

## **PARTICIPATION OF THE RESIDENTS OF VIGAN CITY IN PROMOTING HERITAGE TOURISM**

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AB in Communication*

### **Abstract**

*This study focuses on determining and describing the roles and participation of the residents of Vigan City in promoting heritage tourism. It is designed to specifically identify the participation of the residents which plays a vital role towards the said development of Vigan City in relation to heritage tourism. The study also identifies the challenges being encountered by the residents in promoting heritage tourism and how the residents handle such challenges in relation to their roles and participation. Moreover, this research also identifies the level of participation of the residents, first, based on the sectors where the residents belong and second, the level of participation of the residents of Vigan City as a whole. The level of participation of the residents will be identified based on the residents' roles in promoting heritage tourism.*

**Keywords:** *participation, level of participation, roles, heritage tourism, development, promotion and communication.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Participation ideally connotes the ability of people to share, influence or control decision making and authority in development projects and programs that affect people's lives and resources. It is usually assumed to concern a community (Peters, 2000).

In a study done by Mena (2010) entitled *Community-based Cultural Heritage Projects in the Philippines: Tourism and Heritage Management Partnerships*, it states that the government recognizes the importance of integrating issues of heritage conservation within the overall process of community development.

However, in most developing countries like the Philippines, it has been observed that the issues of heritage conservation cannot be successfully integrated within the overall process of community development unless preservation is linked with economic development or income generation (Villalon, 2007). Prevalent in many Philippine towns and cities is the fact that built heritage is demolished or left to deteriorate in the name of progress and modernization.

Conserving the cultural heritage of the Philippines has been and still is a massive challenge to both national and local governments as well as the civil society. It is inspiring, however, to note that some provinces and municipalities in the Philippines have recognized the importance of placing the issues of heritage conservation within the overall process of community development interlinked with other issues such as tourism development, revitalization of the local economy and local governance.

In the case study *Culture Heritage Management and Tourism: Models for Co-operation among Stakeholders* (2000), it was mentioned that community's participation was limited only to their involvement in cultural

groups. It also stated that heritage tourism has effects on the stakeholder's lives. Concerning heritage, there is much support from the community provided that the government will play its role of providing more financial assistance (Local Case Study Team of Vigan City, 2000).

On the other hand, the level of community participation in the conservation efforts in terms of services, local employment, and tertiary students' involvement, are relatively high. However, the level of awareness of students in the academe about the heritage and conservation is not yet at a very high level, especially, among the elementary and pre-school pupils. The said study also stated that more courses should make as requirements for practicum or extension work along conservation and preservation in regards with the issue on further developments.

This study on participation of the residents of Vigan City in promoting heritage tourism intends to describe and understand the specific participation of the residents in promoting heritage tourism as well as the problems they encounter in fulfilling their roles and how the residents cope with them. It also determined the level of participation of the residents based on their roles in promoting heritage tourism. Moreover, the residents being referred in this study are selected individuals from different sectors involved in promoting heritage tourism in Vigan City.

### **Conceptual Framework**

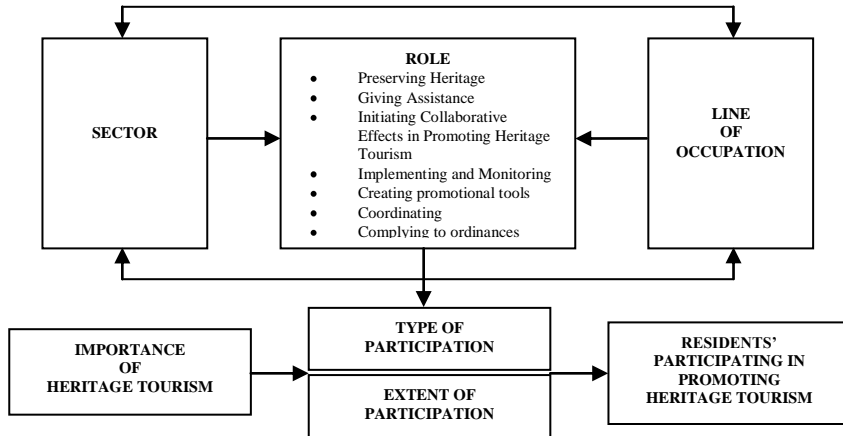
The participation of the residents in promoting heritage tourism depends on their line of occupation and to what sector they belong. The roles of the residents are affected by what is needed on the occupation they have and on what particular area of promoting heritage tourism does the sector they belong to is involved. The themes which emerged upon analyzing the

