

# EVOLUTION AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF FESTIVALS IN GUIMARAS

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**ABSTRACT** This study was conducted to determine the different festivals in Guimaras and identify the significant contributions of the festivals in the Island of Guimaras using a qualitative research design. This study used the qualitative research design. The data were gathered from the people in the tourism industry in the province of Guimaras and in five municipalities in the province for the past five years. Result of the study showed that there were two provincial festivals, five festivals represent each of the municipalities and fifteen festivals represents different barangays in the province. Festivals in the Island of Guimaras contributed to the visitors' Arrival in the Province. The tremendous increase in the number of Local excursionists which ranked first is noted for the past five years. Local tourists ranked second. Foreign excursionist ranked third and foreign tourists ranked fourth. When monthly arrivals are taken into consideration, the month of May ranked first, March ranked second and April ranked third. Another contribution of festivals in the province was evident in its notably increasing Agri-trade and Tourism Fair Sales for the past six years.

**Keywords:** festivals, evolution, excursionists, tourists

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

A festival is known to most people as a day of celebration or festivities. There are many festivals celebrated throughout the world and the Philippines is no exception. Often, a province, town, or municipality celebrates a festival in the Philippines. A festival is viewed by the researchers as a means of sharing the history, identity, and values of the place and people to others and the younger generations. A festival is also a way to attract visitors to come to the province, town or municipality, therefore, a festival has an impact on the hosting place. The impact may be good or bad but none the less a festival has an impact. Since festivals are celebrated throughout the world it is very important to learn, understand, and measure its impacts on the hosting community. Falassi (1987) defines a festival as an event, a social phenomenon, encountered in virtually all human cultures. The colorful variety and dramatic intensity of its dynamic choreographic and aesthetic aspects, the signs of deep meaning underlying them, its historical roots and the involvement of the "natives" have always attracted the attention of casual visitors, have consumed travelers and men of letters alike.

Furthermore, Falassi explained that festivals in the social sciences are simply taken from common language, where the term covers a constellation of very different events, sacred and profane, private and public, sanctioning tradition and introducing innovation, proposing nostalgic revivals, providing the expressive means for the survival of the most archaic folk customs, and celebrating the highly speculative and experimental avant-gardes of the elite fine arts. Etymologically the term festival derives ultimately from the Latin *festum*. But originally Latin had two terms for festive events: *festum*, for "public joy, merriment, revelry." And *feria*, meaning "abstinence from work in honor of the gods. Both terms were used in the plural form,  *festa*, and *feriae*, which indicates that at that time festivals lasted for many days and included many events. In classical Latin, the two terms tended to become synonyms, as the two types of events tended to merge (Luna, 2015).

Guimaras is considered one of the exotic islands in the Philippines. The original name was *Himal-us* but was changed to Guimaras after the folktale of the ill-fated lovers named Princess Guima and the slave Aras, who defied tradition for their romance. The island was once a sub-province of Iloilo but by virtue of R.A. 7160, it was proclaimed a regular province on May 22, 1992.

The province is basically agricultural, with palay, coconut, mango, vegetables, livestock, poultry, and fishing as major products. Likewise, the major industries in the island are tourism, fruit processing, coconut processing, handicrafts making, mining, and lime production (<http://www.tourism.gov.ph/SitePages/InteractiveSitesPage.aspx?siteID=36>, retrieved August 2016).

Guimaras is also known for many of its festivals which were celebrated by the people in the community. These festivals portray religion, practices, norms and even attitudes of the people in the province. There are many sources of the idea of celebrating the festivals. Some focus on food associated with harvest which is blended with the festivals.

Festivals create more opportunity for people to earn a living for it can be a source of fund or income generating projects of the province. These celebrations offer a sense of belongingness for religion, social, and many more.

The researchers as witnesses of how valuable are festivals for people were inspired to conduct this study in order to determine the effects of festivals on the economic way of life of the people in Guimaras. Thus, this study was conducted.

## **Objectives of the Study**

This study conducted to determine the evolution festivals in Guimaras. Specifically this study aimed to:

1. determine the different festivals in Guimaras; and
2. identify the significant contributions of the festivals in the Island of Guimaras.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study used the qualitative research design utilizing the data that were taken as a result of focus group discussion with tourism officers in the tourism industry in addition to the secondary data obtained from the tourism office of the province of Guimaras and five municipalities in the province. The respondents of the study were the tourism officers in the tourism industry in the province of Guimaras and the other tourism offices of the five municipalities of the province.

