



Preserving Indigenous Heritage: A Strategic Roadmap for Community-Based Cultural Development

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Abstract

The Philippines is home to a diverse array of indigenous people, with unique languages, cultures, and traditions. Despite their significant contribution to the country's heritage and ecological balance, these communities often face marginalization and discrimination. They are among the poorest sectors of the population, illiterate, most vulnerable to extreme weather, and have limited access to basic services. To help build a sustainable community for the Indigenous people and contribute to Sustainable Development Goal 11, this study was undertaken to gather essential information that can inform policy decisions and strategic planning for the advancement of Indigenous communities. This study aims to determine the areas that could be developed in the indigenous community in southern Luzon Philippines using the Threats, Opportunities, Weaknesses, and Strengths (TOWS) matrix. Using a qualitative ethnographic method, data were collected through community immersion, participatory observation, interviews, and focus group discussions. Eighteen indigenous people belonging to the *Hanunuo* indigenous cultural community were selected as participants. The results show that pre-colonial script (*Surat Mangyan*), chanted poetry (*Ambahan*), and indigenous textile weaving (*Ramit*) are still being practiced by the elders. However, the younger generation prioritizes livelihood over cultural preservation, which would lead to the extinction of this intangible cultural heritage. Livelihood and cultural identity are essential for community development; thus, devising programs that address both are necessary. The findings served as a basis for the formulation of a strategic community development plan serving benchmarks for government agencies, higher education institutions, and non-government organizations.

Keywords *development goal #11, cultural heritage, SWOT Analysis, Indigenous people*

INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage acts as a collective memory for humanity, encompassing both tangible and intangible components. Tangible elements include physical structures, artifacts, and artworks, while intangible elements encompass customs, traditions, and knowledge (Radzuan, 2015). Cultural heritage is dynamic, evolving, and shaping our present and future. It is crucial in establishing a country's national identity and sovereignty. Moreover, it serves as a bridge between different generations, connecting them to their ancestors and fostering a sense of social attachment and belonging (Chohan & Wai ki, 2005). It reflects our identity, history, and values, connects us to our roots, and inspires future innovations.

Cultural heritage faces threats from environmental decay, urbanization, and globalization. To protect it, we need to prioritize efforts like Leveraging technology, involving communities, safeguarding languages, honoring traditional customs, strengthening museums, recording intangible heritage, protecting cultural landscapes, acknowledging culinary traditions, establishing legal measures, advancing education and awareness, addressing economic factors, and encouraging international cooperation. The preservation of cultural heritage is not optional but a fundamental responsibility. The conservation of cultural heritage is a collective responsibility that extends beyond national boundaries and to individual stakeholders (Tonta, 2013). Cultural heritage is a complex system composed of tangible and intangible elements. To fully appreciate its significance, it is crucial to consider the interplay of various factors, including economic value, natural elements,



and climatic conditions, which contribute to its overall character and preservation (Foroughi et al., 2024).

In the Philippines, the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009 (Republic of the Philippines, 2010) establishes the parameters for cultural heritage, following the guidelines set by UNESCO. The law defines cultural heritage as the entirety of cultural assets that have been preserved, developed over time, and transmitted to future generations (Art. II, Section 3). Cultural property encompasses all forms of human creativity that express the identity of individuals and nations. It also includes traditions and living expressions that are commonly shared, learned, symbolic, adaptable, interconnected, inherited from ancestors, and passed down through generations (Balco, 2012)

The Philippines is home to many indigenous people, including the natives of Mindoro, collectively known as *Mangyan*. *Mangyan*'s lives revolve around farming, hunting, and raising animals. Thus, they value their lands not just as part of their livelihood, but their culture is deeply rooted in these lands. Their ancestral domain is considered the foundation of consciousness and culture (Café, 2012). It goes beyond mere physical land. It encompasses the entire environment, including the spiritual and cultural bonds that indigenous people have with the area.

