
LOCAL TOURISTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS PASUNGAY FESTIVAL

Nocheryleh F. Mombay*, Claudine B. Sarad, Julie Rose S. Sararaña

Hospitality and Business Management Department, Iloilo Science and Technology University, Miagao, Iloilo, Philippines

*Corresponding author: nocherylehombay@gmail.com

Abstract

Festivals play a significant role in terms of presenting cultural aspects and traditions of a place to tourists who give the effort, time, and money to visit, understanding the way of life of the locals. Pasungay Festival is commemorated annually in the Philippines. It is a tradition of the people of San Joaquin, Iloilo, in which the two raging water buffalo, or “carabao,” are fighting in the center field. In celebrating a festival, local tourists' perception matters, for it will help the place improve its facilities, security, and environment. The researchers conducted the study to determine the perception of tourists who witnessed the festival. The respondents of the study were one hundred (100) local tourists who visit the town of San Joaquin to watch the *Pasungay* Festival. This study was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2023-2024. The researchers used a quantitative approach, and a survey questionnaire was employed as a method of gathering data. Results show that local tourists have a “positive perception” towards *Pasungay* Festival when taken as a whole. The festival remains the cultural attraction of San Joaquin, Iloilo, despite the controversy that it faced four years ago. The *Pasungay* Festival is now registered in the Philippine Registry of Cultural Property as an intangible cultural property of the Philippines. The local government unit should provide the best services and satisfying facilities to encourage tourists to visit San Joaquin.

Keywords: Local tourists, *Pasungay* festival, Perception.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Festival plays an important role in the tourism industry, for it commemorates the traditions, culture, and heritage of a certain place. *Pasungay* Festival in San Joaquin, Iloilo, is an ancient tradition of the municipality in which the two raging water buffalo, or known in the locals as *carabao*, fought in the center field where every local and tourist were going to witness. However, it was held by the municipality for four years because it was reported by the numerous animal welfare groups that it violates Republic Act 8485, otherwise known as the Animal Welfare Act of 1998. This year, the *Pasungay* Festival is declared an intangible cultural property of the Philippines, and the celebration of this continued.

From a global perspective, many tourism destinations use festivals as an important means to attract tourists, making festivals an important part of the tourism product to attract tourists from all over the world. The key factors of a festival, such as venue facilities, environment, and performance or entertainment, matter to satisfy the tourists' expectations who spend money and efforts to witness the particular cultural event (Li and Pierskalla, 2018). Evaluating the positive and negative effects of festivals on destinations in general is very important for the success of festivals. In terms of sustainability and efficiency management, it is important to know how social-cultural and environmental impacts are perceived by the local community as well as the economic contribution it provides to maximize the benefits of the festival. Certain impacts are perceived positively by some members of the community, while the other members perceive the same impacts as negative. The

affected community members identify their positive and negative labels to reflect their perception of the types of effects that the festival creates on them (Berzigan and Yetginer, 2020).

After 4 years of being on hold due to the reported violation, the researchers were conducting this study to determine the perception of tourists towards *Pasungay* Festival.

Statement of the Problem

The study aimed to identify the perception of local tourists towards the *Pasungay* Festival. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents?
2. What is the perception of local tourists towards *Pasungay* Festival when taken as a whole or when group according to age, sex, and type of tourists?
3. Is there any significant difference in the local tourist perception when taken as a whole or when group according to age, sex, and type of tourists?
4. Is there a significant relationship between local tourists' perceptions towards *Pasungay* Festival in terms of its ambiance, entertainment, and venue facilities?

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the local tourists' perception towards *Pasungay* Festival when taken as a whole or when group according to age, sex, and type of tourist in terms of entertainment, ambiance, and venue facilities.

There is no significant relationship between local tourists' perceptions of the *Pasungay* Festival in terms of its ambiance, entertainment, and venue facilities.

Theoretical Framework

According to the Constructive Theory of Perception by Gregory (1970), perception is an active process involving making inferences and interpretations based on previous knowledge, experience, and context. Perception is a hypothesis that is based on prior knowledge. In this way, people are actively constructing their perception of reality based on their environment and stored information. The model of reality constructed from perception is biased by perceptual set rather than being objective. Perceptual set refers to the tendency to select certain information that is deemed important, focus on it, and ignore less "relevant" aspects of what people see. The perceptual set is influenced by culture, motivation, emotion, and expectation.