residents' roles in promoting heritage tourism are interconnected with the sector and their line of occupation.

However, the roles of the residents affect the latter's type and extent of participation. The type of participation of the residents depends on what sector they belong; residents belonging to different sectors are concerned on different areas of promoting heritage tourism. The government sector is primarily concerned on reinforcing ordinances and decision making. The residents under the local community and the sector of "kutseros" focus on dealing and assisting tourists. On the other hand, the business sector is mostly concerned on promoting the traditional products and industry of Vigan for business purposes.

The extent of participation of the residents implies the effort that the residents exert in promoting heritage tourism in accordance to their roles. Moreover, the importance of heritage tourism to the residents also affects the residents' participation. The more that the residents need heritage tourism for their day to day living, the more that they will involve themselves in promoting heritage tourism. Hence, the variables mentioned above affects the residents' participation in promoting heritage tourism.

Below is the conceptual framework formulated based on the residents' participation in promoting heritage tourism.



**Figure 1. Participation of the residents of Vigan City in promoting heritage tourism**

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study aimed to achieve the following:

1. to determine the participants' roles in promoting heritage tourism in Vigan City;
2. to identify the challenges that the participants encounter in promoting heritage tourism in the place;
3. to determine how the participants handle the said challenges;
4. to determine the level of participation of the participants in promoting heritage tourism in Vigan City classified using the different level of participation namely passive, consultation, functional and empowerment participation; and,
5. to formulate a framework that can describe the resident's participation.

## METHOD

The researchers used qualitative-descriptive method to determine and describe the participation of selected residents in Vigan City in promoting heritage tourism.

The researchers conducted the study in Vigan City, Ilocos Sur wherein they used the purposive sampling technique in which the samples or participants are chosen based on the residents' role and participation in promoting heritage tourism in Vigan City. The participants are selected according to what sector they belong and the role they play in promoting heritage tourism. The participants are residents of Vigan City since 1999, the year when the city was recognized as a world heritage site. There are a total of 20 participants for the in-depth interviews conducted by the researchers; five participants from the tourism office, five community people, five from the business sector and five "kutseros".

Below is the list of participants for this study.

**Table 1. List of the participants of the study**

Name	Age	Gender	Occupation	Educational Attainment	Length of Stay in Vigan City
<b>Edgar Dela Cruz</b>	47	Male	City Tourism and Investment Promotions Officer	College Graduate	47 years (Since birth)
<b>Arnold Anicas</b>	32	Male	Architect	College Graduate	32 years (Since birth)
<b>Jerbin Dale Formoso</b>	22	Male	Administrative Aide III/Tourist Assistant	College Graduate	22 years (Since birth)
<b>Jo-Anne Margarita Gutierrez</b>	38	Female	Officer-in-charge City Administrative Office (Former Tourism Planning Officer)	College Graduate	15 years
<b>Tracy Galang</b>	24	Female	Community Affairs Assistant	College Graduate	24 years (Since birth though also

