

## Service Quality: Foreign Tourists' Perception of Iloilo Dinagyang Festival Ati-Ati Tribe Competition

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### ABSTRACT

*The aim of this study is to assess the level of service quality of Iloilo Dinagyang Festival, one of Philippines' most prominent cultural festivals. The study focuses on the Ati-Ati Tribe Competition, which is the weeklong celebration's highlight. Current festival service quality studies are focused on the quality improvement of service organizations & recreation industries. Nevertheless, being an abstract concept, the measurement & analysis of service quality is still under continued development with numerous models applicable for different tourism activities. In lieu with this, the researchers aim to put into context the gap mentioned by making an attempt to measure the level of service quality of the 2014 Dinagyang Festival using one of the leading SERVQUAL assessment models. Purposive sampling with thirty (30) foreign tourist respondents was used in this study. The Childress-Crompton model was utilized to assess the respondents' perception of service quality based on four dimensions, namely: generic features, specific entertainment features, information sources, & comfort amenities. The study concludes that foreign tourists who attended the festival's Ati-Ati Tribe Competition were satisfied with the event's generic and specific entertainment features, and neutral with regards to information sources & comfort amenities. As to the over-all relative level of importance of the four dimensions, the ranking is in accordance with existing literature. Furthermore, the Pearson Correlation was used in the analysis of data by sex and by age group. Results have shown a strong linear relationship on how different sexes rate the festival's information sources and comfort amenities. No significant relationships exist for the age bracket. In conclusion, respondents are satisfied with the festival's overall level of service quality. Improvements in the festival should focus on cleanliness, information dissemination, and refinement of comfort amenities.*

**Keywords:** cultural tourism, cultural festivals, dinagyang festival, service quality, childress-crompton model

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Festivals are social phenomenon encountered virtually in all human cultures (Falassi, 1987). Almost every region, province and city all throughout the Philippines celebrates their respective festivals. These are usually commemoration of patron saints, re-enactment of local historical events, and celebration of bountiful harvest.

The focus of this study is the Dinagyang Festival, which is Iloilo's anticipated religious and cultural celebration every year. "Dinagyang", which is an Ilonggo term for merry-making, characterizes the festival's joyous celebration in honor and veneration of the Holy Child. The festival depicts cultural amalgamation of Roman Catholicism and indigenous culture of the Panayanons as presented by various competing tribes in the Ati-Ati Street Dance and Performance Competition ([www.iloilo.gov.ph](http://www.iloilo.gov.ph)).

For three consecutive years from 2006 to 2008, The Dinagyang Festival was adjudged by the Association of Tourism Officers of the Philippines as the country's tourism event of the year. However, it failed to secure the distinction since 2009 and the years thereafter. According to the event's organizer, the Iloilo Dinagyang Foundation, Inc. (IDFI), several factors may have contributed to the festival's decline which may include the following: the decreasing number of both local & foreign tourists attending the event, along with other social and economic factors.

Festivals such as the Dinagyang Festival have huge impact on local communities through tourism. Success of many tourism events rests on its dynamic delivery of good services that would tantamount to customer satisfaction. According to Mackay & Crompton (1990), the relationship between what customers' desire from a service and what they perceive that they receive became known as Service Quality. The most used service quality evaluation model is SERVQUAL developed by Parasuraman, et. al. The Childress – Crompton Model, one of the variants of the SERVQUAL Model, is the primary evaluation tool used in the conduct of the study. The model evaluates service quality in four key service dimensions.

