

Voices of the Travelers: Analyzing Foreign Tourists' Experiences in Santa Fe, Bantayan, Cebu

Original Article

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Abstract

This study's qualitative-exploratory research design aimed to explore the experiences of foreign visitors to Santa Fe, Bantayan Cebu, Philippines, using a researcher-made interview guide. The study was undertaken at Santa Fe, Bantayan, Cebu, Philippines, with seven (7) randomly chosen foreign visitors. The narratives of the research informants were subjected to thematic analysis. The themes created for the reasons that prodded the foreign visitors to visit Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines are Propensity to do Business in Santa Fe, Cebu, Enjoying the Natural Endowed Beauty, Leisure and Relaxation: Common Reasons for Tourists' Visit, and Connecting and Reconnecting Through Visiting Friends, while the theme emanated for the factor of the length of stay of the foreign visitors in Santa Fe Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines is Multifaceted Considerations to Stay. Finally, on the themes relating to how foreign visitors adapt to the culture, language, food, climate, and political ambiance in Santa Fe, Bantayan Island Cebu, Philippines are Kindness, Friendly and Hospitality: Primordial to Culture Adaptation in the Philippines, Tourists' Ease in Communicating the Local People, Filipinos Are English Speakers: Boosting Tourism Industry, Foreign Tourists Love the Local Food, and Sun, Sand, and Sea: Impetus for an Enjoyable Vacation. This study suggests that the local government should promote tropical island tourism by focusing on the 3-S (sea, sun, and sand) and emphasizing Santa Fe, Bantayan's unique features to set it apart from other tourist destinations.

Keywords: Cebu, Exploratory, Foreign Visitors Experiences, Santa Fe, Tourism

1. Introduction

Emerging economies and developing countries have great potential in the tourism sector, according to the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development in 2023. They highlighted how tourism can boost job creation, enhance local economies, support infrastructure development, and aid in conservation efforts for the environment, cultural heritage, and traditions while also addressing poverty and inequality issues.

In 2013, the tourism industry made a significant contribution to the Philippines' GDP, accounting for about 7.1%. The employment opportunities within the tourism industry are vast. Government revenue heavily relies on taxes collected from the tourism sector. The Department of Tourism in 2019 identified key factors such as increasing disposable income, improving living standards, availability of affordable domestic travel options, and government initiatives to prioritize tourism as a leading industry in the country as driving forces behind the industry's growth.

The Philippines heavily depends on tourism as a key part of its economy, boasting beautiful white-sand beaches and friendly locals. Tourism used to account for more than 10 percent of the nation's overall economic output in the past (Statista, 2022). Glaesser et al.



(2017) posit that The Philippines has a variety of tourist spots that cater to a diverse range of visitors and have long been a preferred destination for international tourists. Over the years, the tourism sector in the Philippines has attracted considerable interest from government officials. The 2019 tourism industry forecast revealed a growing interest among Filipino travelers, showcasing the country's appeal to tourists. Moreover, the Department of Tourism stated that 3,489,270 tourists visited the Philippines in the first five months of 2019, a 9.76 percent increase from last year's figures.

According to the Department of Tourism, there was a 14.33 percent increase in tourist arrivals in Cebu in 2019 compared to 2017, with 698,849 more visitors. The total number of tourists in 2018 was 5,575,896, surpassing the previous year's figure of 4,877,047. Cebu received 2,805,115 foreign tourists and 2,770,781 domestic tourists in 2018.

According to Muzones (2024), Bantayan Island in Cebu, Philippines, is an underrated island resort. There are several beaches and natural sights on some of the wonders of Bantayan Island that will draw visitors back. It is widespread and well-known for its blue waters, white beaches, and powdery sand. Santa Fe is known as the access point to Bantayan and its islands due to its convenient airport and main ferry port being located within the town. The majority of Bantayan Island's points of interest, dining options, and high-quality lodging establishments are concentrated in Santa Fe. This explains why many visitors prefer Santa Fe as their preferred destination for a vacation.

The duration of a visit is crucial for any tourist spot, as it directly impacts the revenue generated from tourism (Barros et al., 2010; Martínez-García & Raya, 2008). When travelers are organizing a trip, the duration of their stay at a specific location becomes crucial as they consider various factors before making a decision (Dellaert et al., 1998).

Travelers who decide to extend their stay at a particular location are more likely to explore additional attractions and contribute more to the local economy compared to those who only stay for a brief period (Martínez-García & Raya, 2008). Dellaert et al. (1998) added that the duration of a tourist's visit plays a key role in the success of a destination as it directly impacts the overall revenue generated from tourist activities. On Bantayan Island, there is growing apprehension among service providers due to the downward trend in the length of stay, which is being influenced by the rise in budget travel options.

Various factors, such as economic conditions and time constraints, can impact the flow of travelers to a particular location. These factors can arise in both the countries where tourists come from and the places they choose to visit. Variables like age, income, job, personality, expenses, schedule, drive, distance, uncertainty, and access to other destinations all play a role in influencing travel decisions (Stevens, 1992). Tourism spending trends have shown a decrease in the duration of visits, as efforts have been made to offset the rise in the amount spent by tourists each day or the total number of visitors (Aguiló et al., 2017). In 2018, the Department of Tourism issued travel advisories discouraging visits to southern Cebu, resulting in a decrease in tourist numbers and duration of stays.

Studying the tourist experience has always been a key focus of academic research in the field of tourism. Andersson (2007) and Mossberg (2007) tourism experiences have been studied using various methodologies and approaches, often without consistent data. Researchers have explored a wide range of topics and purposes, displaying significant flexibility in their methods.

The Philippine tourism industry is highly vulnerable to various issues, including economic, social, political, and environmental issues. Hence, any slight negative news affecting a tourism destination's safety, security, and other aspects has an undesirable impact on tourist arrivals, stays, and income. Therefore, the study explored the experiences of foreign

visitors who visited Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines, to develop implications for practice in addressing crucial issues.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Background

2.1.1. Experiential Learning Theory of Dewey (1938)

This research is built upon David Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory from 1984, which suggests that the most effective method of learning is through hands-on experience. According to this theory, memories created during these experiences help in the retention and recall of information and facts. Kolb's model outlines four key stages: engaging in physical experiences, reflecting on these experiences, forming abstract ideas based on them, and finally trying out these ideas in real-life situations. The initial phases focus on understanding an experience, while the later stages concentrate on transforming an experience (Western Governors University, 2020).

In addition, it relies on personal experience to distinguish itself from cognitive learning theory, which emphasizes thinking and behavioral learning theory. This theory overlooks the potential impact of individual experiences during the learning process (Cherry, 2022). Kolb defined experiential learning as a process where knowledge is gained through both understanding and changing an experience. He emphasized the importance of abstract concepts that can be used in different scenarios. Knowledge is essentially formed through experience transformation, laying a strong groundwork for learning and growth. This concept outlines how knowledge is built through hands-on experience, according to (Growth Engineering, 2021).

Experiential learning requires turning experiences into valuable lessons. Kolb's theory on experiential learning highlights the influence of experiences, such as thoughts, emotions, and surroundings, on the learning process (Practera, 2022).

