

## **The Ati-Atihan Festival: Its Impact to the Economy and Tourism Industry in Kalibo, Aklan**

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*Abstract* - Ati-Atihan is a feast held annually in honor of the Senior Sto. Niño concluding on the third Sunday of January in the town of Kalibo, Aklan .The study aimed at assessing the economic and tourism impact of the Ati-Atihan Festival to the Municipality of Kalibo, Aklan. This descriptive study involved 120 respondents composed of residents, businessmen and local government officials who were selected using the purposive sampling method. A one-shot survey was conducted to gather pertinent data and treated using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results revealed that respondents believed that the Ati-Atihan festival had an impact on the economy of the town by bringing about the expansion and improvement of local products and in increasing the economic activity

in the town. It had an impact on the tourism industry by attracting tourists both locally and internationally. However, significant differences were found concerning the impact of Ati-Atihan festival. Thus, certain recommendations were formulated for the enhancement of the celebration as well as to boost the tourism industry and the economy of the municipality.

*Keywords* - Ati-Atihan Festival, Tourism Impact, Economic Impact, Tourism Industry, Economic Activity

## INTRODUCTION

A festival is the most exciting and fastest growing industry related to leisure, business and tourism. Festivals can be viewed as part of the new wave of alternative tourism. This is the reason that tourism organizations in many countries actively promote events. Some researches about festivals documented that a spill-over effect can be found in the local economy. Festivals have always been well attended and thus have brought about significant economic profit (Park, 2002). Business and tourism are not only industry fields, which benefit from festivals, but the host cities and municipalities themselves benefit. A festival demands infrastructure, such as transportation, accommodation, stadiums, and necessary construction. Public facilities improve the quality of residents' lives in the host community.

One such festival is the Ati-Atihan Festival held every January in Kalibo, Aklan. Giving the people glimpse of the history and origin, this traditional fiesta is dedicated to the celebration of the Feast of the Santo Niño or the Holy Infant Jesus. A celebration honoring the Sto. Niño, a harvest thanksgiving, and a 13th-century friendship pact between the native aetas and the Malays, the festival could be considered the Mardi Gras of the Philippines: a weekend of uninhibited merriment, of endless parades and processions of grouped revelers, soothed and intricately costumed, marching an endless loop of streets, dancing to the continuous, rhythmic and hypnotic beating of drums, while countless Sto. Niño statues are carried by or hoisted over the parading crowds or pushed through small make-do floats. It is a non-stop

hyperkinetic street celebration, from morning until dusk, gradually building to a maddening merging of dance and drumbeats (Toriano, 2009). The colorful and often uninhibited festival has been proclaimed by President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo as the “Mother of Philippine Festivals” a few years back. It is therefore important to determine whether the Ati-Atihan Festival has indeed brought about a significant impact on the economy and tourism of the host community of Kalibo, Aklan.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to assess the impact of Ati-Atihan festival to the economy and tourism industry in Kalibo, Aklan, Philippines.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research design used in the study was the descriptive – survey which determines the economic and tourism impact of the Ati-Atihan Festival in Kalibo, Aklan. A one-shot survey was conducted to gather data pertinent to the study. The sampling technique was the purposive – convenience sampling method. This sampling method is a non-probability type and is a combination of the purposive and convenience sampling method. In this study, 120 respondents were purposely selected with an equal number of 40 respondents for each category.

The data gathering instrument was a researcher-made questionnaire which was validated by three experts using the 8 point criteria by Good and Scates. The instrument, it was pre-tested among 30 respondents to determine reliability.

A letter, addressed to the Mayor of Kalibo, Aklan was written requesting permission to conduct the study among the city officials and businessmen. Upon approval, copies of the questionnaire were personally distributed by the researchers to the identified respondents who were given ample time to completely answer the questionnaire. The questionnaires were gathered, scored, tabulated and analyzed using both **descriptive** and **inferential** statistical tools.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Economic Impact of the Ati-atihan Festival*

As presented in Table 1, it was determined that the respondents believed that the festival lead to an increase in the economic activity in the Municipality of Kalibo, Aklan, the municipal and barangay governments provided an adequate budget for holding the festival, the festival brought about the expansion and improvement of local products, the festival resulted in additional/increase costs and expenditures for the local government and it has resulted in generating of higher income and enjoyment of more benefits to the people in the municipality.

