

# CULTURAL RESOURCES IN ENHANCING THE DESTINATION IMAGE OF TAAL, BATANGAS

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**Abstract:** Taal, Batangas, also known as the Balisong and Barong capital of the Philippines is a well-preserved cultural town that is home to numerous historical structures dating from the Spanish colonial period. It was declared as a “Heritage Town” by the National Historical Commission of the Philippines back in September 1987. Assessing tourism resources allows researchers to learn about their current state and discover ways to improve their cultural identity in the tourism industry. Architecture, customs and traditions, religion, arts & crafts, and food are all cultural resources being the specific pointers used as independent variables which had a large contribution in this study. The researchers used qualitative research design in the form of narrative analysis in the study. In the sampling process, the researchers used experts sampling as a tool to identify the five key participants of the study who underwent a zoom interview with the researchers. The data gathered was analyzed through narrative analysis to be able to pinpoint the issues of the destination image of Taal. The result showed that cultural resources are important factors to protect in magnifying a destination image. These analyses gave helpful data to the arranging of the conceivable program that we could propose to upgrade the objective's character in making use of its cultural assets; keeping that in mind, recommendations have been made regarding the preservation and utilization of its cultural resources in further enhancement of the destination image of Taal.

**Keywords:** cultural resources, enhancing destination image, Taal, Batangas, destination image, heritage town.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Destination Image is defined as the set of general impressions of the place visited by the tourists. Many factors affect these impressions such as age, education, income, beliefs, and culture. The primary reason why travellers prefer a specific destination is the attraction offered such as Festivals, sporting events, cultural and historical heritage, entertainment, shopping facilities, and the local cuisine of the area. (Akkucuk & Ata, 2019) There is a demand for attractions to create a brand or image to stand out among other competing tourist attractions as the global market arises. Through their specific brand position and competitive proposition, places with distinct identities appear to stand out and build an advantage, which is almost always related to the ability of local service providers to offer services and express perceived and promised experiences far better than the majority of the service providers on the market. (Villegas, 2017) This research focuses on the five distinct facets of the cultural resources that make up the Research locale's reputation as a heritage town (e.g., architecture, customs and traditions, religion, arts & crafts, and food).

The historically renowned town of Taal, Batangas was declared as a “Heritage Town” by the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP) back on September 30, 1987. The said declaration strengthens the primary goal of preserving and conserving the rich cultural heritage and structures within the Heritage Village and buffer zones, as stated

in PD 1505 amending PD 260 and Article 14, Section 14 of the 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines. Taal's cultural heritage has been rekindled as an effective promotional tool for attracting tourists interested in heritage and the arts. Heritage must constantly evolve, reinventing itself dynamically and finding participation in vital agendas such as dispute resolution, intercultural dialogue, and poverty reduction (Aguda, et al., 2013).

The study's goal is to evaluate Taal, Batangas' established cultural resources specifically customs & traditions, religion, architecture, arts & crafts, and food. This is done with the help of the chosen experts of the said research locale. The study will also generate ideas for improving the current condition of the destination as a heritage town by identifying the strengths as well as the issues of its cultural identity. With that, the group will try to address the problems and come up with solutions for maximizing the town's potential opportunities.

