

## Church Tourism in Batangas Province, Philippines

Jayzel Ann T. De Castro, Kristine Joy M. Bueno, Judy Ann R. Laroza, Karen G. Limbo,  
Jean Shierlene D. Petrasanta, Sevilla S. Felicen, Alex P. Ylagan

*Bachelor of Science in Travel and Tourism Management, College of International Tourism and Hospitality  
Management, Lyceum of the Philippines University, Batangas City*

*PHILIPPINES*

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**Abstract** - Church tourism has clearly increased over the past ten years. Churches are an important part of the tourism product of many parts of the country. This study aimed to determine the contribution of the churches in terms of social, cultural and economic aspects of the place, to identify the problems encountered in the promoting church tourism and propose plan of action to sustain the tourism of the Province of Batangas through churches. The researchers used the descriptive method of research and utilized self-made questionnaire as the main data gathering instrument of the study. The respondents were consisting of 5 people in the offices of the pilgrim churches from Batangas City and 10 churchgoers. The respondents agree that pilgrim churches contribute to tourism in terms of social and economics aspect while they strongly agree in term of cultural aspect. The most commonly experienced problems were the accessibility of the transportation and an action plan was proposed to address the problems encountered. The recommendation addressed that roving guards should be provided to ensure the safety and security of the tourists during their visit in the church. The church personnel may provide creative and command activities that will encourage people. Also they may have a briefing about the history of the church so that if visitor needs information it easy for them to answer and an action plan may be implemented to solve the problem encountered.

**Keywords** – Church Tourism, Pilgrim Churches

### I. INTRODUCTION

The profound and rapid changes that have placed in the world in the past two decades have been mirrored in changes in tourism. Global political and economic reorganizations have resulted in the expansion of tourism both in the spatial sense and in terms of a significant increase in the size of the tourist market. It has grown into one of the world's major industries and has thus also become increasingly important (Aguba, Tamayo & Barlan, 2013). Although tourism has been popular, it cannot deny the fact problem do exist that hinder tourist growth in every place (Buted, Ylagan & Mendoza, 2014). Although these changes have been rapid and, in many cases, unanticipated, they have not had revolutionary effects upon tourism; rather, they have enabled it to grow in an evolutionary fashion. Changes in the environmental sphere, however, appear likely to be more fundamental (Kim, 2008).

Religious institutions are universal institutions, although the types vary from one place to another. Wherever one goes, they discover that religious institutions persist in whatever form. Societies would have at least a system of beliefs and practices related to

a supernatural being. Religion is believed to have originated from man's need to explain the world and the phenomena around him.

Worship has always been a one central church activity, even though greatly corrupted in certain situations by the introduction of pagan rituals, it remains important to all who wish to worship 'in Spirit and in truth'. Secondly, for those who truly love the God of the Bible, His word is precious above the words of men. Thus although this word needs to be faithfully proclaimed as part of Christian worship, it is also the prayer, although a part of corporate worship in a Christian worship context, is often engaged in 'wherever two or three are gathered in my name'. Many churches also have formal mid-week gatherings specifically for prayer, as well as for special needs at other times. Fourthly, Christians often engage in charitable deeds which can take many forms, in order to help those in need.

The researchers conduct a study entitled "Church Tourism in the Province of Batangas". They acquire certain knowledge concerning the said topic so that it

can be an appropriate referral and considering the pilgrim churches in the Province of Batangas can be a tourist destination. In justifying the study, the researchers will procure some information from books, encyclopedias, documents and previous study of the researchers.

## **II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study aimed to determine the sustainability of tourism in the province of Batangas through church tourism. Specifically it determined the contribution of the churches in terms of social, cultural and economic aspects of the place, identified the problems encountered in the promoting church tourism and proposed plan of action to sustain the tourism of the Province of Batangas through churches.

## **III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Tourism is a key element of the Philippine economy. According to the World Tourism Organization, its contribution to the Gross National Product averages 8.8 percent. It brings in the much-needed foreign exchange into the country (Lagman, 2008).