The focus of the study will be on foreign tourists in line with IDFI's aim of making the festival "world-class" by attracting more foreign tourists through quality performance and experience.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The study aims to determine the level of service quality of Dinagyang Festival Ati-Ati Tribe Competition as perceived by foreign tourists, and is therefore guided by the following research objectives:

1. To assess the level of service quality of Dinagyang Ati Tribe Competition along Childress-Crompton Model's four (4) key service dimension.
2. To provide management measures to improve the services of Dinagyang Ati-Ati Tribe Competition.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Nature & Significance of Festivals**

The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2014) defines a festival as a time of celebration; an organized series of performances or events. A festival then, is a social phenomenon encountered in all human cultures, recognizing a milestone in the lives of the people and the community. They can be religious festivals, festivals to mark an occasion in history, and a celebration of age old customs and traditions. Getz (2010) further emphasizes that festivals celebrate community values, ideologies, identity, and continuity. Festivals provide opportunity to get people involved and become active participants in their community (Thomas and Young, 2010).

Festivals have a significant effect on tourism. It contributes to the nation's cultural and economic growth. As the demand for this form of entertainment among tourists has become popular, the revolution of festivals resulted to significant developments in the locality's business environment. According to Sumbarova (2011), two of the economic contributions of festivals are the rise in income and the decrease in the unemployment rate.

Festivals also play a significant role in creating a positive social aura in the locality. By providing unique and inspiring performances, festivals give both the locals and visitors a feeling of privilege. According to Hunyadi (2006), festivals showcase & promote the unique culture and arts of the locality that create and leave a good impression on tourists.

### **Tourist Preferences**

Huang (n.d.) defines international tourists as visitors who travel to a country other than that in which he has his usual residence for at least one night but not more than one year, and whose purpose is other than the exercise of activity remunerated from within the country visited.

According to Nicholson & Pearce (2001), attendance in tourism events are influenced by multiple motivation factors. The seeking and escaping theory (Iso-Ahola, 1983) explains the intrinsic motivators of tourists in attending events. Studies show that escapism is the key factor leading people to events with generic benefits as entertainment, socialization, new experience, and novelty seeking. Furthermore, factors such as adventure, prestige, dream fulfillment, health and fitness, rest and relaxation, were highlighted in Crompton's push-and-pull model.

Another study focusing on motivation was done on the Cultivaria Arts Festival of South Africa by Saayman (2011). The results showed that there were three main motives for attendance: cultural exploration, event attraction, and escape.

Lastly, a study on Mongolia's Ulaanbaatar Naadam Festival by Thompson and Schofield (2009) concluded that the association of the precedent motivation factors was consistent as presented by previous researches in Europe and North America. This suggests that the core factors of motivation remain constant regardless of geographic location.

### ***Tourist Preferences by Sex***

In a study focusing on the motivation factors of attending festivals in Turkey by Yolal et. al. (2009), significant variations in motivation were observed across gender segments. Female respondents placed higher weight on event novelty, escape and excitement, and family togetherness; while males prefer adventure and new explorations.

According to Glynn (2012), in social gatherings, men are more likely to prioritize entertainment and music, and rarely think about luxury; while women would prefer more social interactions and pay closer attention to comfort.

### ***Tourist Preferences by Age Groups***

The early adult group (18-30 years old) are characterized as positive thinkers, technology-savvy, goal-oriented, and are highly motivated by challenging activities. Williams (2011) suggests that tourists under this age always seek adventures and new experiences as they travel in big groups.

The middle adult group (31-50 years old) is known to be very skeptic. They pay much attention in equating the value of the services they receive to the resources they have given up. Schroer (2008) suggest that tourists under this age group are the hardest to impress.

The old age group (above 50) focuses on the value and comforts they get. According to Schroer (2008), they don't pay much attention to the resources they give up, and usually travel in small groups of two to five. In addition, a study conducted in Turkey observed that as festival attendees get older and attain higher education, event novelty becomes more significant as a motivation factor.

## Service Quality

### *Nature & Definition of Service Quality*

Service quality is an intangible area of study that makes it difficult to measure and assess. Mackay and Crompton (1990) defined service quality as the “the relationship between what customers’ desire from a service and what they perceive that they receive.” Furthermore, service quality helps in determining ways of satisfying customers so that they hold positive attitudes toward the services being offered (Ostrowski, et.al. 1993).

