

Conference Paper

Pistang Pamana, Pistang Naaayon: A Socio-Cultural and Environmental Sustainability Framework for Town Fiestas

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Abstract

Town fiestas have increasingly responded to the challenges posed by sustainable development. This study developed a framework for town fiestas which highlight its social, cultural and environmental sustainability by experiencing, exploring and analyzing its practices. Although none of these fiestas are identical, some consistent patterns emerged to demonstrate that comparisons can be developed. Each community has an ongoing challenge of determining how their fiesta can best meet its needs presently and in the future. Each is trying to keep pace with the changes that are taking place within their communities, within the region and from external forces. This study generated new knowledge: tracking the changes occurring in town fiestas in the Tagalog Region that a framework for sustainability was put together. This paper is a multiple case study which is highly ethnographic quantitative and qualitative in nature. In developing the framework, a survey of a sample of residents and tourists were administered for the selected fiestas. Purposive sampling was administered to gather first hand information from the main organizers/drivers of the fiesta: the tourism administrator, hermana mayor, LGU representative and church leaders. Lastly, participant observation method of research was employed. The framework formed composed of three components, the socio-cultural elements, the environmental elements and the multi-stakeholders collaborating strategies. Each of the fiesta observed has its own strengths and weaknesses. The framework linked the fiestas together and elements for sustainability were identified. For any fiesta to thrive, it has to resolve its threats and be able to identify and respond to the requisites of sustainability.

Keywords: Cultural, Environmental, Social, Sustainability, Town Fiesta

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1. Introduction

Events, like festivals, similar to most other areas of human endeavor, have increasingly responded to the challenges posed by sustainable development. Moreover as a rising form of tourist attraction, invariably it has positive and negative impact on culture, the natural and physical environment, and society. Despite the anxiety brought about by the preparations, many still participate in religious festivals or in the Philippine context, more commonly known as fiesta.

Often times, small events such as town fiestas receive less attention when impacts are concerned. A lot of articles and studies on event impacts are focused on big and mega events such as the olympics and international occasions. The cultural, environmental and social components are rarely assessed for small events. Cultural, environmental, and social awareness are potential tools to advance sustainability. Now that changes in tourism priorities impact upon sustainable practices, there is a need to develop a framework that integrates social, cultural and environmental sustainability in celebrating events and festivals specifically town fiestas in the Philippine context.

Fiestas are more than just a spectacle of colorful costumes and dances: fiestas are celebrated in honor of an abundant history, a patron saint commemorated on, or a thanksgiving for the town's harvest. On the other hand, for the tourists visiting these towns, fiestas reflect the residents' positive nature, overlooking all adversaries to appreciate the finer things in life. It is surprising, how even those facing many problems in their day-to-day life set them aside and manage to participate in the preparations and actual festivities.

Accordingly, tourism emerged as a key driving force for promoting festival growth and expansion [1]. Fiestas have the ability to draw positive effects for rural environments but oftentimes their social, cultural and environmental dimensions have received little attention. Over the last few decades, there appears to have been a period of unchecked growth in the use of festivals by local authorities (the bandwagon effect), suggesting that these festivals are often staged with insufficient planning, strategy, and forethoughts [2]. This highlights the need to develop tools and techniques that are theoretically sounding as well as practically relevant.

This study is anchored on the theoretical frameworks such as Gifford's Social Dilemma System model which presupposes that when individuals and groups use resources along a continuum that ranges from pure community or environmental interest to pure self-interest they face social dilemmas in which these interests appear to come into conflict with each other [3]. Also Roger's Diffusion of Innovations theory

which focuses on how ideas are spread throughout a culture discusses that diffusion is the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system [4]. While Stern's Value Belief Norm (VBN) theory suggests that behaviors not strongly constrained by contextual forces, individual choice about pro-environmental actions can be driven by personal norms - an internalized sense of obligation to act in a certain way [5].

Figure 1 depicts the relationship of the three theories and their relevance to sustainable practices.

