

Beyond The Tangible, The Vigan City's Binatbatan Festival Of The Arts: A Basis For A Policy Brief

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Abstract

Festival conveys encouraging influence in drawing tourists, improving image of destination and supporting local communities. This study scanned "Binatbatan" festival of Vigan City from the point of view of organizers and visitors. Through a case study, the qualitative method was employed to understand the Festival underscoring, its origin, celebration schemes and the challenges on the people and the place, magnifying management strategies for ordinance implementation on various activity related to the culture and tradition of the locality. A Focus Group Discussions and interviews of respondents and visitors conducted were interpreted. The study realized that Festivals evolve through informal sociability; planning and coordination, as well as control, were vital, creating avenues for cultural and artistic appreciation and the formation of social capital, that the festivals shares four common success factors of ambiance, socialization, emotion and reflection; and that planning, budgeting, coordination, promotion as well as control were vital to the celebrations and that festivals created avenues for job generation, cultural and artistic appreciation and formation of social capital. Based on the findings, policy brief that act on the challenges met by the organizers in managing the festivals, were proposed.

Keywords: Festival, Case Study, Event's Challenges Sustainability, Policy Brief.

1. Introduction

Festivals are organized series of events, annual celebrations, or anniversaries where concerts, plays, exhibitions and cultural

showcases have been prepared for expectant to see. As local festivals are public events which offer a blend of entertainment, commerce, socialization, togetherness, education, celebrating a variety of themes (Choo et al., 2022), these activities are the soul of cultural and social life. In every nation, the celebrations are significant to its geography and history. Each celebration has its account and intentions and has its attention-grabbing story (Kushwaha, 2019). For many festivals, people decorate their homes, like in India, where the locals put up attractive lamps in their homes for the Festival of Diwali. People are assumed to gaze at the lamps while thinking about their loved ones and other human beings in the World. It is the most widely known Festival for the Hindu people in India and other parts of the World. The Philippines is not new to festivals; in fact, there are celebrations from January to December in different localities. (Chan R.R.T., 2020) emphasize that there are countless festival celebrations all across the world, with the Philippines ranking first. In the country, it is common for a province, municipality, or barangay to hold a festival. Here, we celebrate thousands of festivals yearly in honor of the patron saints, mythologies, flora and faunas, and the history of one's place. Tourists and locals gather and flock from one place to another to witness the spirited, lively, and colorful parades, street dancing, different local events, cultural shows, and the particular delicacies and foods the community offers. Nuñez (2019) cited that the festivals are celebrated in the country from the smallest level of a governmental body (barangay/village) to the national level everywhere.

The "Binatbatan" festival of the Arts, one of the largest cultural gatherings in Region I, is also known as "Viva Vigan" because as the dancers roam the streets, they delightfully shout "Viva Vigan ."During the Festival, the streets were closed to vehicles, and what can be noticed were floods of vibrant costumes worn by graceful dances to the beat of cheerful music. The management of such Festival contributes to society and provide opportunities for political communication leading to the exchange of ideas for social change (Sharpe, 2008). The realization of the Festival, from planning to the conduct of the actual celebration, takes a huge effort. The event starts from the initial concept, and its execution requires knowledge about the Festival and an understanding the community's interests, diversity, and trends. The need to consult and communicate with stakeholders, area residents, and community leaders about finding the right people to help turn the idea into a reality (www.richmondhill.ca/en/events.aspx). Lartec, et. al, (2015) also cited in her study that festivals emerge as a socially sustaining device through

which humans express their identities, connect with their place and communicate with the outside world. The festival-host managers and event organizers should add highly relevant experiences to the events through continuous innovation that transforms favorable destination images and loyalty among visitors and tourists attending the Festival (Van Niekerk, 2017).

Moreover, Karlsen & Brandstrom (2008) mentioned that festivals have the power to build communities. As it was observed that places increasingly vie for attention in a globalized world, place branding is necessary to help an area build its competitive identity to influence perceived images in relevant markets. Events management needs to consider this in their agenda. Throughout the years, community, cultural and religious festivals have become consistent spectacles of local governments in the Philippines.

Gamueda (2019) further mentioned that cultural tourism is also a way of travelling into a certain destination to gain access to the charm of the local communities' traditions, culture, values, and folklore. The "Binatbatan" festival celebration has taken a major role in history and was participated in by various sectors and individuals from all walks of life in the community. These events have become a segment of the people's existence and have affected the community and value added to the place they call their own (Backman, 2018). While the colorful buntings, garlands, and decorations are symbols of festivals in most countries, the Festival in the observed City manifests more than the radiance and energy but their rich heritage, tradition, arts, culture, products, cuisine, and people. Gonzales, (2017), states that Festivals are like "products", and must be recognized, promoted properly and given importance to attract local and foreign tourists.

The study brought together not only the highlights of the event but also accounted for the semblances of its origin and the diversities in the execution. It scanned beyond the tangibles that included but were not constrained to the groundwork, struggles, and resolve of the local government unit's festival team to make the festival event possible. The significant impact of the Festival on the people and the society were also discerned. The upshots from the data, discussions, and interviews will cause the researcher to prepare a policy brief for recommendation to the Festival. The proposed policies aspire to boost the positive encounter of the festival goers. According to Vygotsky in his study of social interaction, participation in joint activities and internalization of the influences of collective working

provides learners and affect their development intellectually. This is relevant with the learners acquisition of knowledge in the world through culture (Bozkurt, 2019). Petroman, et. al, (2016) further states that this view of cultural tourism like the festival, to some extent, moves in harmony with current issue of globalization and the inevitable process of commodification associated with it.