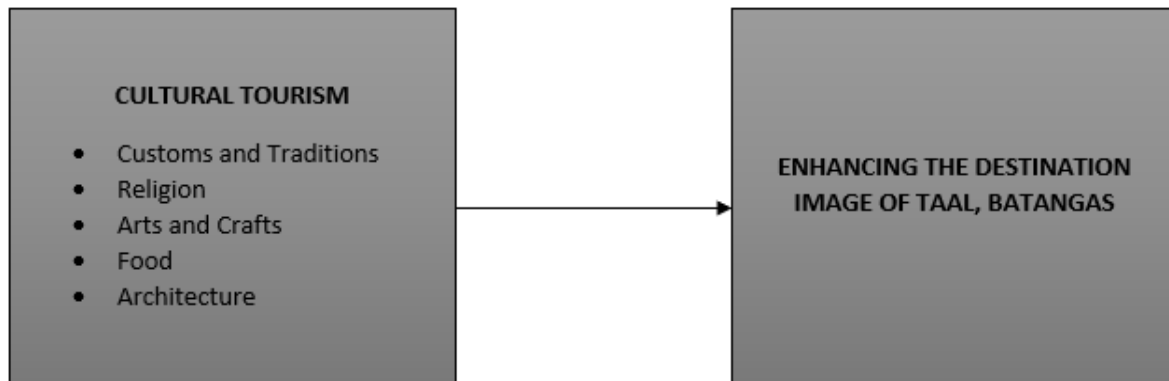
The researchers considered studying the municipality of Taal to be extremely beneficial. Assessing the location, as well as its heritage and cultural factors, has a positive effect on the reputation of the town as a tourist destination. Due to its historical setting, they realized that their location could be a potential source of the National Cultural Tourism Industry. As a result, it is an opportunity to take pride in an area with a rich cultural heritage. Many places in the town remain recognized as major attractions. They will be able to properly monitor their environment as a result of this research. More visitors are anticipated, which will mean more jobs will arise for Taal residents in terms of the labour force.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The perception of Melo, et al. (2017) uncovers that in an undeniably competitive market wherein images are a conclusive part for the decision of touristic objections, destinations are presently trying to turn out to be more particular. This examination endeavours to comprehend the character of the Azores as a milestone in significant business sectors in the territory additionally, to discover how fulfilled these business sectors are. This article manages the definition, as these affect the objective of returning, just as the plan to propose traveller objectives, of the travel industry milestone's image and fulfilment. The results show that (1) the general image influences the fulfilment or reason to recommend, and (2) the fulfilment influences the goal to advise and return to the destination (Melo, et al., 2017). Furthermore, the study of Alcocer & Ruiz (2019) states that an overall picture of a destination is a satisfaction antecedent. That is, the perceived image of tourists in this archaeological place affects their satisfaction after visitation. In addition, the literature reviewed indicates that a satisfied tourist is more likely to visit this tourist destination or to recommend it.

Destination image is an important factor in terms of tourism development. Destinations with constructive impressions are bound to be chosen for travel purposes compared to others. It assumes a significant job in the dynamic in the satisfaction and publicizing systems of the objective (Ahmed, et al., 2018). However, the destination image is to be maintained, enhanced, and protected to establish a competitive proposition. In a country in Africa, issues in destination image harmed tourist arrival (Nyaungwa, 2020). Because of government unreliability, bad publicity, and economic bankruptcy, the number of tourists has dropped down. In the Philippine setting, the island of Boracay is experiencing the effects of enhancing its image from being a party image island towards a sustainable tourist destination due to the rehabilitation that occurred (Mariano, 2019).

Multiple studies focus on the relevance of destination image such as the study of Asuncion (2019) wherein Pasig City was used to regulate and assess its image using the Multisensory Marketing Model. The investigation reasons that as far as the utilization of Multisensory Marketing Model, Pasig city was linked in Visual, Gustatory and Tactile Marketing strategies. Moreover, the city is engaged with gustatory methodology due to the presence of food centre points and eateries around the city. The local government ought to endorse more on this strength and develop other barangay for the food experience of the tourists. Furthermore, in the case of Perak, Malaysia, the travellers put together their choices concerning the impression of destination image ascribes which they got from various data sources. The outcome of this study demonstrates the main element of neighbourhood attractions and facilities falls into the 'cognitive construct' of destination image given the most elevated marker that pulls in guests (Asuncion, 2019). Although numerous studies have conducted an appraisal of the tourism resources, there are no investigations that focus on Taal, Batangas, and surfaced with a similar purpose for utilizing their cultural resources in enhancing their destination image. Therefore, the researchers will gather the necessary inventory of tourism resources, specifically in the cultural aspect in Taal, Batangas to be able to make use of this information in the enhancement of the town.