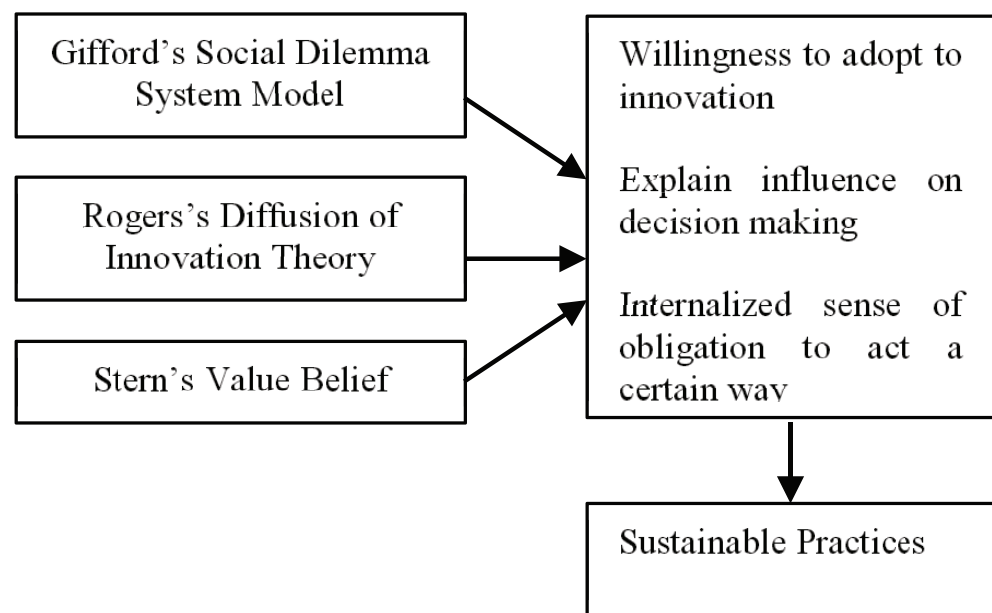


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework.

1.1. Festivals

Festival is a general term used to describe a big celebration while feast is usually attributed to thanksgiving, victory celebration, or any form of merriment for something deemed as an extraordinary feat. Commonly they are celebrations that are rooted culturally, historically and religiously to a community. Specifically, fiesta, is the term used when the festival is associated to a religious celebration, as for the case of most of the festival celebrations in the Philippines.

Reference [1] shows that festival as tourism is problematic, because it implies an undeserved degree of naturalness in the relationship between festival activity and tourism. For centuries, people in all cultures have recognized the need to set aside certain times and spaces for celebratory use [6]. They have been found to exist in virtually all human cultures [7]. They have a strongly collective dimension and they have

always functioned as practices through which community expresses beliefs, celebrate identities and variously confirm or contest the social structures and value system that binds them together.

Evidence show that countless festivals are marketed as tourist attractions and draw definable tourist flows. However, in the specific context of sustainability debates, few researchers have focused on small community festivals.

Three main trends in studying festivals may be identified: the analysis of their influence on culture and society; the trend regard economic issue, and; analyses of festival organization and management [8]. However, festivals have impacts that go beyond these main trends. Reference [9] stated that environmental impacts have little importance to the total assessment as evident in a model for measuring the impact of a tourism event for sustainability perspective. But one can never disregard the involvement of the environment whenever sustainable development is concerned.

Tourism is considered sustainable if it is carried out continuously over time without reducing or diminishing the cultural and environmental values of destination for the present and future generations. Sustainability from ethical perspective indicates that humans are part of nature – a perspective which should constantly be revisited in tourism development. Hence tourism should be compatible with lifestyle, traditional cultures and social value of the people affected by tourism development [10].

The fiesta is a living tradition, like all living things, it has to be nurtured. It is one of the heritage of Filipinos as a nation. It is something that is transmitted by or acquired from the ancestors. It is part of what defines Filipinos as a group of people. Fiestas show how the personality of each of the towns are unique. Reference [8] believes that the Fiesta is the only occasion when the entire community did something together. The Filipinos have such a strong sense for the fiesta because it explains his/her roots and his/her identity as an individual.