The researchers used the focus group discussion to gather the data from the respondents. Secondary data were also taken from the Visitors Expenditures Survey of the Province, and Visitors' Arrival and Tourism Receipt which were obtained from Jordan, Buenavista Guest Assistance Center, RORO and Tumanda Wharves.

The researchers personally conducted a focus group discussion with the people and officers in the tourism industry in the province of Guimaras and the five municipalities of the province. Frequency count and ranking were used to interpret the gathered data.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Different Festivals in Guimaras**

The following were the recorded festivals in the province of Guimaras:

1. Manggahan Festival. Relish from the ambiance of rural life in the "Mango country" during its Manggahan festivals. Manggahan sa Guimaras Festivals involves various activities depicting the cultural heritage of Guimaras while giving emphasis on the promotion of Guimaras Mango. It's a 2-month long festival that starts with Manggahan sa Kabanwahanan at the Municipalities every weekend of April. The highlights happen on May 11-22 at the Provincial Capitol Proper, San Miguel, Jordan, Guimaras.

2. Pagtaltal sa Bala-an Bukid. It is a passion play enacted during the Lenten season in the island and is one of the most spectacular religious festivals in the country. Aside from this major festival, each town has its own identity festival that showcased their historical, natural heritage and livelihood activities.

### **Municipal Festivals**

1. Palayag Festival in the Municipality of Buenavista held every 3rd week of January. Celebrated every 3rd Sunday of January by the Municipality of Buenavista in honor of the town's Patron Saint Sr. Sto. Nino. This cultural festival that was first celebrated in 2007 made maximum use of the rich cultural tradition of the oldest municipality of the Province of Guimaras. The presentation of songs, dances and musical tableau depicts the various influences Buenavista has been subjected to. "Palayag" marked a new footprint during the 2008 Buenavista Centennial Celebration. "Palayag" is defined as boat sailing with the use of "Layag" which is an old form or "Kinaradto" way of sea travel. Swift "Paraos," connected Iloilo and Guimaras. In 1850's, Iloilo Port was opened by Sir James Bowring, British Governor of Hongkong as an international port. Negros Island then has no harbor that could cater for bigger ships so they used Guimaras Island as a transship point to Iloilo and Panay Island. This is the reason why Jordan Wharf has the sugar bulk. While Jordan wharf was prospering, Buenavista was still enjoying with its sandy shore. Dr. Jose P. Rizal stated in his diary written in August 4, 1896, "Opposite Iloilo there is an island where the families go for picnics.... there are various vessels with foreign flag..." The land being referred to is surely Guimaras and the picnic place is the white sand, the "pasil of baybay". "Baybay"(which is presently called Sto. Rosario), was the beach where sailboats from Guimaras Island daily bring in cargoes of fruits, fish,

and vegetables to Iloilo City. The same beach had been a subject for painting by an artist Miguel Zaragoza (1849-1923) and being exclaimed "Buena Vista" by the Iloilo Spanish Gobernadorcillo. The present day wharf was just constructed during World War II, the time of Gen. Douglas MacArthur. The beauty of this place as coupled by the craft of the people in miniature boat making was not just a culture by accident, but a culture rooted in the past. The natural beauty of the place and the economy of the town is dramatically boosted up by the swift and gaily "layag"-using sea vessel. Thus, PALAYAG is a festival of the beauty of the town and the hospitality of the Buenavistahanons which can only be experienced by other people if they will travel, trek and tour the places (<http://buenavistaguimaras.gov.ph/palayag-festival/>, retrieved on December 28, 2017.)

2. Sadsaran Festival in the Municipality of Nueva Valencia held every last week of January. Sadsaran festival is derived from the term "sadsad" which is a common term for dancing used by the Nuevalencianons, especially by the elders. Sadsaran Festival is a cavalcade or kaleidoscope of dance meant to showcase the evolution of dances from the old days to the present depicting the custom and traditions of the different barangays in Nueva Valencia, taking into account the influence of Americans, Spaniards, and Japanese colonizers. Sadsaran is not only a showcase of the evolution of dances but also of cultural heritage and livelihood of the community, as showcased by the Barangay Festivals. Other activities to highlight the festival are the Kansyon sa Sadsaran, a musical show, "hinampang sa sadsaran" or larong lahi, the coronation of the fiesta/ festival queen, exhibits, food fair, and fireworks display. Inasmuch as dancing as sadsad is an expression of happiness, thanksgiving or a way to tell a story and majority loves to dance. Hence, came about "Sadsaran sa Nueva Valencia" Festival (<http://www.traveltothephilippines.info/2017/09/23/sadsaran-festival-is-a-festival-of-cultural-dances-and-more/>, retrieved on November 22, 2017).

