

**PHILIPPINE INTERNATIONAL HOT AIR BALLOON FIESTA (PIHABF)
AS A FESTIVAL DESTINATION IMAGE OF ANGELES CITY**

**Ong, Julia V.¹, Bumanglag, Ma. Elizabeth D.², Dela Cruz, Uriel Ivan C.³, Figurado, Marviric⁴,
Morales, Precious Angela Q.⁵, & Rosario, Mark Kevin⁶**

¹Institute of Business & Management – Tourism Management Program, Program Head, City College of Angeles, Angeles City, 2009, Philippines

^{2,3,4,5,6}Institute of Business & Management – Tourism Management Program, BS Tourism Management IV Year Student, City College of Angeles, Angeles City, 2009, Philippines

E-mail: julaong@gmail.com

Festivals and events are considered to be one of the fastest growing segments in the tourism industry. Countries and cities compete vigorously for mega-events such as Olympics and the World Cup. More specifically, such segments also serve as a powerful tool to attract tourists during off-season and in the creation of image and awareness of an area (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2013). In the Philippines, festivals are celebrated to boost tourism by attracting tourists. According to the Department of Tourism, one of the leading growth regions in the Philippines is Central Luzon; which features the city of Angeles – home of the Philippine International Hot Air Balloon Fiesta (PIHABF), the longest running sports aviation event in Asia.

In consideration to the two-decade existence of PIHABF as an annual event in Angeles City, the study aimed at determining the association of the said event to the destination image of Angeles City. Furthermore, the study also assessed the satisfaction level of the tourists towards PIHABF. Data were gathered using an adopted tool from the study “Miri City as a Festival Destination Image in the Context of Miri Country Music Festival” by Sim et. al (2015). The tool featured a 4-point Likert scale for its rating and was divided into three parts, specifically: profile of respondents, festival destination image and festival satisfaction. Pilot and reliability tests were also done in order to ensure that the tool was effective in gathering results in a different setting. A total of 400 respondents was determined as the sample size, which was based from the 2017 visitor arrivals of PIHABF; a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level was considered. However, a total of 400 surveys were still used in the extraction of data for the study. Surveys were distributed to respondents composed of PIHABF 2018 attendees from February 8 – 11, 2018.

The results revealed that the festival image of PIHABF provides a unique experience and atmosphere, there are a variety of things to see and do, various exciting entertainment opportunities are available, and the festival is an ideal destination for family and friends. In connection to this, Angeles City is also concluded to be a vacation destination because of its existing attractions and tourist facilities, including PIHABF. Generally, tourists who visited PIHABF were satisfied with the overall experience, with a strong revisit intention. In conclusion, it was determined that PIHABF indeed had a positive effect on Angeles City’s festival destination image because of the positive results of the survey.

Keywords: *Tourism, Events, Festival, Destination Image*

1. Introduction

Over the years, events have become a vital part of the tourism and hospitality industry because of their ability to generate tourist visits. Events stimulate tourism and boost the demand for hospitality – the subsection of tourism that provides accommodation, catering services and entertainment to tourists and travelers (Okoli, 2012). Events have become a core element of the destination system where accommodation,

attractions, transport and ancillary services have been utilized or specifically developed (e.g. the provision of infrastructure for mega events) to enhance the destination offer thereby expanding the tourism potential and capacity of destinations beyond a narrow focus on leisure-based tourism (e.g. holidays) (Getz & Page, 2014).

What used to be a simple practice that has long been a part of human history, has now evolved into a profession and a category of its own, being commonly referred to as “Event Tourism”.

Event Tourism is defined as a set of interrelations between tourism management and event management. Tourism management deals with tourism development based on analyzing the behavior and motivation of all kinds of tourists. On the other hand, event management deals with event marketing, design and managing of an event. Moreover, it tries to understand the event experiences and to manage them. Hence, event tourism is in the middle of the two sectors. In other words, event tourism aims at full exploitation of the capabilities of events in order to achieve tourism development of host communities (Oklobdžija, 2015).

Given that Event Tourism is considered to be one of the fastest growing sectors of the Tourism & Hospitality industry (Gursoy, Lim, and Uysal 2004, Getz, 2008) there is now a growing interest in festivals and special events since they are described to provide both tangible and intangible “profitable activities” in the community (Getz, 1991, 1997). As a unique form of tourist attraction, events are an important motivator of tourism, as most of them are not dependent upon a physical environment (Gursoy, Kum, and Uysal, 2004). They are of increasing importance for destination competitiveness (Getz, 2008) and have become an increasingly significant component of destination marketing (Lee and Beeler, 2009; Li and Tan, 2015). Moreover, one of the prevailing sub-topics covered under events and destination marketing is the importance of image. Destination image is commonly accepted as an important aspect in successful tourism management and destination marketing (Molina, Navarro and Rico, 2010). Destination Image refers to the balance between what is expected and what is being delivered, which are both essential in promoting the destination (Banyai, 2009).

The Philippines has a great majority of touristic offerings, whether one is looking for natural

2. Methodology

The study used a descriptive method in assessing Angeles City as a Festival Destination Image in the context of PIHABF. A self-conducted questionnaire tool was adopted from the study titled “Miri City as a Festival Destination Image

wonders, historical landmarks, culture and tradition, arts and crafts, shopping, recreation and entertainment, among many others. Tourism activities continue in the country’s different regions, each with its own feature destinations and product (tourism.gov.ph). People in the Philippines are known to be festival lovers. Festivals are celebrated in the Philippines by honoring patron saints, some festivals are to commemorate an event in history or show gratitude for a good harvest. Festivals in the Philippines are celebrated to boost up tourism and to attract tourists (www.etravelpilipinas.com). According to the Department of Tourism, one of the leading growth regions in the Philippines is Central Luzon, which includes the province of Pampanga, home to what is known to be the Culinary Capital of the Philippines, Angeles City. In terms of festivals and events, Angeles City is best known in introducing the Philippine Hot Air Balloon Festival (PIHABF) back in 1994. Over the years, PIHABF has witnessed many changes, but has stood against the test of time, and has now earned the title of being the longest-running sports aviation event in Asia; flocked by locals and tourists alike from different parts of the world such as Malaysia, Japan, Korea, Germany and the United Kingdom (www.philballoonfest.net).