This theory relates to the study because the study aims to identify the personal perception of tourists towards *Pasungay* Festival based on their experiences and previous knowledge of the festival's ambiance, entertainment, and venue facilities.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

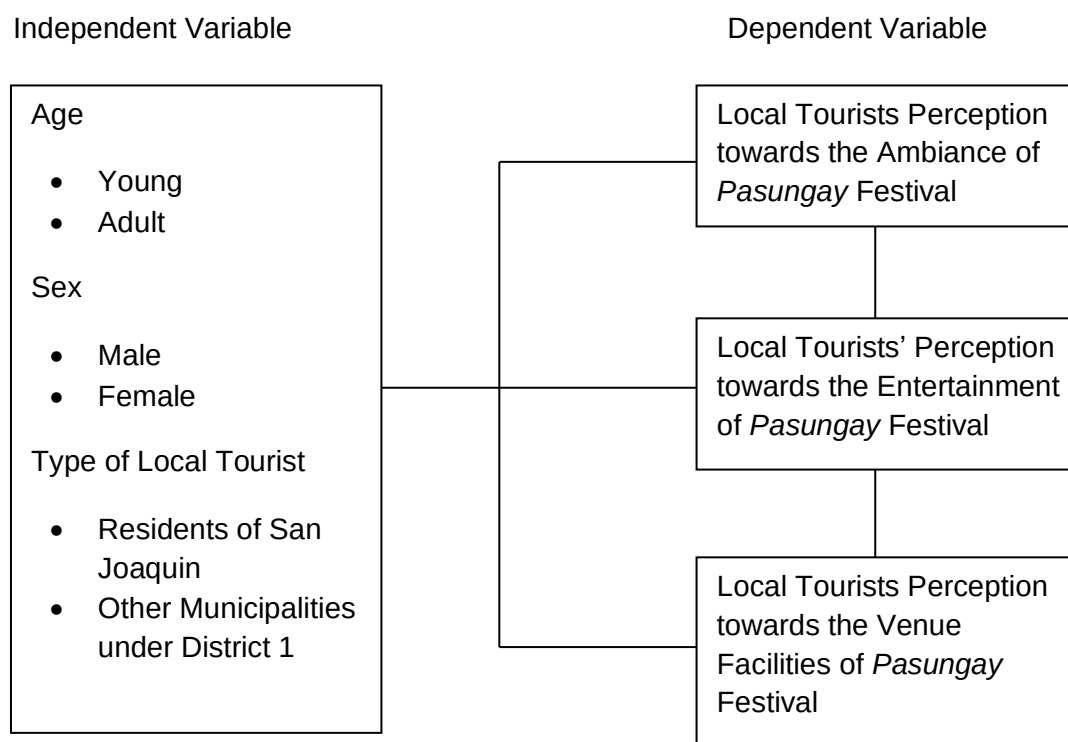


Figure 1. Schematic diagram of the study

Figure 1 shows the independent variables including sex, age, and type of local tourist. The dependent variable is the tourist's perception towards the ambiance, entertainment, and venue facilities of *Pasungay* Festival.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Related Literature

History of *Pasungay* Festival

In the Middle Ages, the bull was simply released into a town or village square, in which the aristocrat (acting as the *matador*) would then fight the animal from horseback with a long lance. By the end of the 18th century, the demand for the bullfight increased in popularity amongst the general public. This led to a loss of the exclusive right to fight bulls that the nobility had. Bullfighting started to become a respectable and honorable profession at last (Carrascosa, 2024).

In the Philippines, the Bullfighting of San Joaquin, famed to be the *Pasungay* Festival, is the other version of this festivity. The annual horsefight "*Pahibag*" and bullfight "*Pasungay*" is one of the most prestigious festivals celebrated in Iloilo. Historians believe that bullfights were already being held in the town before the Spanish era. It began when two angry bulls were set loose by the cow keepers and fought in the hillside. It is witnessed by the townspeople and captured their interest, making it popular amusement in most of the barangay fiestas (Dacumos, 2013).