Literature Review

This study was grounded on the theories and models included, substantiated by the views and beliefs of practitioners. The fusion of these ideas pulled toward the study's framework. It was centered on concepts of social sciences, specifically on culture, tradition, and tourism. Social practices shape everyday life and are familiar to all community members, even if not everybody participates. The activities of the festival events are socially shared, and the people in a community learn from one another through direct experience. The Vigan City's Binatbatan festival became annual practice, where culture was shared with local people who are actors in various activities in the Festival with visitors and tourists. Many traditions, like street dancing, cultural shows, and parade, are re-created and continue to be performed by the people in every celebration. When it comes to policy making, the theory on Policy help strengthen the backbone for a better understanding of the case study. Cerna (2013) mentioned that a policy network is a cluster or complex of organizations connected by resource dependencies and distinguished from other clusters or complexes by breaks in the structure of resource dependencies. According to John (2003), the 'structure of coalitions across complex policy sectors determines policy outputs (long-term relationships between interest groups and executive agencies) evolved into more complex networks between public and private organizations as the number of institutions and participants grew.' The strengths and weaknesses of the policy network theory are useful in highlighting complex interactions between stakeholders (both in the public and private sectors), which can span many actors.

The research objectives are to find out the origin, the different celebratory styles and approaches, and the management initiatives of the committees involved in the Festival. Often, respondents' perceptions are negotiated socially and historically. They are not simply imprinted on individuals but are achieved through interaction with people or in the process of social construction, where people interact and learn from each other's views about life through history

and culture that affects each individual. The study's subject festival affords people knowledge through its endeavors and happenings. It adds information to the minds of local people, Tourists, and visitors and enhances their experiences with all the events prepared by the Local Government Unit's festival management.

United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) mentioned that festivals are a part of the tourism event of the community because of the many activities that contribute to the locality's environmental aspect. Residences, tourists, and visitors of the festival events commune together, contributing to the crowdedness, buying and selling activities, noise, and throwing of unnecessary waste in the place where the activity happens, pave a problem in the environment. Furthermore, the characteristics of tourism make it valuable for development. It triggers the productive capacities of trade and provides jobs related to the tourism chain. Mainly it also thrives on assets, such as climate, cultural heritage, human resources, and the natural environment, which is an advantage to developing countries. Picazo (2015), furtherly mentioned that tourism has evolved along two major categories, the mainstream tourism which is common and standard. And the alternative tourism which includes the non-conventional happenings such as educational, ecological, cultural, adventure and agricultural tourism. For these reasons, it must be well planned and managed, embracing the principles of sustainable tourism, which fully considers its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, and host communities.

One of the many events that can showcase one's culture to others and is a part of cultural tourism is festivals. Sullivan, & Jackson (2016), mentioned that villages, towns, and cities are increasingly keen to share their culture, environment, and spending opportunities with visitors through festival promotion. Vigan City's Binatbatan Festival was a driving force towards tourism development in the northern part of the country. We hope to achieve and sustain the hosting of future festivals that will contribute to development of the local economy and the community's social and cultural aspects. The extent to which festivals can function as sustainable attractions while fulfilling their social and cultural roles at the community level is an issue of considerable importance. In this context, sustainability often depends on key stakeholders' political and tangible support (Andersso, Tommy D, Getz, 2008). The "Binatbatan" festival of the Arts of Vigan City was celebrated in May. It was one of the key areas in the northern part of

the country that contributed to and affected the local activities and lives of the locals socially, economically, culturally, environmentally, and politically.

Moreover, as Andersso, Tommy D, and Getz (2008) elaborated that concerning the Festival's long-term sustainability, the festival management committees indicated the importance of attaining its 'institutional status,' and occupying a 'niche' in the community, sustaining committed stakeholders, and practicing constant innovation. In this manner, the festivals will share with the visitors/tourists the strong culture & traditions we have as Filipinos. Amidst the effects on the environment it can give, festival activities contribute to our socio-cultural and economic development guided by principles of the Local Government Unit (LGU) heads which will cascade and create a positive impact on National Development.

Objectives of the Study

The study intends to explore the functioning of Vigan City’s Binatbatan Festival of the Arts. Specifically, the study sought to find out the following: The Origin and celebration of the Binatbatan” Festival of the Arts of Vigan City, Philippines; LGU’s management strategies on Vigan City’s Binatbatan” Festival of the Arts; Challenges of Vigan City’s Binatbatan” Festival of the Arts along social, economic, cultural, environmental and political and the Policies that can be develop to the LGU’s in sustaining the Binatbatan” Festival of the Arts of Vigan City, Philippines?