In consideration to the importance of destination image in the development of a tourist destination like Angeles City, the study aims to investigate the festival destination image of Angeles City in the context of a particular festival, which in this case is the Philippine International Hot Air Balloon Festival; due to its significance and connection with the history of the city. Related factors that make up a destination image, such as authenticity, quality, satisfaction, motivation, and loyalty will be measured through the responses of those who have attended the recent PIHABF events. In the process of studying all of the factors, it may also be determined if PIHABF is indeed a festival which is or may be associated with the image of Angeles City as a tourist destination.

in the Context of Miri Country Music Festival” by Mr. Adriel K S Sim, Mr. Joseph K M Sia and Mr. Tek Yew Lew. Following the format of the adopted study, the tool was divided into three sections, specifically, Profile of Respondents,

Festival Destination Image and Festival Satisfaction. For the profile of the respondents, demographic-related data such as gender, age, employment status and spending ranges were used which were helpful in further understanding who the participating respondents were. The Festival Destination Image included three variables, specifically, Authenticity, Festival Image and Festival Motivation. The third section, Festival Satisfaction included two variables, specifically, Festival Satisfaction on Quality and Festival Loyalty. Furthermore, all of the variables were measured with a 4-point Likert scale, with a descriptive rating of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. Interpretation of the results were equivalent to determining if PIHABF, is indeed associated with the image of Angeles City as a tourist destination.

3. Results and Analysis

Table 1 presents the summary of the overall results for the festival destination image. More specifically, authenticity was interpreted with a descriptive rating of Strongly Agree. This was measured through 6 sub indicators, which focused on evaluating the ability of PIHABF to provide authentic experience through its local cuisine, heritage, culture, program, venue and souvenir items. The Festival Image likewise, received a descriptive rating of Strongly Agree, through the evaluation of 11 sub-indicators. Generally, the sub-indicators focused on how PIHABF delivered their activities and entertainment, and the general impression it made on the attendees in terms of atmosphere, affordability and safety. Finally, Festival Motivation also received a descriptive rating of Strongly Agree, with a total of 10 sub-indicators considered. Festival motivation was measured by how PIHABF was able to provide stress relief and relaxation to attendees, as well as to engage in socio-cultural related activities.

4. Conclusion

From the data gathered, it was discovered that 63.75% of the participating respondents were returning visitors of PIHABF, this further

The said instrument was distributed by the researchers following a convenience sampling method; during the actual PIHABF event on February 8-11, 2018, at the Omni Aviation, Clark where it was held. The researchers strategically positioned themselves by the exit areas in order to ensure that participating respondents were those who were able to experience the event, since it was essential that respondents had something to refer to when answering the tool. Furthermore, a sample size of 400 was considered in gathering respondents, with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level. The figures were determined using Raosoft, with the 2017 visitor arrivals of 107,950 as the basis for the computation.

TABLE I
FESTIVAL DESTINATION IMAGE

Variable	Mean Rating	Descriptive Rating
Authenticity	3.38	Strongly Agree
Festival Image	3.41	Strongly Agree
Festival Motivation	3.43	Strongly Agree

Table 2 presents the summary of the overall results of festival satisfaction, with two variables evaluated. For Festival Satisfaction on Quality, a descriptive rating of Strongly Agree was received. A total of 5 sub-indicators were considered in measuring festival satisfaction on quality, all of which were focused on evaluating areas such as featured hot air balloons, program, and value of money spent during the festival. Finally, for Festival Loyalty, a descriptive rating of strongly agree was achieved, through the evaluation of 3 sub indicators which focused on word of mouth and revisit intentions.

TABLE II
FESTIVAL SATISFACTION

Variable	Mean Rating	Descriptive Rating
Festival Satisfaction on Quality	3.40	Strongly Agree
Festival Loyalty	3.40	Strongly Agree

strengthens the findings that the festival has a positive revisit intention. This intention to revisit is also further supported with the general

conclusion that PIHABF is able to provide satisfactory results in terms of its delivery on entertainment, activities and value for money spent. Because there is a strong level of satisfaction from the visitors, the result is translated through the significant number of repeat visits. This is considered as one of the key strengths of PIHABF, this may also explain why PIHABF has achieved the status of being known as the longest running aviation show in Asia.

As for the Festival Destination Image, it can be concluded that PIHABF has a positive image, gathering a descriptive rating of strongly agree in terms of authenticity, image and motivation. All of the respondents, representing a majority of PIHABF visitors agree that the festival is indeed a worthwhile event to see, and has the ability to create a positive impression, not just on the event itself, but to the entire Angeles City as a tourist

destination. PIHABF has been indeed, one of the most respected and sought-after international events in Asia; and the positive results on its festival destination image serve as proof and explanation as to why it is so.

In summary, PIHABF can indeed be considered as a festival which can help in further boosting the image of Angeles City as a festival destination. PIHABF is internationally known, it has the ability to provide quality entertainment and activities and has a strong following from its loyal visitors for the past 2 decades; all of which can be utilized to boost in promoting the tourism potential and image of Angeles City. It is therefore, essential, that a strong and consistent effort from all the stakeholders of PIHABF and Angeles City Tourism be maintained in order to sustain the current track record of PIHABF.

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