An increasing number of people are visiting churches and other religious heritage sites awareness of their significance as attractions is growing (Duff, 2009). One spiritual group says it is organizing its first trip to sacred sites in north Wales this summer as part of a retreat. Custodians at St. Winefride's Holy Well said they see people of all "creeds and denominations" who visit with an interest in the building's heritage or for religious purposes (Bourne, 2012).

Religious tourism is when people who, may or may not be Christians, go on holiday or on a day trip to visit churches or shrines because they are primarily interested in history or architecture but in so doing may learn something of the Christian tradition and the Christian faith (Walker, 2012). According to Griffiths (2012), it also an opportunity for them to highlight the many holy sites which they are privileged to have on their doorstep and they hope to inspire others to discover this rich Christian heritage.

Religious tourism is one of the oldest forms of tourism whereby people of faith travel individually or in groups for pilgrimage, missionary, or leisure (fellowship) purpose. The religion and spirituality are common motivations for travel for there are many major tourist destinations having developed largely as a result of their connections to sacred people, places and events (Quinio, et al. 2010).

The process of communities building, adapting and renewing their sacred spaces over centuries of social, economic and cultural change has endowed historic churches with more than a patina of age: they are tangible expressions of the evolution of British culture, local heritage, family history and tales of human events and achievements, embellished with architecture, art and craftsmanship. Thus, churches are a cultural asset contributing to local distinctiveness, integral to the communities and destinations within which they have evolved (Strong, 2008).

According to Lewis (2008), churches are also an attractive component to local communities. Much like strong school systems, many families and individuals consider the presence of local religious organizations when making decisions about moving to communities and purchasing property. Kim (2007) emphasized that the presence of churches in the community will also increase the religiosity of locals, and increased religiosity results in positive social contributions for the community. According to Knack (2007), social capital, which churches promote, has been shown to increase economic growth, and it also improves government performance, according to an evaluation of the fifty states. Churches have diverse positive impacts on communities, ranging from increased trust, improved mental and physical health, decreased crime, and enhanced levels of volunteering and community outreach.

Based on interview with Norli Delgado, a security guard of Saint Martin de Tours in Taal is considered the largest church in Asia; it is famous in local and foreign tourist. This can help to provide jobs for the community. They hired security guard to assist the tourist in touring in the place and also helpers in church to maintain the cleanliness of the church. There are also a lot of store around the church which helps the family in their living. Statistically proven the decrease of crime rates in the place so that the tourist will be encouraged going to this place because the safety is guaranteed.

Based on interview with Leovino Magtibay, a resident of Taal, Our Lady of Caysasay in Talisay is considered promotes charitable contributions and volunteering because they have an organization in volunteerism some of they are students and also elders. Also church help communities' complete vitally important social projects, for which the government would need to fund if churches did not provide such support.

Based on interview with Father Anthony Uy officiating priest, the Church of Immaculate Conception

Mary Mediatrix of all grace helps the people to remind that God guides in everything that happen in one's life. An example of this is when people have problems in their life, they would go to church to talk to God about their problems and they are also asking for an advice and comfort.

According to Quinio (2010), in his study entitled "Religious Tourist Destination in Lipa City" Himalayas and Old Monuments encountered a lot of problems. Tourist or visitors must be educated regarding the need to keep the place clean, neat and pollution free. Visitors going to monuments must not curve their names or initials in the walls.

#### **IV. METHOD**

##### **Research Design**

The researchers used the descriptive method in the conduct of this research. The descriptive method is a fact-finding study with adequate and accurate interpretation of the findings. It describes what is and gives emphasis on existing relationships between current conditions, practices, situations, or any phenomena, (Hale, 2013). Since the purpose of this study is to determine the sustainability of tourism in the Province of Batangas through churches to provide bases for sustainable operations. The descriptive method is the most appropriate method to use in analyzing, testing, and evaluating data gathered.