Mangyan is subdivided into 8 sub-groups: *Alangan*, *Bangon*, *Buhid*, *Hanunuo*, *Iraya*, *Ratagnon*, *Tadyawan*, and *Tau-buhid* (Fansler, 2009). This study focused on the *Hanunuo* subgroup, which inhabits the southern portion of Mindoro Island. They possess a unique pre-colonial script known as *Surat Mangyan*. They are also known to have a rich body of literature in the form of chanted poetry called *Ambahan*, which is recited during rituals, courtship, hunting planting, and other relevant activities. Another relevant cultural heritage of the *Hanunuo* is the weaving of indigenous textiles known as *Ramit*. The intricate weaving designs are relevant to their beliefs and cultural identity. However, like other cultural heritages, *Surat Mangyan*, *Ambahan*, and *Ramit* weaving are facing threats due to the erosion of traditional values and art forms (Ebenezer, 2020), migration, urbanization, technology, and modernization (Jennings, 2017), and acculturation.

The study focused on these three cultural heritages because of their cultural significance and the risks of their disappearance. *Surat Mangyan* is one of the three remaining precolonial syllabic scripts in the Philippines. It is a unique and culturally significant part of cultural identity not only among *Hanunuo Mangyan* but also among all Filipinos because of its similarities with the ancient *Baybayin* script used in other parts of the Philippines. While efforts are being made to preserve and revitalize it, *Surat Mangyan* faces challenges due to the decreasing number of fluent readers and writers. *Ambahan*, the traditional chanted poetry of the *Hanunuo*, is facing the threat of becoming a dying art. The younger generation is increasingly drawn to modern forms of entertainment and communication, leading to a decline in interest. The lack of documentation and limited studies on *Ambahan* are also among the challenges in conservation initiatives. *Ramit* weaving is also facing challenges that threaten its survival because of its time-consuming process, accessibility to modern, cheaper fabrics, economic pressures, and lack of interest among younger generations. The preservation of these cultural heritages strengthens the sense of identity and cultural pride among the *Hanunuo* people. Conservation efforts may include education and awareness campaigns, documentation, digitalization, community engagement, collaboration with government and non-government agencies, and research and outreach programs.

This study supports the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 11, which focuses on sustainable cities and communities. A culturally contextualized community development program was designed to enhance the resilience and sustainability of the *Hanunuo* community in an ever-changing world. Initially, a systematic SWOT analysis was conducted to identify the internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external opportunities and threats, essential for crafting a strategic plan aimed at preserving and developing the cultural identity of the *Hanunuo* community.

This study aims to develop strategies for the cultural development of the *Hanunuo*

indigenous community. A SWOT analysis was conducted to gather relevant information.

SWOT analysis is a logical model that systematically identifies an organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Hamzehpour et al., 2019), which are essential elements of strategic planning (Fuertes et al., 2020). SWOT analysis considers environmental information to identify key organizational attributes (Hidiroğlu, 2019) and categorizes information into internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (opportunities and threats). These factors can either benefit or harm the organization (Brown et al., 2017). The SWOT analysis is akin to evidence-based management in that decisions are made through the conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of sources of information (Puyt et al., 2023).

This study provides information on the cultural heritage of *Hanunuo Mangyan*. By identifying factors like the community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, strategies for the preservation of the cultural identity of the Indigenous community in the highlands of Mansalay, Oriental Mindoro were developed.

Specifically, this study aims to answer the following:

1. What strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats have the *Hanunuo* Indigenous community faced?
2. Based on the results of the study, what strategies can be proposed to develop the cultural identity of the community?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Indigenous People

Around 476 million indigenous peoples today (UNDESA, 2021) represent a rich diversity of languages, cultures, and traditions (Regio & Hestad, 2022). They possess unique knowledge systems and practices for sustainable natural resource management and significantly contribute to global diversity through their culturally rooted practices (Kalafatic, n.d.). However, many Indigenous people face significant challenges, such as high poverty rates, low life expectancy, and limited access to resources and education. Despite facing social and cultural challenges, indigenous communities have historically practiced sustainability and have been effective environmental stewards (Regio & Hestad, 2022).