2.1.2 Operant Conditioning Theory of B. F. Skinner (1938)

B.F. Skinner's theory of Operant Conditioning, outlined in 1938, aligns with the anchor theory, a popular learning approach associated with Skinner. According to this theory, the likelihood of a response being repeated is determined by its consequences. In operant conditioning, behaviors that are reinforced with rewards are more likely to be repeated, while behaviors that are punished will decrease in frequency (McLeod, 2023).

B. F. Skinner introduced the concept of operant conditioning in 1937 to distinguish behavior that impacts the environment from reflex-related subjects like Pavlovian conditioning. While operant behavior, as defined by Skinner, is behavior shaped by its consequences, it differs slightly from what was previously known as "instrumental learning" or habit formation. Although a well-trained operant essentially becomes a habit, Skinner's innovative approach to automated training with intermittent reinforcement and reinforcement schedules was groundbreaking. Over the years, Skinner and his colleagues uncovered a plethora of schedule effects that shed light on learning processes and introduced new challenges to existing theories (Staddon & Cerutti, 2003).

Skinner's exploration of operant conditioning involves using natural scientific methods to study the reasons behind people's behavior patterns. Operant behavior leads to alterations in the environment, whether physical or social, which then influences the likelihood of that behavior being repeated. Therefore, behavior is selected based on the outcomes it produces.

The operant, also known as the operant class, serves as the primary focus of analysis within the operant framework and consists of a set of actions that produce similar results (Dallery et al., 2017).

Skinner's research was based on the belief that classical conditioning was too basic to fully comprehend intricate human behavior. He maintained that analyzing the reasons behind an action and its outcomes was crucial in understanding behavior, which he termed operant conditioning (McLeod, 2023).

Operant conditioning is grounded in the notion that actions that receive positive reinforcement are more likely to be repeated. For instance, if someone shares a funny story in a group and receives a lot of laughs, they are more inclined to share it again in the future. Similarly, if a student raises their hand to ask a question and their teacher praises them for their politeness, they are more likely to participate in class discussions again. This cycle of reinforcement strengthens the behavior, making it more likely to be repeated in the future (Cherry, 2020).

Operant conditioning stands out from other types of learning research due to its focus on reversible behavior. This refers to behavior that remains stable under a specific schedule, with consistent patterns emerging after repeated exposures. For instance, when animals are first introduced to a fixed-interval schedule, they may exhibit either a pattern of pausing followed by accelerated responding (pattern A) or a steady rate of responding (pattern B). If they are then switched to a different schedule before returning to the fixed-interval one, most animals will revert back to pattern A, indicating its stability. Pattern B, on the other hand, may persist under certain conditions but does not consistently reappear after different intervals, thus being termed metastable in some cases (Staddon, 1965).

2.1.3 Experiential Learning Theory of John Dewey (1938)

The study is also backed by John Dewey's Experiential Learning Theory (1938), which focuses on the balance between experience and reflection through the lens of practical daily activities. According to Dewey, unreflective experience rooted in habits plays a significant role in shaping our overall experience. Reflective experience, on the other hand, is guided by intelligence and knowledge, arising from the limitations and conflicts within habitual actions. Dewey emphasized the importance of reflective thinking in solving problems related to our everyday actions. He also highlighted that hypotheses formulated through reflection must be put to the test through practical experimentation to resolve the issues identified through reflection (Miettinen, 2000).

He came up with a set of innovative ideas on education and social change, now called the John Dewey theory. His theories emphasized the importance of experiential learning, where active involvement is key to effective learning compared to passive listening or memorization. He promoted the use of progressive questioning and dialogue to enhance classroom interactions. According to John Dewey, human experience should serve as a compass in education and social reform efforts. He believed that learning should be rooted in practical experience and that true exploration and learning can only happen when students actively engage with the material. Dewey's theory of experiential learning stresses the importance of a social setting in the learning process as knowledge is constructed through experiences. The information must be structured within practical situations that offer a framework for the data (Roberts, 2003).

Dewey supports the idea of learning through experience, but he emphasizes that not all experiences contribute to education. He coins the term "miseducative" to refer to experiences

that hinder or distort future learning. According to him, the educational value of an experience depends on its quality (Dewey, 1938).

2.2. Previous Research

According to Gunn (1988), attractions are an essential aspect of tourism as they attract tourists. On the other hand, (Lew, 1987). Hu and Wall (2005) emphasized the importance of attractions in the development of successful tourism destinations. Lew (1987) provided a comprehensive view of attractions, including various elements that entice tourists such as sightseeing, activities, and unique experiences.

In order to define attractions more precisely, MacCannell (2013) suggested that they must have three key elements: a tourist, a location, and a recognizable image or symbol. This clarification by MacCannell (2013) does not contradict Gunn (1988) observation that tourists are drawn to destinations with popular attractions. However, Gunn's assertion mainly applies to overnight visitors, overlooking day-trippers or domestic tourists who may not stay overnight in the area but still consume attractions.

Harris and Howard (1996) put forward a new understanding of attractions, suggesting that they could be aspects of a place, either physical or cultural, that fulfill specific leisure needs of tourists. They highlighted that these aspects could range from the environment, such as weather and culture, to specific places like museums or performances. Pearce (1991) argued that this definition could be enhanced by taking into account other factors that draw visitors to a destination, such as shopping, cuisine, and a sense of accomplishment.

Furthermore, the definition assumes that travelers only go on trips for leisure, overlooking other reasons such as business, visiting friends and relatives, and health. Nevertheless, Hu and Wall (2005) offer a more straightforward definition, stating that an attraction is a permanent resource, whether natural or man-made, designed to attract tourists through development and management.

Lew (1987) provided an approach to analyzing tourist attractions, including ideographic, cognitive, and organizational perspectives. According to the ideographic perspective, attractions are recognized and valued for their distinctiveness, which gives them a reputation. The cognitive perspective assesses how visitors perceive an attraction in terms of risk, examining the willingness of tourists to engage with potentially risky attractions. Lew (1987) delves into the perceived risk factor associated with tourism attractions and how tourists psychologically prepare themselves for such experiences.

Lawton and Weaver (2010) offer an alternative perspective on attractions that goes beyond categorizing them solely by ownership, capacity, market, permanency, and type. Instead, a more thorough classification system should consider factors such as ownership, orientation, spatial layout, authenticity, rarity, status, capacity, ease of access, market demand, and surrounding environment to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

Kotler et al. (2014) and McKercher (2016) They introduced a product hierarchy with six levels that can be used in the tourism industry as well. They believe that each product within the family can meet various needs based on how simple or complex it is. This means that certain tourism products are most effective at meeting specific needs.

Attractions can be divided into primary, secondary, and tertiary categories as well. According to this hierarchy, lower-tier attractions do not draw tourists in the same way as primary attractions, which are essential for attracting visitors and have broad appeal. In summary, they proposed a six-level product hierarchy that is applicable to the tourism sector. They argued that products in the same family can cater to diverse needs, depending on their complexity. This implies that specific tourism offerings are tailored to specific consumer requirements. Regarding attractions, they can be categorized as primary, secondary, or

tertiary. According to this classification, primary attractions play a crucial role in attracting tourists and have widespread appeal, unlike lesser attractions (Morrison & Mill, 1985).