##### **Participants**

The respondents consist of 5 people in the offices of the pilgrim churches from Batangas City, namely: St. Francis Xavier Church, St. Martin of tours, Our Lady of Caysasay church, Church of Immaculate Concepcion Mary Mediatrix of all Grace and 10 churchgoers from each church. With these criteria, the researches came up with the conclusion that the chosen top 5 pilgrim churches ([www.southerluzoninquire.com](http://www.southerluzoninquire.com)). That each one of the churches gives every churchgoer the feeling of freedom of worship and can freely express their adoration to God; that every church provide different programs and activities, that the size can accommodate a large array of opportunities for every churchgoers and the location is safe and free from disturbances. They were selected on the pure random sampling. This sampling technique gives everyone in the population of inquiry an equal chance to be included in the sample. Pure random sampling provides for easy understanding and application of data gathering procedures, (Castillo, 2009).

##### **Instrument**

The researcher utilized self-made questionnaire as the main data gathering instrument of the study. The questionnaire was constructed to elicit information from the respondents in order to meet the required objectives of the study. The questionnaire had three parts. The first part tackled the contribution of the churches in terms of social, cultural and economic aspects. The second part tackled the problems encountered in promoting church tourism. Unstructured interview was also used for verification and clarification of its data taken from the questionnaires.

##### **Procedure**

The researcher asked the approval of the College dean for this study. Upon approval, an in-depth study on related materials was conducted by the researchers. Then a questionnaire was prepared by the researchers. The researchers wrote a letter for the representative of the office of external affairs of the churches asking for their permission wherein the researchers personally dispersed the questionnaires and carefully explained the contents. Questionnaires were collected and the researchers analyzed the data using various statistical tools.

##### **Data Analysis**

The data gathered were tallied, encoded and interpreted using descriptive statistics. This included frequency distribution, percentage and weighted mean. Frequency distribution and percentage be used to identify the profile of the respondents while weighted mean was utilized to determine the contribution on economic, social aspect and cultural.

#### **V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on table 1, the over-all assessment of the respondents was agree with a composite mean of 3.37. Among the items cited, promotes charitable contributions and volunteering ranked first with a weighted mean score of 3.60. According to Cascio (2007), because it can be difficult to quantify the exact value of the volunteering and community building benefits churches provide to local areas, many scholars have sought to quantify the "replacement value" of the social and volunteering benefits that churches provide to communities. The replacement value calculates monetary donations and in-kind support, staff and congregant volunteer hours, utilities, and the value of space.

**Table 1. Contribution of the Churches in terms of Social**

The church . . .	WM	VI	Rank
1. provides help to poor and vulnerable individuals in the community	3.53	Strongly Agree	2.5
2. improves marriage relationships	3.43	Agree	4
3. decreases violence among women	3.31	Agree	6.5
4. increases moral community obligations	3.39	Agree	5
5. promotes charitable contributions and volunteering	3.60	Strongly Agree	1
6. improves the additional learning of students	3.53	Strongly Agree	2.5
7. provides training and skills that promote civic engagement	3.19	Agree	9.5
8. decreases the occurrence of crime and deviance in communities and among local youth	3.25	Agree	8
9. participates to increase different community-building and moral projects	3.31	Agree	6.5
10. provides a training ground for individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds	3.19	Agree	9.5
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.37</b>	<b>Agree</b>	

*Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Often; Agree – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree*

It was followed by provides help to poor and vulnerable individuals in the community and improves the additional learning of students with a weighted mean of 3.53.

However, there were items which were rated agree only like decrease the occurrence of crime and deviance in communities and among local youth (3.25). According to Haas (2013), churches are statistically proven to decrease crime rates – particularly decreasing levels of assault, burglary, larceny, as well as drug use. Provide training and skills that promote civic engagement with a weighted mean of 3.19 and provides

a training ground for individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds with a weighted mean of 3.19 got the lowest mean score and rated the least.

Based on the interview conducted with Leovino Magtibay, a resident of Taal, Our Lady of Caysasay in Talisay promotes charitable contributions and volunteering because they have an organization in volunteerism some of them are students and also elders. Also churches help communities' complete vitally important social projects, for which the government would need to fund if churches did not provide such support.