Historically, Indigenous people have faced discrimination and marginalization (Anaya, 2009) across various dimensions, including geographical, social, political, educational, and economic (Arch'ad, 2024). These communities continue to be among the most impoverished (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2010) and disadvantaged, partly due to the enduring presence of their pre-colonial cultures and traditions (Bamba et al., 2021), yet these communities have been impacted by environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, militarization, and violence (Kalafatic, n.d.), as well as the enduring economic effects of colonialism, industrialization, and globalization (Jennings, 2017). Indigenous peoples face multiple dimensions of marginalization, including economic, sociocultural, educational, and political participation (Arch'ad, 2024). Despite all these challenges, indigenous peoples continue to strive for self-determination, seeking control over their social, economic, and cultural development paths (Kalafatic, n. d.).

The Philippines is home to 112 ethnolinguistic groups, representing around 14 to 17 million people or roughly 10% to 20% of the nation's total population (Philippine Statistics Office, 2016). Similar to indigenous communities worldwide, they have maintained their traditional practices and beliefs over generations (Bawagan, 2009). In Region IV, an estimated 700,000 indigenous people reside, including approximately 100,000 *Mangyan* living on the island of Mindoro (Fajardo, 2007). The *Mangyan*, an ethnolinguistic group, consists of eight sub-groups: *Alangan*, *Bangon*, *Buhid*, *Hanunuo*, *Iraya*, *Ratagnon*, *Tadyawan*, and *Tau-buhid* (Fansler, 2009). Primarily, farmers' customs

and traditions are closely linked to their agricultural activities (Valera & Visco, 2015). They highly value family bonds and cultural identity but tend to give less emphasis to formal education, particularly higher education (Aclan et al., 2021). Each tribe follows its own set of customary laws and traditions of indigenous leadership (Zhang et al., 2012). The *Batas Mangyan* (Mangyan laws) are used to regulate behavior, resolve conflicts, and maintain peace within the community, with *gurangon* (elder) playing a central role in decision-making and as keepers of indigenous knowledge (Martinez, 1999).

Culture

According to Axelrod (1997), that is linked to groups of people and encompasses a wide array of aspects, such as norms, values, shared meanings, structured patterns behaviors, and political ideologies (Touseef et al., 2023). It can refer to traditional behavior's characteristics of a specific society, group of societies, race, area, or period (Brumann, 1999). A person's cultural background influences their understanding of power dynamics, governance systems, and civic engagement (Touseef et al., 2023).

Indigenous peoples, such as the *Mangyan*, have their own culture and traditions. The *Hanunuo* and *Buhid* Indigenous communities possess an intangible cultural heritage, including their attested writing systems known as "*Surat Hanunuo Mangyan*" and "*Surat Buhid Mangyan*", respectively.

The *Mangyan* Syllabic Scripts (*Surat Hanunuo Mnagyan* and *Surat Buhid Mangyan*) are two of the three surviving indigenous scripts in the country (Postma, 1968). These scripts have endured through pre- and postcolonial eras and are closely tied to *Mangyan's* well-developed poetic discourse (Pitogo, 2015). The scripts are often etched onto everyday objects, such as bamboo containers, weapons, musical instruments, baskets, and even homes, serving as a testament to the *Mangyan's* cultural ingenuity and permeating nearly every aspect of their lives (Postma, 1972).

The *Ambahan* is a unique cultural identity of the *Hanunuo Mangyan* and is characterized by chanted poetry scripted on bamboo slates, posts, or tree trunks in the *Surat-Mangyan* scripts. This traditional form of poetry has been in practice for hundreds of years (Pitogo, 2012). The *Ambahan* verses consist of seven syllables and rhyming flow without a fixed melody or instruments, often posing riddles or challenges to captivate audiences of any age (Postma, 1974).

Ambahan's metaphorical expressions delve into human experiences and emotions (Postma, 1989), symbolizing human situations across cultures (Pitogo, 2012). It provides a sustainable worldview anchored by the cooperation of plants, animals, humans, and spirits in their world (Pitogo, 2010). The *Surat-Mangyan* and the *Ambahan* form an integrated piece, representing a metaphorical expression of the *Hanunuo* poetic genius and literary richness, reflecting the wealth of the Filipino pre-Hispanic consciousness, indigenous literature, poetry, philosophy, and heritage.