Sustainable tourism aligns with the core values of sustainable development, encompassing environmental, social, and economic factors. This approach emphasizes the importance of preserving biodiversity, offering educational opportunities, enhancing visitor experiences, considering planning strategies, upholding ethical standards, and promoting community advantages. These fundamental principles serve as essential guidelines for tourism and park administrators to evaluate the tangible and intangible worth of tourist destinations, analyze tourist behavior and experiences, and determine the characteristics of tourism offerings to be created.

Gunn (1988) said that a tourism system consists of a visitor, main attractions, and signs that guide the visitor towards the destination or attraction motivating them to travel. The suggestion was made that attractions, whether man-made structures, locations, or cultural aspects, can be seen as sources of inspiration, encouraging individuals to venture beyond their regular surroundings. Furthermore, it was noted that by utilizing markers containing information from the place of origin, during travel, and at the destination (connected regions), a comprehensive tourism system is formed which allows a traveler to complete a full journey from one point to another. This concept was also supported by Leiper (1990). The more powerful an attraction is, the more it can attract tourists to that destination (McIntosh et al., 1995; Morrison & Mill, 1985).

Kotler and Keller (2002) and McKercher (2016) introduced a hierarchical structure of products with six levels that can be used in the tourism industry as well. According to them, each need can be met by a product within the product hierarchy and its subdivisions, based on the level of simplicity or complexity of the need. Essentially, individual needs can be most effectively fulfilled by corresponding tourism products or destinations. This concept serves as the cornerstone of McKercher (2016) about the attractions or needs relationship framework, which looks at the role of individual attractions in drawing tourists to a destination. Contrariwise, unique attractions have a high position to attract tourists with singular/specific or low-order taxons with few substitutions (McKercher, 2016).

Tourism encompasses a range of activities that individuals engage in when they explore and reside in locations different from their usual surroundings. International visitors typically spend up to a year in a foreign place for purposes such as business, leisure, or other personal reasons, excluding employment opportunities with local residents (Glaesser et al., 2017).

The worldwide changes in the tourism industry are indicated by the volume of international tourists visiting various destinations, calculating the amount of travelers from abroad who visit and stay at a specific location for a minimum of one night (Glaesser et al., 2017). Therefore, in order to establish operational definitions of sustainability in tourism, it is necessary to specify what exactly needs to be maintained, identify the intended beneficiaries of this sustainability, and determine the specific degree or extent to which sustainability should be achieved (Johnston & Tyrrell, 2005).

Tourists act as buyers of products and services at a destination; nevertheless, the factors influencing their buying choices may vary from what influences a typical consumer's decisions (McCabe et al., 2016) that the process consists of five steps: identifying a need, conducting research for information, considering different options, making a decision to buy, and reflecting on the purchase after (Darley et al., 2010).

Examining tourists as a "middle role" emphasizes their engagement in creative and experience-driven activities. These activities vary from participating in events to seeking

authenticity and cultural diversity. Rather than considering tourists as passive, it is better to advocate for a more interactive model of the tourist (Selstad, 2007).

In 2015, there was a sixth consecutive year of above-average growth in international tourism following the 2009 global economic downturn. The number of foreign overnight visitors in 2015 increased by 4.6% (an additional 52 million international tourists) from the previous year, reaching a total of 1.186 billion globally (Glaesser et al., 2017).

The behavior of tourists in terms of consumption reveals a pursuit of enjoyment rather than maximizing utility (Dai et al., 2022). Tourists are motivated by discoveries and new experiences in the destination environment, activities, and marketing efforts, which encourage them to develop fresh ideas related to consumption (Böttger et al., 2017; Dai et al., 2022).

The act of shopping and consuming at a tourist destination plays a crucial role in generating revenue for the destination and revitalizing local economies, particularly during times of decreased tourist arrivals due to destination crises (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). Tourist behavior, such as buying and consuming destination products and services, is often impulsive, temporary, and unplanned, influenced by the situation at the destination and the tourist experience during a visit (Woodside & King, 2001). Consumer perceptions can impact the selection of a destination, the consumption of goods and services while on vacation, and the decision to stay for a specific duration (Armario, 2008).

Various factors can influence a tourist's decision on how long to stay in a destination, including personal preferences and characteristics of the place itself. The perception of a destination can be shaped by certain factors related to the planned length of stay, with a more positive perception leading to a longer stay (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Chon, 1991).

Visitors contemplating their vacation options carefully consider the advantages of various alternatives and evaluate the expenses associated with each choice. They also factor in their financial limitations and time constraints when determining the duration of their stay and the funds they can allocate for their trip (Alegre & Pou, 2006). When a tourist is planning their trip, they must consider various factors such as finances, time constraints, and companionship in order to make the best decisions on where to go and what activities to participate in (Fesenmaier & Jeng, 2000).

With an increasing number of options for travelers to choose from each year, including various destinations, accommodations, and activities tailored to different interests, it has become challenging for individuals to make decisions about where to visit and how long to stay (Laws, 1995). The increasing trend of taking frequent shorter trips all year round has led to the tourism industry focusing more on capturing the attention of customers who prefer longer stays, as they are seen as highly lucrative (Alén et al., 2014).

The tourist experience plays a crucial role in evaluating the value of a destination and is a key factor in destination management. Research on destination marketing and management emphasizes the importance of both tourist experience and tourist inspiration (Xue et al., 2022). The interaction between a destination and a tourist forms the tourist experience (Stamboulis & Skayannis, 2003). The way a person perceives destination events can vary greatly and may not align with others' perspectives (Pine & Joseph, 1998; Stamboulis & Skayannis, 2003).

One of the most critical factors regarding stewardship by different tourist destinations is achieving tourist satisfaction. Enjoyment is a result of the practical and enjoyable advantages, rather than symbolic advantages. Research also shows that practical, enjoyable, and symbolic advantages stem from cognitive understanding and emotional assessment (Marinao, 2018).

McKercher (2016) emphasized that substitute activities, also known as high-order taxon, can fulfill the requirements of tourists who are not specific in their preferences. In other words, individual attractions do not play a significant role in drawing tourists to a particular location.

The duration of a leisure traveler's stay has garnered significant interest due to its importance for businesses in the hospitality industry and vacation spots (Alegre & Pou, 2006; Gokovali et al., 2007).

Declining length of stay (LOS) has different effects on tourist destinations and the environmental consequences of tourism as a whole. A shorter length of stay means that more visitors are required in order to maintain the same number of nights spent in accommodations. It is essential for destinations to focus on the economic contributions made by tourists through their spending on accommodations, activities, shopping, and food, rather than just the number of arrivals (Jacobsen et al., 2018).

One potential consequence of shorter stays is that it could result in higher expenses for hotels, forcing them to work harder to appeal to a larger number of guests to keep their rooms filled. Conversely, the upside to shorter stays is that it might mean more travelers can find places to stay during busy times of the year (Alegre & Pou, 2006).