The only way to foster a tradition is to make it relevant to the present. Generations may pass, but in the Philippines, traditional fiesta has helped in shaping the identity as Filipinos. On the other hand, sustaining a town fiesta is not merely an issue of the organizers and tourist, most significantly, it is an issue of the community residents. The value of the fiesta is placed on the shoulder of the community. Without the full cooperation of the community, the fiesta may not thrive.

2. Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study is to develop a framework which puts a value in its socio-cultural and environmental sustainability. As town fiestas represent a smaller type of event taking place in a contained geographic location, they are more manageable to investigate and town fiestas or community festivals have been shown to have stronger links with their host community than do other larger events. Although true fiesta is a religious festival that pre-dates the Spanish period, the term fiesta (Pista) is generally attributed to community celebrations which showcases different activities to be enjoyed by the locals and the guests/tourists.

Specifically, this study aims to:

- a. determine stakeholders' experience of socio-cultural impacts;
- b. determine stakeholders' experience of environmental impacts; and
- c. identify elements of sustainability in each type of fiesta.

3. Materials and Methods

To address the objectives stated, three (3) town fiestas were observed in the Southern Tagalog Region: Pahiyas of Lucban Quezon, Parada ng Lechon of Balayan Batangas and Sublian Festival of Batangas City, Batangas.

This research is qualitative and quantitative multiple case study. It discusses facets for sustainable tourism focusing mainly on the socio-cultural and environmental aspects of celebrating a town fiesta. As an ethnographic research it dealt mostly with qualitative data which, rather than control variables, are open ended and sets up research opportunities designed to lead the researcher into unforeseen areas of discovery within the lives of the sectors the researcher is investigating. Moreover, this looked deeply into the behavior within specific social settings rather than a broad population.

The quantitative part was done by giving out survey forms to the residents and guests during the fiesta. The qualitative part was derived from the questionnaire given out to specific people who are stakeholders of the said fiesta. The bulk portion of the qualitative data was obtained from the participant observation method that was employed. The researcher immersed herself in the community before, during and after the fiesta. Observations were recorded, noted and summarized every day. Secondary data were also obtained from different institutions involved, namely Department of

Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Tourism, Local Government Unit, Parish Pastoral Council, National Library and National Historical Commission. Verified and trusted online resources were also utilized.

Actual immersion observation which were put into a journal, video recording and voice recording was used to further gather data on the celebration of the fiesta. Along with the narrative reports of the researcher, pictures also serve as data since the study is all about culture, environment and society. It is believed that pictures can capture stories the researcher may not be able to grasp at the moment of observation.

A framework which integrates the socio-cultural and environmental aspects of sustainability was developed based on the identified gaps, existing problems, best practices, issues and solutions which were discovered thru the baseline information survey, taking into account the interview with the stakeholders, participant observation data narratives, and intensive review of literatures.

In this study the multiple case study design was used to produce detailed descriptions of the town fiestas using constructs to order the data and relate to earlier literature. Reference [12] emphasized that multiple cases strengthen the results by replicating the patterns thereby increasing the robustness of the findings. Literal replication (where the cases are designed to corroborate each other) and theoretical replication (where the cases are designed to cover different theoretical conditions) are two approaches to establish replication logic. Since case studies rely on analytical rather than statistical generalizations, relying on replication logic as per reference [12] provided external validation to the findings. Each case served to confirm or disconfirm the conclusions drawn from the others. The qualitative data were interrelated using codes for themes which were similar to fiestas observed and came up with a generalization.

4. Results and Discussion

Fiesta as a form of tourism can be considered as a “one-time big time product”. It is not like any other tourism site which can be visited anytime of the year. Since it is held only once a year in a specific locality, the organizers tend to incorporate almost all forms of merriment that will cater to both residents and tourists’ palate.

Like any other form of tourism, fiestas can be manipulated and packaged to satisfy the needs of the tourists. This can lead to the commoditization of local cultures and traditional activities. Traditional “products” such as dances and religious activities may need to be altered to satisfy the tourists demand.