The carabao symbolizes strength, power, efficiency, perseverance, and hard work. Carabaos are the main attraction of the *Pasungay* Festival in San Joaquin, Iloilo, held every third Saturday of

January. Locals said it is a celebration of the importance of farm animals in their daily lives as an agricultural community (Gorecho, 2023).

The annual bullfight festival of San Joaquin, Iloilo, is back in the limelight after hitting some snags in the past four years. In 2019, the municipal government deferred the holding of *Pasungay* due to legal obstacles not only to the San Joaquin local government it was facing but also to owners of the animals that would take part in the activity. Opponents of the festival said the holding of the *Pasungay* Festival violated Republic Act 8485, or the Animal Welfare Act of 1998. In this year's *Pasungay*, the NCCA also brought good news to the people of San Joaquin. The *Pasungay* Festival is now one of the intangible cultural properties of the Philippines, as it is registered in the Philippine Registry of Cultural Property. Officials from the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) joined thousands of people of San Joaquin in witnessing the festival. *Pasungay* Festival is an event celebrating the importance of livestock as part of the daily lives in an agricultural community like San Joaquin. In Iloilo, bullfights are still held today as part of an old religious tradition. The festival called *Pasungay* involves bulls and horses that are pitted against each other for the sake of entertainment (Rendon, 2023).

Related Studies

A study by Dalgiç and Birdir (2020) entitled “Key Success Factors on Loyalty of Festival Visitors: The Mediating Effect of Festival Experience and Festival Image,” in a successful event, some factors, which can be described as key success factors, must be present both before and during it. These are factors that can change the perceptions and behaviors of participants and provide them with unique experiences. Program, physical environment (facilities, parking places, etc.), interaction (employees and volunteers, participants, etc.), and benefits (output quality) all affect participants' perceptions about the festival and help form an image of it. Attitudes are positive or negative reactions to an object that can be learned by individuals. Attitudes in turn are related to behavior. The study is related to the current study because this study also aims to identify if there is a difference between the perception of tourists in terms of their age, sex, and type of tourist to the festivals' ambiance, entertainment, and venue facilities.

According to the study by Ahn et al. (2020) entitled “Does Gender Moderate the Relationship among Festival Attendees' Motivation, Perceived Value, Visitor Satisfaction, and Electronic Word of Mouth?” festivals are experiential products that heavily rely on recommendations of those who have already experienced it. This relates to the study because if the festival could gain a positive perception from the tourists who witnessed the said event, that could be the tourist's next motivation to revisit the municipality.

According to the study by Fytopoulou et al. (2021) entitled “The Role of Events in Local Development: An Analysis of Residents' Perspectives and Visitor Satisfaction,” tourism is arguably one of the most promising options for economic prosperity in rural areas. Effective strategies aiming at tourism development, however, should be based on a thorough analysis of residents' preferences as well as visitors' expectations and satisfaction. Moreover, the majority of visitors attending events regarded the study as a value-for-money destination and experienced positive emotions during their stay. Visitors' views and satisfaction with the destination are equally important and should not be neglected, as they can point to areas that require improvement and new ways to attract visitors or maintain the existing ones.

According to the study by Setubal et al. (2019) entitled “San Joaquin: A Look into its Local Tourism,” the local tourism of San Joaquin is promising. San Joaquin is a municipality that has a lot

over in terms of its local tourism. Offering up beautiful landscapes, unique culture, fun-filled festivals, and adrenaline-pumping activities, it is not a question of what to see and do in San Joaquin. Rather, it is a question of knowing which sights and experiences simply cannot be missed. Tourism is argued to belong to the most important industries in the world, with much ability to connect cultures and people in developing an understanding and knowledge about the other. Furthermore, it provides a stepping stone for communities to reach development and improvement. A cultural heritage value is a living idea. Currently, “cultural heritage” is a broader term, which includes natural and man-made legacy. The complex care of cultural heritage in the field of visual arts involves a set of new values, stories, ideas, traditions, symbols, attitudes, and accomplishments.