Khoi et al. (2020) delved into the concept of tourist inspiration from the perspective of drivers and moderators. They specifically identified attachment and willingness to try new things as key drivers of tourist inspiration, with the factors of finding value in a peaceful life and seeking social recognition as moderating influences. In order to test their theories, they utilized partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with a sample of 238 international tourists from Europe, America, and Asia who were visiting Vietnam. The research findings revealed that both attachment to a place and openness to new experiences have a positive impact on tourist inspiration. Interestingly, valuing a peaceful life was found to weaken the link between openness to new experiences and inspiration. On the other hand, valuing social recognition was shown to lessen the connection between attachment to a place and inspiration. These results have important implications for scholars and professionals in the field of tourism.

A research conducted by He et al. (2023) delved into the world of wellness tourism, focusing on how tourist experiences influence inspiration. Their findings revealed that education, aesthetics, and escapism greatly influence tourist inspiration, with the exception of entertainment. The study also highlighted that openness to new experiences plays a key role in determining the impact of tourist experiences on inspiration. By emphasizing the importance of inspiration in fostering tourist engagement, this study provided valuable insights for both academics and industry professionals. The results of this research offer a blend of theoretical and practical implications that can be beneficial for various stakeholders in the field of tourism.

O'dell (2007) examines the tourist experience, evaluating different theoretical approaches used by scholars. The article concludes by emphasizing the importance of comprehensively understanding tourist experiences beyond what is typically discussed in the tourism literature.

Larsen et al. (2019) conducted three (3) extensive surveys (N=1,029), tourists who enjoy seeking both new and familiar experiences find it intriguing to interact with fellow travelers from their own country or a different one, whether in familiar surroundings or abroad. The study reveals that the level of interest in tourist experiences is influenced by the balance between familiarity and novelty for both types of seekers. This suggests that cognitive factors play a more significant role in determining the appeal of tourist experiences than individual personality traits.

Li et al. (2015) discovered that the tendency for seeking new experiences had a significant impact on the behavior of tourists, suggesting that those who seek sensation are more likely to prefer traveling independently. In the study conducted by Mossberg (2007), two different models were presented and analyzed in terms of tourist experiences within the realm of marketing. The first model demonstrates the collaborative effort between the tourism and creative industries in creating tourism products. The second model highlights various key factors that affect the experiences of tourists. It was revealed that regardless of the type of tourism product being offered (such as attending a medieval festival or visiting a museum), the overall experience of the tourist is influenced by multiple factors, including staff, other tourists, the surroundings, products/keepsakes, and the overall theme/narrative.

Xue et al. (2022) conducted a study to explore how the tourist experience affects inspiration among tourists, with destination familiarity as a moderating factor. The research revealed that various types of tourist experiences, including education, aesthetics, entertainment, and escapism, had a significant and positive impact on the state of tourist inspiration. This, in turn, influenced the overall level of inspiration among tourists. Furthermore, destination familiarity played a role in moderating the relationship between the educational experience and the level of inspiration. A sensitivity analysis indicated that the educational experience was the most influential factor in determining the level of inspiration, followed by aesthetics, escapism, and entertainment aspects of the tourist experience.

Also, Ganzon and Fillone (2015) conducted a study on the factors influencing the duration of tourists' visits to Guimaras province. They found that various aspects such as civil status, employment status, frequency of vacation, purpose of the trip, budget considerations, and overall travel budget play a role in determining how long tourists stay in Guimaras. The research indicated that the amount of money tourists allocate for their trip directly impacts the length of their stay in the province. The findings suggest that the tourism industry in Guimaras could benefit greatly from targeting single tourists, particularly unmarried solo travelers, as they tend to stay longer. It might be advantageous for tourism promotion agencies to focus on single tourists as a specific market segment in Guimaras.

Gokovali et al. (2007) conducted a study to examine what factors influence how long tourists stay at a destination. They gathered data using a questionnaire during the summer of 2005. In contrast to previous research, this study utilized survival analysis to interpret the information collected. The results revealed that out of the 39 variables considered, 16 were found to have a significant impact on tourists' decisions regarding the duration of their summer vacations. Specifically, factors such as nationality, education, income, experience, familiarity, and daily expenditure were identified as having a significant influence on the length of tourists' stays. Changes in these variables were shown to result in corresponding changes in the duration of stay.

Further, Jacobsen et al. (2018) conducted a study that delved into factors affecting how long visitors planned to stay. They discovered that the perceived amount of time required for desired activities was the key factor influencing holiday duration planning, along with constraints such as limited vacation days, budget restrictions, and accommodation options. Visitors who concentrated on the area, had their own transportation, or prioritized outdoor activities and scenic views tended to have longer stays. The research indicated that destinations could potentially encourage visitors to extend their length of stay.

Ultimately, Machado (2010) delved into examining the duration of European tourists' stays in Madeira. The research suggests a link between the length of stay and factors such as age, gender, education, nationality, affinity for wine, and previous visits. Conversely, variables like nationality (British, Dutch, French), spending habits, and perceived quality were tied to

shorter stays. These findings align with the idea that financial status influences how long tourists stay in a destination.

The paper also touches on theories centered around tourists seeking to learn from their experiences while visiting destination sites. Furthermore, the literature delves into topics like the presence of tourist attractions, the overall tourism system, tourist behavior, and satisfaction levels, offering profound insights into the tourist experience in Bantayan, Cebu.

3. Methods

3.1. Design

This research project used a qualitative approach to investigate the experiences of foreign tourists in Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines. The researcher developed an interview guide to gather data from the participants.

Exploratory research involves exploring research questions that have not been extensively studied before. It is typically qualitative and primary in nature. This type of research is also referred to as interpretive research or grounded theory approach because of its adaptable and open-ended characteristics. Exploratory research is commonly employed when studying new topics or facing challenges in data collection. This research method is utilized to gain a broad understanding or answer specific questions, but it requires some existing knowledge or framework to guide the study (Kumar et al., 2023).

3.2. Environment

This study was conducted in Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu. It is located 11,1691° N, 123,7909° E in the Philippines and is part of the 7th Congressional District of Cebu Province. The Municipality of Santa Fe is recognized as the gateway of the island since the airport and the ferry port are in the abovementioned municipality. It is also the center of tourism on the island since it houses most resorts and accommodation facilities, with most tourist establishments stationed in the locality. Aside from that, the island became a sensation among domestic tourists when it was promoted in a local movie. The Local Government Unit (LGU) promotes Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu as a sun, sand, and swim destination, which can be compared to Boracay Island.

3.3. Participants

The research participants of this investigation were the seven (7) foreign tourists randomly chosen in Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, and Cebu. For the inclusion criteria for study participants, they should be of legal age, foreign tourists who stayed in Santa Fe Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines, and who stayed more than three (3) days but less than six (6) months at Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu, who gave their willingness to participate in the interviews. Exclusion criteria include foreign tourists who stayed in Santa Fe, Bantayan, and Cebu for less than three (3) days, local tourists, and formerly Filipino citizens (balikbayan).

3.4. Instrument

The main instrument used in gathering the data is a researcher-made interview guide. It consists of preliminary questions about the following: their reason for traveling and prolonged stay at Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu, how they adapt to the culture of the people on the island, their adjustment to the differences in language between them, and the local people, the local food available in the local community, and the climate difference between their country of origin and the Philippines.