Conceptual Framework

INPUT	PROCESS	OUTPUT
<div>Vigan City’s Binatbatan Festival</div> <div>The origin and celebration of the Binatbatan Festivals of Vigan City.</div> <div>The LGU’s management strategies for its Festival.</div>	<div>Focus Group Discussion/Interview of the LGU’s of Vigan City, Random Interviews of visitors in Vigan City,</div> <div>Documentary Analysis of data from Vigan LGU’s Festival & Web Search on Journals of Events/Festivals management/</div>	<div>81</div> <div>Policy Brief</div>

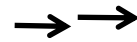


Figure 1. The Input Process Output Model

The Input-Process-Output (IPO) model above illustrates the affiliation of the input and the outputs and the required processes to transform the former into the latter. Outputs are functions of group processes, which in turn are influenced by numerous input variables. For this study, the inputs represent the flow of festival data and materials that include the variables under study. The processing step to convert into results or effects includes mediating mechanisms such as documentary analysis, Focus Group Discussions, and Key Informant Interviews. These data are transformed into knowledge and information that allow the researcher to conceive the output of the study – policy brief as a recommendation for the “Binatbatan Festival of the Arts of Vigan City.

1. METHODOLOGY

Research Design. The researcher used a qualitative design in the investigation to help reveal the comportment and insights of the target audience vis-a-vis the topic under study. It collects and works with non-numerical data and seeks to interpret meanings from these collected data. Astelin (2013) mentioned that qualitative research design is the most flexible of the various experimental techniques, encompassing a variety of accepted methods and structures. Qualitative research approaches all have the following in common: Being grounded in an “interpretivist” position, i.e., they are concerned with how the subjects or cases of interest are interpreted, understood,

experienced, produced, or constituted based on research methods that are flexible and sensitive to social context. (Mason, 2002) Moreso, The study used a case study method, a research approach to verbalize or assess generalizations that cover the case. Case studies involve the thorough Analysis and the axiological relevance of the festival case.

The respondents' accounts of the Focus Group Discussion were examined and compared to come up with a generalization of Data. Gale (2016) explained that case-study techniques provide means to examine a multiplicity of perspectives to illustrate a social entity or pattern and to test ideas and processes and by delving into the cultural narratives underlying traditional festivals (Ya Lei. Et. Al. 2023)

This research methodology allowed the researcher to understand and compare the operation of organizations and institutions, practice and policy implementation, and change processes of the Festival (Ritchie & Lewis, 2006). Observations were made on the commencement and commemoration of the Vigan City's Binatbatan festival. Heads of the City's Local Government Units were the respondents of the Focus Group Discussion. Through the focus group discussion, the city representative's commentaries about local festival origins, the modes of celebration, the management strategies, and the Festival's challenges, along with the social, economic, cultural, environmental, and political aspects of the locality, will be thoroughly scanned.

Sources of Data. Willis (2007) states that multiple perspectives arise from the belief that external reality is variable. He indicates that "different people and different groups have different perceptions of the world" (p.194). This will significantly facilitate educational researchers when they need 'in-depth' and 'insight' information from the population rather than numbers by statistics. As subject - respondents on their knowledge about the Binatbatan festival they are managing, social construction was formed within their group as the committee that prepared the logistic of the events in the Festival. This tapestry of studying the social World through subjective thoughts and ideas confirms the significance of interpretivism, which is to see the World through the eyes of the people being studied, allowing them multiple perspectives of reality (Chowdhury, M. F. (2014). The philosophy emphasized the researcher's qualitative data analysis implemented through Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and interviews.

2.1 Instrumentation and Data Collection

Research instrument. In this study, the researcher employed a structured interview guide with open-ended questions as the primary data collection instrument. Open-ended questions allowed participants greater latitude in responding and providing in-depth feedback regarding the Festival. To ensure the credibility of the data collected, the researcher set aside his preconceived ideas in asking the same set of questions to all the cities. The responses of the participants in the focus group discussion were recorded. The interviews and focus group discussion reactions were analyzed, transcribed, and transformed into transcripts. The interview guide for the respondents was adapted from related research and was blended with the researcher's concepts.

Structure of the instrument. The research guide comprised sections for collecting historical and supplemental data relative to the Vigan City's Binatbatan festival. The open-ended questions concentrated on the origins, celebration approaches, festival management methods, and the challenges experienced during the festivals.

Data Collection. A letter of request was prepared, forwarded, and approved by the city mayor. Copies of the letter request were furnished to concerned department/committee heads. The schedule of the time for the receipt of documents and Focus Group Discussion was set. Data were collected through the conduct of Focus Group Discussions (FGD), interviews with visitors, and documentary analysis. A purposive interview was likewise handled with random Tourists throughout the Festival. Respondents were asked about their observations of the Festival's events, the frequency of their visit, and the facilitating and hindering factors in their choice of festivals to visit. All interviews, including the FGD, were documented through audio recording and videography. Archival, Library and web research are also deemed necessary to add more information about the history and celebration of the Vigan City's Binatbatan festival. The recorded Focus Group Discussion on the subject of LGU respondents and interview of the Visitor of the Festival was captured, transcribed, and analyzed. The composition that provided data about the Binatbatan Festival of Vigan City, Ilocos Sur, Philippine are organizers and implementers these are the City Tourism Officer, City Social Welfare and Development Officer, City Environment and Natural Resources Officer, City's Events Protocols Community Affairs Officer, Visitor of Festival

Ethical Consideration. The researcher certifies that there is a conflict of interest between him and the research's respondents, who will provide relevant data for the study. Informed consent was provided to the Vigan City Mayor and the LGU's various offices. They are also conscious of the benefit of the study to the community and the people. No known risk to the informant and the researcher and appropriate confidentiality was implemented by not exposing their names to safeguard the identity of the respondents in providing data. No monetary compensation was given to the respondents, and proper acknowledgment was given to them in this study. The record will be destroyed as data from FGD and interview undergoes transcription and is implemented through text.

