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Research Article

Dark Tourism: Tourist Motivations at The Site of Grief in Liberty Shrine, Cebu, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

There is a marked rise in the development of outrage and demise-related tourist spots, destinations, and places of interest that provide potential information, insight, and recreation, enticing individuals eager to consume natural and commoditized death. The Liberty Shrine in Mactan, Cebu, Philippines, is an example of dark tourism because this spot is a commemorative marker that gives people an insight that the place was where Chieftain Lapu-Lapu killed Ferdinand Magellan during the battle in Mactan that makes the latter the first Filipino to have deterred European belligerence. The study aimed to identify tourist motivations at the grief site in Liberty Shrine, located at Mactan, Cebu, Philippines. The study utilized the descriptive survey method validated through in-depth interviews, documentary analysis, and historical analysis. Using Stone's (2006) Dark Tourism theory, data were obtained from one hundred respondents (100), including government employees, residents, and tourists. Results revealed that visitor motivations at the grief site included location, education, motive, and promotion. It concluded that although *location* and *education* were rated *Very Effective*, *motive* and *promotion* were rated *Effective* only. The study recommended that the site management conduct systematic research and various promotional strategies, focusing on those that have proven more effective.

Keywords: Cebu, Descriptive Study, Hospitality Management, Liberty Philippines, Shrine, Tourism

Introduction

Individuals usually travel to see novel places of interest and become aware of new customs, cultures, and insights. Sometimes the

reason is to explore something gloomy where thousands of people were assassinated by terrorist attacks, and suffered from the devastation of natural catastrophes, shattered

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castles, forts, and even poverty. These tragic events and more have been encompassed by dark tourism in which these spots are visited to reminisce about past events and see what remains. While some people quickly say they have never been engaged in something with a word like dark tourism, the scope is broad, and you might be one of the dark tourists without recognizing it.

Dark tourism, as indicated by Booth and Casbeard (2012), refers to visiting sites associated with death, tragedy, or other forms of human suffering, such as former concentration camps, disaster sites, and battlefields. The authors argue that dark tourism is a product of post-modernism, which emphasizes the fragmented nature of reality and the instability of meaning. Coote (2010) stated that dark tourism could be healthy and exploitative, depending on how it is approached and managed. Also, it was mentioned in the study of Coote (2010) that benefits and obstacles were associated with dark tourism, such as education of the visitors about the history of the place, lifting awareness about social issues, and yielding economic benefits for the local communities of the tourist spot.

Exploring sites of terrible death, tragic incidents, and dreadful situations are becoming an invasive racial interest in modern society. In a study by Bitnner (2011), visitors to these sites have several reasons, including curiosity, a desire to learn and understand history, and personal connections to the events. Visitors also reported various emotional experiences, including shock, sadness, and reflection (Bitnner, 2011; Biran et al., 2011). Another article explored risks and constraints of dark tourism, yet it centers on educational settings. The article acknowledges that dark tourism can be emotionally challenging and inappropriate for some visitors, particularly children (Cohen, 2011). However, Cohen argues that these risks can be mitigated through careful planning and design, such as providing educational resources and support for visitors who may be emotionally affected by the experience. Traveling and experiencing death-related events, the pain of suffering is no longer a new trend. For psychological and spiritual reasons, religious crusades have captivated people to sites of

death and violence for centuries. Thus, demise-related attractions have been the preferred destination of people.

Multiple scholars have done articles that undertake dark tourism, and each highlighted significant findings that contribute to dark tourism's body of knowledge. Dunley et al. (2011), in their paper, explored the battle sites in Europe, including the Somme in France and Ypres in Belgium, which is considered dark tourism due to the history of these places. Through a qualitative approach, the scholars identified numerous themes: a.) desire for education; b.) personal connection to history and heritage; c.) sense of pilgrimage and commemoration. Another study of Dark Tourism in Lithuania revealed that regional tourism in Lithuania (incredibly niche forms like dark tourism) suffers from a lack of integrity among various stakeholders, particularly when it comes to involving the local population in the development of cultural tourism and processes for protecting cultural heritage as well as when forging closer ties with the private sector (Jurieniė & Radezvičius, 2022). Also, the investigation showed a hazy public perception of the dark legacy, which is detrimental to the actualization of such heritage and the sustainable growth of tourism. Moreover, given the numerous wars Iraq has experienced throughout its history, especially the one against the terrorist group ISIS, which violated moral and religious standards and destroyed historical sites, religious shrines, churches, and temples in addition to carrying out massacres, it has been determined that the country is full of locations ideal for promoting black tourism, as indicated in the study of Roaf (2023).