According to the study by Villones (2020) entitled “Negros Panaad Festival Dances: A Reflection of Negrenses’ Cultural Identity,” the coming of technology in this millennial culture awakened the already threatened Filipino cultural identity. This is coupled with varied cultures and traditions introduced by the waves of colonial rule that have reached the Philippine shores. It is perhaps the oldest of the arts, reflecting man's desire to communicate history, religion, and diverse cultural traditions and heritage. The discussions mentioned above of different dance descriptions of dance festivals are a clear manifestation of people's different stories from all walks of life. The various contexts may have different perspectives: may it be animistic in form, imitative or show colonial influence, contemporary or new, native or purely Filipino in style.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study used the quantitative approach. The researchers collected statistical data and analyzed and interpreted the responses from the selected respondents. The respondents are selected during the festivals' commemorating time. The researchers prepared the survey questionnaire composed of categories classified into *Pasungay* Festival's ambiance, entertainment, and venue facilities, as well as the respondents' personal information such as age, sex, and type of tourist. The data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted by the researchers to identify the perception of tourists towards *Pasungay* Festival.

The respondents of the study were one hundred (100) local tourists from the residents of the municipality of San Joaquin and other municipalities from District I. All of the respondents were selected through the convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method where units are selected for inclusion in the sample because they are the easiest for the researcher to access. This can be due to geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or willingness to participate in the research (Nikolopoulou, 2022).

Before conducting the study, the preliminary survey questionnaires were referred to the validators for comments and suggestions regarding the format and item content. Suggestions and feedback were served as guidelines for the revisions of questionnaires. The survey questionnaire was made by the researcher for the purpose of collecting the profile of the respondents and their perception towards *Pasungay* Festival in terms of the festival's ambiance, entertainment, and venue facilities.

The researchers created a survey questionnaire to gather the data needed for the study. The questionnaire contains two sections. The first part of the questionnaire includes respondents' demographic profile, such as age, sex, and type of tourists. The second part contains questions in accordance with the tourists' perceptions of the *Pasungay* Festival in terms of its ambiance, entertainment, and venue facilities. The researchers created their own questionnaire, and it was

based on the Good and Scates Validation. The questionnaire formulated by the researchers was subjected to the validation of the experts.

The perception of local tourists was rated on its corresponding five-point Likert scale, with the description and range of the mean described below. Confidentiality of every respondent was highly valued in this research study. The perception of local tourists in *Pasungay Festival* was rated on the corresponding five-point Likert scale, with the description and range of the mean described below:

Scale	Description	Range of Means	Overall Rating
5	Strongly Agree	4.21 – 5.00	Strong Positive Perception
4	Agree	3.41 – 4.20	Positive Perception
3	Neutral	2.61 – 3.40	Neutral Perception
2	Disagree	1.81 – 2.60	Negative Perception
1	Strongly Disagree	1.00 – 1.80	Strong Negative Perception

The gathered data was subjected to the following statistical treatments: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to measure the level of significance. The percentage and frequency were used to determine the profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, and type of tourist. Mean and standard deviation were used to describe the data. The Mann-Whitney U test is used to test whether two samples are likely to derive from the same population (Lamorte, 2017). Spearman Rho was used to find out the significant relationship between the perception and the ambiance, entertainment, and venue facilities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Analysis

To have a comprehensive background of the respondents, the profile is provided in the table below.

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents			
	Categories	<i>f</i>	%
Age	Young	64	64
	Adult	36	36
Sex	Male	48	48
	Female	52	52
Type of Tourists	Resident of San Joaquin	82	82
	Other Municipality	18	18
Total		100	100

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents according to age, sex, and type of tourist. As to sex, 48 (48%) of the respondents were male and 52 (52%) were female. As to age, 64 (64%) of the respondents were young, with the age between 18 and 29 years old, and 36 (36%) were adults, with

the age between 30 years old and above. For the type of tourists, 82 (82%) of the respondents were residents of San Joaquin, and 18 (18%) were from other municipalities under District 1.