2. Results and Discussion

The Ilocanos share many of the cultural values and traditions of their villagers. Like Filipinos throughout the nation, the Ilocanos are strongly group-oriented, although they also value a certain amount of individualism (agawayas). Ilocanos believe in self-reliance in overcoming life's challenges and prefer to ask for help only from close family members. Nevertheless, they have several mutual aid associations and labor exchange agreements in their communities. The concept of *bain* (sense of shame) is also important. Ilocanos are motivated to abide by social conventions and norms because they do not wish to embarrass others. Individuals are expected to avoid embarrassing others at all costs. Unacceptable behavior damages the individual's reputation and the standing of other people, especially immediate family members. This awareness leads to a high degree of conformity. Ilocanos detest gossip, and the pressure to resist the temptation to envy others is strong.

Nearly every City and town in the Philippines holds an annual fiesta. These celebrations are part religious and part secular. Many Ilocanos return home to celebrate with their families. Binatbatan Festival, also known as Viva Vigan Festival of the Arts, was created to promote awareness of the City's cultural heritage and centered on the loom weaving industry of the City, Thus transforms favorable destination images and loyalty among visitors and tourist attending the festival (Van Niekerk, 2017) .

It occurs during the first week of May. The week-long celebration includes street dancing competitions, "Abel" fashion shows, traditional games, art exposition, and parades.

The Vigan City's "Binatbatan" Festival Origin and its Celebration

As one of the largest cultural gatherings in the north, the "Binatbatan" festival tracks its origin from Vigan's long-standing "abel" weaving industry. Respondents mentioned that the annual "Binatbatan" Festival is one of the most celebrated festivals in Vigan City and Northern Luzon. More commonly known as the Viva Vigan Festival of the Arts, the Festival is held in May. With the celebration, Vigan transforms itself into an open space filled with colors, animation, amusement, and merriment as the town celebrates the Festival with glorious character. The name "Binatbatan" comes from the word "batbat", a pair of bamboo sticks used to separate cotton pods that come from the "kapas sanglay" tree. Some respondents mentioned that there was also a folk dance with the same name, "Binatbatan," where dancers employ two sticks used for beating to a tune. The dance itself was from Paoay Ilocos Norte, but since it was a shared heritage of the Ilocanos for its folk dance or folk song, the use of the label "Binatbatan Festival" was admissible. The knowledge materials produced by the City reinforced the derivation of the brand "Binatbatan. The Festival's connection to the "Abel Ilocos" industry was also assented to by the FGD participants. According to them, the Festival showcases the intricacies and attention poured into the production of the "Abel" that made them proud of this local tradition. The present-day "Binatbatan" Festival started in 2002 to showcase the traditional weaving craft that was said to predate the arrival of Spaniards. The Festival starts on May 1, when the Philippines celebrates Labor Day where the town remembers its local hero Isabelo de los Reyes who founded the country's first federation of workers. It is also this day that the Catholic Church remembers St. Joseph, the patron saint of workers (Vigan City brochure, 2010).

The Heritage City of Vigan still demonstrates it is a center of political, cultural, economic, and religious activities during the Spanish times. It is the only World Heritage City registered in the list of Heritage sites and monuments on December 2, 1999. The City was able to preserve its tangible and intangible heritage because of the efforts of the local government and the people. It represents a unique fusion of Asian building design and construction with European-Spanish colonial architecture and planning that until now was considered one of the few exceptionally intact and well-preserved examples of a European trading town in east and Southeast Asia. This vibrant historical City is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and was recently listed as one of the New 7 Wonders Cities of the World.

The celebrations of the “Binatbatan” festival entertainments include “Binatbatan” street dancing, “calesa” (horse-drawn carriage) parade, “Karbo” (Carabao) Festival, traditional games, religious rituals in honor of the Black Nazarene, Santacruzán (ritual pageant), “Abel Iloco” fashion shows, exhibition and trade, food fairs and other exciting events. Accentuated by the “Abel Iloco,” one of Vigan’s One Town One Product (OTOP), the “Abel” weaves the story of the “Binatbatan” festival. Consistent with the materials and stories, one respondent asserts that “when we look for the history of the Abel Iloco it starts with “Binatbatan.” They get the cotton pod and use the “batbat” to separate the fiber from the seed, the fibers that set down in the wheel are created to become the “abel” cloth.” Nevertheless, the celebration was more than the “batbat” and the “abel” it created. With more than a week of celebration, the merriment included several sub-highlights, such as the “Karbo” Festival, which began in 2005. The event's name came from carabaos, or the Philippine water buffalo used for farming, and the “Bo” from the Ilocano word “bokel” or seeds. “Karbo” is a painting competition depicting carabaos and art contests using various seeds. The event winds up with a parade around the City. The implication of the “Karbo” festival was mentioned by one respondent “the Carabao painting competition of the Binatbatan Festival has been included in the calendar of the Philippine Carabao center.” The “abel” house decoration or set-up is a collaboration of the different establishments in Vigan City, including the Ancestral House in Calle Crisologo, which is decorated using the “abel” cloth. The Vigan City’s Binatbatan Festival Street Dancing Competition was participated by elementary and secondary public and private schools of Vigan City. The participants were dressed in “Abel” cloth as the respondents in the Focus Group Discussion expounded that the Festival was about the traditional weaving craft that predated the arrival of Spaniards and was associated with the abel loco’s process of “batbat” or the separation of fiber from the seed. The participants used the gesture of striking bamboo in the ground to create sound as well as part of the choreography of their dances. The celebration of the Binatbatan Festival was synonymous with the Viva Vigan Arts Festival. The Vigan City festival events emphasize the culture and the Arts of the Biguenos. The Festival also includes a mosaic competition and Art in the Park, where visitors, tourists, and attendees can express themselves by joining in painting the blank canvass that stands along the cobblestone. Other significant activities are the “Abel” Fashion Show, “Abel” House Decor Competition, Santa Crusan, and Ramada.