The *Ramit* is a traditional textile worn as a skirt by *Buhid* and *Haunuo Mangyan* women. It features geometric patterns and is woven using white and indigo threads (Mangyan Heritage Center, 2015). The traditional weaving process involves spinning, dyeing, and weaving locally grown wild cotton (The Mindoro Post, 2023). The indigenous textile represents the history, beliefs, and traditions of the people and is vital to their social, cultural, and economic aspects (Osei et al., 2021). Clothing is a significant tool for social and political expression, shaping, and reflecting cultural and societal shifts (Sadono et al., 2023). However, the clothing industry faces threats from unfair trade, expensive raw materials, and foreign textiles (Traub-Merz & Jauch, 2006). To preserve indigenous textiles, it is essential to safeguard traditional practices, promote the unique processing of natural fibers (Fahey, 2022), and conserve the concepts, philosophy, techniques, and history of indigenous textiles (Sharan et al., 2015). Neglecting traditional textiles will result in cultural identity loss (Kuwornu-Adjaottor et al., 2015), and stakeholders must work together to preserve this rich

cultural heritage (Ayesu et al., 2021).

Unfortunately, *Mangyan* scripts, including the poetic *Ambahan* and indigenous textile *Ramit*, are in danger of extinction (Catapang, n.d.). The younger generation's disinterest in their ancestral tongue writings and crafts has left the elders as the sole keepers of these cultural treasures. To preserve these customs and traditions, the Indigenous community, government agencies, non-government organizations, and academe must work together to develop culturally sensitive and appropriate interventions (Café, 2012). Therefore, the Indigenous community should continually find ways to preserve these customs and traditions for self-determination and cultural identity (Cadiz et al., 2019). Continuous research and extension projects should be conducted to help the *Mangyan* develop holistically, preserve their culture, and nurture their cultural beliefs (Cadiz et al., 2019). Understanding the significance and impact of cultural heritage is essential for preserving and promoting cultural identity (Ladja & Ladja, 2024).

The literature review emphasizes the importance of conducting a SWOT analysis to develop strategies for cultural development, which enables stakeholders to assess their resources and challenges, optimize decision-making, and achieve development goals effectively. This study aims to identify key factors that can facilitate the cultural advancement of indigenous communities in the upland areas of Southern Luzon., focusing on participative and culturally sensitive planning. Collaboration among stakeholders, including indigenous communities, local governments, and academic institutions, is crucial, with academe playing a key role in capacity-building and ensuring project alignment with sustainable development and cultural identity. By involving the *Hanunuo Mangyans* in the SWOT analysis, they can be empowered to participate in development decisions while preserving their cultural identity and fostering development.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study aims to identify internal and external attributes through SWOT analysis that may be used in strategic planning (Fuertes et al., 2020) To safeguard the cultural heritage of indigenous communities in the upland regions of Southern Luzon, Philippines. SWOT analysis consists of internal and external audits (Åberg et al., 2017). Internal analysis helps identify strengths and weaknesses as internal sources and capabilities for competitive advantage (Shtal et al., 2018), while external analysis identifies environmental opportunities and threats (Bowen & Bowen, 2016). Strengths represent an organization's internal assets and capabilities that drive its success, while weaknesses represent internal limitations that hinder its performance (Aldehayyat & Anchor, 2008). Opportunities are external elements that an organization can use to improve its performance. These include the positive aspects of the external environment and opportunities to address unmet needs and launch new initiatives (Fleisher & Bensoussan, 2003). Threats are external challenges or obstacles that can hinder an organization's ability to achieve its objectives (Lee & Lin, 2008). By understanding its strengths and weaknesses, an organization can strategically position itself to seize opportunities (Hamzehpour et al., 2019). Therefore, organizations should build strength to optimally utilize opportunities (Majekodunmi, & Ogundele, 2021).

Ethnography was used in the study to explore the social and cultural life of communities (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010), from a local perspective (Liang, 2022). This method allows the researcher to engage deeply in the community to describe the cultural phenomenon in depth (Fetterman, 2010) and learn from community members (Mendoza, 2007). By observing the community in natural ways (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010), researchers become participants or members of the community (Campbell & Lassiter, 2015), which helps in understanding the factors influencing cultural preservation.