Fabros et al. (2023) studied dark tourism in the Philippines in a local setting. Their study examined the markers of dark tourism and visitor motivations that served as the foundation for developing the Philippine dark tourism spectrum. To get a clear picture of the characteristics of dark tourism related to a particular site or location, attractions in selected cities in Metro Manila that the researchers regarded to be dark were analyzed and recognized. Through an exploratory-qualitative approach, the study revealed that the characteristics of dark tourism destinations include history,

authenticity, storytelling, and experience. Chinese Cemetery, Intramuros, Libingan ng mga Bayani, Luneta Park, and Paco Park and Cemetery are all among the places that have been identified as gloomy sites. These sites are visited for education, memory, sightseeing, recreation, family time, curiosities, and as a place for events. With that in mind, the scholars of this study were inspired to conduct a study that focuses on the Visayas, particularly in Cebu. The researchers identified Mactan Shrine or Liberty Shrine as a form of Dark Tourism. This study will serve as the knowledge gap since no literature covers this site as the theme of the study. Mactan Shrine or Liberty Shrine is a commemorative marker that shows people that the site is where Lapu-Lapu, the first Filipino to have deterred European belligerence. Specifically, Mactan Shrine will always tell us about the Filipinos' gallantry and show the history of the Philippines, and foreign and local tourists visit the site to see the remarkable past. Hence,

The pivotal point of this study is to determine the tourist motivations at the Liberty Shrine on the island of Cebu, Philippines. On top of that, the study wanted to examine the location, education, promotion, and motive as

perceived by government employees, residents, and tourists.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to identify tourist motivations at the site of grief in Liberty Shrine to promote this place as well. It determined the effectiveness of upholding the tourist motivation regarding location, education, motive, and promotion as perceived by the government employees, residents, and tourists.

Methods

The study utilized the descriptive survey method validated through in-depth interviews, documentary analysis, and historical analysis, which focuses on the condition of the Liberty Shrine of Mactan, Cebu, Philippines.

The locus of the study was the Mactan Shrine or Liberty Shrine, located at Lapu-Lapu City, Cebu.

The respondents of the study were residents, government employees, and tourists. One hundred (100) respondents were selected using simple random sampling, wherein every member of the population had an equal chance to be chosen. Furthermore, table 1 reflects the number of respondents that were selected.

Table 1. Respondents of the Study

Respondents	f	%
Tourists	50	50
Residents	38	38
Government Employees	12	12
Total	100	100

(Source: Authors, 2023)

The researcher-made questionnaires served as the primary data collection instrument. It is a response regarding the participant's perception of the effectiveness of the promotional strategy rendered by the management of Liberty Shrine to the tourists regarding location, education, promotion, and motive.

Before the formulation of this study, the researchers obtained permission from the management of Liberty Shrine to conduct a study on tourist motivation at the site of grief in the shrine. Upon approval, questionnaires were administered to the study participants:

government employees, residents, and tourists. The researchers made themselves available during the entire sessions, during which the participants answered the questionnaires and additional explanations were given as needed.

One-on-one in-depth interviews were also done to gather more information and discover current ideas that are significant and valuable to the study. To ensure that everything was well-done, the final records of the interviews were reiterated to them in the Cebuano dialect for local participants and English for foreign participants for validation and confirmation.

The researchers recorded each relevant and exciting information. Data collection methods and systems followed the ethical principles of research. Eventually, frequency and percentage were utilized to present and analyze the collected data. The questionnaires were used to gather information and discover current ideas and resources for the researchers' timeline.

At first, a personal call to the management of Liberty Shrine was made for permission to conduct the study. After the verbal affirmation, a formal letter was handed to them for signature as proof of approval for data gathering. Before administering the questionnaire to the participants, a proper explanation of the purpose was given for them to answer it seriously and adequately. Separate tour guides of the

foreign tourist participants assisted in translating the questionnaire. Participants were informed that all their data would be treated with the utmost confidentiality and primarily intended for academic purposes.

The accomplished questionnaires were promptly collected, and the answers were translated into English. The responses were noted and tallied, and the data were tabulated. The following statistical methods are used to show the accuracy of the precise interpretation and analysis of the findings. These are computed through the weighted means to figure out the exact results of the table. The summation of the number of responses under each scale and the weight assigned to each scale is divided over the total number of respondents.

