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Historical Tourism in Intramuros: Visitor Satisfaction and Engagement with Local Tour Guides

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Abstract. This study examined visitor satisfaction and engagement with local tour guides in Intramuros, Manila, and tested whether these outcomes differed by tourist profile. A cross-sectional quantitative survey was administered to 200 tourists who had experienced a guided tour in Intramuros, comprising equal numbers of Filipino and foreign visitors. The researcher-developed questionnaire assessed factors influencing the use of tour-guide services, post-tour evaluations of information and communication, tourist engagement, and proposed service-improvement strategies. The analyses used descriptive statistics, Kruskal-Wallis tests, Mann-Whitney U tests, and Pearson correlation. Respondents reported highly positive reasons for using tour guides ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.411$), high satisfaction with guide information and communication ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.434$), and high engagement ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.415$). Satisfaction and engagement did not differ significantly by age, gender, or nationality (all $p > .05$). Satisfaction was strongly and positively associated with engagement ($r = .820$, $p < .001$). Respondents strongly endorsed continued guide development, particularly communication and storytelling, feedback mechanisms, local cultural integration, multilingual provision, and digital support. The findings position tour guides as central interpretive mediators in heritage tourism and suggest that professional, communicative, and participatory guiding can support meaningful visitor experiences in Intramuros.

Keywords: *heritage tourism; Intramuros; tour guides; visitor satisfaction; tourist engagement; storytelling*

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Introduction

Heritage destinations are experienced not only through their physical fabric but also through interpretation. In guided settings, tour guides translate places, objects, and historical events into narratives that visitors can understand, question, and connect with. This interpretive role is particularly important in Intramuros, Manila, where churches, fortifications, museums, plazas, and other Spanish-colonial-era resources form a concentrated heritage landscape. The Intramuros Administration is mandated to protect and conserve the district's historical and cultural significance while guiding its development, making visitor experience and heritage stewardship closely linked concerns (Intramuros Administration, n.d.).

Tour-guide performance has long been associated with service quality, satisfaction, learning, and behavioral intentions. Expectation-Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980) provides a useful explanation: visitors evaluate an experience against prior expectations, and satisfaction emerges when perceived performance confirms or exceeds those expectations. In guided heritage tourism, relevant performance cues include historical accuracy, clarity, responsiveness, storytelling, professionalism, and the ability to facilitate interaction. Recent research further emphasizes storytelling and sensory or narrative-based guiding as mechanisms that deepen cultural immersion, emotional connection, and memory (Chan et al., 2025; Khater et al., 2026; Leong et al., 2024). Tour guides also contribute to heritage management by educating visitors and encouraging responsible behavior (Khater, 2026).

Despite the importance of guided interpretation, localized evidence on the relationship between visitor satisfaction and active engagement in Intramuros remains limited. The present study therefore examines tourists who used local guided-tour services in Intramuros and focuses on how they evaluated guide services, how actively they engaged during tours, and whether satisfaction and engagement varied across demographic groups.

Study Objectives

The study aimed to: (1) describe the tourist respondents by age, gender, nationality, and first-time/repeat visitation; (2) assess factors influencing the decision to use tour-guide services; (3) evaluate satisfaction with the quality of information and communication delivered by tour guides; (4) assess tourist participation, attentiveness, and interest; (5) test differences in satisfaction and engagement by age, gender, and nationality; (6) determine the relationship between satisfaction and engagement; and (7) identify service-improvement strategies supported by respondents.

Theoretical Framing

Expectation-Confirmation Theory (Oliver, 1980) served as the principal theoretical lens. Visitors enter a guided experience with expectations shaped by previous travel, recommendations, promotional information, and beliefs about service quality. During the tour, perceived guide performance provides the basis for confirmation or disconfirmation. In this study, post-tour evaluations of information quality and communication were treated as indicators of satisfaction with the guided experience, while participation and attentiveness represented engagement. The framework anticipates that favorable evaluations of guide performance will be associated with stronger engagement, although the cross-sectional design does not establish causal direction.

Methodology

Research Design and Setting

We used a cross-sectional quantitative survey design. Data were collected in Intramuros, Manila, from tourists who had completed guided tours. The survey was distributed in high-traffic heritage areas identified in the original protocol, including Fort Santiago, Plaza Roma, and San Agustin Church. The study focused on visitors' post-tour perceptions and experiences with local tour guides.

Participants and Sampling

The final sample consisted of 200 respondents: 100 Filipino and 100 foreign tourists. Eligible respondents had experienced a guided tour in Intramuros within the study's stated recall window of up to 12 months; tourists who visited independently were excluded. Recruitment was non-probability based and combined on-site purposive/convenience procedures, including referrals from tour guides.