<b>Remedios Palacpac</b>	71	Female	Tour Guide and Care Taker of Crisologo Museum	College Graduate	<i>stayed in other places during her studies)</i> 71 years ( <i>Since birth</i> )
<b>Resty Sebastian Ponce</b>	64	Male	Tour Guide and Care Taker of Syquia Mansion	College Graduate	64 years ( <i>Since birth</i> )
<b>Jayvert Almondia</b>	25	Male	Police Assistant	College Graduate	25 years ( <i>Since birth</i> )
<b>JR Arranz</b>	30	Male	Tour Guide/Tricycle Driver	High School Graduate	30 years ( <i>Since birth</i> )
<b>Rico Soriano</b>	42	Male	Tour Guide/Tricycle Driver	High School Graduate	42 years ( <i>Since birth</i> )
<b>Fidel Go</b>	74	Male	Owner of Pagburnayan ( <i>Jar making business</i> )	High School ( <i>Undergraduate</i> )	74 years ( <i>Since birth</i> )
<b>Erlinda Benson</b>	41	Female	Owner Nino's Tinubong ( <i>Ilokano Kakanin Business</i> )	High School ( <i>Undergraduate</i> )	41 years ( <i>Since birth</i> )
<b>Norberta Santos</b>	68	Female	Owner of Irene's Empanada	Elementary Graduate	68 years ( <i>Since birth</i> )
<b>Jenalyn Aviente</b>	33	Female	Sales Lady ( <i>BJ &amp; RM Furniture and Ilokano Blanket</i> )	College Graduate	15 years
<b>Proceso Razonable</b>	46	Male	Ice Cream Vendor along Crisologo Street	High School ( <i>Undergraduate</i> )	46 years ( <i>Since birth</i> )
<b>Jaime Aguinir Rabang</b>	52	Male	Kutsero	High School ( <i>Undergraduate</i> )	52 years ( <i>Since birth</i> )
<b>Ditas Gonzalo</b>	42	Female	Kutsera	College ( <i>Undergraduate</i> )	42 years ( <i>Since birth</i> )
<b>Eliceo Quereza</b>	52	Male	Kutsero	High School ( <i>Undergraduate</i> )	52 years ( <i>Since birth</i> )
<b>Salve Quirit</b>	62	Female	Kutsera	High School ( <i>Undergraduate</i> )	62 years ( <i>Since birth</i> )
<b>Romel Quirit</b>	32	Male	Kutsero	College ( <i>Undergraduate</i> )	32 years ( <i>Since birth</i> )

In this study, the researchers used intensive interview method which goes by asking the participants of the study to gather the information needed on what is the participation of the residents in promoting heritage tourism.

The researchers conducted an ocular inspection in Vigan City to gather more information about the residents' participation in promoting heritage tourism and in to what specific places in Vigan heritage tourism is observed. They conducted the in-depth interviews with the selected participants from May 24 to 27, 2013. The observation however, started from the time the researchers arrived in Vigan City until May 28, 2013.

Data analysis for this research involves organizing and preparing data for analysis. After determining the roles of the residents from the in-depth interviews and transcriptions, the researchers read the gathered data and analyzed the general ideas of the participants and their overall meaning to come up with the themes. The researchers used the coding process to generate description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis. After analyzing the data gathered, the researchers classified the level of participation of the residents based on the four levels of participation.

The level of participation of the residents is classified based on the extent of the decision making ability of the residents in fulfilling their role. If the residents are not aware of what their participation is their level of participation falls on the passive level. On the other hand, if the residents consult first and do not decide on their own before fulfilling their respective roles in promoting heritage tourism, their level of participation falls on the second level which is participation by consultation.

However, the level of participation of the residents falls on the third level which is the functional level if the residents can decide on their own with regards to fulfilling their roles in promoting heritage tourism. In cases wherein



the residents are obliged to follow though they are willing to do so their level of participation still falls under the functional level.

The level of participation of the residents falls on the highest level which is the empowerment level wherein the residents are willing and have the initiative to fulfill their roles as well as deciding what their roles and participation are. The final step in data analysis involves making interpretations, conclusions and recommendations based on the data gathered.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The identified roles of the residents mainly involve preservation of both cultural heritage and heritage sites of Vigan, provision of assistance to the tourists, compliance with ordinances, and coordination for concerns about promotion and heritage tourism and maintenance of Vigan City's good image, its people and local products as well.

