore, one of the effects of commercialization of the festivals is that, back then, each festival was just a day of celebration, now all the festivals have evolved into at least a week-long celebration (Coconut Festival) to a month-long Celebration (Pahiyas, Higanes, Lechon, Anilag Festivals). Common to all the celebration of these festivals are night booths that sell food and alcoholic beverages. There are sentiments that those who are attending and drinking in the night booths tend to forget the reason why the festivals are being celebrated. Although this is actually good for the businessmen and for everyone who is part of the festival as it provides more tourists for the businesses to gain a customer. This also confirms the finding that commercialization may also lead to creating events or programs under a festival for additional public consumption (Bankston III and Henry, 2000). The more events/programs added, the more events for the people and tourists to watch or join into. However, some of the attendees of the festivals (Coco Festival, Pahiyas Festival) seem to forget the reasons why the festivals are celebrated in the first place. These are changes in the festival that could not be disregarded and these are attributed to commercialization of the festivals. This goes against the study of Frew and Ali-Knight (2010) that the festival of their study was able to maintain its original philosophy despite of commercialization.

On commoditization, although the festivals have different reasons as to why they are being celebrated, they all have something in common, which were added to ensure the success of the festivals of this study. All the festivals added programs that will ensure the participation of the local people, so that they will find an event in the festival that they will have a chance to be part of the festival. This confirms the finding of Gursoy et al. (2004) that the success of festivals and special events is more dependent upon the enthusiasm of the local community and event organizers than upon unique natural or built attractions. Each festival has a program for the members of the LGBTQ community such as pageants, fashion shows that feature the products of the places that hold them, ballroom dancing for the senior citizens, fun run and fun rides for the health enthusiasts, singing and dance contests for all ages, food bazaars, booths at night that sell alcoholic beverages that is coupled by a local showband performing. All these events were added to the main event of each festival that contribute to the maximum participation of the residents to the festival in total, which in turn, these minor events lead to a sense of ownership, an attachment, a sense of belonging of residents to the festival. In plain sight, these might be a negligible factor, but it is a major determinant for the success of each festival. This further supports the conclusion of Gursoy (2004) the success of festivals and events depends on the enthusiasm of the local community.

Summary and Conclusions

This study aimed to (1) determine the perceived changes as a result of commercialization and commoditization of the festivals; (2) Identify which among the five festivals are highly commercialized; (3) Identify the effects of commercialization and commoditization to the festivals and host communities.

Changes were necessary and unavoidable in the implementation of the festivals; and that these changes led to the longevity and success of the festivals under study. The effects of

commercialization and commoditization of the festivals is like double-edged sword. There are good effects as well as bad effects to the festivals and the host communities.

Among the five festivals, the Pahiyas and Higantes festivals are the festivals that can really be identified as highly commercialized, as the control of the festivals were taken by the local governments respectively and there were changes done in the festivals that affected but did not really change the aims of the festivals. However, because of commercialization, all five festivals have evolved to a week-long to a month-long celebration with so many added events aside from the main attractions of each festival.

Commercialization and commoditization has a good side and a bad side. The good side is because of commercialization, the festivals have evolved into more than just a one-day event. They are now a week-long to a month-long event and because of this, a lot of programs are implemented that target different sectors in the community, which what makes the festivals successful and sustainable. The negative side of it is because of the commercialization of festivals, in the case of the Higantes Festival, the participants of the main events which is the parade of the Giant Papier Mache now involves non-local artists. For the Pahiyas Festival, some of the house owners resort to hiring designers to have a bigger chance of winning the big prize money for the best decorated house, which partly loses the tradition that houses will be designed by the house owners with the help of their relatives and close friends from the town.

All the festivals were able to maintain the main reasons why they are being celebrated:

The aim of the Anilag festival is to feature the agricultural products of Laguna which is celebrated in conjunction with the foundation of the province. It is now dubbed as the “mother of all festivals” as it has a little of something of all the festivals of Laguna.

The Lechon Festival is a way to give thanks for the blessings that the people from the western part of the town received and a way share their blessings to the lesser fortunate people of the town it is celebrated with the feast of Saint John the Baptist.

The Higantes Festival’s aim is to feature the local artist of the “Art Capital of the Philippines”, Angono, Rizal.

The Coconut Festival of San Pablo City, Laguna is to feature the primary product of the city, the coconuts. It is because of the coconuts that the city became a first-class component city. It is celebrated together with the town fiesta.

The oldest of all the festivals in this study is the Pahiyas Festival, with the origin pre-dating the Spanish colonial period, it was a practice to give thanks to the bountiful harvest, it was integrated in the town fiesta during the colonial period.`

Recommendations

Considering the findings of this study, the following recommendations are given:

For the Festival Organizers

Commercialization and commoditization are often associated with negative implications however, these concepts may be used and utilized to ensure the success and longevity of festivals to maximize the participation of the communities involved.

For Other Researchers

Conduct of another study during the actual celebrations of the festivals is highly recommended to fully appreciate/grasp the experiences of the people in the celebration of the festivals.

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