

Shadows of the Past: Tourist Perceptions and Educational Experiences in Paco, Manila's Dark Tourism Sites

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Abstract. Dark tourism has become a distinct form of cultural and educational travel, giving visitors the chance to explore heritage, history, and tragedy in meaningful ways. This study examines the fascinating field of dark tourism, focusing specifically on Paco, Manila, Philippines, an area of great historical and cultural significance. Using a quantitative-descriptive research approach, data were collected from 260 tourists in Paco, Manila, through purposive sampling. The results show that most respondents are Filipino, young adults, and mostly female. They expressed a strong interest in visiting dark-tourism sites and agreed that such visits respect the dignity and memory of the deceased. It also helped them better understand the area's history and culture, leaving a lasting impression and a desire to remember and document their experiences. Furthermore, it triggers emotional responses and effectively communicates the importance of historical events. Tourists of various ages gain similar educational benefits from their visits. There is no significant difference between the sexes, and tourists' educational gains do not vary significantly by nationality. Overall, tourists' perceptions of Paco, Manila, reflect a positive and respectful attitude toward the destination's dark tourism appeal. This study highlights the lasting appeal of dark tourism and its potential to serve as a meaningful platform for historical understanding and the responsible growth of tourism.

Keywords: *Dark tourism, tourism, quantitative, history, culture, Manila*



Introduction

Dark tourism is described as visiting sites that showcase suffering, tragedy, and death. It has often been linked to tragedies and fatalities (Sun & Lv, 2021). In the study by Lewis et al. (2021), it was mentioned that there has been a significant increase in dark tourists, with more than 2.1 million visiting a memorial since 2018. This topic has been investigated for more than 20 years; many viewpoints and understandings have already emerged in various locations worldwide. This study explored the dark tourism experience, tourists' perceptions, and educational benefits, which served as the foundation for developing the setting in Manila. Attractions considered dark at Paco Park and Cemetery were assessed and identified to provide a clear illustration of the characteristics of dark tourism at specific sites. Additionally, it seeks to determine whether the reasons dark tourists choose certain areas are relevant to their critiques.

There is a growing scholarly interest in "dark tourism consumption," "dark tourism motivation," and "dark tourism experience," according to a review of current literature on the subject. Consequently, the current study has three main objectives: to assess the state of research on these three concepts, critically evaluate recent findings, and identify gaps that require further investigation. A more comprehensive, interdisciplinary research framework is needed to explore new directions. The findings indicate that these concepts are developing and evolving, with new studies expanding the boundaries of inquiry. Based on recent literature, it can be said that thanatopsis is an uncommon aspect of travel. However, early conceptual studies suggest that the primary reason people visit dark places is to confront death. The results show that many visitors are motivated by curiosity and interest in learning about the historical significance, educational value, and history of the dark site, among other factors. It is important to highlight that internal tensions caused by the event influence these motivations. The experience offered to tourists resembles that of popular heritage sites. Generally, visitors cannot be considered "dark tourists" unless they perceive a location as dark (Iliev, 2020).

The study by Chen & Xu (2021) has found that visitors encounter a range of moral challenges due to their contrasting viewpoints regarding the past or present (in the time dimension) and dark attractions and dark places (in the spatial dimension). The moral gaze can be divided into four categories: empathetic, supportive, tolerant, and critical.

Disengagement practices are crucial in dark tourism marketing because they let tourists hear engaging stories about a place without seeming immoral or deviant. Especially for experiences with an exciting element, like ghost tours or dungeon tours, most dark tourism markets are quite developed. Discussing sensitive topics like death privately rather than publicly is common in today's society (Sharma, 2020).

Methodology

This study employed a quantitative-descriptive research design to collect data and examine respondents' perceptions (Shuttleworth, 2023) regarding dark tourism in Paco, Manila. After conducting a comprehensive review of related literature, a structured survey questionnaire was developed to gather firsthand data on tourists' perceptions, experiences, motivations, and educational gains related to dark tourism sites. The instrument underwent content validation by three experts in tourism and social research, followed by a pilot test with 30 respondents. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha confirmed internal consistency across all constructs.

To determine the sample size, the researcher consulted staff from Paco Park and Cemetery, who estimated that approximately 800 tourists visit the site daily. Using a 95% confidence level and margin of error appropriate for large populations, a minimum of 260 respondents was identified. Purposive sampling was applied to select participants who had completed their tour or site visit, ensuring that all respondents had directly experienced the dark tourism attraction. As Perez et al. (2024) noted, learning from tourists' insights is essential in evaluating an attraction's sustainability and cultural value.

The researcher-created questionnaire consisted of four major sections: (1) demographic profile; (2) awareness and understanding of dark tourism; (3) perceptions and experiences related to the site; and (4) educational, cultural, and emotional insights gained from the visit. Items in Sections 2 to 4 utilized a 4-point Likert scale to determine levels of agreement. Before answering, respondents were provided a brief explanation of the concept of dark tourism and were given adequate time to complete the survey voluntarily.