3. Balsahan Festival in the Municipality of Sibunag held every February 19-20 of the year. The Balsahan Festival coincides with the foundation day of the Municipality of Sibunag every February 20. Legend says that a son of a deity and a mortal was stolen when he was only a baby. He was named Sibunag and was raised and cared for by a fairy. His amazing quests and romance stories have been one with the waters ever since. The Balsahan Festival is the town's way of immortalizing the mystical river. "Balsa" refers to the bamboo water raft. The people of Sibunag and all over Guimaras celebrate the festival with fun activities such as balsa racing, a motorized banca race, and a paraw regatta. Sibunag is one of the two youngest municipalities of the island-province of Guimaras. Established in 1995, it was named after its main river, the town's main geographical feature that makes its way through most of the barangays. The river is the setting of many spellbinding folktales and legends. A visit to Sibunag is sure to unravel the town's secrets and make your journey much more colorful (<http://www.choosephilippines.com/do/festivals/1138/balsahan-festival>, retrieved on November 22, 2017).

4. Bulantihan Festival in Jordan. It is celebrated every last Friday of January by the municipality of Jordan. The three major sources of income of the people of Jordan are farming, fishing, and mango production. The products are brought in the market for "bulante" (trade). It is primarily a celebration of the economic endeavor that made Jordan what it is today (<http://guimaras.forumotion.net/t8-festivals>, retrieved on December 28, 2017).

5. Asinan Festival in San Lorenzo. It is Celebrated every 19th day of February by the municipality of San Lorenzo. Marvel at how the ordinary salt has gravitated the people of the community in an annual gathering with all the delicious trimmings specialty products. Not everything in the Asinan Festival is salty though, as there are the spicy seafood, the juicy citrus, and crispy nuts. With the proper blend of the unique hospitality and the natural smiles of the people and one will hunger for more of the Asinan spectacle ((<http://guimaras.forumotion.net/t8-festivals>, retrieved on December 28, 2017

## **Barangay Festivals**

1. Pamalandong sa Tamborong in Tamborong, San Lorenzo, Guimaras held in a week before Good Friday.

2. Banigan Festival in Sapal, San Lorenzo, Guimaras held every April 15. Banigan Festival focuses on the use of 'banig' or dried pandan leaves as mats and various handicrafts. Banigan Festival is the identity festival of Barangay Sapal, San Lorenzo with "banig" mat as the most notable product of the village. To promote the products of the village weavers, the Banigan Festival was conceptualized and new products like hats, bags, and slippers are creatively designed by the locals to sustain the preservation of its cultural heritage. In promoting the products during festivals, Banigan tribe danced with the costume made by Banig and portrayed steps on mat weaving. Props and other accessories of the tribe members were also made of Banig. Indeed, Sapal which was once considered a depressed remote barangay has now drawn attraction among local and even international tourist through its Banigan Festival. Banigan Festival is celebrated

every 15th day of April (<http://guimaras.forumotion.net/t8-festivals>, retrieved on December 28, 2017).

3. Saranggola Festival in San Roque, Buenavista, Guimaras held every March. Kite flying festival which is participated by Barangay folks and neighboring barangays and municipalities of Guimaras. It manifests the ingenuity and creativity in designing kites, maneuvering the same as it swiftly and smoothly fly in the air. The events promote the preservation of traditional leisure of the Filipinos and creativity in re-using and recycling materials in making and designing kites. It is celebrated every last week of March (<http://guimaras.forumotion.net/t8-festivals>, retrieved on December 28, 2017).

4. Layagan Festival in Hoskyn, Jordan, Guimaras held every May 8.

5. Mini Paraw Festival in Rizal, Buenavista, Guimaras held every 3rd week of June

6. Binagtong Festival in Cabalagnan, Nueva Valencia, Guimaras held every 3rd week of April

7. Harvest Festival in Suclaran, San Lorenzo, Guimaras held every 2nd Sunday of October

8. Pangasi Festival in Lanipe, Nueva Valencia, Guimaras. Pangasi, a traditional farming ritual whose function is to offer, relate, befriend or communicate with the environmental spirits for a bountiful harvest, whether benevolent or malevolent, who are unseen but live together with the mortals. And is still performed by most farmers in the barangay. The three day celebration on the last day of January, has several activities which include traditional games like palosebo. "lagsanay manok", "Palumbadakupidik", Pinaka contest for vegetable growers, pinipig contest, ibos making contest, puso making contest, bag-id contest which been participated by Lanipe's Indigenous people, and a cultural presentation which really shows what is pangasi all about(<http://guimaras.forumotion.net/t8-festivals>, retrieved on December 28, 2017).