Table 2. Scoring Procedure Used in the Study

Weight	Range	Descriptive Equivalent	Verbal Interpretation
4	3.25-4.0	Very Effective	It means that promotional strategy is related and beneficial to the shrine
3	2.50-3.24	Effective	It means that promotional strategy is somehow related and beneficial to the shrine
2	1.75-2.49	Less Effective	It means that promotional strategy cannot be related and beneficial to the shrine
1	1.0-1.74	Not Effective	It means the promotional strategy needs to be more related and beneficial to the shrine.

Results and Discussion

Table 3. Summarized Result on Tourist Motivation at Site of Grief in Liberty Shrine

Indicators	Government Employees	Residents	Tourists	Item Average
Location	3.38	3.41	3.46	3.42
Education	3.94	3.32	3.48	3.58
Promotion	3.32	2.46	2.25	2.68
Motive	3.58	2.80	3.37	3.25
Grand Mean	3.55	3.00	3.14	3.23

Legend:

3.25-4.0	Very Effective
2.50-3.24	Effective
1.75-2.49	Less Effective
1.0-1.74	Not Effective

Table 3 shows the grand mean of 3.23, taken from the factor mean of 3.55 from the government employees, 3.00 from the residents, and 3.14 from the tourists were viewed to be effective. It implied that the outcome was adequate and quite beneficial to the shrine.

The data showed a remarkably effective result on the location with a factor mean of 3.42, denoting that the participants identified and even experienced the following observations. First, they find the area accessible because it is along the road and has enough public utility

jitneys passing the area. Second, it has a huge space for parking that could accommodate visitors' vehicles. Third, the vicinity of the area is safe and not prone to crime due to police visibility. Fourth, it can accommodate many groups of people. Fifth, the area is clean and well-maintained because of the imposing proper waste management and proper drainage system. Lastly, it has visible directional signage and historical information about the shrine.

According to Stones' (2009) research, dark tourism destinations are not simply real places but also "moral landscapes" where people can interact with and think about moral issues. The author contends that by exposing travelers to frequently seen as taboo or ethically dubious events, dark tourism might test the tourists' moral viewpoints and values. Another study by Cohen (2011) found that according to participant reviews of seminars at Yad Vashem for European teachers, the location is crucial for a fruitful interaction with the topic.

On education, it revealed that a factor means of 3.58 implied that the participants gained a lot of historical insights, such as the bravery of the Cebuano to defend territory from the foreign rule of power, the value of fighting for their rights, the importance of Filipino culture and tradition, and the implication value of patriotism and nationalism.

The paper covers the numerous motives for dark tourism, such as a need for emotional release, a need for education, and a search for purpose. Dark tourism, according to Stone (2012), can be a therapy for people mourning the loss of a significant other, enabling them to face their feelings in a safe and orderly setting. Strange and Kempa (2003) noted that dark tourism could minimize and commercialize other people's suffering while simultaneously being an effective tool for education and remembering. They need a critical approach to dark tourism, considering complex ethical dilemmas.

Promotion means an effective result with a factor mean of 2.68, highlighting that the participants are satisfied with the presence of souvenir shops around the site that tourists would buy souvenir items, the attractiveness and high public demand of the area, several activities

implemented like "Kadaugan sa Mactan" was held to commemorate of what had happened in the past, events offered and are posted on the website. However, the advertisement and the website about promotion and information on the historical site should be improved and updated as well as the displayed historical information of the shrine should also have translations from different languages considering the presence of Koreans, Americans, Japanese, and other foreign tourists that had visited the place.

Although pilgrimage tourism has always been a critical part of tourism in Palestine, Isaac, and Ashworth (2012) contend that the area's history of violence and political unrest offers a chance to grow dark tourism. They specifically propose that promoting places connected to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, such as the Separation Wall and military checkpoints, can draw a new kind of traveler interested in learning more about the area's intricate political and social dynamics.

Motive rated an effective result with a factor mean of 3.25, showing that the participants were eager and curious to know the reality and deeper understanding of the site's history and to feel the victorious moment of the Filipino hero. Moreover, they want to investigate and discover new things and experiences, a particular social and cultural exploration that could enrich and satisfy their curiosity and the need to develop a more in-depth analysis of the tragic event that occurred on the site.