Table 1. Impact of the ati-atihan festival on the economy of the municipality of kalibo among respondents when taken as a whole group

Items	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
1. On the Ati-Atihan Festival leading to an increase in the economic activity in the Municipality of Kalibo, Aklan			
a. There is an increase in income in the hotel and restaurant industry.	4.21	Very high impact	1
b. Current and New businesses support the festival.	3.99	High impact	2
c. Income opportunities are provided for the residents.	3.83	High impact	3
d. Generates job opportunities for local citizens	3.53	High impact	4
Mean	3.89	High impact	
Items	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
2. On the municipal and barangay governments providing an adequate budget for holding the Ati-atihan festival.			
a. Annual municipal budget is recommended by festival organizers for consideration by municipal council and approved by local executive	3.28	Moderate impact	1

b. Competing 'tribes' are given subsidy by municipal government particularly for costumes and other necessary expenses	2.88	Moderate impact	2	
c. Part of barangay funds is set aside by barangay captain to finance participation after due consideration by the barangay council	2.78	Moderate impact	3	
d. Additional expenses for the festival are also provided by generous benefactors and sponsors	2.43	Low impact	4	
Mean	2.84	Moderate impact		
	Items	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
3. On the Ati-atihan Festival bringing about the expansion and improvement of local products.				
a. There is an increase in the sales of local products such as abaca/pina/raffia fabrics, fashion accessories, house wares, handmade paper products, furniture and furnishings	4.34	Very high impact	1	
b. The festival serves as showcase for the local products such as abaca/pina/raffia fabrics, fashion accessories, house wares, handmade paper products, furniture and furnishings	4.10	High impact	2	
c. There is an increase in the investments for locally produced products.	3.79	High impact	3	
d. There is an increase in the patronage of the hotel and restaurant industry of the municipality.	3.55	High impact	4	
Mean	3.95	High impact		
	Items	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
4. On the Ati-atihan Festival resulting in additional/increase costs and expenditures for the local government.				
a. Expansion of program of activities undertaken during the actual celebration resulted in increased costs and expenditures as provided in the budget.	3.73	High impact	1	
b. Different competing groups from various barangays reported the increase in costs and expenditures to be competitive during the celebration.	3.59	High impact	3	
c. Organizers of barangay participation recognize the increasing costs and expenditures, hence have resorted to fund solicitation outside the municipality.	3.63	High impact	2	

d. Local businessmen often spend more in building stalls/kiosks and inventory of goods for sale	3.44	High impact	4
Mean	3.60	High impact	
Items	Mean	Interpretation	Rank
5. On the Ati-ahitan Festival having resulted in generating of higher income and enjoyment of more benefits to the people in the municipality.			
a. Many local business have increased in sales and capital because of the festival.	3.63	High impact	1
b. Entrepreneurs have reported higher earned income during the actual celebration.	3.57	High impact	2
c. Revenue generated by hotels and restaurants have increased considerably during the festival dates.	3.55	High impact	3
d. Influx of tourists have increased demand for accommodation and food services	3.31	Moderate impact	4
Mean	3.51	High impact	
Composite Mean	3.56	High impact	

Scale	Interpretation
4.21 - 5.00	Very High Impact
3.41 - 4.20	High Impact
2.61 - 3.40	Moderate Impact
1.81 - 2.60	Low Impact
1.00 - 1.80	Very Low Impact

### Tourism Impact of the Ati-ahitan Festival

The Table 2 shows that the respondents believed that the Ati-ahitan Festival led to the development of the tourism industry by attracting tourists/ visitors to the municipality. The respondents also believed that the tourism office promoted the Ati-ahitan festival. The activities during the Ati-ahitan Festival has attracted tourists both locally and internationally. The festival provided a night during the celebration which presents special programs to honor tourists/visitors,

especially balikbayans and OFWs. Lastly, the respondents of the study also believed that the organizers and the local tourism office assured tourists/visitors of the availability of accommodations for rest, dining and relaxation

Table 2. Impact of the Ati-atihanfestival on the tourism industry of the municipality of kalibo, aklan among respondents when taken as a whole group