**Fig. 1** The researchers used the framework above based on the various components of cultural tourism that were applied in the abstract of the study of Peterson & McCarthy (2003) entitled “Hotel Development of Cultural Tourism Elements”.

The figure introduced shows the connection between the independent and dependent variables associated with this investigation. As can be seen, the dependent variable was the enhancing of the destination image of Taal, Batangas reliant to the cultural tourism considered as the independent factors with pointers to be specific as customs and traditions, religion, ceremonies, arts and crafts, food, and architecture. This spoke to the cycle of how the researchers made a comprehensive synopsis on various cultural tourism and how each varies from their effect with regards to the knowledge of the experts to modify its qualities that can be utilized in enhancing the destination image. The evaluation of these assets was the premise in seeing further the destination image of Taal, Batangas.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The researchers used expert sampling as a method to determine the selection of participants critically and concisely. In expert sampling, there are two key stage processes in identifying who will be the participant of the study. The first stage is to give meaning to the word experts, which the researchers identified as an individual who has knowledge of the cultural resources of Taal, Batangas. The second stage is to identify if the experts suit the criteria of the researchers (Glen, 2020). The experts should possess the following criterion: (1) knows the destination; (2) has been to/living in Taal, Batangas. The researchers have come up with a total of five participants who underwent a one-on-one interview with the researchers and these experts passed all the criteria that were suggested.

The five experts were identified through the recommendations of the various Tourism Facebook pages of Taal, Batangas. The researchers then contacted the experts through their Facebook accounts as recommended and through that, the researchers have acquired information with regards to their profession and their knowledge on the destination. The five experts that were identified are the following: (1) Dr. Emmanuel Calairo, a History Professor at De La Salle University – Dasmariñas and a commissioner of National Historical Commission of the Philippines; (2) Mr. Pio Goco, a resident of Taal and the Proprietor of the Goco Ancestral House in Taal, Batangas; (3) Ms. Myrna Dimaano, a retired Professor at Araullo High School and a Senior President of Senior Citizen Association of Taal; (4) Mr. Derrick Gerardo Manas, a Consultant of Batangas Vice Governor Mark Leviste for Heritage and Tourism and a Columnist for CALABARZON newspaper based in Batangas called "The Weekly Front Page" and a PRO of Batanguenos Organization called "The Batangas Form"; (5) Armando Montenegro, a resident of Taal, Batangas and an advocate for Culture and Tourism.

The researchers used the interview as the data gathering tool for the study and it was done virtually through an application called “Zoom”. The scheduling of the interview was set both by the expert and the researchers basing on their availability of time and day. Upon the scheduled interview, the researchers sent the interview guide together with the consent form. The interview questions are based on the framework of the study focusing on the resources of Taal, Batangas which will be further discussed by the experts.

The analytical method that is used in the study is narrative analysis for the reason that it helps interpret the results of the interview in a narrative manner and find the connection of all the results which enables it to acquire an organized and functional conclusion and recommendation. The data is treated with utmost confidentiality basing on the consent form that has been submitted to each expert who took part in the study.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1. Customs and Traditions

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY
Lua	A chant performed as a prayer by a selected female (18 years old) of Taal. Usually performed at feasts.	3
Feast of St. Martin de Tours	Celebration of Taal's Patron Saint, St. Martin de Tours. Every November 11	5
Feast of Our Lady of Caysasay	A feast celebrated every 8 <sup>th</sup> of December for the Archdiocesan shrine of our lady of Caysasay.	5
El Pasubat	A Festival that showcases all the products and delicacies of Taal, Batangas. It stands for Empanada, Longanisa, Panutsa, Suman, Barong, Balisong, Tapa, Tawillis, Tamalis, Tulingan, Tsokolate.	2