The researcher-designed interview guide was subjected to content validation to assess the fitness and subjectivity of the contents before the interview proceedings. The content validator was an expert in research and social studies. A series of comments and suggestions from the validator to the instruments served as bases for the revisions. After the revision, the validator checked against the instrument before giving the affirmative assessment. The validator used the content validation sheet in the final assessment of the interview guide.

3.5. Data Collection

The researcher wrote a letter to ask permission from the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu, to conduct a study in the municipality. They also sent another letter to the Municipal Tourism Office to obtain relevant information for the investigation.

After obtaining permission from the local authorities, the researcher chose the key informants with the guidance of the Municipal Tourism Office of Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu, to ensure that the key participants or informants were chosen based on the inclusion criteria. Afterward, the researcher approached each key informant to orient them about the study. They were also given a short explanation about the Informed Consent Form (ICF). They were asked whether or not they would be willing to participate in the personal interviews. Those who made affirmative decisions were asked to sign the Informed Consent Form (ICF).

Then, the interviews took place at a convenient place and time for the critical participants or informants. Each interview lasted 40 minutes to an hour. The research participants or informants consented to audio recording each interview. The audio records were then transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis.

Also, these research records and documents were kept in a cabinet with a lock and key, to which only the researcher and the adviser had access. The soft copies of the informants related to this investigation were saved on the researcher's laptops. They will be deleted two (2) years after the finalization of the report.

3.6. Data Analysis

The research participants' or informants' narratives or responses were transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves identifying recurring patterns or themes present in qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that this method is often recommended as the initial qualitative technique to master, as it equips individuals with essential skills that can be applied to various forms of analysis. This method is often recommended as the initial qualitative technique to master, as it equips individuals with essential skills that can be applied to various forms of analysis.

Thematic analysis is a method used to uncover important patterns in data and apply these patterns to address the research question or provide insights into an issue. It goes beyond just summarizing the information gathered (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

Based on Braun and Clarke (2006), a practical framework for conducting this type of analysis is presented in a six-phase guide. The initial step in qualitative analysis involves reading and re-reading transcripts to become acquainted with the data corpus. Creating notes and recording initial impressions is recommended at this stage. Following this, the process involves generating codes to organize the data systematically and meaningfully. Coding helps in condensing large amounts of data into smaller, more manageable sections of meaning. The method of coding varies depending on the perspective and research questions. Next, the analysis involves searching for themes (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

As Braun and Clarke (2006) explained, There are no set rules for determining a theme. A theme is characterized by its importance. In this case study, the codes were analyzed and

some were grouped under a theme. The next stage involves examining the themes. During this process, the initial themes identified in Step 3 were reviewed, adjusted, and expanded upon. The researchers assessed the data connected to each theme to determine if it supported the theme. The subsequent step involves considering how well the themes fit within the overall data set. This step serves as the final refinement of the themes, with the goal of capturing the core essence of each theme. The final step involves documenting the findings. Typically, the culmination of research is a formal report (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

3.7. Ethical Protocols

This research followed ethical guidelines related to promoting well-being, doing no harm, fairness, and honoring individuals. In the aspect of beneficence, the research participants or informants, the Local Government Unit [LGU], the community, and tourist service providers would benefit from the proposed implications for practice because they are the primary stakeholders in the tourism economy in the Municipality of Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines.

Moreover, in non-maleficence, this investigation's proceedings ensured that no informants or participants would be harmed physically, psychologically, economically, or socially. The procedures were paramount in ensuring the privacy and anonymity of research participants. The information gathered was handled with the highest level of privacy and kept secure in a locked safety deposit box. No personal identities were included in any research findings or articles produced. Instead, they will be replaced with a unique number or code to protect anonymity. After two years, all gathered data will be permanently deleted.

The expert checked the nature of the questions to ensure they were structured neutrally and only related to the research participants' experiences in Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines. The inclusion criteria were used to select the study participants or informants. No discrimination based on socioeconomic status, religion, race, ethnicity, place of origin, or color was practiced in this investigation. Whatever the participants' answers were, they were respected and treated correctly.

Taking part in this research study was completely optional for the individuals involved, and they were free to leave the study at any point if they desired. This decision to participate or not would not impact their relationship with any tourism-related businesses or the government. In addition, the participants were required to sign an informed consent form that contained detailed information and assurances about the study. This was meant to ensure that the participants gave their explicit permission to take part, understood the potential consequences of their involvement, and made their decision freely and without any undue influence.

4. Results and Discussion

The following section delves into the collection, examination, and understanding of information regarding the encounters of international visitors exploring Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines. It also includes the themes developed and narratives of the key informants or the research participants.

4.1. Research Results

4.1.1. Profile of Foreign Tourists

This section presents the personal information of the foreign tourists in Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines, who were included in the interview. The data is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Profile of the Research Participants

Key Informant	Age	Gender	Nature of Work	Country of Origin
1	46 years old	Male	Shipping Agent	Italy
2	31 years old	Male	Music Producer	France
3	32 years old	Male	Engineer	China
4	34 years old	Female	IT Specialist/ Virtual Assistant	U.S.A.
5	40 years old	Female	NGO	Switzerland
6	Undisclosed	Male	Undisclosed	Germany
7	27 years old	Male	Computer Programmer	Russia

Based on the interview, the predominant age of the foreign tourists was less than 50; the youngest was 29, while the oldest was 46. This data indicates that these foreign tourists belonged to the adult group, and they enjoyed the view and scenery of the place so much that they tended to travel and return to Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, and Cebu, Philippines.

For the seven (7) research participants, there were a more significant number of male than female informants. However, this data does not mean that more males were on the underground tourist visits because the island’s leisure and relaxation are not gender-biased. Anyone can visit the destination regardless of gender if they have the industry, motivation, and persistence to earn.

4.1.2. Reasons for Travelling to Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu

This part also details why foreign visitors were attracted to Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines.

Theme #1: Propensity to do Business in Santa Fe, Cebu

Santa Fe is situated on Bantayan Island, Cebu, with beautiful scenery and sandy beaches. So, the research participants divulged that their primary reason for traveling to Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines was to explore opportunities to venture into a business that relates to tourism since, by mere observation, the primordial driver of the local economy of the abovementioned municipality has been tourism over the years. So, engaging in any business activity that provides tourism services is practical since there are unending arrivals of both domestic and foreign tourists.

Informant 1 had seen many business opportunities in Santa Fe, Bantayan, considering the large number of domestic and foreign tourists visiting the coastal municipality annually. Also, Informant 2 divulged that his main reason for coming to the abovementioned tourist place was to take advantage of putting up a business.

Theme #2: Enjoying the Natural Endowed Beauty

The Municipality of Santa Fe, Bantayan Cebu, Philippines, is a tourist destination that is considered one of the main reasons for tourists to visit due to its white and powdery beaches, fine beach resorts, and friendly ambiance, which appeal to local and foreign visitors.