Festival Celebration is not complete without the exposition of local products. Dissimulacion (2016) explained that festival like tourism are powerful economic forces that brings in investment, creates jobs and generates foreign exchange. This gives depth to the celebration and reflects the character of the place. The products are part of the heritage of the people in Vigan City. The place had a lot to offer from the vintage "abel Iloco" or loom weave cloth, handicrafts, and local foods like the barquillos and bibingkas or rice base products. The Food & Trade Fair opening was attended by officials of Vigan City headed by their Mayor and its council. They were in full support as they headed the cutting of the ribbon to the public. There are items available for visitors and Tourists where various Ilocano foods like "empanada, okoy, miki, barquillos torones de mani and kakanin." As (Mousavi, 2016) states, the community offers food and allows visitors to try the region's various products, delicacies, wines, and meals.

Furthermore, the culture of Vigan City is reflected in the most attended activities of the Binatbatan Festival/Viva Vigan Festival of the Arts. Some of the activities are Concerts at the heart of the famous Calle Crisologo, where the postcard-pretty scene of the centuries-old Bahay na Bato houses stands. The Abel Iloco House Decor and the Caleza Parade Competition are participated by selected establishments of Vigan City and the Tatto and Band Festival, which was an event for the millennials youth where the bands and tattoo artists clash their talents for the viewers to see.

Vigan City's Management Strategies and Local Government Initiatives

Vigan City's Local Government Unit was very keen on the festival programs and events. (Tepeci, et. al. 2022) states that Government involvement in festivals is desirable for economic, social and environmental concerns. it is necessary to have a good planning and development strategy and introspection to strategic issues, so that with a good strategy in the development of the tourism sector, it will know the prospects for the development of the regional tourism sector in the future. (Siryayasa, et. al. 2022) The festival committee warrants that every participant, Tourist, and Visitor will enjoy and experience what the "Binatbatan" festival geared up and various events that stimulate the City's culture and tradition. The City crafted the "Vigan Tourism Code," which regulates and governs the development of tourism and programs promotions of Vigan City. It includes all the legal processing of the license, registration, regulation, and supervision of the operations of tourism oriented/related

establishments. It shall apply to all establishments in the City with an operation domestically or internationally. Section 7 orders the City Tourism Office to implement the provisions of the Vigan Code's technical and administrative duties and functions. (<http://www.vigancitycouncil.ph>, vigancity.gov.ph). Vigan City's Binatbatan Festival, or the Viva Vigan Festival of the Arts, held in the first week of May, was included in the Vigan Tourism Code, as the role of the City Tourism Office is to institutionalize and improve year-round programs in order to provide a cultural platform. During the FGD, several programs were stated to be included in the next planning phase of the festival committee, and these were authenticated by Vigan City's website. As part of its management of festivals, the City Government of Vigan will carry out marketing and publicity campaigns and back all tourism-related programs. (Sirayasa, et. Al. 2022) further states that these programs will also incorporate environmental and public safety concerns as well as the previous research and literature on festivals have led to the increasing realization of their positive outcomes, mainly emphasizing the economic contribution of events and their ability to market a place., thus these results indicate that the festival will not achieve any notable economic, social, or cultural gains, thus, shortcomings of the festival exceed its benefits. (Tefeci, et. al. 2022)

Table 1. Vigan City's Tourism-Related Programs

Program	Description
Decongestion Program	Transfer stalls and vendors in crowded tourist spots.
Commercial signs	Remove all commercial signs at tourist spots.
Location Signs	Upgrade and maintain all tourist location signs.
Smoke Belching Campaign	Apprehend all smoke belchers passing through Tourist
Parking	Construction of adequate pay parking areas near Tourist spots. Prohibit Public Utility Jeepneys (PUJ's) from using these as their staging areas or terminals.
Public Comfort Rooms	Upgrading and maintenance of these public comfort rooms and their devolution to the barangays.
Re-greening	The annual planting of fruit trees at various tourist spots. The watering of the lawns of major parks.

Source: Vigan City's Website (vigancity.gov.ph)

Vigan City's management of festivals is equipped with plans and specific policies. Such policies include Ordinance no. 06 Series of 2005 entitled "An Ordinance Declaring the Celebration of the Viva Vigan Festival of the Arts, also known as the "Abel Iloko Week." It endorsed

the promotion of “Abel Iloko” during the Festival and other tourism and economic development-related events. The said order is aligned with the strategy of Vigan City to conserve its precious historical and cultural heritage for the benefit of future generations. Among the relevant element of the cultural heritage of Vigan is the old traditional industries that are still evident such as Jar making (Damili, Burnay), Rice Cakes and food products (“ka-kanin”), Woodcraft, and Loom weaving “(Abel Iloko).” The same ordinance mandates that employees in private tourism-related establishments and educational institutions and owning an office in Vigan, and all Barangay officials wear the Filipiniana “Abel Iloko” attire every third day of May and throughout the Viva Vigan Festival of the Arts.