Table 1 reveals that most of the respondents are female, of young age between 18 and 29 years old, and are residents of the municipality of San Joaquin.

Mercan (2020) supported the result of this study that most attendees of the festival were women. On the other hand, males were less motivated to attend festivals than females. Regarding the type of tourist, the results indicate that residents were more motivated to attend festivals than non-residents. (Camprubi & Coromina, 2019).

Table 2. Perception of Local Tourists of the *Pasungay* Festival Taken as a Whole and When Grouped According to Sex, Age, and Type of Tourist

Categories		N	M(SD)	Description
Age				
Ambiance	Young	64	3.60(0.54)	Positive Perception
	Adult	36	3.33(0.49)	Neutral Perception
Entertainment	Young	64	3.71(0.43)	Positive Perception
	Adult	36	3.57(0.41)	Positive Perception
Venue Facilities	Young	64	3.58(0.58)	Positive Perception
	Adult	36	3.23(0.45)	Neutral Perception
Sex				
Ambiance	Male	48	3.37(0.59)	Positive Perception
	Female	52	3.52(0.48)	Positive Perception
Entertainment	Male	48	3.68(0.44)	Positive Perception
	Female	52	3.64(0.42)	Positive Perception
Venue Facilities	Male	48	3.39(0.61)	Neutral Perception
	Female	52	3.51(0.49)	Positive Perception
Type of Tourists				
Ambiance	Resident	82	3.57(0.56)	Positive Perception
	Non-resident	18	3.17(0.33)	Neutral Perception
Entertainment	Resident	82	3.70(0.43)	Positive Perception
	Non-resident	18	3.47(0.43)	Positive Perception
Venue Facilities	Resident	82	3.49(0.58)	Positive Perception
	Non-resident	18	3.27(0.41)	Neutral Perception
Total		100	3.53(0.44)	Positive Perception

Table 2 reveals that in terms of age, the entertainment gain “positive perception” in young ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.43$) and adults ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.41$). On the other hand, the ambiance and venue facilities gain “positive perception” in young people ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.54$), ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.58$), and “neutral perception” in adults ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 0.49$), ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 0.45$). In terms of sex, the entertainment of the *Pasungay* Festival gains “positive perception” in males ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.44$), and ambiance has “positive perception” ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 0.59$). The female has also a “positive perception” ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.42$) in entertainment, and ambiance has also a “positive perception”

($M = 3.52$, $SD = 0.48$). While venue facilities gain “neutral perception” in males ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.61$) and a “positive perception” ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.49$) in females. In terms of type of tourists, the entertainment has a “positive perception” ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.43$) from the residents of San Joaquin.

The other municipalities under district one have a “positive perception” ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 0.36$). The ambiance has a “positive perception” ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.56$), and venue facilities also have a “positive perception” ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.58$) from the residents of San Joaquin. The residents of other municipalities have a “neutral perception” ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 0.33$) of the ambiance and a “positive perception” ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 0.36$) of entertainment. On the venue facilities, the residents have a “positive perception” ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.58$), while the nonresident has a “neutral perception” ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 0.41$). The result reveals that when taken as a whole or when taken as a group, the perception of tourists towards *Pasungay Festival* is “positive perception” ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 0.44$).

Ahn, Choi, and Joung (2020) supported the results of this study that both male and female have a positive perception of the entertainment and ambiance of the festival by assuring that it provides enjoyment and perceived value in the culture that it represents. As for venue facilities, finding a parking lot is difficult to find, especially when the place is overcrowded and you have your personal vehicle. It was supported that males could have a neutral perception than females, who had a positive perception of venue facilities for festivals (Bezirgan and Yetginer, 2020).