The four sectors included in this study deal with challenges concerning limited resources, dealing with tourists, external conflicts such as typhoons and conflicts involving noncompliance of implemented ordinances.

This research also includes the residents' ways on how they deal with the challenges they encounter in promoting heritage tourism in Vigan. The residents handle such challenges by providing added assistance for the tourists, coordinating with the city government and formulating ordinances.

The level of participation of the residents in the government sector ranges from the functional to the empowerment level, however, majority of the residents' roles in the government sector is on the empowerment level. In the said levels of participation, stakeholders are able and willing to initiate and participate in the collaborative decision making about what should be

achieved and how it would be achieved (Mefalopulos, 2008). The researchers conclude that the level of participation of the said sector is relatively high wherein decision making is evident in the roles of the residents.

On the other hand, the level of participation of the residents in the local community sector ranges from the functional to the empowerment level. In the third and fourth levels of participation, stakeholders participate in discussion and achieving predetermined objectives set for a project which is observed in the local community sector in terms of promoting heritage tourism in Vigan. There is only one role which is on the third level which concerns the role of the residents in complying with ordinances. Though they are willing to follow, the ordinances are imposed to them which they have to follow otherwise, sanction will be given. The researchers conclude that this sector has a high level of participation because majority of the residents' roles are on the empowerment level which indicates that the residents willingly participate in promoting heritage tourism.

Moreover, the level of participation of the residents from the business sector ranges from the functional to the empowerment level. Three out of the four roles of the residents in the business sector is on the fourth level of participation. The researchers conclude that the residents in this sector have a high level of participation wherein the residents are involved in decision making.

However, the level of participation of the residents in the sector of the "kutseros" ranges from the functional to the empowerment level. In the said levels of participation, stakeholders participate in the discussion and analysis of objectives (Mefalopulos, 2008). The researchers conclude that this sector has a high level of participation in terms of promoting heritage tourism.

Lastly, the level of participation of the residents of Vigan City in general, ranges from the functional to the empowerment level. In the said levels of participation, stakeholders are capable and willing to initiate and participate in the collaborative decision making about what should be achieved and how it would be achieved (Mefalopulos, 2008).

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **Conclusions**

This research identified and described the roles and the level of participation of the residents of Vigan City in promoting heritage tourism. More so, it explained how a community contributes in achieving particular goals of the community which in this case pertains to promoting heritage tourism in Vigan.

In this research, decision making is observed in the four sectors involving different people whose roles and decisions affect the heritage tourism of Vigan City. In line with this, the success of Vigan City in its heritage conservation program is anchored on the residents' individual contribution as part of the community as they fulfill their roles and take initiatives on promoting the city's heritage tourism.

It is important to specifically identify the roles of the residents in promoting heritage tourism to recognize how these roles are linked in community development brought by the tourism industry in Vigan. The challenges encountered by the residents and their ways of coping are also affected by their respective roles.

Participation suggests certain degree of involvement in an activity or an organization. Thus, people involve themselves depending on their

participation which is referred as contextual wherein it varies in type, level of intensity, extent and frequency.

The type of participation being rendered by the residents in terms of promoting heritage tourism is connected to the roles that they have which depend on what particular sector they belong to, thus the residents belonging to different sectors are concerned on different areas of promoting heritage tourism. Moreover, it is important to identify all the sectors that may be present in the locale to further assess the participation of the residents in promoting heritage tourism.

The level of participation of the residents from the different sector varies depending on their roles in promoting heritage tourism, their occupation and how important heritage tourism is for their day to day living. Heritage tourism creates jobs and livelihood which is considered to be another factor on why the residents themselves are in to preserving and promoting the heritage of Vigan.

The extent of the promotion efforts given by the residents has something to do with the benefits they are getting from the tourism industry of Vigan.

The government sector for instance, mostly focuses on the heritage preservation so as the heritage tourism of Vigan will be sustained. It is the duty and responsibility of the residents from this sector to promote the heritage tourism of Vigan and initiate conservation programs. As government employees, it is their job to promote the city however, in excess of that is the sector's initiative to influence other sectors to participate in promoting and making decisions.