The study was conducted in a second-class municipality in Southern Luzon, Philippines, inhabited by the *Hanunuo*, one of the eight sub-groups of *Mangyan* indigenous cultural communities

(Gutierrez & Aplao, 2020). The *Hanunuo* indigenous cultural communities comprise 33% of the municipality’s total population. They are mostly farmers who grow varieties of crops on their ancestral land and have a diverse cultural heritage.

The study involved 18 community members who were deliberately selected based on specific criteria. Participants were chosen because they consented to join the study, were fluent in Filipino, were at least 50 years old, and played a role in the community’s decision-making body. These criteria ensured that participants possessed extensive knowledge and experience relevant to the study. Among them, six served as primary informants, while the remaining twelve took part in focus group discussions.

Ethnographic data collection involves gathering a wide range of information (Lichtman, 2013) through multiple methods (Suter, 2012). This interconnected process encompasses data collection, analysis, and reporting (Creswell, 2007). In this study, data was obtained through observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and fieldwork/community immersion. No qualitative software was used for data analysis. Instead, the analysis followed a modified version of the LeCompte and Schensul (2010) model, as adapted by Liang (2022). This five-step approach included categorizing data, defining key terms, organizing categories into themes, and interpreting the findings. To ensure research trustworthiness, triangulation, researcher positioning, member checks, and field notes were utilized. Feedback from participants, particularly elders and cultural masters, was carefully considered during the member-checking process to validate the results. Additionally, the study underwent peer review by experts during an in-house evaluation at the university.

The findings of the SWOT analysis were presented using the TOWS (Threats, Opportunities, Weaknesses, and Strengths) matrix, a situational analysis framework developed by Wehrich (1982).

Table 1. The TOWS strategic alternative matrix

	Internal Strengths (S)	Internal Weaknesses (W)
External Opportunities (O)	SO strategies (maxi-maxi)	WO strategies (mini maxi)
External Threats (T)	ST strategies (maxi-mini)	WT strategies (mini-mini)

Source: Wehrich (1982)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The *Hanunuo Mangyan*, one of the Philippines’ most marginalized indigenous groups, possesses a rich cultural heritage that encompasses a unique writing system, literature, arts, handicrafts, and intricate weaving traditions. Despite this, they remain significantly disadvantaged compared to other indigenous weaving communities in Luzon, Southern Mindanao, and the rest of the country. To ensure the preservation of their cultural identity and foster sustainable livelihoods, it is imperative to implement targeted interventions that revitalize their heritage and promote community development. A SWOT analysis was carried out to assess both internal and external factors. attributes that may be considered when formulating appropriate interventions.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

The results of the SWOT analysis are displayed in Table 2 to facilitate the strategic formulation using the TOWS matrix developed by Wehrich (1982) As demonstrated, one of the community’s strengths is its abundant source of indigenous materials for weaving and handicrafts.

The community uses palm leaves to weave mats, purses, and hats, while it uses vines and bamboo in furniture, bags, and food containers. Another strength identified is the existence of *Surat Mangyan* (pre-colonial syllabic script) and *Ambahan* (chanted poetry), which have been national heritages preserved for hundreds of years (Pitogo, 2012). *Surat Mangyan* is one of the few remaining Pre-colonial scripts, while *Ambahan* is a collection of poetry chanted during courtship, planting, and other rituals that have been used since the pre-colonial period (Pitogo, 2015). The community, especially the women, is still weaving and using indigenous textiles like *Ramit* which has a unique pattern and motif. *Ramit* is not only an alternative livelihood among women It is an integral aspect of the cultural identity of the *Hanunuo* indigenous community. There exist professional teachers in the community who can teach the younger *Hanunuo* about their cultural heritage. Lastly, the indigenous knowledge, systems, and practices (IKSP) of the community regarding farming, healing, and other relevant activities remain intact. These IKSPs are important for managing risks and uncertainties (Materer et al., 2002), sustainable development, climate change adaptation, and maintaining culture, rights, and environmental management (Mistry et al., 2020).