**Table 2. Contribution of the Churches in terms of Economic**

The church . . .	WM	VI	Rank
1. provides jobs for the community	3.28	Agree	5
2. statistically proven to decrease crime rates – particularly decreasing levels of assault, burglary, larceny, as well as drug use	3.45	Agree	2
3. enhances the peace and order	3.56	Strongly Agree	1
4. is a cultural asset contributing to local distinctiveness, integral to the communities and destination	3.20	Agree	7
5. encourages community growth, job creation, and overall economic vitality	3.24	Agree	6
6. increases property values	3.29	Agree	4
7. invests into its community for poverty alleviation (E.g., Food shelves, free financial/legal counseling)	3.32	Agree	3
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.34</b>	<b>Agree</b>	

*Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Often; Agree – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree*

Table 2 shows the weighted mean distribution of the respondents on the contribution of the churches in terms of economic aspects with a composite mean of 3.34, which is verbally interpreted as agree. The result revealed that the respondents agree that the church enhance the peace and order with a weighted mean of 3.79. Churches decrease the occurrence of crime and deviance in communities and among local youth. Reduced levels of crime and deviance make communities more safe, stable, and productive, and safe and stable communities encourage economic growth, through business expansion and attracting new residents. Several studies find that churches decrease crime and deviance, helping promote these economic benefits of a safer community (Lewis, 2008).

However, there were items which were rated agree only, statistically proven to decrease crime rates particularly decreasing levels of assault burglary, larceny as well as drug use with a mean of 3.45. Invest into its community for poverty alleviation (3.32), increase property values (3.29), provides jobs for the community (3.28), encourages community growth, job creation, and overall economic vitality (3.24), while the item a cultural asset contributing to local distinctiveness, integral to the communities and destination got the lowest mean score of 3.20 and rated the least. An increasing number of people are visiting churches and other religious heritage sites show awareness of their significance as attractions is growing. That also means great potential for tourism professionals to help enhance the contribution of such

places make to the overall visitor experience of a destination (Duff, 2009). Meanwhile, those involved in the care and maintenance of churches look for ways in which the cultural and spiritual assets of which they are stewards can be opened up more effectively for both residents and visitors. Arguably, visits to churches have economic value, as people will typically spend money on travel, food and other items as part of a day out, and accommodation if staying in the area. It is, however, impossible to put a monetary value on the importance of historic churches to the character and distinctiveness of destinations.

Based on an interview with Norli Delgado, a security guard of Saint Martin de Tours in Taal is considered the largest church in Asia it is famous in local and foreign tourists. This can help to provide jobs for the community. They hired security guards to assist the tourist in touring the place and also helpers in church to maintain the cleanliness of the church. There are also a lot of stores around the church which help the family in their living. Statistically proven the decrease of crime rates in the place so that the tourist will encourage going because the safety is guaranteed.

Based on an interview with Angelica Reyes, a resident in Taal, Our lady of Caysasay, has a cultural asset contributing to local distinctiveness, integral to the community and destination. Example of this is the wishing well near the church. It is believed that this was miraculous in a way that water can heal. This contributes in the economy where many tourists visit in the place of Talisay.

**Table 3. Contribution of the Churches in terms of Cultural**

The church . . .	WM	VI	Rank
1. unites people and strengthen their relationship to God	3.73	Strongly Agree	2
2. influences the principles and beliefs of a person	3.64	Strongly Agree	5
3. helps the people to remind that God guides us In everything that happens in our life	3.79	Strongly Agree	1
4. helps people to have faith in God through their devotions	3.65	Strongly Agree	4
5. helps the person to build up a good relationship with other people through church teachings	3.69	Strongly Agree	3
6. preserves the way of living	3.48	Agree	7.5
7. helps one place/destination to be famous through their cultural activities	3.48	Agree	7.5
8. teaches young minds to be more aware and responsible in appreciating cultural aspect	3.55	Strongly Agree	6
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.63</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	

*Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Often; Agree – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 – 1.49 = Strongly Disagree*

Table 3 shows the weighted mean distribution of the respondents on the contribution of the churches in terms of cultural aspects with a composite mean of 3.63, which is verbally interpreted as Strongly Agree. The

result revealed that the respondents strongly agree that the church helps the people to remind that God guides us in everything that happen in our life with a weighted mean of 3.79. According to Southwick (2012), people who experience different problems try to overcome with those problems by seeking comfort in spirituality or religion. Some people overcome by different meditation, yoga and journaling, but most people prefer to go to church wherein they said that they feel holy and solemn in taking to God when they are in church.

