



CULTURAL FESTIVALS AS CATALYSTS FOR COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Cultural festivals serve as significant platforms for preserving local traditions, strengthening community identity, and promoting tourism development. This study assessed the effectiveness of cultural festivals as catalysts for community-based tourism development in the Province of Leyte, Eastern Visayas, Philippines. Specifically, it determined the respondents' profile, assessed the level of effectiveness of cultural festivals in terms of community participation, economic impact, cultural preservation and identity, and social and environmental sustainability, identified challenges encountered during festival implementation, and developed a proposed community-based tourism development model.

The study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. Data were gathered from eighty (80) respondents composed of forty (40) tourism officers and forty (40) event organizers from eight municipalities in the Second District of Leyte. A researcher-made survey questionnaire was used as the main instrument. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, ranking, and Chi-square test of independence.

Results revealed that cultural festivals were highly effective in promoting community participation, generating economic opportunities, preserving cultural heritage and identity, and supporting social and environmental sustainability. The findings showed that collaboration among community groups contributed significantly to festival success. However, challenges such as limited funding, waste management concerns, poor weather conditions, insufficient promotion, traffic congestion, and coordination issues were identified. Significant relationships were also observed between selected respondent characteristics and perceived festival effectiveness.

The study concluded that cultural festivals contribute substantially to sustainable community-based tourism by empowering local stakeholders, promoting cultural preservation, and supporting economic development. A community-based tourism development model is recommended to strengthen partnerships, improve festival management, and ensure long-term sustainability.

Keywords:

Cultural festivals; community-based tourism; tourism development; community participation; cultural preservation.

1. Introduction

Cultural festivals have become important mechanisms for tourism development because they provide opportunities to showcase local heritage, traditions, and community identity. Beyond entertainment, festivals create spaces where communities preserve cultural practices, strengthen social relationships, and generate economic opportunities through tourism-related activities.

In many communities, cultural festivals contribute to local development by attracting visitors, promoting local products, creating livelihood opportunities, and encouraging cooperation among residents and stakeholders. Community-based tourism emphasizes the active participation of local people in planning and managing tourism activities to ensure that benefits are distributed within the community.

The Province of Leyte in Eastern Visayas is recognized for its diverse cultural festivals that reflect local history, agricultural traditions, religious practices, and community values. Festivals such as Magara Festival, Sanggutan Festival, Lantawan Festival, Tamyok Festival, Bathan Festival, Tambalan Festival, Lingganay Festival, and Pamagpagan Festival represent the cultural richness of the municipalities in the Second District of Leyte.

This study aimed to assess cultural festivals as catalysts for community-based tourism development. Specifically, it determined the profile of respondents, evaluated festival effectiveness in terms of community participation, economic impact, cultural preservation and identity, and social and environmental sustainability, identified problems encountered during festival celebrations, and developed a community-based tourism development model.

The findings provide insights for tourism planners, local government units, festival organizers, cultural organizations, and communities in enhancing festival management practices and promoting sustainable tourism development.

2. Materials and Methods

Research Design

The study utilized a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. It examined the perceived effectiveness of cultural festivals as catalysts for community-based tourism development and determined relationships between respondent characteristics and festival effectiveness.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in the Second District of Leyte, Eastern Visayas, Philippines. The research covered eight municipalities: Carigara, Barugo, Capoocan, Tunga, San Miguel, Jaro, Alangalang, and Pastrana. These municipalities were selected because of their active cultural festival celebrations.

Respondents

The respondents consisted of eighty (80) participants selected through purposive sampling. Forty (40) were tourism officers and forty (40) were event organizers directly involved in

festival planning, implementation, and promotion. Each municipality was represented by ten respondents.

Research Instrument

A researcher-made survey questionnaire was used. The instrument consisted of three parts: respondent profile, assessment of festival effectiveness, and problems encountered during festival celebrations. The effectiveness indicators covered community participation, economic impact, cultural preservation and identity, and social and environmental sustainability. A four-point rating scale was utilized. Pilot testing was conducted to ensure reliability and consistency of the instrument.

Data Gathering and Analysis

Permission was secured from concerned local government authorities before data collection. Ethical principles including informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and protection of respondents were observed.

Frequency and percentage were used to describe respondent profiles. Weighted mean and ranking were used to determine festival effectiveness and challenges encountered. Chi-square test was applied to identify significant relationships between respondent profiles and perceived effectiveness.

3. Results and Discussion

The respondents were mostly young adults, with the largest group belonging to the 25–34 age bracket (47.50%). Female respondents comprised the majority (63.75%), while most respondents were single (70.00%) and bachelor's degree graduates (57.50%). Nearly all respondents were Filipino stakeholders directly involved in cultural festival activities.

The main reasons for participating in cultural festivals were cultural appreciation and learning and support for community and heritage, demonstrating that festivals serve as important avenues for cultural engagement and preservation.

The findings revealed that cultural festivals were highly effective in terms of community participation, obtaining an overall mean of 3.63. Community collaboration received the highest rating, indicating that cooperation among community groups strongly contributed to festival sustainability.

In terms of economic impact, cultural festivals contributed to increased livelihood opportunities, local business activities, and tourism-related income generation. The results indicate that festivals serve as economic instruments that benefit community members and local enterprises.

Cultural festivals were also found to be highly effective in preserving cultural identity. Through performances, traditions, local products, and cultural presentations, festivals helped strengthen community pride and heritage awareness.

Regarding social and environmental sustainability, festivals promoted cooperation, community responsibility, and awareness of sustainable practices. However, respondents identified challenges including limited funding, waste management concerns, unfavorable weather conditions, lack of promotion, traffic congestion, and coordination difficulties.

The study further revealed significant relationships between selected respondent characteristics and perceived festival effectiveness, suggesting that stakeholder perspectives influence how cultural festivals contribute to tourism development.

4. Conclusion

Cultural festivals in Leyte function as effective catalysts for community-based tourism development. They promote active community participation, support local economic growth, strengthen cultural preservation, and encourage social and environmental sustainability.

The success of cultural festivals depends on strong collaboration among local government units, tourism stakeholders, event organizers, and community members. Although challenges exist, these can be addressed through improved planning, adequate funding, stronger partnerships, and sustainable tourism strategies.

The proposed community-based tourism development model provides a framework for maximizing the tourism potential of cultural festivals while ensuring that local communities remain active beneficiaries and custodians of their cultural heritage.

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