9. Sibiran Festival in Guisi, Dolores, Nueva Valencia, Guimaras. Sibiran Festival is an annual celebration of SitioGuisi, Dolores, Nueva Valencia. The word "sibid-sibiran" or simply called "sibiran" is artificial fish bait made of selected fowl feather and is attached to a hook and line being used to catch fishes. Celebrated every 3rd Saturday of February as part of the over-all activities. The festival showcases presentations. Games, beach sports and regatta with food festival in the shoreline.Sibiran Festival aimed to develop unity and cooperation to promote awareness in the protection, conservation and rehabilitation of coastal resources for the maintenance of ecological balance and enhance the promotion of eco-tourism (<http://guimaras.forumotion.net/t8-festivals>, retrieved on December 28, 2017).

10. Ambolong Festival in Salvacion, Buenavista, Guimaras. "Ambolong" comes from the word "bulong" which means medicine or treatment for once upon a time there was anHerbolaryo who could heal various ailments of the locals which named the place "AngBulong" and later was changed to Ambolong, noewSalvacion. The Barangay is popularly known for its history and expertise of the locals in the field of music and arts. It is home of an Orphanage-the Good Shepherds Fold Academy (GSFA) where orphans are trained in playing violins and other musical instruments. Celebrated every 3rd Saturday of February (<http://guimaras.forumotion.net/t8-festivals>, retrieved on December 28, 2017).

11. Bayuhan Festival in Salvacion, Nueva Valencia, Guimaras. Bayuhan is an Ilonggo term which describes the procedure of traditional way of rice milling or food processing using "lusong" and "hal-o" wherein the products are placed in lusong and pounded by hal-o, a hard wooden pole rounded at both ends with a grip-size middle that serves as the handle. This traditional way of pounding rice has been made popular in the barangay even in the introduction of modern technology. This annual activity preserved the skills, cooperation and develops unity as well as the observed customs and traditions in the people of Barangay Salvacion and so Bayuhan Festival was conceptualized. It is celebrated every 2nd Friday of March (<http://guimaras.forumotion.net/t8-festivals>, retrieved on December 28, 2017).

12. Niyogyogan Festival in Oracon, Nueva Valencia, Guimaras. Niyogyogan Festival conceptualizes livelihood and production processes of coconut as the main source of income the community. The annual celebration presents a cultural showcase through dance drama and interpretation of their lifestyle and culture; their artistry and creativity in designing and crafting local crafts and skills in food processing, utilizing the parts of the Coconut- the Tree of Life. It is celebrated every March 20 (<http://guimaras.forumotion.net/t8-festivals>, retrieved on December 28, 2017).

13. Karosahan Festival in Napandong, Nueva Valencia, Guimaras. The Karosa is an invention that helped shaped the agri-based economy of the barangay. Made mostly of a bamboo and pulled by carabaos, the karosa has transported farm inputs from the farm to the market. Karosa- a carabao- the drawn sledge is a traditional means of transportation as part of their lives, being preserved and celebrated with the culture of the old folks in street dancing and cultural showcase. It is celebrated every 14th of April (<http://guimaras.forumotion.net/t8-festivals>, retrieved on December 28, 2017).

14. Manokan Festival in Concordia, Nueva Valencia, Guimaras. "Manokan" comes from the word Manok which means chicken. A street dancing, array of products display and food festival or chicken-based menus await guests to experience the festive activities. This festival promotes the preservation of Poultry raising as the main source of income of the community to sustain production of highly breed and good quality chicken, the major livelihood of the village as one of the suppliers of native chicken in some big restaurants in Iloilo City. It is celebrated every 30th of October ((<http://guimaras.forumotion.net/t8-festivals>, retrieved on December 28, 2017).

15. Kadagatan Festival in San Roque, Nueva Valencia, Guimaras. Kadagatan Festival depicts the bounties of the sea of Barangay San Roque. Locals' livelihood is fishing and they are very much dependent on the richness of marine resources for their home consumption and sustain their family needs. "Kadagatan Festival" advocates community awareness as one of the potential assets for tourism and involvements in protecting their marine resources to sustain life. It also displays the traditional way of catching fish that has been observed by the old folks which are handed down from generation to generation. Celebrated every 27th of December (<http://guimaras.forumotion.net/t8-festivals>, retrieved on December 28, 2017).