4.1. San Isidro Pahiyas Festival

The *Pahiyas* Festival has over time offered residents a comfortable mindset that addresses nature, culture and social wellness as central features of the hospitality shared with visitors. It can be argued that the geographical features and experiences of settlement over time have informed not only the context and format of the festival's program, but how residents and visitors actually use the celebration to make a mark on the region's distinctiveness, which in turn builds its strength.

During harvest season the farmers used to gather their harvests inside the chaplet (*tuklong*), where they converge and partake of sumptuous meal. Eventually, when the chaplet no longer suffice to accommodate the harvests the parish priest, agreed that the farmers' harvests be displayed right at the door steps in front of the house, where it can be easily blessed as the priest walks around the houses during procession. Not contented with this change, the townspeople went on to outdo each other's door steps that made the procession more lively and colorful.

In order to make the San Isidro Pahiyas Festival more meaningful, the townsfolk decided that instead of just putting the agricultural harvest in front of the door steps of every house along the processions route, the entire façade of the house is decorated for a much greater impact to the viewing public.

Upon data gathering, table 1 shows the summary of the impacts of San Isidro Pahiyas Festival.

4.2. Parada ng Lechon Festival

An annual event held on the 24th of June is dubbed as the "king of all Batangas festivals" the *Parada ng Lechon* Festival. Locals and tourists from different places here and abroad share the merriment of this festival. *Lechon* is the star of every big event in the Filipino household. In this Balayan festival, the sumptuous roasted pigs are dressed and ornamented in clever ways and are paraded around town.

One of the highlights of the festival for the community is the preparation of the *lechon* where the residents come together. However, when sponsoring a *lechon* became popular, residents no longer roast their own entry to the parade. The experience of the community in preparing for the roasting has been disregarded.

Table 2 shows the summary of impacts of Parada ng Lechon Festival.

TABLE 1: Impacts of San Isidro Pahiyas Festival.

Domains	Best Practices	Problems /Threat
Social	Municipal Ordinance for Trade – Fair zone Opportunity for small – scale entrepreneurs Shared celebration Family reunions Display of hospitality Sense of community pride Enhanced sense of place and identity Increased community participation Presence of police officers	Disruption to residents’ way of life Challenged morals and values Loss of identity Social instability Too much commercialization
Cultural	Revitalization of traditions Development of arts & crafts thru programs and activities Promotion of local products (<i>kiping, langonisa</i> and <i>pancit habhab</i>) Greater intercultural understanding	Commodification of culture Commoditization of local products Defacement of cultural heritage Decreasing participation in religious activities
Environ-mental	Municipal ordinance on traffic management plan. Standby emergency response team in strategic locations Municipal ordinance regulating the use and sale of plastics	Vehicular and pedestrian traffic congestion Accumulation of solid wastes Exceeding carrying capacity

4.3. Sublian Festival

The *Subli* is a religious devotion translated to a dance that is indigenous to Batangas. Traditionally performed to the accompaniment of drums and chants, the *Subli* praises the patron in a combination of poetry, movement and music. The Sublian Festival also coincides with the city’s founding anniversary.

It is with the fast urbanization and modernization that the local government of Batangas City decided to revive the cultural heritage through these celebrations. It was the thought of losing what makes them unique that made them design the *Sublian* Festival, which started only in 1988 and is considered as a relatively young town fiesta.

Table 3 indicates the summary of impacts of the Sublian Festival

Sublian Festival commemorates the founding anniversary of Batangas City and showcases the traditional dance of Subli. Among the fiestas observed, Sublian festival has the most effective traffic management plan. The roads are blocked early in the morning which is an evidence that the entire place is being prepared for the street dance and float parade.

TABLE 2: Impacts of Parada ng Lechon Festival.

Domains	Best Practices	Problems /Threat
Social	Shared celebration Family reunions, get together Display of hospitality Sense of community pride Enhanced sense of place and identity Increased community participation	Disruption to residents' way of life Challenge morals and values
Cultural	Revitalization of traditions Development of arts & crafts thru programs and activities Promotion of local product: lechon National Shrine: Church of Immaculate Conception	Commodification of culture Commercializa-tion of lechon by sponsorship Decreasing participation in the religious activities
Environ-mental	Municipal ordinance on traffic management plan. Standby emergency response team in strategic locations Municipal ordinance regulating the use and sale of plastics	Vehicular and pedestrian traffic congestion Accumulation of solid wastes

TABLE 3: Impacts of Sublian Festival.