The community is rich in raw materials that the residents can use in handicrafts. Their indigenous knowledge, systems, and practices are intact and are being observed by the elders and cultural masters. Strong community cohesion may be instrumental in inculcating the importance of the preservation of cultural identity. These internal attributes may lead to sustainable cultural revitalization when managed effectively.

Regarding the community's weaknesses, younger generations are not knowledgeable about their cultural heritage. The younger generations gradually embrace and integrate themselves into modern culture and trends (Trocio et al., 2023). Another weakness identified is the simplicity and limited design of handicrafts, which results in low value and limited market opportunities. Furthermore, the younger *Hanunuo* perceived that *Ambahan*, together with other cultural heritage, was irrelevant to their daily lives. They lose interest in their cultural identity because of various factors like globalization and modernization (Jennings, 2017), discrimination (Anaya, 2009), acculturation, and mainstream education (Candelario-Aplaon, 2024). Nowadays, only elders know how to write in *Surat Mangyan*, and very few are composing *Ambahan* (Catapang, n.d.). Moreover, they prioritize livelihood over other aspects like cultural preservation. It was also found that some elders were illiterate. Illiteracy is still prevalent among indigenous people (Rheault et al., 2019), which poses a greater challenge to community development (McGlusky et al., 2006).

The *Hanunuo* youth, as future bearers of cultural heritage, play a pivotal role in its preservation. However, in today's digital age, their interests often lean toward modern technologies, leading them to prioritize more immediate concerns like farming, manual labor, and service industries. Traditional crafts, such as *Ramit* weaving and handicraft-making, which require significant time, skill, and patience, are often perceived as less lucrative and less appealing to the younger generation. This shift in priorities poses a significant challenge to the continuity of cultural traditions, as the knowledge and skills associated with these crafts can be lost over time.

The first opportunity identified is the potential partnership between government agencies (GAs) and non-government organizations. (NGOs) in community development programs. NGOs and GAs could facilitate coordination with stakeholders (Bezboruah, 2013) in any plan of action to help the community (Neth et al., 2013). Second, there is a souvenir shop at the Heritage and Cultural Center where the IPs sell their products. Third, the university should facilitate capability training in weaving and handicrafts, as well as the preservation of indigenous cultural heritage, and conduct literacy drives. The academe (Oetzel, 2020) and other research partners (Jemingan, 2015) could provide mentoring for indigenous capacity building (Bamba et al., 2021). Fourth, an electronic dictionary of *Surat Mangyan* was developed to facilitate the preservation of the indigenous writing system. Finally, there are handicraft masters from other communities who can teach handicraft-

making and marketing.

Collaboration between various institutions is crucial for the preservation of cultural heritage. Government agencies may allocate funds for heritage conservation projects and establish cultural heritage offices to oversee preservation efforts and coordinate with local communities. The local government can host cultural events and festivals to celebrate and preserve local traditions, strengthening cultural pride and identity among indigenous communities. Private organizations can contribute to preservation efforts by supporting and promoting local products, helping to sustain the handicrafts and weaving industry. Meanwhile, academic institutions play a crucial role in documenting indigenous knowledge, systems, and practices, ensuring their continuity for future generations.

The table also highlights threats and external factors that may negatively impact the community or hinder the implementation of interventions. These include price manipulation by lowlanders, modernization, the mainstream curriculum, unpaved and hazardous roads, and the persistence of stigma. Another significant challenge faced by indigenous peoples is the limited access to culturally responsive basic education (DepEd, 2016). The lack of cultural integration within the curriculum further affects the preservation of indigenous writing. This is consistent with the findings of Cadiz et al. (2019), who identified the absence of a culturally inclusive curriculum as a contributing factor to the decline of cultural identity.