Informant 4 was stunned by the white sand beaches in Santa Fe, Bantayan, and Cebu due to the available news and advertisements online and was fascinated to come. He opined that:

Stunning, well, I heard... Erm. I saw a video on YouTube (Informant4).

Santa Fe, Bantayan, Cebu is gifted with crystal clear waters, white sand beaches, and other natural wonders. This is the reason why Informant 7 came to the place and uttered this: *(The) beaches, not many tourists (Informant 7).*

Theme #3: Leisure and Relaxation

Common Reasons for Tourists' Visit. Tourists visit places to experience leisure and relaxation, especially those stressed by their jobs and personal lives. So, they would choose a peaceful and quiet place. The Municipality of Santa Fe in Bantayan Island, Cebu, is peaceful, with a population and more tourists than other well-known tourist destinations. So, tourists can enjoy the scenic sunset and the beach. Informant 6 shared that: *Some people say it is an excellent place for relaxation (Informant 6).*

Theme #4: Connecting and Reconnecting Through Visiting Friends.

Another vital reason foreign visitors visit a travel destination is to connect with a new friend or to reconnect with an old friend. Tourists have existing friends living in Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, and Cebu. Getting invited was expected, especially when there were special occasions. Informant 4 uttered:

And then, luckily, my friend moved here, so I told him I was going to visit, and I came here, so I fell in love with it (Informant 4).

Informant 3 also divulged that his visit to Santa Fe, Bantayan, Cebu was to meet a friend, which ignited his excitement to travel. It was uttered that: *Meet with a friend (Informant 3).*

4.1.3. Factors for Foreign Tourists 'Length of Stay in Santa Fe, Cebu

Another aspect explored in the study was why foreign tourists prolonged their stay in Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu. The length of stay visibly impacts any tourism destination since more extended stays are positively and negatively related to the aggregate earnings obtained from tourist activities. It determines the economic effect on income, employment, the destination's supply and demand inflow, and investment and development.

Theme #1: Multifaceted Considerations to Stay

The different research participants expressed many reasons why they keep returning to the Philippines. Informant 1, a shipping agent, disclosed his travel itinerary in the Philippines for several trips. He said:

This is my third (3rd) time visiting the Philippines. On my first visit, he went to Cagayan and stayed for ten days; on my second (2nd) visit, he was in Bataan; and lastly, I stayed on Bantayan Island for a week and was planning to extend his stay (Informant 1).

The safety of the tourist destination place is the primary consideration when choosing Informant 5 when visiting the Philippines for work-related/ rehabilitation matters. The whole family has been traveling across the country for three months. Thus, they have decided to stay in the destination for eleven (11) days. She uttered the following statement:

We are planning a three-month family vacation, but not only in the Philippines. We want to go to a place with no Malaria—make it as safe as possible for the kids” (Informant 5).

4.1.4. Adaption to the Culture, Language, Food, Climate, and Political Ambiance

The third part is about the key informants or participants' means of adapting to the culture in terms of language, food, and climate in Santa Fe, Bantayan, Cebu, Philippines.

Theme #1: Kindness, Friendly and Hospitality

Primordial to Culture Adaptation in the Philippines. When one decides to visit a foreign country, one must consider local people's culture, traits, and behavior. Fortunately, the Philippines is known to have people who are best in hospitality, and visitors are warmly welcomed once they arrive in the place. The hospitality and approachability of the people of Santa Fe made Informant 1 appreciate the local culture. Informant 1 said that:

On the one side, it is better for the culture. In Europe, when someone talks to you, you run. Here, it is a different, uncomplicated life. In Italy, people work 40 hours; we have excellent hospitals with free health care. I prefer our culture because we have everything” (Informant 1).

Informant 5, who traveled to Santa Fe, Bantayan, with her family, shared a comparison between the two countries they have visited in terms of culture. She appreciated the innate kindness of the Filipinos in Santa Fe, Cebu. She shared that:

For me, it is like coming back home. I can say that I can quickly adapt to the culture. The people are kind compared to the Chinese (Informant 5).

Informant 6 also recognized the admirable traits of the Filipinos, which made him revisit Santa Fe, Cebu. He uttered that:

Filipinos are nice guys. I do not know the difference between Filipinos and Germans: different places and different locals (Informant 6).

Likewise, the distinct Filipino trait of being friendly and hospitable comforted Informant 7, who disclosed one's positive experience while vacationing in Santa Fe, Bantayan, Cebu. It was narrated by saying:

It is extraordinary; people here are amiable. If you are friends in Russia, they can be very friendly and polite. If you are not a friend, they will not care at all. Filipinos are so accommodating and hospitable that it is extraordinary sometimes (Informant 7).

Theme #2: Tourists' Ease in Communicating the Local People

In the Philippines, communicating with other nationalities is easier than it seems. Filipinos use English as their second language, so foreigners can easily find an individual who knows the universal language. It is also their will and their familiarity with the language that made the adaptation smooth, as experienced by Informant 2. Constantly talking to the local people helped Informant 2 learn the local language. She shared that: *I adapt by learning the language every day (Informant 2).*

Informant 5 learned the Filipino language and communicated with the locals. It was said that:

No problem. I understand and talk Tagalog (Informant 5).

Theme #3: Filipinos Are English Speakers

We are boosting the Tourism Industry. Since English is the medium of instruction in all schools in the Philippines at all levels, the Filipino literate can speak English. However, the level of fluency may differ. Nevertheless, the ability of Filipinos to communicate in English has become their edge over other nations that depend on tourism since we can easily cater to the visitors' needs.

It was pleasing to bridge the language gap between foreign tourists and local people because people in the Philippines can speak English. Informant 1 shared that:

Everybody in the Philippines speaks English, and I have zero problems speaking in English (Informant 1).

In addition, Informant 6 said it was not hard to communicate with the Filipinos since they are fluent in English. It was disclosed that:

No, most Filipinos are good at speaking English (Informant 6).

Theme #4: Foreign Tourists Love the Local Food

Each country has different kinds of food commonly eaten by the people. Food mirrors the culture of the people. Thereby, Filipino food represents Filipino culture. However, since the Spaniards colonized the Philippines for more than three (3) centuries, followed by the American and Japanese, with trading activities among Asian countries, it became the melting pot of the East and the West. Hence, different dishes with both Eastern and Western influences are available.

Informant 2 shared that, generally, the country's food is to his liking. However, there was exotic food eaten by the local people, which he did not like and was quite shocking. He stated the following:

I cannot adapt to food like “balut,” “tamilok,” or “sisig.” I eat fruits, pancit canton, rice, and fish. I am vegan, so I am shocked that some people eat meat from animals (Informant 2).

According to Informant 4, a freelance virtual assistant, the food in Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines, is a little mixture of all the Asian countries. So, it is easy to adjust since the taste is close to other countries' food. She narrated that:

I love the food – a little mix of all the Asian countries (Informant 4).

Informant 5 also posits that Filipino food is like the food in Europe; however, since Bantayan is a separate island from mainland Cebu, there might be some food of her liking that she cannot buy. Informant 5 disclosed that:

It is easy because it is like European or Western food here. It is hard to find Filipino food here. It is surprising how many tourists there are (Informant 5).