According to Day and Peters (1994), quality in service industries has both static and dynamic dimensions. The static dimension characterizes the expectation of the customers that varies over time as additional service features are being added. Dynamic dimension of quality happens during the delivery of the service and offers opportunities for the customer to be satisfied by the extra efforts of event organizers to address their need of tangible products - which is a primary cause of customer satisfaction. Ingram (1997) suggests that dynamic quality cannot be easily achieved since they are spontaneous acts and cannot be scripted.

### *Tourism Applications of Service Quality*

Tourism business caters to a diverse range of customers whose needs may vary; thus, understanding them would help identify their needs, develop strategies, and maintain the service quality of the business. Tourism businesses and organizations develop methods that can effectively adapt to the changing demands of tourists and competition.

In some studies, service quality has been identified as a primary factor in establishing a competitive advantage in tourism as well as in differentiating products. According to Crompton and Love (1995), measuring service quality has been a major issue in tourism and recreation studies. Continuing success of many going-concern tourism businesses rests on its vital delivery of good services. As such, service quality should be integrated into every part of the business.

## Service Quality Evaluation Models

### *SERVQUAL Model*

The most used service quality evaluation model is SERVQUAL developed by Parasuraman, et. al. in 1985. Several scholars have conducted studies using the same model in evaluating the behavior of festival attendees, and the responsiveness of program organizers to such behavior.

The SERVQUAL model consists of 22 items on service attributes, which are clustered along the five dimensions, namely tangibles, reliability, assurance, responsiveness, and empathy. Each attribute in the model is used to determine the customer’s expectations about the service provider in general within the category being studied, as well as to measure perceptions of performance of a particular service provider. A seven-point Likert scale is used in the evaluation.

According to the SERVQUAL authors, the service quality is the difference between customer’s perceptions and expectations. The model measures tangible and intangible elements of the service, and investigates gaps in the customer-supplier chain to highlight target areas where quality may be improved. These include the gap between customer’s expectations and management’s perceptions of customer’s expectations; and service quality specifications and service delivery.

Studies under the SERVQUAL model indicate that improvements in tourism service quality are essential to achieve three requirements: employee satisfaction, tourist's satisfaction, and the efficiency of processes. For quality improvement, it is necessary to be creative and innovative, which would support new ideas and employee participation in the decision-making process. According to Eraqi (2006), a wide range of employee empowerment is vital to give the employees opportunities to apply positive behavior in competitive markets.

In addition to its usefulness in tourism events, the SERVQUAL instrument is a popular model of measuring the perceived service quality of other service categories. According to Orsingher (1998), it is considered as a concise service quality measure, easy to use by event managers, and currently being referred to as a standard measure by other service quality researchers.

### ***Childress-Crompton Model***

From Parasuraman's SERVQUAL, several variants were developed. One of the variants is the Childress–Crompton Model, the primary evaluation tool used in the conduct of the study. Childress and Crompton (1997) conducted an empirical study at Main Street Days, an annual festival in Grapevine, Texas for the purpose of determining the relationship between the constructs of quality of performance and visitor satisfaction.

The study was based on Crompton and Love (1995) assessment using eighteen evaluation items of festival attributes. The 18 attributes were categorized into four identified dimensions, and these are: (a) Generic features commonly characterized most festivals; (b) Specific entertainment features that entail to a specific festival; (c) Information sources comprised of printed program, street maps and information booths; and (d) Comfort amenities related to overall comfort of the visitors. According to Childress & Crompton (1997), the four dimensions establish the overall quality of the service provided, which will eventually determine the tourists' level of satisfaction. The level of satisfaction then influences the tourists' behavioral intentions such as their loyalty to the festival and willingness to pay more.

In conclusion, the emerging consensus suggests that service quality primarily determines the customers' level of satisfaction. The level of satisfaction will in turn influence the customers' behavior. Likewise, in a number of literatures, customer satisfaction is seen as the core catalyst of business success.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Existing literature suggests that most of the previous researches on service quality assessment of cultural festivals, such as the one by Childress & Crompton (1997), were done using the survey method, primarily because of its convenience and ease in administration. For the conduct of this study, the researchers likewise made use of the same method.