Management of an event may only be possible with the corresponding budget. Table 2 below shows the budget of Vigan City for Tourism and Events for the past 12 years. The table suggests that the budget for the Vigan City Tourism and Events is annually increasing from 2006, which had a budget of 1,000 0000 pesos, to 10,000,000 pesos in 2018. This indicates the Committees’ economic projections on tourism events and related activities. Thus more efforts are developed to ensure the increased admission of tourists and visitors to the City, especially during the “Binatbatan” Festival.

Table 2. Budget of Vigan City for Tourism and Events before the Pandemic

YEAR	TOURISM & EVENTS
2018	P 10,000,000.00
2017	P 9,000,000.00
2016	P 8,000,000.00
2015	P 6,000,000.00
2014	P 4,000,000.00
2013	P 3,000,000.00
2012	P 2,000,000.00
2011	P 2,000,000.00
2010	P 1,500,000.00

Source: Vigan City Budget Office

By the same token, Bueno, (2013) detailed that Vigan City’s annual budget is aligned with its vision and mission statement of providing a generous portion of the budget to deliver effective services for improved quality of life. The UNESCO Heritage City of Vigan is directed towards conserving its heritage and promoting its Cultural Heritage Management Program. Moreover, at least 1.85 percent share of the

Annual Investment Program for Tourism Promotion has been produced the year-round cultural activities in the UNESCO Heritage Site. This includes the Vigan City Fiesta and Longganiza (Local Sausage) Festival in January, Semana Santa in April, Viva Vigan Binatbatan Festival in May, World Heritage Cities Solidarity day featuring the Repazzo de Vigan (Vigan's History on Parade) and other Cultural Awareness Program.

One of the other fundamental regulatory functions observed by the "Binatbatan" festival committee is crowd control. Crowd control is a safekeeping procedure that supervises large crowds to avoid accidents, commotions, disturbances, and fights involving intoxicated and rowdy people. Crowd crushes, in particular, can cause casualties. Thus, their management of the crowd involves the anticipation of possible occurrences.

Vigan City's Binatbatan Festival Challenges

The assessments of the activities during the "Binatbatan" festival gave rise to their key and perennial dilemma, the garbage problem challenge. Responses revealed that the garbage problem is greatly considered by festival committee members. The possible residues of garbage on the environment are injurious to a heritage community. The environmental challenges of the Festival to the community must consider the future scenarios as a festival host. Similarly, three major impacts of tourism were identified the natural resources depletion, pollution, and physical impacts brought about by the events of the Festival (United Nations Environment Program UNEP). The involvement of the people of Vigan from all walks of life is a concrete example of the community-building effect of the Festival. According to one of the respondents, "in the past, only the rich have the rights to celebrate the festivals, but now everyone, even the ordinary families had always something to share with them in their tables."

Moreover, it is not only those who reside in Vigan City but also other visitors. Since families were given livelihood by selling different products during the festivals, people's purchasing power increased. Moreover, because of the influx of tourists, a number of informal workers were given opportunities. Many residents accepted laundry and other "odd" jobs for visitors. One respondent mentioned that "you can not any more call anyone who accepts and do laundries at home because they are already employed in hotels or transient houses, these are what happened if there are a lot of tourists and visitors."

One of the other fundamental regulatory functions observed by the “Binatbatan” festival committee is crowd control. Crowd control is a safekeeping procedure that supervises large crowds to avoid accidents, commotions, disturbances, and fights involving intoxicated and rowdy people. Crowd crushes, in particular, can cause casualties. Thus, their management of the crowd involves the anticipation of possible occurrences. Traffic planning is also a part of the management concern of the “Binatbatan” festival committee that commits to public safety. Responses involve the appreciation that there were preparatory activities to ensure the safety of visitors. One comment specified that “they (committee) were creating traffic plan before the start of the Festival. They see to it that it was not detrimental to the parade on the incoming and outgoing vehicles, they have a traffic to focus on.” There was an elaboration about one of the respondent’s experienced traffic. The respondent remarked that his family was stuck for almost an hour in Vigan during the Festival. “We wanted to get to Vigan but decided to turn back because they did not know where to park their car and after that they proceeded to Ilocos Norte” he further admitted. Parking space is a big problem for Vigan City because of the absences of spacious area for parking. One respondent disclosed that “the city was creating the traffic planning before the festival in order to minimize the traffic and that they have warnings on the time of the parade so that it will be smooth in the whole duration of the activity.” Managing a big event like the “Binatbatan” would require more than the decorations, the programs, the parades, and the food. It will need to look into the possible consequences and outcomes. Tourism also bolstered investment in the region’s economy and infrastructure, which generated employment and increased local income. (World Trade Organization 2013). In the same way, a respondent mentioned that “the tourist data really reflects the inflow of tourists and visitors. We can see that there are a lot of tourists and visitors especially during the May Festival, the most attended festivals among the many festivals of Vigan City, probably because it was summer and that was why plenty of tourists comes in the city”. World Trade Organization (2013) states that employment creates directly in the tourism industry through restaurants, nightclubs, hotels, souvenir sales, taxis, and other tourism-related services and indirectly through the supply of services and goods necessary to the tourism-related business.

