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Article

Revitalizing Traditional Salt Farming in Cavite: A 7Ps Marketing Mix and Sociology of Religion Approach to Sustainability, Values, and Community

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Abstract

This study explores the current state of the salt-making industry in Cavite, focusing on the remaining salterns in Kawit and Noveleta. Employing a descriptive quantitative design, data were collected from 150 respondents composed of salt farmers, their families, residents, and government officials. A validated self-made questionnaire structured around the 7Ps marketing mix framework was utilized to assess demographic profiles and market conditions. Statistical tools such as percentages, frequency distributions, and mean scores were applied to analyze responses and identify significant differences and relationships across demographic groups. Findings revealed that the majority of respondents were older, male, married, and earning low monthly incomes, reflecting an aging and economically vulnerable workforce. Respondents agreed that poor infrastructure, inconsistent pricing, limited product diversity, and reliance on traditional methods hinder industry growth. Seasonal dependence on dry weather and climate change impacts, including flooding and unpredictable rainfall, further exacerbate production challenges. Integrating principles from the sociology of religion, the study highlights how salt farming traditions are embedded in local rituals, communal values, and collective identity. Religious practices and cultural beliefs surrounding salt—as a symbol of purity, preservation, and livelihood—reinforce social cohesion and resilience. These symbolic meanings provide moral legitimacy to sustaining the industry despite economic decline. Significant differences in assessments were observed across demographic categories, underscoring diverse stakeholder perspectives. The study concludes that Cavite's salt industry faces systemic decline due to urbanization, regulatory burdens, and lack of modernization. However, opportunities exist through targeted promotional strategies, infrastructure development, and government support. Recommendations include leveraging social media and salt tourism, improving quality control, introducing modern saltern technologies, and recognizing the role of cultural-religious values in sustaining production. By applying both the 7Ps framework and sociology of religion principles, this research provides a holistic strategic plan aimed at revitalizing Cavite's salt industry, ensuring cultural preservation, spiritual meaning, and economic sustainability for future generations.

Keywords: *7Ps marketing mix, Cavite salt farming, sustainability, community resilience, sociology of religion, cultural values, rituals and traditions*

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Introduction

Salt has played a crucial role in shaping civilizations, serving as currency and a preservative for food (Elias et al., 2019). In the Philippines, the salt industry was once vibrant, with provinces such as Bulacan, Pangasinan, Occidental Mindoro, and Cavite meeting 85% of national demand during the 1990s. However, by the early 2000s, production declined drastically, forcing the country to rely heavily on imports (Tarriela, 2022). Recent data show that the Philippines ranked 28th among 91 countries in salt production, producing 1,147.97 metric tons in 2019 (Bartolome et al., 2022). This decline reflects not only economic pressures but also an aging and economically vulnerable workforce, as most salt farmers are older adults with limited income opportunities.

The decline of the industry is attributed to multiple factors, including climate change, outdated production techniques, and lack of government support. Seasonal dependence on dry weather, coupled with typhoons and flooding, has reduced both the quantity and quality of salt produced (Ventayen et al., 2023). Pollution from industrial and domestic waste in Manila Bay has further rendered areas in Cavite and Bulacan unsuitable for salt farming (Montojo et al., 2024). These challenges have left the Philippines importing 80–90% of its salt requirements, primarily from China and Australia (Dejareco, 2023). At the First Salt Congress in 2022, industry leaders warned that the sector was on the "verge of death" due to insufficient government recognition and support (Sotelo, 2023). Moreover, poor infrastructure, inconsistent pricing, limited product diversity, and reliance on traditional methods continue to hinder industry growth, while climate change impacts such as flooding and unpredictable rainfall exacerbate production challenges.

This study focuses on the remaining salt farms in Kawit and Noveleta, Cavite, where farmers, their families, residents, and government officials provided insights into the industry's challenges. Their perspectives guided the formulation of a promotional plan aimed at revitalizing Cavite's salt farming sector. By examining demographic profiles and applying marketing strategies, the study seeks to provide actionable solutions for sustaining this traditional livelihood. The research applies the 7Ps framework to design a strategic promotional plan, ensuring not only economic revitalization but also cultural preservation and community resilience for future generations.

The study adopts Jerome McCarthy's 4Ps of marketing—product, price, place, and promotion—expanded by Booms and Bitner (1981) into the 7Ps framework, which includes people, process, and physical evidence. This model emphasizes customer service and service-oriented industries, making it suitable for analyzing salt farming as both a product and a cultural service (Rafiq & Ahmed, 1995; Luenendonk, 2019). The framework provides a lens to assess how marketing strategies can be applied to Cavite's salt farms, ensuring that promotional plans address both economic and cultural dimensions. In addition, principles from the sociology of religion highlight

salt's symbolic role in rituals, purity, and livelihood, reinforcing its cultural legitimacy and strengthening community resilience.

Methodological Framework

This study employed a descriptive quantitative design to systematically capture the current situation of salterns in Kawit and Noveleta, Cavite. A validated self-made questionnaire structured around the 7Ps marketing mix framework was utilized to assess demographic profiles and market conditions. The instrument included items on age, gender, marital status, income, and respondent type, alongside assessments of product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence. Statistical tools such as percentages, frequency distributions, and mean scores were applied to analyze responses and identify significant differences and relationships across demographic groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Likert, 1932; Triola, 2020). This methodological integration ensured that both economic and cultural dimensions of salt farming were systematically evaluated.