### **Research Design**

In doing the study, a quantitative research design was utilized. Taking into consideration the abstractness of the concept, the researchers used an objective likert scale of 1 to 5 to evaluate the participants' perceptions of the event's level of service quality, with 5 being *highly satisfied* and 1 being *highly dissatisfied*.

In the presentation of the results, several statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, and frequencies were utilized. In the analysis, the Pearson r correlation analysis was used to identify plausible relationships between the variables.



### Selection of Respondents & Sampling Procedure

The sample was taken from foreign tourists present in the said locale during the Ati-Ati Tribe Competition proper, or within a few hours after the conclusion of the contest. Non-probability purposive sampling was employed. The researchers asked for the participation of qualified respondents immediately upon sight.

### RESULTS OF THE STUDY

#### Profile of Respondents

Thirty (30) foreign tourists participated in the study. The table below shows the nationality distribution of the respondents. All of them were Caucasians due to the proficiency requirement in the English language.

**Table 1. Nationality Distribution of Respondents**

<i>Nationality</i>	$f$ <i>n</i> = 30	%
Australian	5	17
American	4	13
Dutch	4	13
French	3	10
German	3	10
Belgian	2	7
British	2	7
Canadian	2	7
Swiss	2	7
Estonian	1	3
Norwegian	1	3
Polish	1	3
	30	100

The table below highlights the age group and sex distribution of the respondents. For statistical analysis, the age and sex distributions can be approximated as of equal sizes.

**Table 2. Age and Sex Distribution of Respondents**

	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>f</i> , <i>n</i> = 16	%	<i>f</i> , <i>n</i> = 14	%	<i>f</i> , <i>n</i> = 30	%
18-30	7	44	5	36	12	40
31-50	3	19	5	36	8	27
Above 50	6	37	4	28	10	33
Total	16	100	14	100	30	100

### Mean Rating Results per Key Service Factor

The table below shows the arithmetic mean rating of each of key service factor for the four dimensions, along with their standard deviations.

**Table 3. Mean Rating per Key Service Factor**

<i>Factor</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>STD Deviation</i>
<i>Dimension 1: Generic Features</i>		
Safety/security on the site (e.g. Police visibility)	4.00	0.83
Cleanliness of the festival site (limited litter)	2.93	1.26
Friendliness of the street vendors	4.07	0.96
Food & beverages	3.88	0.82
Live entertainment (bands, street dancing)	4.34	0.72
<i>Dimension 2: Specific Entertainment Features</i>		
Re-enactment of local history	3.64	0.86
Exhibit of arts & crafts	3.85	0.86
Souvenir shops	4.04	0.94
<i>Dimension 3: Information Sources</i>		
Printed programs (e.g. tarpaulins, posters)	2.50	1.14
Availability of street maps that give directions	2.20	0.96
Availability of information booths	2.38	1.17
Web / Internet information sources	3.00	1.04
<i>Dimension 4: Comfort Amenities</i>		
Availability of restrooms	2.58	1.21
Cleanliness of the restrooms	2.64	1.18
Availability of areas to sit down & rest	2.59	1.05
Accessibility for those with special needs	2.52	1.03
Availability of parking spaces	2.72	1.23
Availability of waiting sheds	2.86	1.32
First aid / medical facilities	3.13	1.03

The table above shows that respondents rated most of the festival’s generic features and specific entertainment features key service factors at the *satisfied* range (3.50 to 4.49), information sources at the *neutral* (2.5 to 3.49) to *dissatisfied* range (1.5 to 2.49), and comfort amenities at the *neutral* range (2.5 to 3.49).

**Results by Sex**

The following table shows the mean rating in each key service dimension by sex.