Table 3. The Economic Profile of Vigan

	2012	2014	2016	2018
Business Opportunities				

● Accommodations	29	42	100	152
● Food & Beverages providers	29	41	47	89
● Souvenir Shops	41	65	93	96
● Transport Operations	3609	3622	3642	3152
Cultural Industries				
● Museum	5	6	6	8
● Heritage Structure	nda	nda	nda	246
● Craft industry	4	4	4	4
Employment Data	592	909	1250	1797
Poverty incidence	9.6%	7.3%	3.42%	1.93%

Source: Vigan City Planning and Development Office

The various initiatives and interventions to the local tourism industry positively affected the economy and further added to the citizenry's life. The table above shows the economic profile of Vigan. The City's Economic Profile from 2012 to 2018 clearly illustrates the gradual improvement of the various component of the local economy in terms of business opportunities and cultural industries and how it affected the businesses, which is the reason the poverty incidence of the City declined from 9.6 percent to 1.93 percent up to the present. With the various festivals of Vigan City, including the Binatbatan/Viva Vigan festival of the Arts. It reflects the economic impact not only on the famous heritage site as the seven wonders of the World but also because of the events in the City brought about by the various festivals celebrated almost every other month.

Analogously, a respondent claimed that the cultural impact of the Festival is reflected in the continuous awareness of people in Vigan

City. This is the motivation for the consistent involvement of the community.

Correspondingly, it was suggested that “Biguenos” appreciate their own culture that they could pass on to the next generations. Another respondent upheld this statement and explained that the “other impact of the festival was about the passing of knowledge to the children.” Accordingly, “Biguenos,” especially the poor ones, “knew the standard history of the town, even without incorporating it in their studies, they knew by heart without teaching them.”

3.1 POLICY BRIEF

Executive Summary

Throughout the years, community, cultural and religious festivals have become consistent spectacles of local governments in the Philippines. These celebrations include those observed in Vigan City’s Binatbatan Festival. Beyond the tangible celebrations, the buntings, the garlands, and the decorations, festivals manifest the tradition, arts, culture, products, cuisine, and delicacies and showcase the place’s rich heritage. In the study, the roots of the celebration were expounded as well as the praxis of tradition. Furthermore, the researcher documented some limitations that disturbed the management and control of the festivals. While Vigan City seems to have geared up for its Binatbatan festival celebration, there were still some glitches pointed out by the respondents. The researcher has been a cultural worker for many years, a heritage conservation specialist who assisted in organizing events along heritage, culture, and the arts, and has seen the challenges of the LGU’s event management. The study would like to seek alternative solutions to the challenges of the LGU’s festival management. Therefore, crafting a Policy Brief for the LGU concerned is necessary. This will be the basis of an intervention for a Memorandum of Agreements (MOA) between the University of Northern Philippines and the LGU of Vigan City.

VIGAN “BINATBATAN” FESTIVAL

Vigan is an authority in events as it has celebrated several revelries. Being inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage list of sites and monument in 1999, UNESCO’s Best Practice in World Heritage Management in 2012, and one of the Seven Wonders-Cities in the World in 2014, Vigan is the place where everyone, including locals, would prefer to visit. Nevertheless, a success story is almost always accompanied by complexities. When holidaymakers from all over the

World pour into the City during the Festival, two basic problems are traffic congestion and waste accumulation. As well as the choice of activities set during the celebration, a need for culturally relevant shows and programs must be taken into account to create branding and strengthen the culture of the local people.

FIRST ISSUE: Traffic and Parking Problems during Festivals

RECOMMENDATION: Setting up a designated festival parking area bordering the festival perimeter and using “green” transportation to rove around the festival area.

The researcher submits to the City a proposal to pass an ordinance identifying the festival limits, the parking spaces for visitors, the “walk” only area, the “green” transportation area, areas where wheelchairs will be allowed, a place for rest, place to eat, etc. The festival committee can assign the responsibility for security, “green” transportation concerns, and traffic segregation to its various committees. The option will generate additional income for the City through parking fees, “green transportation” fees, and rentals. It will also make the Festival a truly amazing experience for the visitors, offering more than the buntings.

ANALYSIS:

Background: The Viva Vigan Binatbatan Festival is one of the several annual celebrations in Vigan City. It pins down its roots in the Abel Weaving industry of Vigan, which existed before the Spanish colonization of the country. Along Calle Crisologo, locals decorate their houses and establishments with colorful abel. The sight of the street alone is considered one of the high spots of the celebration, the cobbled stones that take one back in history and the display of the rich and multi-colored woven fabrics. With the influx of both local and foreign tourists, traffic congestion and the scarcity of parking area has become a problem for both visitors and the organizers. While transportation is one aspect we cannot do without during festivals, too much contributes to several problems in festival management. This would include environmental degradation, health problems (physical, emotional, mental, spiritual), and emission of greenhouse gases.

The designation of a festival parking space bordering the festival quadrangle is recommended. From this point, electronic jeepneys, bicycles, and calesas (green transportation) will be available for visitors to enter the area. This will allow for less crowded and healthier

celebrations. Those requiring wheelchairs will be allowed to use their modes.

ALTERNATIVES:

Option 1: Designation of a festival parking area where all vehicles of visitors will be asked to park. The festival perimeter will also have to be identified and marked to ensure that no vehicles except for the “green transportation” (e-jeep, bicycle, and calesas) will be allowed to pass.

Advantages: The parking area, as well as the “green transportation,” can generate more jobs and income for the City

Disadvantages: There will be a need to identify more than one parking area if tourist arrival increases.