Mainstream curricula, often centered around dominant cultural norms and values, can inadvertently contribute to indigenous communities' acculturation. The schools inside Indigenous communities that offer mainstream curricula instead of integrating culturally responsive curricula lead to diminishing cultural identities. The *Hanunuo* pupils learn to read and write the Filipino alphabet, not *Surat Mangyan*, a manifestation of the erosion of the traditional language and writing system. They study other skills in Livelihood Education instead of integrating *Ramit* weaving and handicrafts making, which results in the loss of ancestral knowledge and practices and a shift in cultural values. As a result, *Hanunuo* communities may experience a decline in cultural pride and a weakened sense of belonging to their heritage.

Table 2. TOWS matrix

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are abundant indigenous materials for weaving and handicraft making. (S₁) 2. <i>Surat Mangyan</i> (writing) and <i>Ambahan</i> (chanted poetry) are still being practiced by the <i>gurangons</i> (elders). (S₂) 3. <i>Ramit weaving</i> (indigenous textile) is still performed by the elderly. (S₃) 4. There are professional teachers in the community who can teach cultural heritage to younger generations. (S₄) 5. The indigenous knowledge, systems, and practices in farming, healing, and other relevant activities are being practiced by the <i>gurangons</i>. (S₅) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The younger generation is not knowledgeable about <i>Ramit weaving</i>, <i>Surat Mangyan</i>, and <i>Ambahan</i>. (W₁) 2. The design of handicrafts is simple and limited. (W₂) 3. <i>Ambahan</i> is not as relevant as young men. (W₃) 4. Livelihood is their priority, and preserving culture is their last. (W₄) 5. Some <i>gurangons</i> are illiterate. (W₅)
Opportunities	Threats
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Government agencies and non-government organizations can help with community development projects. (O₁) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lowlanders (non-IP) buy their products at cheap prices. (T₁) 2. Modernization negatively affects their

2. The souvenir shop at Oriental Mindoro Museum and Heritage Center sells indigenous products. (O ₂)	culture and language preservation. (T ₂)
3. Academe could facilitate capability training in weaving and handicrafts, preservation of indigenous language, and literacy drive. (O ₃)	3. The curriculum excludes the preservation of indigenous language and culture. (T ₃)
4. There is an available dictionary of <i>Surat Mangyan</i> developed by the University of the Philippines to facilitate the preservation of the language. (O ₄)	4. No existing marketing schemes exist. (T ₄)
5. Handicraft masters can teach handicraft-making and marketing. (O ₅)	5. The unpaved road from the community to the proper town is risky. (T ₅)
	6. Stigma is still prevalent among the lowlanders. (T ₆)

The indigenous people have remained the most underprivileged and discriminated against since time immemorial (Anaya, 2009). Thus, social and cultural interventions should be implemented to help them preserve their cultural identity development aligned with customs, traditions, values, and beliefs (Pawid, 2012) in an inclusive and sustainable community.

Strategies for the Development of Cultural Identity

Capability Training for Intangible Cultural Heritage (Maxi-maxi)

Hanunuo is known for its *Ramit* weaving, bead accessories, baskets, bags, wallets, and other handicrafts adorned with *Pakudos*—their tribe's symbol. To help improve this intangible cultural identity, the abundant indigenous materials (S₁) will be used in conducting capability training with the help of local teachers (S₄) and handicraft masters (O₅) through the university's initiative (O₃). The university may provide various training relevant to the skills and available community resources. By capacitating the Indigenous community through resource management, they can improve their livelihood and contribute to environmental sustainability (Mellegård & Boonstra, 2020). Moreover, community strategies like capacity building empower community members through experiences that foster critical thinking and self-sufficiency (Hanathasia et al., 2024).

Capitalizing Intangible Cultural Heritage as a Sustainable Source of Livelihood (mini maxi)

Because they prioritize livelihood over cultural development (W₄) and younger generations are not knowledgeable in *Ramit* weaving (W₁), a livelihood training program may be conducted by handicraft masters (O₅). The finished products will be sold at the Oriental Mindoro Museum and Heritage Center (O₂) and other souvenir shops. The indigenous people possess the skill and craft that should be preserved and revitalized. The revival of traditional crafts will contribute to the indigenous community's cultural resilience and self-determination (Gowlland, 2022). This could be made possible by establishing a school of living traditions (SLT) in a community where cultural masters teach the youth about their cultural heritage and the importance of safeguarding them for future generations.