**Table 4. Mean Rating per Key Service Dimension by Sex**

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>MALE</i>		<i>FEMALE</i>	
	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>
Generic Features	3.95	0.41	3.72	0.62
Specific Entertainment Features	3.86	0.63	3.81	0.69
Information Sources	2.75	0.81	2.12	0.74
Comfort Amenities	2.85	0.94	2.51	0.79

Based on the table above, both sexes gave a *satisfied* rating to the generic features and specific entertainment features. For the information sources, males were *indifferent*, while the females were *dissatisfied*. Lastly, both sexes were *indifferent* as to comfort amenities.

In terms of variability, the answers of female respondents were more varied as compared to the males for the generic features & specific entertainment features, while for the information sources and comfort amenities, the other way around.

**Table 5. Relative Level of Importance of the Four Dimensions by Sex**

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>MALE</i>	<i>FEMALE</i>
Generic Features	1 <sup>st</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
Specific Entertainment Features	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
Information Sources	3 <sup>rd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Comfort Amenities	4 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>

The ranking of the relative importance for the four service quality dimensions are almost the same for both sexes. Consistent with previous studies, male respondents ranked the generic features as the most important, followed by specific entertainment features, information sources, and finally, comfort amenities. This is also the case for the female respondents except that the first two dimensions ranked equally as the most important.

**Results by Age Group**

The following table shows the mean rating in each key service dimension by age group:



**Table 6. Mean Rating per Key Service Dimension by Age Group**

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>18 to 30</i>		<i>31 to 50</i>		<i>Above 50</i>	
	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>
Generic Features	3.78	0.66	4.00	0.40	3.79	0.40
Specific Ent. Features	3.77	0.58	3.95	0.52	3.84	0.56
Information Sources	2.13	0.85	2.63	0.72	2.92	0.71
Comfort Amenities	2.51	0.88	2.97	0.51	2.83	1.16

All age groups gave a *satisfied* rating to the generic and specific entertainment features. However, for the information sources, the age group 18 to 30 was *dissatisfied*, while the rest were *neutral*. All age groups were *neutral* when it comes to comfort amenities.

In terms of the relative level of importance of the four dimensions, all age groups have ranked generic features as the most important. Ranking for the other dimensions vary among age groups, as shown in the table below.

**Table 7. Relative Level of Importance of the Four Dimensions by Age Group**

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>18 to 30</i>	<i>31 to 50</i>	<i>Above 50</i>
Generic Features	1 <sup>st</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
Specific Entertainment Features	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Information Sources	3 <sup>rd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
Comfort Amenities	4 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>

### Overall Results

The table below shows the ranking of the four key service dimensions in terms of relative level of importance. Notably, the dimensions that are more important to the tourists were given *satisfied* ratings, while the least important dimensions were given *neutral* ratings.

**Table 8. Overall Results**

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Deviation</i>	<i>Importance</i>
Generic Features	3.85	0.51	1 <sup>st</sup>
Specific Entertainment Features	3.84	0.65	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Information Sources	2.52	0.85	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Comfort Amenities	2.72	0.90	4 <sup>th</sup>

## ANALYSIS

### Overall Results

Foreign tourists are motivated to participate in events with generic benefits as entertainment, socialization, novelty-seeking, and new experience, as previously stated by Iso-Ahola (1983) in his seeking-and-escaping theory. Dinagyang Festival continued to showcase and promote the unique culture and arts of Ilonggos which created a good impression from foreign tourists. Such is an evidence of preservation and enhancement of the components of general and specific entertainment features. On the other hand, dynamic quality was hardly achieved due to the fact that there were limited on-site sources of information that foreign tourists can avail, and site cleanliness was not maintained all throughout the event.

As to the relative level of importance of the four dimensions, the ranking is in accordance with existing literature and results of previous festival studies.

### Analysis by Sex

In general, data has shown that female respondents provided lower mean ratings for all four dimensions with the largest difference in the information sources. This can be attributed to the inherent nature of women being detail-oriented.

Pearson Correlation Analysis between sex and mean rating per dimension indicated there is a strong linear relationship between how sexes rate the information sources and comfort amenities. Males tend to give higher mean ratings to those two dimensions as compared to females, with Pearson  $r$  coefficients of 0.42 and 0.40, respectively.