Customs and traditions have long been linked to regional pride, including the holidays people celebrate, the foods they eat and prepare, the clothes they wear, and the folk tales they tell their children. (Stokes, 2017) Over the years, the Customs & Traditions of Taal has always been there. The interviews conducted by the researchers all said that the Festivals are celebrated every year in honor of their Patron Saint, St. Martin de Tours as well as the Feast of Our Lady of Caysasay. It is evident that their customs & traditions are heavily connected on their religion. In the words of Mr. Montenegro *"When you talk of the customs and traditions, handed down to us and for so many generations we've always been into the lavish preparations and the grand celebration. Specifically of religious traditions"*. The feasts were known to be expensive since big celebrations are prepared years prior. Preparations are headed by their so called "Hermana Mayor". This type of celebration has been the tradition of the town and lasted as long as they can imagine. Perhaps the reason why their festivals are deemed significant is that the strength of their town is their close-knit relationship with each other that in time of big festivals, they work as a big unit. Showing the essence of "Bayanihan".

As we dig deeper the festivals, there are activities that are always present. There is their so called "Lua" or "Pagluluwa" wherein Ms. Myrna Dimaano described it as a chant teens perform in honor of their saint. This is performed while in a "Karosa" that serves as the stage together with matching traditional outfit for the performer. *"In fact, sabi nga ng matatanda noong araw, hindi kumpleto ang pagdadalaga mo kung ikaw hindi na-lua. Ibig sabihin pag dating mo ng 18, ipagpapagawa ka ng magandang gown, gawa ng ang mga taga-Taal tapos tuwing December 8, piyesta, lu-lua ka"* (Manas, 2021). Again, this tradition has been going over for years and it has been discussed on 3 out of the 5 interviews. On the other hand, the distinct celebration of EL PASUBAT in Taal is one event that tourist should not miss. This festival is an extravagant way of showcasing Taal's goods in a celebration designed to rekindle Taaleños' interest in the things that have led to the municipality's economic development and the people's unity. (El Pasubat, n.d.)

All five agreed that these are the cornerstone of the customs and traditions of the town and all of them came down with one synonymous issue that affected the feasts of taal. The celebrations were not as lavish or grand as it used to be which made it seem like tourists are not as interested with the town's traditions compared with other famous festivals in other cities and provinces that are known to be great attractions. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic arose and suddenly, big events like these were called off.

Table 2. Religion

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY
Minor Basilica of Saint Martin of Tours	It is considered to be the largest church in Asia with its Neo-classic architecture that dates back to 1856 and was finished in the year 1878.	5
Archdiocesan Shrine of Our Lady of Caysasay	A coral-hewn chapel was built in the year 1639 in the barrio of Caysasay.	4
San Lorenzo Ruiz Steps	A 125 steps stairs known as the "hagdan-hagdan, but later changed its name after the first Saint of the country.	2

The interview found out that religion in Taal, Batangas is one of the reasons why the destination is said to be a Heritage town. In an interview with Mr. Calairo, He mentioned *“So lahat yun umiikot yun sa simbahan kasi yung kultura ng simbahan napakamaimpluwensya sa bayan ng Taal”* which means that their culture and traditions are heavily rooted to Christianity on the Spanish colonial period and are deeply influenced by it. Also, in Mr. Montenegro’s statement, before Taal, Batangas was established, they already have a religious symbol or a patron saint that has been recognized and this is Saint Martin of Tours, the patron saint of Taal which is celebrated every 11th of November. The statement of Mr. Montenegro is a clear evidence that religion is the basis of the creation and formation of the town. Hence the result of inhibiting the largest church in Asia which is the Minor Basilica of Saint Martin of Tours and in a short distance the Archdiocesan Shrine of our Lady of Caysasay is located together with San Lorenzo steps which was built in 1850 and is composed of 125 granite steps.

According to Mr. Goco, the faith of the locals to the lord are so big that they even entrust their lives to him knowing that Taal, Batangas is located only 10km away from the active volcano. This shows how reliant the locals are to religion and how it gravely influences the locals of Taal that people know now. Due to its rich religious background, it is inevitable that influx of tourist with diverse interest would want to visit the said destination. In a study by Aulet (2019), *“It is undeniable that sacred places are visited by different people and for very different reasons, ranging from the faithful and those who seek to have a transcendental experience to those who are drawn there by factors as diverse as nature or art”*. This only shows how it can influence tourists by just simply acknowledging and giving importance to the religious background of the destination that would benefit the community of Taal.