Research Instruments

Data were collected using a researcher-developed structured questionnaire. Items were adapted from prior work on cultural tourism and visitor satisfaction and supplemented with context-specific items for Intramuros. The instrument covered demographic characteristics; factors influencing the use of tour-guide services; post-tour evaluations of information quality and communication; engagement through participation, attentiveness, and interest; and proposed strategies for improving tour-guide services. Most evaluative items used a four-point response scale. Three experts reviewed content validity, and the authors conducted a pilot test with 10 eligible tourists excluded from the main sample.

Data Collection and Ethics

Researchers administered printed questionnaires on site after guided tours, allowing approximately 10-15 minutes for completion. Researchers were present to clarify instructions without directing responses. Researchers encoded, double-checked, cleaned, and stored completed forms securely. The study reports institutional ethics approval from Lyceum of the Philippines University-Manila, informed consent, voluntary participation, the right to withdraw, anonymity/confidentiality, harm minimization, and secure data storage. Only aggregate findings were used in reporting.

Data Analysis

Frequencies and percentages described respondent characteristics. Means and standard deviations summarized four-point scale responses. Kruskal-Wallis tests compared age groups, and Mann-Whitney U tests compared gender and nationality groups. Pearson's r assessed the association between satisfaction and engagement. Statistical significance was evaluated at $\alpha = .05$.

Results and Discussion

Respondent Profile

Table 1. Respondent characteristics

Characteristic	n	%
Age: below 18	1	0.5
18-25	51	25.5
26-35	71	35.5
36-45	42	21
46-65	26	13
66 and above	9	4.5
Male	98	49
Female	102	51
Filipino	100	50
Foreign	100	50
First-time visitor	128	64
Repeat visitor	72	36

The largest age group was 26–35 years (35.5%), followed by 18–25 years (25.5%). Gender was nearly balanced, nationality was intentionally balanced between Filipino and foreign respondents, and almost two-thirds (64%) were first-time visitors.

Factors Influencing Use of Tour-Guide Services

Table 2. Factors influencing use of tour-guide services

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Quality of tour-guide services	3.56	0.479	Strongly agree
Relevance/depth of historical and cultural information	3.58	0.448	Strongly agree
Personal recommendation / practical value	3.60	0.453	Strongly agree
Overall	3.58	0.411	Strongly agree

Respondents strongly endorsed all three sets of factors. Personal recommendation and practical value received the highest dimension mean (M = 3.60); this cluster included organization, navigation, pacing, safety, and overall improvement of the visit. Historical and cultural depth followed closely (M = 3.58), while guide-service quality was also highly rated (M = 3.56). Respondents therefore valued both interpretive expertise and the practical structure that guides provided.

Satisfaction With Guide Information and Communication

Table 3. Satisfaction with guide information and communication

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Quality of information	3.61	0.458	Highly satisfied
Communication skills	3.63	0.465	Highly satisfied
Overall	3.62	0.434	Highly satisfied

Overall satisfaction was high (M = 3.62, SD = 0.434). Communication received the highest dimension mean (M = 3.63), with especially favorable ratings for clear, audible speech; interactive narration; approachability; understandable language; and responsiveness. Information quality was similarly high (M = 3.61), including perceived historical accuracy, depth, meaningful insights, and clear explanations of landmarks and artifacts.

Tourist Engagement

Table 4. Tourist engagement

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Participation in guided-tour activities	3.62	0.471	Highly encountered
Attentiveness and interest	3.63	0.423	Highly encountered
Overall engagement	3.62	0.415	Highly encountered

Tourists reported high engagement throughout the guided experience. Attentiveness and interest (M = 3.63) marginally exceeded participation (M = 3.62). Respondents reported paying attention, remaining mentally focused, becoming curious as tours progressed, joining question-and-answer sessions, and participating in interactive experiences.

Difference by Demographic Profile

Table 5. Differences in satisfaction and engagement by demographic profile

Grouping variable	Outcome	Test statistic	p	Result
Age	Engagement	Kruskal-Wallis = 3.805	.578	Not significant
Age	Satisfaction	Kruskal-Wallis = 6.598	.252	Not significant
Gender	Engagement	Mann-Whitney U = 5116.500	.764	Not significant
Gender	Satisfaction	Mann-Whitney U = 5358.000	.355	Not significant
Nationality	Engagement	Mann-Whitney U = 5163.000	.680	Not significant
Nationality	Satisfaction	Mann-Whitney U = 4989.500	.979	Not significant

No statistically significant differences in satisfaction or engagement were observed by age, gender, or nationality. Within this sample, evaluations of guided-tour experiences were therefore broadly similar across these demographic groupings.

Relationship Between Satisfaction and Engagement

Satisfaction and engagement were strongly and positively correlated, $r = .820$, $p < .001$ ($N = 200$). Visitors reporting higher satisfaction also tended to report greater participation, attentiveness, and interest. Because both constructs were measured in the same cross-sectional survey, this association should not be interpreted as evidence that satisfaction causes engagement or vice versa.