Inferential Analysis

Table 3. Significant Difference in the Local Tourists' Perception When Taken as a Whole and When Group according to Age, Sex, and Type of Tourists

Variable	Mean Rank	U	p
According to Ambiance			
Age	48.30	790.00	0.009*
Sex	50.39	1098.50	0.300
Type of Tourists	44.02	439.00	0.007*
According to Entertainment			
Age	49.02	938.00	0.123
Sex	50.53	1208.50	0.784
Type of Tourists	45.31	508.00	0.038*
According to Venue Facilities			
Age	47.91	725.00	0.002*
Sex	50.26	949.00	0.039*
Type of Tourists	47.45	597.50	0.206
Total	49.50	739.50	0.003*

*significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 3 shows the significant difference in the local tourists' perception when taken as a whole and when grouped according to age, sex, and type of tourist. The table reveals that when taken as a whole, there is a significant difference in the local tourists' perception of the *Pasungay Festival* since the p-value (0.003) is less than 0.05.

When grouped according to ambiance, the table shows that age has a p-value of 0.009, which is a significant difference. This implies that the local tourists' perceptions of the ambiance based on their age differ. As to sex, the p-value is 0.300 and is not significant. The type of tourists has a p-

value of 0.007, which is less than 0.05 and is significant. It means that the perception of the local tourists as to the ambiance of the *Pasungay* Festival varies.

When grouped according to entertainment, age has no significant difference since the p-value of 0.123 is greater than 0.05. Sex has a p-value of 0.784 and is also not significant. The type of tourists has a p-value of 0.038 and is considered significant. This implies that local tourists have diverse perceptions of the entertainment of the festival.

When grouped according to venue facilities, age has the p-value of 0.002 and is considered significant. This implies that the perceptions of local tourists vary by age. Sex has a p-value of 0.039 and is considered significant. This shows that the local tourists' perceptions as to sex differ. The type of tourists has a p-value of 0.206 and is not significant. Hence, the result shows that local tourists' perceptions of the ambiance and venue facilities are affected by age. Sex, as to the ambiance and entertainment of the *Pasungay* Festival, does not significantly influence the perceptions of local tourists. As to the venue facilities, males and females have varied perceptions. The type of tourists significantly influences the local tourists' perceptions of ambiance and entertainment.

Table 4. Significant Relationship between Local Tourists Perception towards *Pasungay* Festival in Terms of Ambiance, Entertainment, and Venue Facilities

Variables	<i>rho</i>	p	Description
Entertainment and Ambiance	0.630	$p < 0.001$	*Moderate Positive Correlation
Entertainment and Venue Facilities	0.565	$p < 0.001$	*Moderate Positive Correlation
Ambiance and Venue Facilities	0.760	$p < 0.001$	*Moderate Positive Correlation

*significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 4 shows the significant relationship between tourists' perceptions of the *Pasungay* Festival in terms of ambiance, entertainment, and venue facilities. The table reveals that entertainment, ambiance, and venue facilities have a significant relationship since the p-value (0.00) is less than 0.05. The null hypothesis that states that there is no significant difference in the tourists' perception towards *Pasungay* Festival when taken as a whole or when group according to age, sex, and type of tourists in terms of entertainment, ambiance, and venue facilities is rejected. Hence, the result shows that entertainment, ambiance, and venue facilities are significantly related to each other.

CONCLUSION

The *Pasungay* Festival is declared an intangible cultural property of the Philippines by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), and the celebration of this continued. *Pasungay* Festival portrays the way of life of every farmer in the municipality, as well as strongly depicting the culture of San Joaquin for a long decade. It shows that the residents of San Joaquin are more likely the ones who visit and witness the cultural attraction. This study has proven that residents of a certain place are those who patronage and support their municipality's culture and

traditions. Planning and having a thorough preparation could be a positive factor that makes the previous visitors or tourists revisit the place and recommend the festival to other people. Just like *Pasungay* Festival, most of the festivals held in the Philippines are celebrated to help protect and preserve local cultural traditions, develop tourism, and promote the economic, social, and cultural developments of the destination.

Future researchers should conduct in-depth research on the history, significance, and cultural practices associated with the *Pasungay* Festival. They should document comprehensively to provide valuable insights for promotional materials and educational resources. They should organize community outreach programs, workshops, and educational initiatives to raise awareness about the *Pasungay* Festival among local residents, schools, and organizations to encourage them to participate and volunteer to foster a sense of ownership and pride in the festival. Besides that, they should engage with local communities that are involved in organizing and participating in the *Pasungay* Festival to understand their perspectives, traditions, and motivations.

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