Items	Means	Interpretation	Rank
1. On the Ati-atihan festival leading to the development of the tourism industry by attracting tourists/visitors to the municipality.			
a. There is an increase in the variety of entertainment in the area.	4.51	Very high impact	1
b. There is an increase in the awareness of the local culture and heritage among the locals and tourists.	3.62	High impact	2
c. There is an increase in the cultural facilities and activities in the community.	3.56	High impact	3
d. There is an improvement in local infrastructure and development.	3.33	Moderate impact	4
Mean	3.75	High impact	
Items	Means	Interpretation	Rank
2. On the tourism office promoting the Ati-atihan Festival			
a. The local tourism office coordinates with regional office of the DOT to promote the festival.	3.58	High impact	1
b. The festival organizers make use of the world wide web to make the festival known to other people.	3.34	Moderate impact	3
c. The local tourism office has prepared information technology-based presentation of the festival to attract tourists.	3.42	High impact	2
d. The local government officials provide flyers, brochures and other print materials to promote the festival.	3.28	Moderate impact	4
Mean	3.40	Moderate impact	
Items	Means	Interpretation	Rank
3. On the activities during the Ati-atihan Festival has attracted tourists both locally and internationally.			
a. The Ati-Atihan competition has improved and has become more colorful.	3.93	High impact	1.5

b.	The number of tribes competing provide a variety for the tourists to see.	3.80	High impact	4
c.	The street dancing provide the tourists and visitors a chance to participate.	3.93	High impact	1.5
d.	There are a large number of local and foreign tourists who flock to the town during festival dates.	3.92	High impact	3
Mean		3.90	High impact	
	Items	Means	Interpretation	Rank
4.	On the having a night during the celebration which presents special programs to honor tourists/visitors, especially balikbayans and OFWs.			
a.	During the festival celebration, a special night is allotted to balikbayans and OFWs in recognition of their fund and logistics support to the festival.	3.55	High impact	2
b.	Distinguished balikbayans and OFWs who have excelled in their professions are awarded and recognized.	3.47	High impact	3
c.	Festival organizers have designed special program for balikbayans and OFWs to show tangible proof of the value and significance of their support.	3.57	High impact	1
d.	Every year, festival organizers have designed a special presentation for tourists/visitors to showcase the local products of the town.	3.46	High impact	4
Mean		3.51	High impact	
	Items	Means	Interpretation	Rank
5.	On organizers and the local tourism office assuring tourists/visitors of the availability of accommodations for rest, dining and relaxation.			
a.	Organizers have instructed restaurant owners/managers to have a list of menus with priced for information and convenience of the tourists.	3.09	Moderate impact	1
b.	Prominent families have been contacted to accommodate special guests with provision for dining, rest and relaxation.	2.79	Moderate impact	3
c.	Owners/managers of hotels and restaurants have been informed to maintain standards for safety and sanitation so as not to disappoint tourists/visitors.	2.90	Moderate impact	2
d.	Local tourism office have assessed the quality of accommodation and food services and duly informed festival organizers of their availability.	2.68	Moderate impact	4
Mean		2.87	Moderate impact	
Composite Mean		3.49	High impact	



### Significant Differences on the Perceived Economic Impact of the Ati-atihan Festival among Categories of Respondents

Results of the ANOVA revealed an F Value of 21.84, with a significance of 0.00. Since this was lesser than the p value of 0.05, this indicated that there were indeed significant differences in the perceived impact of the festival on the economy of the municipality. (Table 5)

Table 3. ANOVA Table for significant differences on the impact of the ati-atihan festival on the economy of Kalibo, Aklan among Categories of Respondents

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Interpretation
Between Groups	20.96	2.00	10.48	21.84	0.00*	Significant
Within Groups	56.14	117.00	0.48			
Total	77.10	119.00				

*Significant at  $p < 0.05$*

### Significant Differences on the Perceived Tourism Impact of the Ati-atihan Festival Among Categories of Respondents

Results revealed an F value of 2.70 with a significance of 0.07. Since the significance was greater than the p value set for this study of 0.05, this indicated that there were no significant differences in the impact of the festival on the tourism industry of Kalibo, Aklan as perceived by residents, businessmen and local government officials. (Table 4)