Results on Demographic and Market Realities of Cavite's Salt Industry

The study revealed that the majority of respondents were aged 51–61, underscoring the aging workforce in Cavite's salt farms (Banicod et al., 2024). Respondents were predominantly male (61%) and married (52%), reflecting the reliance on family labor in salt production. Income profiles showed that 54% earned between ₱1,000–₱5,000 monthly, highlighting economic vulnerability consistent with national fisherfolk income ranges (Mitra, 2023; Benueza et al., 2019).

Beyond these basic demographic indicators, the findings revealed a workforce that is both socially and economically vulnerable. The predominance of older, married men suggests that salt farming is sustained by traditional family structures, where generational continuity is threatened by youth migration to urban centers. This demographic imbalance reflects a looming succession crisis, as younger generations show limited interest in salt farming due to its low income and unstable market conditions.

Respondents strongly agreed that poor infrastructure, inconsistent pricing, limited product diversity, and reliance on traditional methods hinder industry growth. Seasonal dependence on dry weather and climate change impacts, including flooding and unpredictable rainfall, further exacerbate production challenges (Ventayen et al., 2023; Montojo et al., 2024). These environmental pressures compound the economic vulnerability of farmers, who lack access to modern technology and government support.

Integrating principles from the sociology of religion, the study highlights how salt farming traditions are embedded in local rituals, communal values, and collective identity. Religious practices and cultural beliefs surrounding salt—as a symbol of purity, preservation, and livelihood—reinforce social cohesion and resilience. These symbolic meanings provide moral legitimacy to sustaining the industry despite

economic decline. Significant differences in assessments were observed across demographic categories, underscoring diverse stakeholder perspectives. Older respondents emphasized tradition and communal values, while younger participants expressed concerns about modernization and income stability.

Taken together, these results emphasize that Cavite's salt industry is shaped not only by demographic realities and environmental pressures but also by cultural-religious meanings that sustain its social relevance even in the face of economic decline.

Discussion on Strategic Pathways for Revitalization

The findings emphasize that Cavite's salt industry is constrained by aging labor, low income, and limited modernization. Respondents strongly agreed on the importance of preserving traditional practices but also recognized the need for modern technology to sustain production. Recommendations included infrastructure development, government subsidies, improved quality control, and community-driven promotional campaigns. These strategies are critical in addressing the systemic decline of the industry, which is shaped by both demographic realities and environmental pressures.

Beyond economic strategies, revitalization must be understood through the lens of cultural and religious sociology. Salt farming in Cavite is not merely an economic activity but a practice deeply embedded in communal rituals, symbolic meanings, and collective identity. Salt has long been associated with purity, preservation, and livelihood, and these cultural-religious meanings reinforce social cohesion while providing moral legitimacy for sustaining the industry despite economic decline. Such symbolic dimensions suggest that revitalization cannot be reduced to technical modernization alone; it must also preserve the cultural heritage that binds communities together.

Strategic pathways therefore require a dual approach. On one hand, modernization through infrastructure development, mechanization, and climate-resilient technologies is essential to ensure production stability. On the other hand, cultural preservation must be foregrounded by integrating salt's symbolic role into promotional campaigns, educational programs, and tourism initiatives. Promotion strategies must evolve beyond traditional referrals to include social media campaigns, salt tourism, and educational programs that highlight salt's cultural and spiritual significance (Tadeo & Mendoza, 2024; Muyot et al., 2024). For instance, salt festivals, heritage tours, and school-based modules can showcase salt as both a livelihood and a cultural artifact, strengthening community identity while attracting external support.

Moreover, revitalization requires multi-stakeholder collaboration. Government agencies must provide subsidies and policy support, while local cooperatives and religious institutions can mobilize community participation. Faith-based organizations, which already play a role in reinforcing communal values, can be engaged in advocacy and awareness campaigns that highlight salt's spiritual

symbolism. This integration of economic, cultural, and religious dimensions ensures that revitalization strategies are holistic, sustainable, and socially resonant.

Finally, the study underscores the importance of demographic diversity in shaping stakeholder perspectives. Significant differences in assessments across age, gender, and income categories reveal that revitalization strategies must be inclusive, addressing the needs of older workers while also attracting younger generations to participate in salt farming. Educational programs and livelihood incentives can encourage youth involvement, ensuring intergenerational continuity in both economic production and cultural heritage.

By combining modern technology with cultural heritage, Cavite's salt industry can be revitalized not only as an economic enterprise but also as a living expression of community identity and resilience. This synthesis of modernization and tradition positions the industry as a model for values-driven development, where economic sustainability and cultural preservation reinforce one another.

Conclusion

The study assessed the profile of salt-making industries in Cavite, focusing on production processes, market demand, and challenges faced by local farmers. Respondents were predominantly older adults aged 51–61, male, married, and residents of Kawit and Noveleta, with most families earning between ₱1,000–₱5,000 monthly. Market analysis revealed critical issues such as poor infrastructure, inconsistent pricing, limited product diversity, and reliance on traditional methods.

Statistical results indicated significant differences in perceptions of salt production when grouped by age, gender, marital status, home address, income, and type of respondent. Correlation analysis showed that age, marital status, and home address had positive relationships with industry assessments, while gender and type of respondent had negative correlations.

The conclusions emphasized that Cavite's salt-making industry faces systemic decline due to urbanization, regulatory burdens, and lack of modernization. However, opportunities exist through targeted promotional strategies, infrastructure development, and government support. By applying both the 7Ps framework and sociology of religion principles, this research proposes a holistic strategic plan that ensures economic sustainability, cultural preservation, and community resilience for future generations.

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