Recognizing that these infrastructures are hundreds of years old, the maintenance and restoration of it would now be the challenge of Taal. In which the goal here is to maintain its authentic glory and not give in to the modernity of today’s time. By restoration, it would now showcase a great experience for the tourists in which historical preservation is present and visible in the attraction. With that being said, monetary fund is required to start its operation which will be considered by the local government; in which reconstruction of budget is needed to allocate funds for the project; which will be tricky. Also, a proper scheduling should be plotted in order to avoid disturbing the tourism operations because this would have an effect to tourists in a negative way if their visit were bombarded by several construction in the vicinity.

**Table 3. Arts and Crafts**

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY
Barong Tagalog/Burdang Taal	A traditional attire of men in the Philippines that looks like a Polo. It is made of Pineapple fibers and is hand-made.	5
Balisong	A folding pocketknife that originated in Taal. Taal is known as the Balisong capital of the Philippines.	5

Traditional Arts and crafts are always a strong factor when it comes to considering the cultural heritage of a said area and can be classified as tangible heritage. Products that originated in such town mirrors the traditional history, feelings, culture as well as the characteristics of the society. (Sayfa n.d.)

Taal has produced some of the Philippines' most ferocious revolutionaries and people, so it is only fitting that it is also known as the Balisong Capital of the Philippines. The balisong's origins can be traced back to its ancestors can be traced backway beyond modern times. (Goco, 2021) Taal was the birthplace of the Balisong at form. Around 1905, the art of making Balisong became popular in the Philippines. Perfecto de Leon produced it as a lethal weapon and from then on, it has become a well-known commodity not just in the Philippines, but around the world. Today, Taaleños can be seen making knives in their raw form on the streets of Taal, from the molding of metal sheets to the sharpening of knives and the crafting of handles. Taal is the place to go to see how balisongs are made and to buy one as a souvenir.

Meanwhile, the Barong Tagalog has seen many imposing trends in fashion together with changing patterns. The beautifully embroidered traditional male clothing remains distinctly Filipino, despite many changes in style over the centuries. Prior to the arrival of the Spaniards, the Barong Tagalog originated from the baro, a Filipino male shirt. Besides the Balisong Capital, Taal is also called the Barong Tagalog Capital and still a lifeline for the town and has gained international acclaim. *“Through the efforts of the late Mrs. Arsenia Barrion-Ocampo who was recognized by President Ferdinand Marcos in 1975 with the Panday Pira Awards because of her barong tagalog creation. Ang sabi ng mga matatanda noong araw, [former Presidents] Magsaysay, Garcia, Macapagal at Marcos ay pumupunta pa sa Taal para*



*magpasukat ng barong*” (Manas, 2021). The most expensive of all Barongs is what they call “Burdang Taal”. It is made with piña cloth, a soft sheer white fabric made from the leaves of the pineapple plant.

*“These are the two major products that have made to Taal really recognized by many. But over the years, it managed to exist, although I must admit that it already is into a diminishing trend, were in so many people are not anymore as interested and as involved with the production of barong and balisong. When you talk of Balisong and the embroidery, it seems like only the old folks are just the ones left stuck into it. But with the youth you know with the modern people, it seems that they cannot anymore just get into it as much as it is not even as lucrative. It does not even promise a good day when you talk of what can be their participation in production”* (Montenegro, 2021). In today’s day and age, Taal’s Barong and Balisong industry is continuing to suffer setbacks as a result of industrialization and the emergence of machinery that facilitate mass production.