Data collection was online using Google Forms. Respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and participation was entirely voluntary. Completed surveys were screened for completeness before encoding. Descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used to analyze the demographic profile and perception indicators. Inferential statistics were employed to identify differences in perceptions across demographic groups. All analyses were performed using statistical software to ensure the accuracy and reliability of results.

Results

1. Demographic Profile

Table 1.
Distribution of Respondents by Age Group

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18 - 25 years old	100	38.5
17 years old and below	91	35.0
26 - 33 years old	24	9.2
34 - 41 years old	18	6.9
42 - 49 years old	15	5.8
50 years old and above	12	4.6
TOTAL	260	100.0

Young adults aged 18-25 show interest and enthusiasm for visiting the dark sites of Paco, Manila. This suggests that this age group may demonstrate emotional engagement and a curiosity about history to support learning and strengthen cultural programs. These findings align with the study of Biran & Hyde (2013), which highlights that young tourists are attracted to destinations that offer educational and meaningful travel experiences, incorporating cultural identity through history and tragedy.

Table 2
Distribution of Respondents by Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Female	142	54.6
Male	99	38.1
LGBTQ+	19	7.3
TOTAL	260	100.0

This distribution in Table 2 indicates a slightly higher proportion of females (54.6% of the total sample) among visitors to the dark sites of Paco, Manila, compared to males and LGBTQ+ individuals. As Meng & Uysal mentioned in 2008, females are more likely to travel to attractions that showcase heritage and cultural representation.

Table 3.
Demographic profile of the respondents in terms of Nationality

Nationality	Frequency	Percentage
Filipino	254	97.7
Non-Filipino	6	2.3
TOTAL	260	100.0

The data shows that the vast majority of respondents are Filipino, making up 97.7% of the total sample, which indicates that it is not yet widely known among

foreign tourists. This suggests that dark tourism sites have limited recognition worldwide. Isaac & Cakmak (2016) demonstrated in their study that dark sites are often visited by tourists when they are effectively marketed. The more a dark tourism site reveals and showcases its history and meaningful heritage, the better its chances of attracting a broader range of international tourists.

2. Perception of Tourists

Table 4.

Distribution on the perception of tourists in terms of Historical Interest

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1. Exploring sites associated with dark tourism in Paco, Manila, adds depth to my understanding of 1 history.	3.41	.545	Strongly Agree
2. Learning about the darker aspects of Paco's history enhances my overall tourist experience.	3.40	.571	Strongly Agree
3. I am interested in exploring historical sites related to dark tourism in Paco, Manila.	3.37	.610	Strongly Agree
4. I prefer visiting historical sites with a focus on the darker chapters of Paco's past.	3.07	.639	Agree
5. I believe understanding Paco's dark history is not essential for appreciating its cultural heritage.	2.08	.837	Disagree
Overall Mean	3.0646	.39707	Agree

The mean distribution of tourist perceptions of Paco, Manila, regarding historical interest shows a strong inclination toward dark tourism. Tourists expressed high interest in exploring dark-tourism-related historical sites, with a mean score of 3.37 ($SD = 0.610$). Tourists also agreed that learning about Paco's darker history enhances their overall experience; they preferred visiting historical sites focusing on the darker aspects of Paco's past. In addition, there was a slight disagreement with the belief that understanding dark history is not necessary for appreciating the cultural heritage. There is a need to highlight historical interpretation to ensure that tourists appreciate its relevance and to attract more visitors. Since tourists visit dark tourism sites to seek out experiences that delve into the darker chapters of the destination's past (García-Madurga & Grilló-Méndez, 2023). Although some tourists may not consider it essential, the majority still value dark tourism for understanding and appreciating Paco's cultural heritage (Fabros et al., 2023).

Table 5.

Perception of tourists in terms of Ethical Concern

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1. I believe that visiting dark tourism sites in Paco Manila respects the dignity and memory of the deceased.	3.30	.672	Strongly Agree
2. Tourists' cultural backgrounds and personal values influence their perceptions of the ethical considerations surrounding dark tourism in Paco, Manila.	3.16	.617	Agree



3. I feel that Paco Manila's dark tourism sites are being commercialized at the expense of historical suffering.	2.96	.677	Agree
4. I am concerned that operators can exploit these sites to make money or simply to provide entertainment.	2.93	.718	Agree
5. I think that tourists should not be provided with educational information about the historical significance of dark tourism sites in Paco Manila.	1.81	.856	Disagree
Overall Mean	2.8315	.39231	Agree

The findings showed a generally positive outlook on tourists' perceptions of ethical concerns related to dark tourism, though some reservations remain. Respondents indicated that visiting dark tourism sites respects the dignity and memory of the deceased; however, there is an ethical tension because it could exploit history or raise questions about management for commercial gain. As mentioned in the study by Shayan et al. (2022), commercialization of dark sites may overshadow the historical suffering. There is also a risk that management might use these histories for entertainment and profit (Bae, 2020).