Informant 6 revealed that the local food in Santa Fe is her preference. However, the variety is not that great due to the limited resources on the island. She said that:

We love local food but cannot find much local food here. Diversity. We tried Greek food, which was okay, and Thai food, which was great. Sanitation—Asia” (Informant 6).

Informant 7 did not find it hard to look for food that he preferred since it is available in Santa Fe, Cebu. He disclosed that:

It is good but not a dish; it is something very simple. I like fried bananas and coconut milk. I have tried a lot of bakeries (Informant 7).

Theme #5: Sun, Sand and Sea: Impetus for an Enjoyable Vacation

Foreign tourists find it easy to adapt to the dry climate of the Philippines, particularly on Bantayan Island, because this is why they came here. They can enjoy swimming on the beach, diving in the coral reefs, snorkeling, and doing more activities when the sun is out.

Bantayan Island possesses warm weather that is suitable for tourists' activities. That is why Informant 4 preferred vacationing in Santa Fe, Cebu. She uttered:

Hot and humid (Informant 4).

Informant 5 also liked the weather in the Philippines because it is different from her home country. It was disclosed that:

This is fine for us, so we adjusted well. Before coming here, we stopped over in HK, and the weather was awesome (Informant 5).

Informant 6 further found the weather of the country as suitable for his preference to be able to enjoy his vacation and shared that:

It is excellent (Informant 6).

Informant 7 expressed that he liked the weather of Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Philippines, more than his home country since they can enjoy the sun. He narrated that:

I like it. We do not have much sun in Russia, so I like it (Informant 7).

4.2. Discussion

Table 1 presents the research participants' work. They were a shipping agent, a music producer, an engineer, an information specialist, and a computer programmer. These data indicate that they had good-paying jobs and occupations that enabled them to earn money to finance their vacation at Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines. Further, the research participants came from countries like Italy, France, China, the United States of America, Switzerland, Germany, and Russia.

These pieces of information denote that the culture and lifestyle of the research participants were different because each country has different traditions and practices, which affect their appreciation, acceptance, and adaptation to the culture, food, lifestyle, people, and others at Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines.

4.2.1. Themes Generated concerning Reasons for Travelling to Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu

The first theme highlights one of the primary purposes of visiting Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, Cebu, Philippines, which was to explore business opportunities related to tourism. Tourism has been the primary driver of the local economy in this area for many years. Therefore, given the continuous influx of domestic and international tourists, it is logical to consider engaging in a business that offers tourism services.

The tourism sector in Sta. Fe town on Bantayan Island in northern Cebu will receive a significant boost if one of the town's small islands is designated as a tourism enterprise zone (TEZ). According to the mayor of the Municipality of Santa Fe, Cebu, Barangay Hilantagaan has the potential to be developed for agritourism, where visitors can spend a day or two in lodging facilities and explore the natural beauty of the island. This plan would establish a positive relationship between tourism, agriculture, and fishing industries, benefiting all three sectors. The town primarily relies on fishing and farming for income, with a few small-scale industries on the side. Nevertheless, the tourism industry is also emerging as a key economic driver due to the growing number of visitors, particularly during the Holy Week, who come to relax on the island's shores. Since the island's airport and main ferry terminal are situated within the municipality, Santa Fe is regarded as the gateway to Bantayan and its neighboring islands (Silva, 2016).

The second theme centers on enjoying the place's natural beauty, particularly the white sand beaches and general wonders of the environment. This is unique from other tourist destinations, which are already congested with too many people, distracting their vacation. The Philippines is a cluster of over 7,000 islands in Southeast Asia, scattered across the Pacific Ocean. The nation's diverse geography includes long stretches of immaculate beaches with clear, blue waters. These natural marvels make the Philippines an ideal destination for travelers seeking a one-of-a-kind experience.

Undeniably, Bantayan Island boasts some of the most breathtaking beaches in the entire country of the Philippines. It is not surprising that it attracts numerous tourists and travelers

to Cebu. The town of Santa Fe is particularly famous among visitors, as it offers a stunning white sand beach and a variety of attractive sights to explore in the surrounding area (Mancelita, 2021).

Santa Fe Municipality, located on Bantayan Island in Visayas, the Philippines, is known for its stunning white sandy beaches. This popular destination attracts both local and international travelers who come to relax and enjoy the resorts. The municipality relies mainly on fishing and agriculture for its small-scale industry. During holidays, such as Holy Week, the area is bustling with visitors looking to unwind with loved ones on the beach or engage in leisure activities. Even during non-holiday periods, tourists, especially foreigners, can be seen taking advantage of the services provided by the resorts in Santa Fe. Some of these establishments are not solely operated by locals but also by expatriates who have married residents of the island (Travelling Cebu, 2022).

The third theme reveals that leisure and relaxation matter during their stay. Relaxation does not necessarily mean the quality that an attraction provides. It may also refer to the quantity that the attraction possesses. No matter how attractive the tourist attractions are, those who want bliss in solitude may still consider finding it not in a crowded place, not to defeat the essence of looking for a place to relax. Santa Fe, Bantayan Cebu, offers a similar quality experience to other destinations like Boracay, which has a huge crowd.

A holiday provides the opportunity for individuals to relax on the beach or explore unfamiliar and exciting destinations. Whether someone prefers relaxation or adventure, a change in environment can make it easier to escape from worries and responsibilities. (Eastern College, 2023).

The fourth theme disclosed that visiting a remarkable and beautiful place is best enjoyed with friends. Also, visiting friends is one of the best ways to reconnect with them and enjoy talking and visiting beautiful scenery. Some people come to the country to connect with a newfound friend, which is very prevalent nowadays.

The strong urge of individuals to see their loved one's face to face may be more astounding than their eagerness to take vacations. The return to visiting friends and relatives (VFR) and traveling will play a crucial role in the revival of the travel industry worldwide, and those in the tourism sector should recognize the impact of these types of trips (Baratti, 2021).

4.2.2. Theme Generated concerning Factors for Foreign Tourists 'Length of Stay in Santa Fe, Cebu

The theme speaks about the longevity of stay, and its extension pertains to ensuring that Santa Fe, Bantayan Cebu, does not disappoint foreign tourists regarding the beauty, peace, safety, and security of the place to foreign tourists. The tourism-driven place is something to be enjoyed. Moreover, the tourists have different reasons for visiting the Philippines more than once. However, these return visits only show that they were captivated by the white sand beach, people's hospitality, and the serenity of the place.

The length of a tourist's stay is among the most important factors indicating consumption levels and revenue generation for specific tourist destinations. In addition, tourists with different modes of transportation, motivations, and past visits have different durations of stay (Yang et al., 2011).

4.2.3. Themes Generated concerning Adaption to the Culture, Language, Food, Climate, and Political Ambiance

The first theme highlights that hospitality is a trait that could serve as an asset for Filipinos. Filipinos have a reputation for treating all tourists with respect, regardless of race. Every time someone walks in, a Filipino strives to put one's best foot forward. This is evident

in providing high-quality service to travelers, relatives, friends, and even new acquaintances. Many people have admired this aspect of Filipino culture, which is one reason why locals and visitors to the country like traveling from place to place.