Option 2: Declare the festival perimeter as a “walking” area only. Do not allow vehicles within the declared festival perimeter area; people can walk around. Covered Pedestrian lanes will have to be created for this purpose.

Advantages: This will promote a healthier Festival and can protect the cobblestones of Calle Crisologo.

Disadvantages: Not all visitors can manage to walk towards the area.

Option 3: Provide more and bigger parking spaces along the festival area.

Advantages: There will be additional income for idle lots

Disadvantages: Vigan is already congested, and big parking spaces along the festival perimeter may not be available anymore. Besides, this will not deter the double parking of vehicles.

SECOND ISSUE: Waste Accumulation

RECOMMENDATION: Conceive an incentive-based program to recycle and reuse materials from the Festival.

The researcher submits to the City government a recommendation to pass an ordinance providing incentives for visitors (during Binatbatan and other festivals) who will carry and surrender the thrash they accumulated during the Festival in exchange for some festival souvenirs.

The ordinance also will create a working group to design, produce and package upcycled materials from bottles, cans, and other plastic wrappers into souvenir items. The working group may be groups of students, women's organizations, or any association of residents. The items that will be produced will be labeled according to the Festival it will showcase and placed on the barter area of each festival exit. These tokens will have their corresponding worth (i.e., 5 empty water bottles for a fan; 10 empty soda cans for a festival wristband).

Adapting this policy will offer the City the following benefits: Develop creativity and innovativeness in the working group; Reduce the need for garbage collectors; Promote recycling as a means of sustainably developing the City; Will make the Vigan festival more unforgettable because of the stories behind each of the tokens.

3.2 ANALYSIS:

The hot weather and activities during the Binatbatan festival call for people to soak themselves up in the water. In most cases, plastic water bottles, soda cans, and other packaging materials are left in loads after the events.

Option 1: Prepare an incentive program for visitors to carry their tumblers. Water and soft drinks will be available for sale, but there will be no garbage bins. Festival goers will be urged to bring empty bottles or cans and exchange them for freebies at the exit station. These freebies can be wristbands, stickers, or other memorabilia from the Festival. The giveaway will also be products of plastic bottles and cans to be made by the residents.

Advantage: This will generate additional income for the residents and upcycle waste. Also, it will motivate festival goers to pick up garbage for some mementos. It will also inspire the residents to be creative to make unique and useful souvenirs.

Option 2: Prohibit the use of plastic bottles during the whole festival day. There will also be no sale of bottled water or soft drinks within the area. Ask festival goers to bring their water tumblers and offer water dispensers in the area.

Advantage: This will be a very healthy alternative.

Disadvantage: This will lessen the sales of water. Also, an additional cost for the City is the provision of water.

3. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were made:

(1) The evolution of the City festivals illustrates the LGUs' determination to carry on their cultural identity vis-a-vis their ingenuity and innovativeness; (2) Festivals are cultural celebrations that intend not only to highlight products and services but create cultural awareness and a vehicle to pass on the tradition and tacit knowledge to the new generation; (3) With different administration comes to a distinct manner of celebration, but all of which underscore collective activities. The Binatbatan festival celebration will continuously transform as a new breed of LGU officials penetrate the arena; (4) Festivals boost the economic, social, environmental, and cultural conditions of the LGUs. The sense of pride and community of the people brought about by the festivals were evident in their participation in the various activities; (5) The proposed Policy Brief will influence and guide the way festivals are organized in the Local Government Unit (LGU). As festival tourism is about creating, providing, and consuming experiences, the policy will put forward ways for both local and foreign tourists to realize pleasant and memorable experiences.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are presented based on the findings and conclusions of the study:

- (1) Festival Committees should be strengthened in Vigan City and may involve representatives from various sectors, community volunteers, bloggers, and others;
- (2) Due to the present situation brought about by Covid – 19, it is recommended that alternative modes of festival celebration be set up. A virtual festival (or e-festival) may also be celebrated to continuously promote the culture and tradition of the Ilocanos in Vigan City;
- (3) Tourists may become more interested in visiting the area through the exposure of pictures, videos of the previous celebrations in the Vigan City Web-cite. Virtual Contests and live chats may also help to flourish the Vigan City Binatbatan festival events;
- (4) While Vigan City already equipped with a website, the presence of a dedicated web page for the festivals will be beneficial. The web page may include a pulse survey for tourists/visitors and attendees of the actual or virtual festivals. Visitors and Tourists are made to register with their email for the LGUs contact tracing.

They will be emailed and given a survey to answer about the festival activities they have witnessed—a virtual map of the celebration and a list of activities and programs, among others. The web page can also host the virtual festival celebration;

- (5) The integration of local history and culture into the elementary and secondary curriculum in Vigan City is recommended to widen people's ethnic perspective and further appreciate the intentions of local celebrations. The selected City LGU's must collaborate with the Department of Education to implement this initiative. This allows people to preserve and develop the local heritage and culture for future generations;
- (6) It is also fitting that coordination be made between the City and TESDA for the conduct of Events Management training and NC III assessment to boost the technical know-how of Festival the management staff;
- (7) Further studies on the Binatbatan festival and its events should be conducted to cover other variables such as distinctiveness of the Festival; a study of the festivals in the barangays; Impact Analysis and the satisfaction level of the visitors and Tourist in attending the Vigan City's Binatbatan festivals.

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