Table 4. ANOVA Table for Significant Differences on the

## Impact of the Ati-atihan Festival on the Tourism Industry of Kalibo, Aklan among Categories of Respondents

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Interpretation
Between Groups	4.80	2.00	2.40	2.70	0.07	Not Significant
Within Groups	104.10	117.00	0.89			
Total	108.90	119.00				

*Significant at  $p < 0.05$*

### Significant Economic Impacts of the Ati-atihan Festival

The significant impact of the festival on the economy of the town were on the festival resulting in additional/increase of costs and expenditures for the local government with a Z value of 2.10 and a significance of 0.04. Another significant impact was on the festival having resulted in generating higher income and enjoyment of more benefits to the people in the municipality, with a z value of -4.12 and a significance of 0.00. (Table 5)

Table 5. Z-Test for Significant Economic Impacts of the Ati-atihan Festival

Items	Test Value	Z Value	Assymp. Sig.	Interpretation
1. On the Ati-Atihan Festival leading to an increase in the economic activity in the Municipality of Kalibo, Aklan	3.89	-1.47	0.14	Not Significant

2.	On the municipal and barangay governments providing an adequate budget for holding the Ati-atihan festival.	2.84	-0.62	0.54	Not Significant
3.	On the Ati-atihan Festival bringing about the expansion and improvement of local products.	3.95	-1.57	0.12	Not Significant
4.	On the Ati-atihan Festival resulting in additional/increase costs and expenditures for the local government.	3.60	2.10	0.04*	Significant
5.	On the Ati-atihan Festival having resulted in generating of higher income and enjoyment of more benefits to the people in the municipality.	3.51	-4.12	0.00*	Significant

$p < 0.05$

### Significant Tourism Impacts of the Ati-atihan Festival

The z-test for significant impacts of the Ati-atihan festival on the tourism industry of Kalibo, Aklan revealed that only one item was significant. This was on the activities during the festival having attracted tourists both locally and internationally, with a z value of -5.34 and a significance of 0.00.

Table 6.Z-Test for Significant Impacts of the Ati-Atihan Festival on the Tourism Industry of Kalibo, Aklan

Items	Test Value	Z Value	Assymp. Sig.	Interpretation
1. On the Ati-atihan festival leading to the development of the tourism industry by attracting tourists/visitors to the municipality.	3.75	-1.03	0.30	Not Significant
2. On the tourism office promoting the Ati-atihan Festival	3.40	-1.81	0.07	Not Significant
3. On the activities during the Ati-atihan Festival has attracted tourists both locally and internationally.	3.90	-5.34	0.00*	Significant
4. On the having an night during the celebration which presents special programs to honor tourists/visitors, especially balikbayans and OFWs.	3.51	-1.09	0.28	Not Significant
5. On organizers and the local tourism office assuring tourists/visitors of the availability of accommodations for rest, dining and relaxation.	2.87	1.71	0.09	Not Significant

*Significant at  $p < 0.05$*

## CONCLUSIONS

The respondents believed that the Ati-atihan festival had an economic impact to the town by bringing about the expansion and improvement of local products and in increasing the economic activity. They likewise believed that the Ati-atihan Festival had an impact to the tourism industry of the town by attracting tourists both locally and internationally. There were significant differences in the perceived economic impacts of the Ati-atihan Festival in Kalibo, Aklan when respondents are categorized to variables.

The significant economic impact of the festival were centered on the festival resulting in additional/increase of costs and expenditures for the local government and on the festival having resulted in generating higher income and enjoyment of more benefits to the people in the municipality. The significant tourism impact of the festival centered on the activities during the festival having attracted tourists both locally and internationally.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to boost the economy of a certain Municipality the local government should look into additional job opportunities and income generating activities for the local citizens. Also, the local government should look into more solicitations from generous benefactors and sponsors to help defray expenses for the festival. Local hotels and restaurants should be promoted since there is a need to increase patronage of these service industries as evidenced from the low impact it had on the economy of the town.

The municipality of Kalibo must improve and develop local infrastructures in the locality to make it more conducive to tourism. Additional promotions should be made, especially on flyers, brochures and print materials to promote the festival. It is recommended that the internet be used as an effective medium of promotion. A campaign for more tribal competition should be made to provide more variety for tourists to see. It is also recommended that a study be made to assess the economic impact of the festival based on actual income and

expenditure made in relation to its celebration.

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