Respondent-Supported Improvement Strategies

Table 6. Respondent-supported service-improvement strategies

Selected strategy	Mean	SD
Enhance communication skills, humor, and storytelling	3.70	0.459
Regular assessment and feedback for guides	3.69	0.495
Include local cultural performances/traditional crafts	3.69	0.464
Strengthen guide-community collaboration	3.69	0.466
Provide pre-tour orientation/briefing materials	3.68	0.478
Advanced historical training	3.66	0.485
Multilingual tour services	3.66	0.475
Digital tools to enrich tours	3.66	0.507
Interactive elements and participatory storytelling	3.63	0.514
Improve tour pacing and structure	3.61	0.519
Overall	3.67	0.402

All proposed strategies were highly recommended. The highest-rated item concerned communication, humor, and storytelling ($M = 3.70$), followed by feedback mechanisms, cultural integration, and guide-community collaboration (each $M = 3.69$).

Discussion

The findings show a consistent pattern: tourists valued local guides as both service providers and heritage interpreters. Ratings for information quality, communication, participation, and attentiveness clustered at the upper end of the four-point scale. These favorable post-tour evaluations are compatible with the Expectation-Confirmation framework, but expectations and confirmation were not measured separately; the results therefore do not directly test whether expectations were met or exceeded. The strongest satisfaction dimension was communication, emphasizing that historical knowledge alone is insufficient unless it is delivered clearly, responsively, and in an engaging manner.

The strong association between satisfaction and engagement ($r = .820$) is substantively important. In heritage settings, engagement involves more than physical presence; it includes curiosity, attention, interaction, and participation. Contemporary heritage-tourism research similarly finds that historical storytelling can strengthen tour-guide interaction, authenticity, and experiential value (Leong et al., 2024), while narrative-

based and sensory guiding can enhance memory and emotional connection to place (Chan et al., 2025). Recent evidence also indicates that storytelling in tourism guidance deepens cultural immersion by adding context and emotional resonance (Khater et al., 2026). These studies provide a current literature base for interpreting why communication and storytelling emerged as prominent features in the Intramuros data.

No significant demographic differences were found. This may indicate that respondents across age, gender, and nationality evaluated the tours similarly; however, non-significance should not be taken as proof that all visitor groups have identical needs. The sample was non-probability based, nationality was balanced by design, and some age categories were small. More granular analyses by language, prior heritage-tourism experience, tour format, guide, group size, and specific site could reveal variation that broad demographic categories miss.

The improvement priorities respondents identified align with current heritage-management thinking. Training, multilingual capability, participatory storytelling, digital support, and community collaboration can extend the guide's role beyond information delivery. Recent work characterizes guides as mediators between heritage and visitors who can simultaneously enhance interpretation, visitor education, responsible behavior, and conservation outcomes (Khater, 2026). In Intramuros, this is especially relevant because the responsible public agency explicitly combines conservation, cultural significance, and visitor-oriented development in its mandate.

Practical Implications

For tour-guide development, training should integrate historical accuracy with interpretive communication, audience adaptation, storytelling, question facilitation, and responsible-heritage messaging. Multilingual support and concise pre-tour materials can improve accessibility for diverse visitors. Digital tools should supplement, not replace, human interpretation, particularly where maps, archival images, augmented content, or accessibility features can enrich understanding. Collaboration with residents, craftspeople, cultural performers, museums, churches, and heritage managers can also strengthen authenticity while ensuring that cultural presentation remains respectful and historically grounded.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Several limitations should be considered. First, non-probability sampling restricts generalizability beyond the respondents surveyed. Second, the study relies on self-reported, same-source, post-tour measures, which may inflate associations through common-method effects. Third, reliability coefficients for the multi-item scales were not reported, which limits assessment of their internal consistency. Fourth, the cross-sectional correlation between satisfaction and engagement cannot establish temporal or causal direction. Fifth, the questionnaire labels some post-tour evaluative items as "expectations," even though the wording asks respondents to evaluate services already received; future studies should separate pre-tour expectations, perceived performance, confirmation/disconfirmation, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions to test Expectation-Confirmation Theory more directly. Finally, future research should include guide perspectives, stratified samples by nationality, specific Intramuros sites and tour formats, and longitudinal or experimental designs.

Conclusion

The 200 respondents in this study evaluated guided historical tourism in Intramuros very positively. Tourists emphasized professional communication, historically meaningful interpretation, organized guiding, and interactive engagement. Satisfaction and engagement were strongly related, while age, gender, and nationality were not associated with statistically significant differences in the reported outcomes. The results support continued investment in guide training, storytelling, multilingual services, participatory experiences, digital enhancement, feedback systems, and community collaboration. For heritage destinations such as Intramuros, interpretation quality is not peripheral to the visitor experience: it is a central mechanism through which historical places become understandable, memorable, and meaningful.

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