The Philippines is like a friend one wishes to have met sooner. First-time tourists grudgingly end their holidays but vow to return. Repeat visitors stay longer the next time, and some stay for good. Travel magazines and bloggers rave about the place, the people, and the experience. The Filipinos are a vibrant democracy of 100 million people speaking English and Filipino interchangeably. Forbes ranks the Philippines as the region's friendliest country (Garcia, 2015).

The second theme unveils that language barriers are widely seen as a substantial hurdle to cross-cultural communication, which can stifle people's desire to visit a location and reduce tourist enjoyment while they are there. Healthy relationships cannot be maintained without effective communication between tourists and hosts, particularly at the intercultural service interface (Ying et al., 2018). However, this is not a problem in the Philippine tourism industry because many people are hospitable and can communicate with foreign visitors in English. Some even speak Korean, Nihonggo, Spanish, and other foreign languages.

Likewise, the Philippines' English status is unique among Southeast Asian countries. English-language policy has resulted in fundamental changes in the Philippines' society, as evidenced by the tourism industry, which has become increasingly appealing to travelers from English-speaking countries. With two-thirds of the population fluent in English, the Philippines is regarded as one of the largest English-speaking countries in the world. The country's competitive advantage compared to its neighboring countries is its pool of quality workforce. With these recognitions under its belt, here are three reasons why the Philippines is considered one of the top English-proficient countries in the world (Mariñas, 2021).

The third theme is based on their experience; foreign tourists who visited Santa Fe, Bantayan Island, and Cebu, the Philippines, were fine adjusting to the country's language. Generally, Filipinos can speak English, the universal language. Filipinos' ability to communicate in English gives them a competitive advantage over other nations whose local people cannot speak English fluently. Hence, it also helped boost the country's tourist industry.

The Philippines is known worldwide as one of the largest English-speaking nations. Most Filipinos can speak English to some extent. English has always been one of the official languages of the Philippines, spoken by over 14 million Filipinos. It is used in business, law, and education. However, in a recent discussion organized by the British Council, government, education, and business leaders agreed that the Philippines needs to work harder to improve English teaching and learning. They believe that English skills are crucial for the country's workforce to stay competitive. This initiative could strengthen the Philippines' distinct advantage in this part of the world, particularly with the upcoming ASEAN economic integration. Enhancing the teaching of English in the Philippines presents opportunities for the country in tourism (Cabigon, 2015).

The fourth theme, revealed by the research participants during the interviews, shows that visiting a remarkable and beautiful place is best enjoyed with friends. Also, visiting friends is one of the best ways to reconnect with them and enjoy talking and visiting beautiful scenery. Some people come to the country to connect with a newfound friend, which is very prevalent nowadays.

People's desire to reconnect in person with family and friends is potentially even more remarkable than their pent-up longing for leisure getaways. Visiting friends and relatives (VFR) trips will be a significant driving force in the global travel industry's recovery, and

tourism providers should be aware of their influence (Baratti, 2021). The fourth theme exposed Filipinos to European, American, and Asian cultures that influenced the food they prepared and ate. Also, since Cebu is considered economically booming, with tourism as one of the drivers, many restaurants, resorts, and other hospitality establishments offer different Western and Eastern cuisines. So, foreign tourists need help adjusting to the food available in the local stores and restaurants.

Moreover, food accounts for around a third of the average tourist's vacation budget. This demonstrates how vital this sector is to visitors' in-destination experience and why they should stay longer. As a result of their exposure to many cultures from other countries, Filipinos have developed numerous cuisines that give tourists the impression that the food combines all cultures. However, some prefer variety so they can quickly adjust, while others like the familiar foods of their own country.

Florendo (2019) opined that maintaining Filipino culture through gastronomy is a challenge because Filipino food is currently being adapted to cater to international tastes, and a desire for foreign foods is replacing the desire for Filipino cuisine. According to the study, Vidal Caramonte and Faber (2017) revealed that food reflects a culture's character, morals, religion, social history, and understanding of existence. Filipino food represents Filipino culture and is a result of being colonized by numerous cultures.

The fifth theme centers on the narrative of Europeans, Americans, and other foreign tourists who preferred the climate and weather of the Philippines because it is dry. There might be some weather disturbances, but they will take a little time. So, during summer, they have ample time to enjoy the beach for swimming, diving, snorkeling, and other activities they do not have the chance to do in their home country.

Climate and weather are important factors in tourists' decision-making and influence the successful operation of tourism businesses (Becken, 2013). This is crucial in determining the touristic areas and affects tourism demand in different seasons since tourists are more sensitive to climatic conditions than the locals.

Hence, they usually prefer a place with pleasant thermal comfort (Nasrollahi et al., 2017). The 3s for sun, sand, and sea are distinctive features of the country that attract tourists who long to bask under the sun's heat, as the Philippines is a tropical country with two seasons (Arellano, 2020). This implies that the tourists, based on their narrations, could quickly like and adapt to the country's climate because it would give them time to enjoy doing activities.

Arellano (2020) further said the Philippines is perceived as a destination with warm weather, and Cebu is the traveler's fantasy of a tropical island coming true with a refreshing climate. The narratives of the research participants suggest that they liked the hot and humid temperature in the Philippines, particularly in Santa Fe, Cebu, because they could do more activities while having a vacation.

5. Conclusion

Unsurprisingly, Bantayan Island in Cebu features one of the country's most beautiful beaches. On Cebu's Bantayan Island, Santa Fe is the most famous municipality. Its wonderful white sand beach and other beautiful attractions are within walking distance. The study generated themes such as the propensity to do business in Santa Fe, Cebu, enjoying the natural beauty, leisure, and relaxation—common reasons for tourists' visits—and connecting and reconnecting through visiting friends. These themes represent the principal reasons tourists visit the place. Additionally, multifaceted considerations to stay were found to be decisive factor influencing the length of stay of foreign visitors in Santa Fe Bantayan Island, Cebu,

Philippines. Moreover, kindness, friendly and hospitality: are primordial to cultural adaptation in the Philippines, tourists' ease in communicating with the local people; Filipinos are English speakers: boosting the tourism industry; foreign tourists love the local food, and sun, sand, and sea: impetus for an enjoyable vacation were the themes relating to how foreign visitors adapt to the culture, language, food, climate, and political ambiance in Santa Fe, Bantayan Island Cebu, Philippines.

The research findings suggest that the identified themes are crucial for future research focusing on marketing strategies and brand development. The local government unit (LGU), in collaboration with other tourism stakeholders and the Provincial Government, should enhance the promotion of tropical island tourism, emphasizing the 3-S (sea, sun, and sand). This approach aims to attract more international tourists. The goal is not only to promote but also to educate potential visitors about the offerings of the destination. In addition, the LGU, working with the Department of Tourism (DOT), should concentrate on branding the destination sites to differentiate them from other tourist attractions and highlight what Santa Fe, Bantayan has to offer that sets it apart from other destinations. While the island's main attractions are its expansive white beaches, azure waters, and coral reefs, there is an opportunity to reposition it as a destination for adventure tourism while maintaining a romantic image, portraying the island as a place where visitors can experience the tranquility, relaxation, and revitalization.

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