Social Advocacy Marketing (maxi-mini)

Despite the abundance of Indigenous materials (S₁), the community could not sell their handicrafts and local produce at good prices because of the stigma among lowlanders (T₆) who buy at cheap prices (T₁). To help the community compensate for their hard labor and risk in traveling on risky roads (T₆), social advocacy marketing will be conducted. This could be possible by documenting the entire production process and sharing it via social media platforms. The

documentation may be used for cultural awareness initiatives during the celebration of National Indigenous Peoples Month and promotional marketing. This way, consumers will be aware of their purchases to help touch lives and boost Indigenous people's pride in their craftsmanship. Promoting socially beneficial behavior and causes, (Borden & Mahamane, 2020) allows for more targeted and impactful social marketing campaigns across various sectors, including non-profit, corporate, and government organizations (Campbell et al., 2023).

Collective Responsibility for the Preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage

The preservation of cultural heritage is a shared responsibility that extends beyond Indigenous community members to include various sectors such as local government units, government agencies, non-government organizations, academic institutions, and private individuals (Candelario-Aplaon, 2024). Universities, in addition to working with local government units, can collaborate with other organizations for funding, manpower, and intellectual resources. The preservation of *Surat-Mangyan* can be supported through the dictionary developed by the National Research Council of the Philippines. Establishing connections with the National Commission on Culture and the Arts can further strengthen conservation efforts. Additionally, securing funds through research funding agencies can enhance preservation initiatives. Successful cultural conservation relies on the collective efforts of organizations, nations, and stakeholders (Tonta, 2013).

CONCLUSIONS

The SWOT analysis identified the community's internal strengths and weaknesses, along with external opportunities and threats. Using the TOWS matrix, strategies were formulated to revitalize the community's cultural identity. Ethnographic research provided valuable insights into the diverse culture of the *Hanunuo* people.

Key findings highlight strengths such as picturesque landscapes, abundant natural resources, a rich cultural heritage, and the presence of cultural bearers. However, weaknesses include low interest in cultural preservation among the youth, limited marketing of indigenous products, and illiteracy.

On the positive side, opportunities include collaboration among public and private organizations, academic institutions, and other stakeholders to safeguard *Hanunuo Mangyan's* cultural identity. Conversely, several threats pose challenges to preservation efforts, including insurgency, inaccessibility, stigma, climate change, unfair trade practices, and the influence of the mainstream curriculum.

The findings of this research can be used as input for developing policies on cultural heritage preservation. The SWOT analysis identified key strategies for cultural preservation, including capability training, resource management, social advocacy marketing, and collective responsibility. By equipping the Indigenous community members with their arts and crafts, they can improve their livelihood and preserve their cultural identity. In the process, community members actively participated in identifying key areas for community development. Through community engagement, indigenous knowledge was integrated into action plans that are implemented with cultural sensitivity (Browne et al., 2016).

LIMITATION OF RESEARCH

This research focused on qualitative data and did not conduct a complete inventory of cultural bearers. Additionally, it only documented major cultural elements like language, poetry, handicrafts, and textiles, excluding other aspects like indigenous knowledge, systems, practices (IKSP), dances, music, and rituals. Therefore, a comprehensive documentation of indigenous

knowledge, systems, and practices (IKSP) and a thorough inventory of cultural bearers and artisans. The study only involved members of the indigenous communities as participants, which would have limited the results to the insiders' perspectives. It is recommended that future studies include other stakeholders like industry partners, community developers, and local government officials.

The formulated strategies can be incorporated into the university's 5-year community development program *Awati TI-KAPE* to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 specifically SDG #11, which focuses on sustainable cities and communities. The School of Living Traditions project could help to safeguard and revitalize the *Hanunuo* cultural heritage and empower them for sustainable and resilient development. Academe, government agencies, and non-government organizations should collaborate to support indigenous communities. The extension department may use the findings to conduct capability training on *Surat Mangyan, Ambahan, and Ramit* weaving. The production unit may also help in social advertising and marketing. Further studies are also encouraged. It is also recommended that local government units consider the study's findings about policy and decision-making.

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