However, the assistance given by the government sector to the private sectors with regards to giving finances for maintaining and restoring

old Vigan houses were limited. Moreover, the trainings given by the Department of Tourism (DOT) in partnership with the city government of Vigan mostly involve the “kutseros”.

The local community sector is primarily concerned on relating and dealing with tourists. As tourist guides, it is natural to them to promote Vigan through personal communication and be more particular in promoting Vigan through its history and cultural heritage since they are earning through the museums and their efforts on tour guiding.

On the other hand, the business sector and the sector of the “kutseros” which are both earning through the help of tourism in Vigan, primarily involves themselves in preserving the traditional products of Vigan as well as the old traditions of the city.

In line with this, the researchers found out that the residents from the local community sector, business sector and the sector of the “kutseros” has a minimal participation in terms of creating promotional materials for the city. It is only the government sector which takes charge of making the promotional tools they use in promoting heritage tourism in Vigan.

The residents’ roles in promoting heritage tourism affect the level of participation of the residents. The level of participation of the residents depends on the extent of the residents’ decision making ability and their willingness to promote the city in their private capacity meaning outside their work.

Majority of the roles of the residents under the four sectors namely, government, local community, business and the sector of the kutseros falls on the fourth level of participation which is the empowerment level wherein the residents are able to decide on their own, willing and has the initiative to fulfill their roles. However, some of the roles of the residents which include

observing the implemented ordinances and following instruction from the city government, the residents' level of participation falls on the third level which is the functional level.

The researchers conclude that the level of participation of the residents of Vigan City in general is relatively high wherein the residents decide on their participation in promoting heritage tourism and what specific role they would fulfill. The identified roles are the basis of the level of participation of the residents. The level of participation depends on the extent of their decision making ability in the roles that they fulfill. Based on the analysis of the gathered data, decision making is evident on majority of the roles of the residents.

Moreover, the researchers found out that it is important for the local government of a certain locale to recognize the participation and efforts of the residents which contribute to the locale's development and attainment of goals. In line with this, the researchers conclude that the residents' participation can contribute to future developments in a certain place in different aspects such as economic, political, industrial and academic.

### **Recommendations**

In accordance with the result of this study, the researchers came up with the recommendations discussed below.

For the residents of Vigan City

The researchers recommend to the residents of Vigan City to coordinate with the city government in terms of the promotional materials they use in promoting heritage tourism specially with regards to using the social media as a promotional tool since the city government works on a

minimal budget for promotional materials, with that the residents would be of help in promoting the city considering the limited budget of the city.

For the city government of Vigan

The researchers recommend giving importance and recognizing the participation of the residents in promoting heritage tourism which contribute to the development of the tourism industry in Vigan and extending the assistance they provide to the private sector in terms of maintaining and restoring the old Vigan houses within the heritage area in support to the residents' efforts in preserving the heritage sites of the city.

For the Department of Tourism

The researchers recommend supporting the local government not only in providing seminars and trainings for "kutseros" but to the local community tour guides as well since majority of the projects of the Department of Tourism with regards to tour guiding only involves the sector of the "kutseros". The researchers also recommend recognizing community involvement and participation of the residents as a tool to further develop the tourism industry of Vigan.

For development communication practitioners

The researchers recommend working on a research which dwells on community participation and acknowledge the importance of participation of individuals in attaining specific goals.

For future researchers

For further improvement of this study, the researchers recommend to future researchers who would like to work on the same research topic as this to give particular importance on how the level of participation of individuals

can contribute to future developments in a certain locale may it be in terms of economic, industrial, political and academic aspects. This study focused only on sectors which are primarily involved in promoting heritage tourism; hence, the researchers recommend including all the sectors that may be present in the locale when working on a research about levels of participation to have a bigger picture of the research study. In terms of improving the methodology used for this research, the researchers recommend to conduct a focused group discussion to validate the results.

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