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## **ABSTRACT**

The focus of this study is on the participation and non-participation in bangus tagging aimed at understanding what branding is when it comes to Dagupan bangus based on the lived experiences of the Dagupeño fisherfolks. Participant of the study represent Dagupan bangus small industry players in the fish “consignation” (wholesale) market of Dagupan which include small time bangus producers/growers, fish cage and fishpond operators, and fish vendors who are (a) participating and (b) non-participating in bangus tagging. The stories of participants provided insight into the views of the Dagupeño fisherfolks about Dagupan Bangus and how they see the need for branding. While they are convinced their produce could “bear communicative power” through branding, the findings reveal that participants place more emphasis on the distinct features the ‘real’ Dagupan bangus has which for them needs no further branding. A qualitative methodology through the adaptation and application of a research method based on existential phenomenology was utilized in this study to gain the primary data in the form of the Dagupeño fisherfolks’ themselves sharing their lived experiences. The study had two objectives. The first objective described what Dagupan bangus is to them, was reflected in the themes of (1) Dagupan bangus and it acquired meanings and (2) Differentiating Dagupan bangus from competitors. The second objective, namely, how their views of Dagupan bangus define their act of tagging or non-tagging, was reflected in the themes of (3) Communicating the brand through tagging, (4) Upholding to their traditional practices and (5) Dagupan bangus having its own unique brand.