Domains	Best Practices	Problems /Threat
Social	Municipal Ordinance for Trade – fair zone, Opportunity for small – scale entrepreneurs Display of hospitality Sense of community pride Participation of schools Enhanced sense of place and identity, Increased community participation Presence of police and traffic officers	No existing ordinance as regards fiesta itself
Cultural	Revitalization of traditions: harana, Preservation of traditional dance Promotion of local products Basilica: Our lady of Immaculate Conception	
Environ-mental	Municipal ordinance on traffic management plan, Standby emergency response team in strategic locations Environmental awareness campaign	

In its almost 30 years of existence it is still under the threat of being discontinued. There is currently no city ordinance which establishes this town fiesta. It is feared that a change in administration might also change its fate.

Putting together all these findings as impacts of fiestas studied, certain commonalities can be observed and is summed up at table 5.

TABLE 4: The fiestas with their corresponding key terms in each theme.

Theme	Religion/ Culture	Social	Environment
Pahiyas Festival	Mass, Procession, National Shrine, Thanksgiving, Cuisine, Kiping, Arangya, Pahiyas, Arts, Pancit habhab, Longanisang Lucban, Official Historical Commission Marker	Schools, vendors, LGU, Agri-Tourism, Municipal Ordinance, Community Organizations	Solid waste generation Traffic Management, Physical and Social carrying capacity
Parada ng Lechon	Mass, Procession, Novena, National Shrine Cuisine, Official Historical Commission Marker	Schools, vendors, LGU, Community Organizations	Solid waste generation Traffic Management
Sublian Festival	Basilica Authentic Subli Dance Steps, harana,	Schools, vendors, LGU, Agri-Tourism, City Ordinance, Community Organizations	Traffic Management, Municipal Planning

The results of the survey and the interview and the observations led to some more perceptions and realizations. Putting together gathered information on the three fiestas observed and all other literature compiled for this study, the research problems were answered.

Although there are some residents who are excited at having performances from outsiders such as known bands or dance groups or celebrity personnel, the visitors are more interested in authentic and home grown talents and performances.

Analysing the tables enables the author to put together in Table 7 the description and elements of sustainability per fiesta and the common elements for all three.

Considering all the variables, all observations and analysis of the data gathered, a framework which can be used to sustain a town fiesta socio-culturally and environmentally was formulated as shown in fig. 3.

When a fiesta is sustainable, it can be passed from one generation to another and is celebrated with pride. With the fiesta comes the enhancement of town's identity and opportunity for progress. This framework may be used as a reference of different fiestas, may it be new or old existing ones.

TABLE 5: Best practices and problems encountered by the fiestas.

Fiesta	Best Practices	Problems
San Isidro Lucban Pahiyas	Presence of good municipal ordinance for trade fair zone and traffic management plan	Exceeding physical and social carrying capacity Too much commercialization
Parada ng Lechon Festival	Community participation during Novena Active participation of community organizations Creativity in showcasing lechons in the parade	Presence of activities which does not promote the objectives of the celebration
Sublian Festival	Presence of good city ordinance for the trade fair of events, good traffic management plan Efforts for patronizing local products Promotion of environmental awareness Preservation of the authenticity of the traditional dance - subli Passing of the tradition to the next generation	No official declaration from the city and is therefore subject to the decision and priority of the succeeding local officials

TABLE 6: Fiestas Elements of Sustainability.