**Significant Contributions of the Festivals in the Island of Guimaras**

Visitors' Arrival in the Province. Table 1 shows the visitors arrival in the province of Guimaras for the past five years. It was shown here clearly that higher number of visitors' arrivals represented the local excursionists or those visitors coming outside Guimaras and within the Philippines and have stayed in less than 24 hours in the destination; tremendous increase in the number of local excursionists is also noted for the past five years. Local tourists ranked second in terms of arrival in the province; records showed that there was a notable increase of arrivals of local tourists from 2014 to 2016. Foreign excursionist ranked third in terms of arrival in the province; tremendous increase in arrival is also noted from 2012 to 2016. Foreign tourists ranked 4th in terms of the number of arrivals; an increase of arrival is also noted in 2016.



Figure 1.Visitors' Arrival for the past five years.

**Visitor's Arrival in 2016 per month.** Table 2 shows the visitor's arrival in 2016 per month. It was shown here that in terms of monthly monitoring of the arrival of visitors, the month of May ranked first, March ranked second and April ranked third while in terms of the number of festivals, the month of April ranked first, January and February ranked second and March ranked third. Hence, it was shown in this table that the number of festivals does not contribute to the number of visitor's arrival in the province.

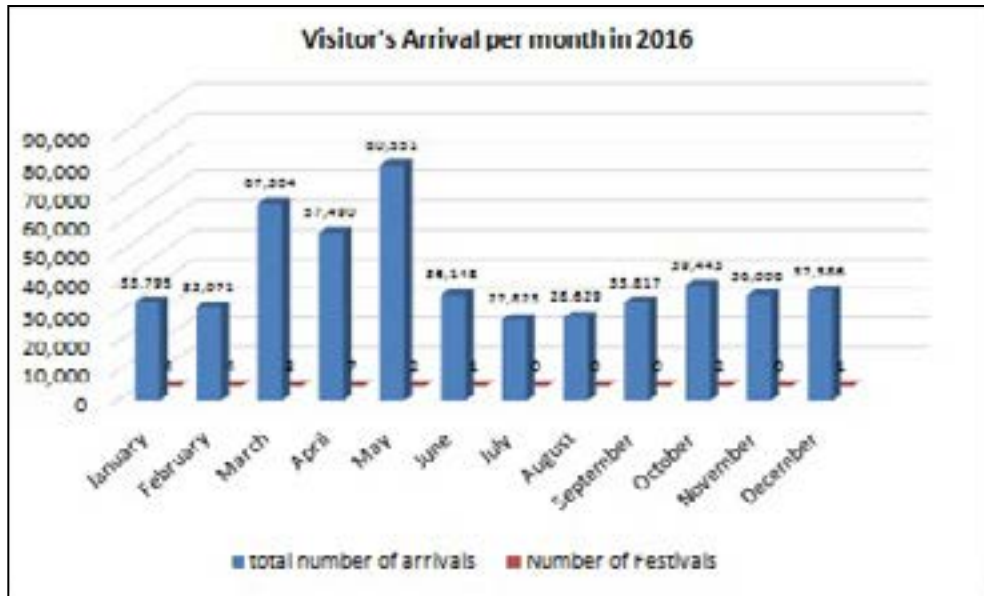


Figure 2. Visitor's Arrival in 2016 per Month

### Agri-Trade and Tourism Fair Sales

Table 3 presents the Agri-trade and Tourism Fair Sales of the province of Guimaras for the past six years. Based on the gathered data, it was shown that there was a notable increase of sales from 2014 to 2017.



Figure 3. Agri-trade and tourism fair sales

## **CONCLUSIONS**

1. The province is rich in festivals that showcase the culture of the people in Guimaras.
2. The festivals in the province of Guimaras contributed to the visitors' arrival when taken as a whole but the visitors' arrival is not dependent on the number of festivals when monthly monitoring is considered. In addition, festivals contributed to the increase in agri-trade and tourism fair sales for the past five years.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. In order to maintain the momentum of the celebration of festivities in the province, there is a need to review the schedule of activities of these festivals so that the months of July, August, September, and November will also be counted as festive months.
2. Recognizing the contributions of festivals in the visitors' arrival in the province, it is recommended that careful planning of the events may be done to invite more visitors to come and witness the festivities in the province.
3. It is recommended that each of the municipalities in the province will maintain a well-documented data to show the significant contributions of the municipal and barangay festivals in the economic aspects.

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