The church helps the people to remind that God guides in everything that happens in one's life which means that God is always here no matter what happens and it helps an individual to become stronger in facing all the challenges that will be coming in his life. More so, some people have their own style to meditate to God example of this is by going to church to feel the solemnity.

Church unites people and strengthens their relationship to God with a weighted mean of 3.73 with verbal interpretation of strongly agree. According to Castro (2013), one example of how church unites people is by having youth groups. These youth groups conduct different activities which can help to strengthen relationship with God.

The church unites people and strengthen their relation to God by means of their being united with the help of some activities in the church example of this was the worshipping that they were gaining some friends and some of the family members got have a chance to have a bonding moments with their families.

It can be gleaned on the table that respondents strongly agree that church helps the person to build up a good relationship with other people through church teachings with a weighted mean of 3.69.

Church helps people to have faith in God through their devotions with a weighted mean of 3.65. Developing long term habits is important in maintaining one's faith. Church influences the principles and belief of a person ranked 5 with a weighted mean of 3.64. Churches preserve the way of living and those churches help one place to be famous through their cultural activities with a weighted mean of both 3.48.

Churches preserve the way of living and that church helps one place to be famous through their cultural activities. By maintaining the orderliness and the cleanliness of the church and by following its traditions the way of living will be spread also in the next generation. The church helps one place to be famous through their cultural activities, by their own replicas of the religious artifacts showing some miraculous doing

and also because of their traditional festival day of the saints. The church teaches young minds to be more aware and responsible in appreciating cultural aspect ranked 6 with a weighted mean of 3.55.

Based on an interview with Father Anthony Uy, officiating priest in Lipa, the Church of Immaculate Concepcion Mary Mediatrix of all Grace, the church helps the people to remind that God guides in everything that happen in the people's lives an example of this is when people have problems in their life they would go to church to talked to God about their problems and they also asking for an advices and comfort to God. This contributes to the people in the way to have a full praise to God.

Our Lady of Caysasay Church unites people and strengthens their relationship to God. Example of this contribution is when they go to church with their families, the church helps to unite people because of attending to the mass and the church contributes also to strengthen the relationship to God of the people of going to church.

St. Francis Xavier Church helps the person to build up a good relationship with other people for through church teachings. Example of this when the priest have the homily the people would get some learnings and teachings that would help to them to be a good person to everyone and also church provides a good relations to other people through churches.

**Table 4. Problems Encountered in Promoting Church Tourism**

	Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1.	some cultural activities brings crowd congestion	3.16	Agree	3
2.	mass can be interrupted due to the noise coming from the vehicles	3.23	Agree	2
3.	lack of buildings for a growing membership	3.08	Agree	4.5
4.	accessibility of transportation	3.24	Agree	1
5.	poor waste disposal management	2.97	Agree	7
6.	loss of belongings	2.81	Agree	8
7.	accessibility of food services	3.05	Agree	6
8.	stealing of ancient statues and artifacts becomes common due to the high price of such precious stone	3.08	Agree	4.5
<b>Composite Mean</b>		<b>3.08</b>	<b>Agree</b>	

Table 4 shows the weighted mean distribution of the respondents in terms of problems encountered in promoting church tourism with a composite mean of 3.08 which verbally interpreted as agree.

Accessibility of transportation is the highest because transportation means a lot to everyone. Respondents agree that accessibility of transportation is really a problem in promoting church tourism maybe because they already encountered the same problem. Some of them already experienced it. This means that if transportation is not easily accessible to everyone, especially to tourist, church tourism probably will not be promoted. It is more promoted because of those tourists, especially those internationals who keep going back to different tourist spots in our country.

It can be gleaned on the table that accessibility of transportation is really a problem in promoting church tourism with a weighted mean of 3.24.

Mass can be interrupted due to the noise coming from the vehicles with a weighted mean of 3.23. Some cultural activities bring crowd congestion with a weighted mean of 3.16.