Fiesta	Description	Elements of Sustainability	
San Isidro Lucban Pahiyas	Display of art outside the house using agricultural products and residents' source of livelihood	Maintenance of farmlands, Produce from residents' farmland Creativity of residents in making pahiyas	Appropriately constructed ordinance Education/ awareness of both tourists and residents Solid waste management Well coordinated traffic management plan Emergency Response Management
Parada ng Lechon Festival	A parade of roasted pig as a form of thanksgiving for good life/success	Size of the lechon being paraded Participation of community groups	
Sublian Festival	A dancing of the traditional Subli that is authentic in Batangas and passing it to the younger generation	Participation of local organizations/ educational institutions	

The framework has three major components, the first two are Socio – cultural components and Environmental components. The components can be institutionalized in

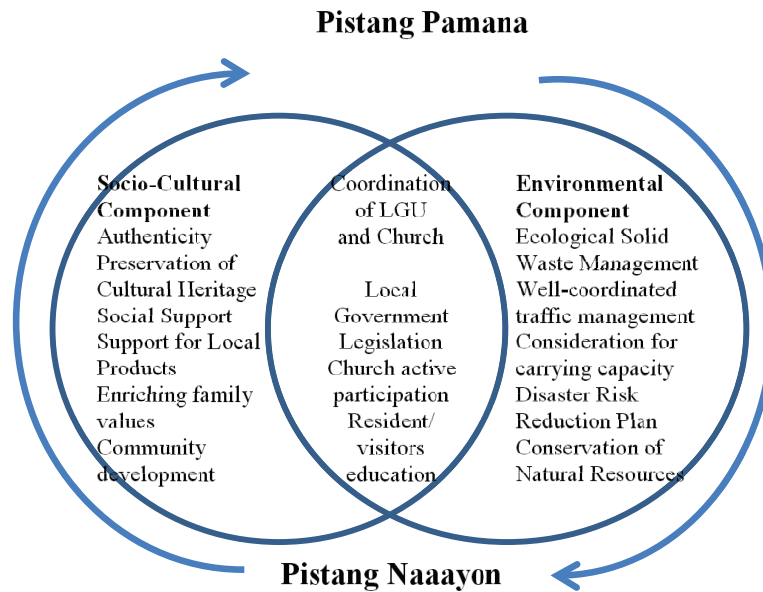


Figure 2: Socio – Cultural and Environmental Sustainability Framework for Town Fiesta.

the fiesta management system through various means; cooperation, legislation, participation and education, to make stakeholders to collaborate and participate. This consists the third component of the framework, the multi – sectoral collaboration strategies.

The first component, the socio – cultural consists the following elements:

Authenticity – Authenticity refers to the genuineness of artifacts or events.

- *Commodification* – when we try to turn local cultures into commodities when religious rituals, traditional ethnic rites and festivals are reduced and sanitized to conform to tourist expectations.
- *Standardization* – our towns have characteristics which are distinctly theirs. Tourists visit the place for something they do not ordinarily see or experience.

Preservation of cultural heritage – Any form of art, inherent in a certain location can be considered as a heritage. Visual art and gastronomy is what is common in the observed fiestas.

Visual Art

- The long road of display of pahiyas

- Display of dressed up lechons

Gastronomy

- Kiping and Longanisa for Lucban.
- Lechon for Balayan
- Nilupak for Batangas City

Social Support – is the perception and actuality that one is cared for, has assistance available from other people, and that one is part of a supportive social network. Since the fiesta is a social activity, the need for collaboration among stakeholders are greater.

Support for local products – just like any event, the fiesta is an opportunity for residents and travelling entrepreneurs alike to earn seasonal income.

Enriching family values – Family values plays an important role in the sustainability of a fiesta. It is the time for families to celebrate and assemble again.

Fiesta unconsciously allows family members to work together on some activities like cleaning the house in preparation for the coming of visitors, cooking family delicacy, and designing and printing family shirts.

Community Development - Community development is the capacity for people to work collectively in addressing common interests. The number of community member who will volunteer will be a good indicator of continuous participation of the members.

The second component, the environmental, consists the following elements:

Ecological solid waste management – During fiesta, RA 9003, the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act should be intensified. The best environmental practices in ecological waste management must be ensured all year round.

Well-coordinated traffic management – The municipal planner may allocate a certain portion within the town for the vehicles to park and let the visitors continue the rest of the travel on foot to the main venues. This way, vehicles entering the town can be lessened.