**Table 9. Person Correlation Coefficient: Mean Scores per Dimension & Sex**

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Pearson's r</i>	<i>Strength</i>
Generic Features	- 0.31	Moderate
Specific Entertainment Features	+ 0.19	Negligible
Information Sources	- 0.42	Strong
Comfort Amenities	- 0.40	Strong

To substantiate further, the information sources received *neutral* and *unsatisfactory* mean ratings from the males and females, respectively. Previous studies have shown that most men refuse to ask directions and would rather choose to find their way on their own, while women are more open to asking people for help especially with directions. This explains why information sources serve a bigger purpose for the female respondents, and their scarcity provides dissatisfaction to them.

As to Comfort Amenities, the very nature of females and their biological needs dictate that they should assess cleanliness and comforts at a higher degree as compared to the males.

### Analysis by Age Group

Respondents from the age bracket 31-50 gave slightly higher ratings on the generic festival features compared to the other two age groups. This is quite contrary to existing literature that this age group is the hardest to impress.

In terms of the relative level of importance of the four dimensions, the 18-30, and 31-50 age groups ranked info sources 3rd, followed by comfort amenities, and for the Above 50, the other way around. This is due to the fact that a maturing age places a higher degree of concern upon comforts, and places a higher demand on them.

Pearson Correlation Analysis between age group and mean rating per dimension indicates no strong relationship between how different age groups generally rate the four dimensions.

**Table 10. Person Correlation Coefficient: Mean Scores per Dimension & Age Group**

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Pearson's r</i>	<i>Strength</i>
Generic Features	+ 0.12	Negligible
Specific Entertainment Features	+ 0.18	Negligible
Information Sources	+ 0.31	Moderate Positive
Comfort Amenities	+ 0.09	Negligible

The only notable relationship existing was the moderate positive relationship for the information sources. It means that the higher the age group, the higher the rating. For such dimension, the age group 18-30 years old was *dissatisfied*, while the other two age groups were *neutral*. This is explained by the general characteristics of early adults being information-savvy. Literature suggests that they usually go on trips with less planning, and would therefore rely on on-site maps and booths for directions.

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that foreign tourists who attended the Dinagyang Ati-Ati Tribe Competition were *satisfied* with the festival's generic features (mean = 3.85) such as security on site, food and beverages, and live entertainment, as well as with the specific entertainment features (mean = 3.84) such as local history re-enactments, and exhibition of arts. However, they were only *neutral* with regards to info sources (mean = 2.52) and comfort amenities (mean = 2.72). By inference from the aggregate data, the proponents conclude that foreign tourists were *satisfied* with the quality of service offered by the Dinagyang Ati-Ati Tribe Competition.

In terms of the relative level of importance of the four dimensions, the respondents ranked Generic Features as the most important, followed by Specific Entertainment Features, Information Sources, and Comfort Amenities. Such ranking is consistent with previous literature. Notably, those dimensions which the respondents considered as relatively more important received *satisfied* mean ratings, while those that are relatively less important received only *neutral* mean ratings.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results gathered, the proponents suggest that the following measures be implemented for better management of the festival:

1. Organizers should maintain or further improve the festival's generic features since foreign tourists are more concerned with how organized and prepared the organizers are, as they are ranked as most important and received a *satisfied* rating.

2. Specific entertainment features set the Dinagyang Festival apart from other festivals. Thus, re-enactment of local history should be preserved conservatively, and exhibition of arts, crafts, and souvenirs be considered for continuous improvement.
3. Festival organizers should invest more on information dissemination using the internet and social media. Street maps and information booths should be strategically located throughout the festival site which would give valuable information on the location and schedule of events.
4. Comfort amenities need improvement. Medical facilities should be made visible throughout the festival area and ambulance stationed at strategic locations. Waiting sheds and uncongested rest areas should be made available, free from loud music. Portable restrooms should be made available in different areas, and personnel must be stationed to maintain its cleanliness.

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