**Table 4. Food**

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY
Empanada	Are fried pies that have meat filling; it could be chicken or pork.	2
Lomi	A type of noodle broth with pork toppings, liver, and vegetables.	2
Panutsa	A type of peanut that uses whole nuts as its main ingredient.	3
Adobong Dilaw	A different kind of approach in the traditional adobo. This type of adobo does not use soy sauce but instead, uses turmeric or "luyang dilaw" as an alternative.	4
Sumang Taal	A Filipino pasalubong which is a combination of sweet and sticky which is a boiled rice cake wrapped in banana leaves.	2
Tapang Taal	A marinated thin sliced pork, paired with a mix of vinegar, soy sauce, onions, calamansi as a dipping sauce.	4
Tamales	A Taaleno delicacy that is covered in banana leaves with a mixture of pork, egg, and nuts in a sticky rice cake.	2
Taghilaw	A Filipino stew that has pork and intestines, liver, and kidneys on it and sautéed with garlic and onions then later cooked in vinegar.	1
Longganisang Taal	A Filipino type of sausage marinated into soy sauce, garlic, sugar, and calamansi.	3

The food aspect is an essential and crucial factor on the destination. According to Coppola (2016), *“It is a way of immersing ourselves into the culture and heritage of a region, making the experience memorable in a completely unique and personal way”*. This means that food offers the tourists an authentic experience that is incomparable to others. In the case of Taal, Batangas, the culinary industry of the destination portrays as a unique factor on their tourism because people can see a glimpse on their culture which makes the culinary industry of Taal unique and famous. According to Mr. Montenegro, *“Taal is also known as a culinary destination simply because we have some dishes that make Taal even more distinctive”*. This only proves how essential for Taal to have a culinary industry that is purely authentic because their culture reflects on it and so as their image being a culinary destination. According to Mr. Manas, a historian from Batangas, *“food is also a heritage. Ang Taal ay maraming iba’t-ibang klaseng mga pagkain”*. He mentioned food as a heritage aspect of the destination which weighs even further that food is a crucial part of Taal and should be recognized alongside with its historical structures that create its identity as a heritage town and he also mentioned that Taal has various dishes that would simply define them as a culinary destination, among others.

Dishes like Adobong Dilaw and Tapang Taal are repeatedly mentioned by four interviewees and was described as a taste that is purely authentic to Taal, Batangas. Adobong Dilaw is a dish that is completely distinctive because of its unique color that is not normally seen in an Adobo; the use of turmeric powder or “luyang dilaw” is the reason why it creates its bright yellow color. A dish that is most popular to tourist is the Tapang Taal which is a marinated thin sliced pork and is mainly sold in the public market of Taal. Other dishes that are popular to tourists are Longganisang Taal, Panutsa, Tamales, Sumang Taal, Lomi, and Empanada. Compared to its relatives from Vigan and Lucban, Longganisang Taal is much larger in size but still maintaining its strong flavor coming from garlic but giving a hint of sweetness in it hence the presence of sugar as one of its ingredients. Panutsa is a brown and round candy that is made from brown sugar syrup and whole nuts and is commonly bought by tourists as their “pasalubong” or souvenir.

Another notable dish in Taal is Tamales, it is a sticky rice mixed with several ingredients such as pork, egg, and nuts and wrapped together in a banana leaf. Another dish that is wrapped with banana leaves is the Sumang Taal, which is a mixture of sweet taste, yet it has a sticky texture and is commonly paired by locals with a cup of Tablea drink. Next one, it is widely popular in the Batangas province and is deemed to be its signature dish and it is called Lomi, this dish is made from rice noodles and egg soup with variety of toppings on it just like vegetables and pork. This dish is made of flour and fried until the outer layer is crunchy and it is filled with a choice of meat either pork or chicken. One dish that was mentioned by one interviewee is the Taghilaw, it is a specialty dish from Batangas which is a Filipino stew with pork and offal such as intestines, liver, and kidney which is later cooked with vinegar. Taal, Batangas have a wide variety of dishes that are completely distinct from each other which will provide the different taste of tourists. This shows how important food is in tourism and how it can be a factor in giving an authentic experience.

It is said that Taal, Batangas have been having problems in disseminating information in a global scale. Mr. Montenegro also said in an interview that the challenge for Taal is to remind the residents that the town is their cultural treasure and should be properly protected and in order to do such thing is to effectively disseminate information with regards to their town which will result to the preservation of Taal and its culture. Continuing practice of this said culture and traditions will seek a more sustainable future which will enable the presence of this dish known and relevant on the future times.