Lewis et al.'s (2022) study suggests that travelers are fascinated by and captivated by spooky tales of paranormal activity. As a result, they make travel decisions based on their values and tastes, with little outside influence. The dark experience was shown to be the dark tourism construct that had the most impact on attitudes and subjective norms. Magano (2022), in his study, Gender, age, knowledge of dark tourism, and reasons (curiosity, the need to study, the desire to understand, and pleasure) were found to explain 38.1% of a dark tourism practice index, according to a model used in the study. Many studies also show a connection between darker activities and ruminating on grief, self-hatred, aggression, and psychological vulnerability.

Conclusion

Based on the study's findings, the researchers concluded that although the location and education were rated very effective, promotion and motive were rated effective. However, there were still some areas of the parameters that needed to be corrected and to be improved. There were proposed schemes to implement a promotional, strategic plan like implementing more activities to attract more tourists, improving the advertisement and activities offered in the shrine, offer more unique products such as handicrafts, shell crafts, and other souvenir items that showcase the beauty of the shrine, to update the website about the shrine, upgrade facilities, preserve the area where the battle happened and maintain the cleanliness and orderliness of the area. Moreover, a program to be proposed is called "Promoting and Enhancing the Beauty of Liberty Shrine" (PEBOLS). It is a seminar intended to create cooperation among the community to sustain the shrine's beauty and to have an equal understanding of the various concerns about its promotional activities based on the study. It also creates understanding and good camaraderie between the government and its community to help one another for the success of promoting the shrine locally and globally.

Translational Research

The study's outcome, "Dark Tourism: Tourist Motivations at the Site of Grief in Liberty Shrine, Cebu, Philippines," may be translated through Republic Act No. 9593 or the Tourism Act of 2009. It is an act declaring national policy for tourism as an engine of investment, employment, growth, and national development and strengthening the Department of Tourism and its attached agencies to implement that policy and appropriate funds effectively and efficiently. Section 2- Declaration of the Policy- the State declares tourism as an indispensable element of the national economy and an industry of national interest and importance, which must be harnessed as an engine of socioeconomic growth and cultural affirmation to generate investment, foreign exchange, and employment, and to continue to mold an enhanced sense of national pride for all Filipinos.

Towards this end, the State shall seek to: a) Ensure the development of Philippine tourism that is for and by the Filipino people, conserve and promote their heritage, national identity, and sense of unity; b) Recognize sustainable tourism development as integral to the national socioeconomic development efforts to improve the quality of life of the Filipino people, providing the appropriate attention, and support for the growth of this industry; c) Promote a tourism industry that is ecologically sustainable, responsible, participative, culturally sensitive, economically viable, and ethically and socially equitable for local communities; d) Create a favorable image to the Philippines within the international community, thereby strengthening the country's attraction as a tourism destination and eventually paving the way for other benefits that may result from a positive global view of the country; e) Develop the country as a prime tourist hub in Asia, as well as a center of world congresses and conventions, by promoting sustainable tourism anchored principally on the country's history, culture and natural endowments, and ensuring the protection, preservation and promotion of these resources; and f) Encourage private sector participation and Agri-tourism for countryside development and preservation of rural life.

Pursuant to the declaration, the State shall adopt the following objectives: These objectives are just selected that complement to this study: a) Develop a national tourism action plan and work for its adoption and implementation by national and local governments; b) Encourage activities and programs which promotes tourism awareness, preserve the country's diverse culture and heritage, an instill a sense of history and a culture of tourism among the youth and the populace; c) All things being equal, grant preferential treatment to the employment of Filipino nationals in tourism-related enterprises; d) Ensure the right of the people to a balanced and healthful ecology through the promotion of activities geared towards environmental protection, conservation and restoration; e) Provide full government assistance by way of competitive investment incentives, long term development fund and other financing schemes extended to tourism related-enterprise; f) Develop responsible

tourism as a strategy for environmentally sound and community participatory tourism programs, enlisting the participation of local communities, including indigenous people, in conserving bio-physical and cultural diversity, promoting environmental understanding and education, providing assistance in the determination of ecotourism sites and ensuring full enjoyment of the benefits of tourism by the concerned communities; g) Ensure that tourism development protects and promotes the general wellbeing of the Filipino people, particularly on the area of investment, to include the monitoring and prevention of any act of profiteering or speculation to the detriment of local residents, as well as the exploitation of women and children in tourism; and h) maintain international standards of excellence in all tourism facilities and services, and promote the country as a safe and wholesome tourist destination.

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