Consideration for carrying capacity – Every tourist destination fears of reaching its carrying capacity. This might indicate the place will have negative impacts to both its ecological and physical environment.

Disaster and risk reduction management plan – any event has a likelihood of unnecessary emergency. Celebrations every year must be a continuous lesson for contingency measures.

Conservation of natural resources - This is a reminder that any form of defacement that the site visited will experience, will lessen its value as a tourist destination. We owe it to our environment not to throw solid wastes and other form of trash at the rivers or other bodies of water. Protecting and maintaining the cleanliness of the rivers which are used for fluvial parade encourage more devotees and participants.

The third component – the collaboration technique between and among stakeholders consist of the following:

Coordination of LGU and church – when a particular heritage is of religious significance, the LGU and the church must coordinate to be able to preserve this tangible or non-tangible heritage. Municipal legislation and church order can be made so that even if different church administrator and local official will be in office, the ruling stays.

Residents' education – Educational institutions play a big role in inculcating to the local residents and students the practices and traditions of their town in relation to their fiesta. The municipality on the other hand, must involve the residents in issues concerning the fiesta.

Visitors' education – anybody who wishes to visit an area of interest must know all about the place as much as possible, such as its natural resources, people, and its culture. The visitors should also take into account the rules and policies employed in towns they are visiting.

Church active participation – as the prime mover of a religious fiesta, the church holds a very important position in making a fiesta sustainable. Most of the attendees of *Fiesta Patronales* are devotees of particular saints.

The church may sponsor activities which supports the fiesta's objectives. It is the church's duty to let the residents and tourists know that the true essence of the fiesta is the Feast of the Saints and that activities provided by the municipal are just supplements.

5. Local Government Legislations

The Philippine Constitution generally covers everything about the way of life of a Filipino. Some provincial ordinances ensure welfare of its territories and people. Despite this, there is still a need for individual and localized ordinances that municipalities should endorse and pass.

The fiesta is a vital element in the Filipino culture. There are museums to preserve our archeological artifacts and artistic creations; libraries and archives to protect our written heritage; and reservations for ethnic groups, animals and plants that are in danger of extinction. For a fiesta to be passed on to the next generations, it has to be "*naaayon*", it has to be sustainable in terms of socio-cultural and environmental aspect. When a fiesta is *naaayon*, it can be, and should be passed on or become a *Pamana*.

This framework is a compassionate cycle, when a fiesta is *naaayon*, it is sustainable and can be a *pamana*. Once a *pamana* is treasured, it is sustained and can continuously be passed on.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

The following were the problems identified in celebrating the fiestas observed:

1. Two fiestas have problem with overcrowding of streets which raises the question of carrying capacity and limits of acceptable change for the physical resources and social conditions
2. All fiestas generate an unusual amount of solid waste despite Republic Act 9003, or solid waste management act, provisional ordinances on Solid wastes and city/municipal ordinances
3. Commercialization is both a boon and a bane. It can increase tourist visitation due to advertisements and promotions. However, it also causes the residents to deviate from the traditional way of celebrating.

The fiestas observed have the following best practices:

- Sublian Festival has a good traffic management scheme which enables a good flow of parade and street dance;
- San Isidro Lucban Pahiyas has increasing number of visitors due to improving display of “wall arts” or pahiyas, and;
- Parada ng Lechon takes pride in the long but delightful preparation of hog roasting.

For a fiesta to thrive, it has to resolve its threats and be able to identify and respond to possible elements for sustainability.

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

To the LGU:

- To conduct an annual evaluation for fiesta with specific parameters (e.g. social, cultural and environmental).
- To come up with activities that will minimize negative impacts

To Educational Institutions:

- To include in their syllabi the schedule for discussions in the class of their town fiesta
- To sponsor activities that will activate the awareness of the students about the fiesta they celebrate.

To sponsoring corporations:

- To become vehicles of conservation and preservation efforts of the communities they sponsor.

To future researchers:

- To look into possible inclusion of detailed carbon foot print computation of each kind of fiesta.

Author's Note

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