**Table 5. Architecture**

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	FREQUENCY
Casa Villa Vicencio	An old Spanish colonial-era house of the Villavicencio.	1
Don Leon Apacible Ancestral House	A mansion turned museum built in the 19th century	1
Ilagan-Barrion Ancestral House/Galleria Taal	It is known as the first camera museum in the Philippines.	1
Goco Ancestral House	One of the most famous and very well restored ancestral houses in the Philippines.	1
San Lorenzo Ruiz Steps	A 125 steps stairs known as the "hagdan-hagdan, but later changed its name after the first Saint of the country.	2
Museo nina Marcela Marino at Felipe Agoncillo	The house where the head sewer of the Philippine flag was born.	1

The researchers have investigated that in terms of Taal’s architecture, ancestral houses are the most known precedent in the province. To begin with, two of the experts interviewed, Mr. Calairo and Mr. Montenegro, opted to answer this specific cultural component generally and did not state a specific architectural site. As mentioned by Howard (2019), “*We should want to extract as much value from it as possible and understand our role in space and time as part of a link from that past, through us to the future*”. This explains the importance of historical and architectural sites of a destination, especially in today’s modernity.

One of the ancestral houses in Taal is the Casa Villa Vicencio. It was the wedding gift to Doña Gliceria Marella y Legaspi from Don Eulalio Villavicencio on the event of their wedding in 1871. Most of its areas are made from hardwood mulawin and narra. In the 1990s the house was restored to maintain its respectability. In Don Leon Apacible Ancestral House, they have saved antique items utilized by the family. 18<sup>th</sup>-century old furniture and artifacts can be found on the

site. *“Now, the granddaughter of Don Leon who was mayor in Taal in the 1970s donated the house to the National Historical Commission. So, yung dalawang bahay na yun, well-maintained kasi it is being funded by the government”* (Manas, 2021). The ancestral house is currently regulated by the National Historical Institute as well as the Goco Ancestral House which was built around the year 1876 and was restored in 1999. Commemorative items of Raul Goco and his wife, Marietta Goco can be found on the site. They were both known as public servants and one of the wealthiest families in Taal.

Additionally, the Galleria Taal features a wide collection of cameras from the late 1800s, 1900's and up to the current date. Rare photographs of some landmarks during the Japanese occupation and other events that happened in the history of the Philippines. On the other hand, San Lorenzo Ruiz Steps was built in 1850 composed of 125 granite stairways that connect the shrine of Caysasay and the well of Sta. Lucia. It was named in commemoration of the first Filipino saint of the Philippines. Lastly, the Museo Nina Marcela Marino at Felipe Agoncillo is the house of the first Filipino known to be the head sewer of the official national flag of the Philippines has been a historical landmark in Taal over the years. According to Mr. Derrick Manas, in honor of her legacy, the descendants decided to donate the ancestral house to the government to be preserved and restored which makes Taal, Batangas eminent.

These investigations are supported by the statement of Mr. Dindo Montenegro wherein he states that *“Taal may be the only town that can boast or that would have the rank high in terms of the number of cultural landmarks or houses or structures that have been declared as a historical structure”*. He believes that these architectural structures have been part of the people's identity hence, strict guidelines must be implemented to protect and preserve them.

These examinations revealed the enormous impact and significance of architecture to the people of Taal. However, the preservation and restoration of these structures become a challenge to the province. As stated by Mr. Dindo Montenegro in the interview, *“with all these attractions, the challenge is there having to be a continuing sustainability”*. Second is the part of the stakeholders in disseminating the architectural infrastructures that they can offer most especially to the tourists to have continuous support in their heritage town. Inevitable calamities such as volcanic eruption, earthquake, and typhoon are factors that should also be addressed for the reason that they can severely damage the protected infrastructures of Taal.