Lack of buildings for a growing membership and stealing of ancient statues and artifacts becomes common due to the high price of such precious stone with both weighted mean of 3.08. It can also be seen on the table that accessibility of food services is a problem encountered in promoting church tourism with a weighted mean of 3.24.

Poor waste disposal management is the second to the lowest among the indicators because most churches implement “No Eating and drinking” policy in the church. Poor waste disposal management can only

happen most of the time maybe outside the church, because there are many vendors outside. Cotton candy vendors, balloon vendors, toy vendors and others. Inside the church, poor waste disposal management is not really a big problem unless there are kids or children who really cannot resist eating their snacks while the mass is ongoing. This can only happen most of the time during church day. Because on ordinary days, there are limited people visiting or going to churches. This means that not every day or not most of the time, churches can experience poor waste disposal management and this is the reason why it ranked second to the lowest. Poor waste disposal management can be a problem in promoting church tourism with a weighted mean of 2.97. The item loss of belongings can also be a problem in promoting church tourism got a lowest weighted mean of 2.81.

Based on an interview with Charles De Guzman, a resident of Talisay, the accessibility of food services is a problem in Our Lady of Caysasay church in Talisay Batangas because there is no store beside the church or near the church. A visitor has to walk a few minutes to buy food or something not like other churches that was very near in the store.

Based on interview with Michelle Umali, a resident of Nasugbu the mass can be interrupted due to the noise coming from the vehicles that is the problem in the church in Nasugbu because when the vehicles passed at the front of the church, some of them were blowing their horn. They do not care if they are in the front of the church or when the mass is going on. Also do not care if the holy mass is destructed.

**Table 5. Action Plan to Promote Church Tourism**

Objectives	Activities	Person Involved
To be accessible to transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Putting some signage or directions along the way to locate easily the destination.</li> <li>• High demand of transportation due to many commuters.</li> <li>• Official must take the responsibility for the placing of that signage.</li> </ul>	Municipal officials in connection with the barangay officials where each church is located must take responsibility for the placing of that signage.
To avoid the noise from the vehicle that interrupt the mass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put signage near the vicinity of the churches like “no blowing of horn”</li> <li>• Implement rules and regulations strictly about the do’s and don’ts inside the church to lessen the interruptions during the mass.</li> <li>• The facilitators are in charge to take the action to lessen those interruptions.</li> </ul>	Facilitator or churches organizers are in - charge to take the action to lessen those interruptions

**Table 5 (cont). Action Plan to Promote Church Tourism**

Objectives	Activities	Person Involved
To prevent crowd congestion in some cultural activities	The cultural activities or different activities must be scheduled properly to prevent the overcrowding of the people  In every activity there must have different organizers to facilitate it well.	Officials of the church and barangay officials are responsible to maintain the solemnity of every church activity.
To avoid stealing of ancient artifacts and statue	Put some CCTV cameras to prevent the stealing of the replicas.  Hire some guards to secure the religious artifacts and statues.	Church officials are in - charge of the hiring of guards for they are responsible for the compensation of those.
To manage the waste properly	Give punishments to those who will be caught in throwing any garbage or littering.  Practice the proper segregation of garbage.	Everyone should take responsibility and have discipline in maintaining the cleanliness of the place.

**VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Respondents agree that pilgrim churches contribute to tourism in terms of social and economic aspect while they strongly agree in terms of cultural aspect. Most visited cultural heritage attraction in Taal, Batangas was Basilica of St. Martin de Tours (Buted, Felicen, Bancoro, Maligaya, Panaligan, Reyes, & Sandoval, 2014). The most commonly experienced problem was the accessibility of the transportation. An action plan was proposed to address the problems encountered.

It is recommended that roving guards should be provided to ensure the safety and security of the tourists during their visit in the church. The church personnel may provide creative and command activities that will encourage people. The church personnel may have a briefing on the history of the church so that if a visitor needs information it easy for them to answer. Action plan may be implemented to solve the problems encountered. Further studies may also be conducted to further confirm the results of this study.

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