## V. CONCLUSION

The researchers were able to assess the Cultural resources that were available to Taal with the help of interviewees that are expert in the field. Taal, Batangas, is a town rich in tourism resources particularly in their religion that is gravely connected to their traditions, and architectural structures that are considered a cultural heritage today. They were able to preserve these resources over the period of time. This serves as their greatest strength and is already the face of their tourism today while keeping up with the test of time is now at question. Opportunities in their culinary industry is slowly in progress and can be another great reason to visit the town. With a town rich in cultural heritage like Taal, Batangas, the researchers were able to define the different cultural resources that in terms of the 5 categories based on the study's conceptual framework.

Taal's culture and traditions are heavily rooted to Christianity on the Spanish colonial period and are deeply influenced by it. As an established heritage town, they already have a religious symbol or a patron saint that has been recognized and this is Saint Martin of Tours, the patron saint of Taal which is celebrated every 11th of November. Not to mention the feast of Our Lady of Caysasay that is celebrated every 8th of December. The statements of the interviewees were clear evidence that religion is the basis of the creation and formation of the town. Hence the result of inhibiting the largest church in Asia which is the Minor Basilica of Saint Martin of Tours and in a short distance the Archdiocesan Shrine of our Lady of Caysasay is placed together with San Lorenzo steps which was built in 1850 and is composed of 125 granite steps.

According to Mr. Goco, the faith of the locals to the lord are so big that they even entrust their lives to him knowing that Taal, Batangas is located only 10km away from the active volcano. This shows how reliant the locals are to religion and how it gravely influences the locals of Taal that people know now. The discussion also mentioned *“Pagluluwa”* which is an ongoing tradition that is being performed specifically in religious feasts. Although the town is rich with religious history, Taal also boasts its heritage by showcasing its products in terms of Arts, crafts, and food. These products are greatly highlighted in the event called EL PASUBAT, a type of festival that remembers the products of Taal that improved their economic development as well as the community's spirit of unity.



Known as the Balisong and Barong capital of the country, these products that are branded as “Burdang Taal” (hand-embroidered baro made from Pina fibers) are mainly at the center of attraction with matching culinary dishes that shows the unique factor of their tourism. Dishes like Adobong Dilaw and Tapang Taal are also mentioned as the town’s staple and was described as a taste that is purely authentic to Taal, Batangas. Other dishes mentioned and showcased in El Pasubat are Longganisang Taal, Panutsa, Tamales, Sumang Taal, Lomi, and Empanada. Lastly, Architectural designs that are still visible in town was greatly preserved.

Over a hundred of years past, the structures have faced the test of time. It mirrors the life and culture of each taalenos. Other than the religious structures that were mentioned, there are these ancestral houses that poses a great value to the heritage of Taal. From the Goco Ancestral Houses to some Spanish colonial-era house like the Casa of Villavicencio. The mansion of Don Leon Apacible, Marcela at Felipe Agoncillo’s house, as well as the Ilagan-Barrion Ancestral house all turned into a museum and very available to the public.

In accordance with the result and discussion, various lapses were seen. Hence, the researchers have come up with recommendations on how the town of Taal would want to safeguard these cultural aspects where in the long run, would potentially assist them with improving their current identity by organizing an exhibit that will incorporate these five cultural resources.

- A collective display of photos and videos that shows the town’s culture and traditions such as their festivals and practices that have been documented in the past which has a brief history and explanation on each display.
- Producing miniature models of the famous architectural resources such as ancestral houses, churches and other historical buildings that will include a concise description regarding the relevance of the architectural structure to its history.
- Increase the value of the culinary industry of Taal to acknowledge that the town has distinct and incomparable dishes through developing a cookbook that will serve as an effective tool to disseminate information with regards to the town’s cuisine.
- Presenting the products that are first known in Taal which includes balisong and handwoven barong. Moreover, the video of the process on how these products are being put together will be flashed on a screen.

This study is restricted in its capacity to sum up on the grounds that there are only 5 experts selected. It is proposed that the future studies utilize a similar method which is the expert sampling to acquire true and accurate information. Moreover, using a similar framework is recommended.

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