Table 6.
Perception of tourists in terms of Remembrance

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1. I believe that visiting dark tourism sites in Paco, Manila helped me understand the history and culture of the area better.	3.40	.578	Strongly Agree
2. I explore dark tourism sites in Paco, Manila primarily to commemorate the attractions, such as capturing photos of the locations.	3.33	.613	Strongly Agree
3. The dark tourism sites in Paco, Manila left a lasting impression on me.	3.19	.597	Agree
4. I visit dark tourism sites in Paco, Manila, to pay respect to my deceased loved ones interred within these locations.	2.93	.805	Agree
5. The stories and narratives presented at the dark tourism sites in Paco, Manila were not impactful and thought-provoking.	2.15	.808	Disagree
Overall Mean	3.0008	.37095	Agree

As shown in Table 6, tourists view dark sites as memorable, leaving a lasting impression (Mean = 3.19), and significantly help increase their understanding of the area's history and culture (Mean = 3.40). This supports the idea that dark tourism, which involves visiting places linked to death and tragedy, often serves as a way for people to connect with the past and deepen their knowledge of historical events (García-Madurga & Grilló-Méndez, 2023b). It suggests a desire among tourists to remember and document their experiences, possibly for personal reflection or educational reasons.

However, there is a slight discrepancy regarding the purpose of their visits. While most strongly agree that they visit to pay respect to deceased loved ones (Mean = 2.93), there is also a feeling that the stories and narratives shared at these sites may not always be engaging or thought-provoking (Mean = 2.15). This indicates that, although tourists appreciate the historical and cultural importance of these sites, they may not always find the storytelling or interpretive elements captivating. Overall, the perception tends to be positive, suggesting that tourists generally view Paco, Manila's dark tourism sites as meaningful for remembrance and commemoration.

Table 7.
Distribution on the Perception of Tourists

Categories	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Historical Interest	3.0646	.39707	Agree
Remembrance	3.0008	.37095	Agree
Ethical Concern	2.8315	.39231	Agree
Overall Mean	2.9656	.31469	Agree

Visitors show a keen interest in the historical aspects of these locations, indicating a general agreement that these sites offer valuable insights into the area's history. This aligns with the essence of dark tourism, in which individuals are drawn to places of significant historical or cultural importance, even if they are associated with tragedy or death (Panayidou et al., 2024). Additionally, tourists exhibit a sense of ethical concern, as reflected in their mean score of 2.8315. This suggests that tourists are mindful of the ethical implications of their visits, indicating a level of respect and awareness regarding the sensitive nature of these sites.

The overall average of 2.9656 indicates a general agreement among tourists, emphasizing their appreciation for the historical importance of the sites and their awareness of the ethical issues related to dark tourism. These results imply that tourists see Paco, Manila as a worthwhile destination because of its historical significance, while also understanding the importance of being sensitive and respectful when visiting these sites (Panayidou et al., 2024).

3. Tourists' Experiences

Table 8.
Experience of tourists in terms of Casual Interest

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1. Exploring sites related to Paco's dark tourism sparks my curiosity with about 1 history and culture.	3.41	.566	Strongly Agree
2. I would be interested in guided tours focusing on Paco's dark tourism attractions.	3.25	.617	Agree
3. Learning about Paco's dark history adds to the appeal of my visit to Manila.	3.22	.571	Agree



4. One of the most fascinating parts of my travel plans in Manila is seeing Paco's dark tourist spots.	3.22	.564	Agree
5. I am not interested in visiting historical sites related to dark events in Paco, Manila.	1.93	.687	Disagree
Overall Mean	3.0094	.33709	Agree

The results suggest that tourists visiting Paco, Manila, show a significant casual interest in the area's dark tourism sites. Despite an initial lack of interest in visiting historical sites related to dark events (Mean = 1.93), tourists generally demonstrate a strong inclination to explore and learn about Paco's dark history. The high mean scores for statements such as learning about Paco's dark history adds to the appeal of my visit to Manila (Mean = 3.22) and exploring sites related to Paco's dark tourism sparks my curiosity about history and culture (Mean = 3.41) indicate genuine interest and curiosity among tourists toward these sites. Tourists visited the attraction associated with meaningful significance on tragedy or history to better appreciate its past (Light, 2017).

Furthermore, the results show that tourists are receptive to guided experiences, with a high interest in guided tours focusing on Paco's dark tourism attractions (Mean = 3.25). This indicates that tourists not only want to visit these sites but also appreciate guided experiences that offer deeper insights and context. Overall, with a grand mean of 3.0094, the findings suggest strong agreement among tourists about their casual interest in Paco, Manila's dark tourist spots, emphasizing the appeal and fascination these sites hold for visitors (Libre et al., 2022).

Table 9.
Emotional Experience of Tourists

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1. I evoked feelings of sympathy towards the personalities involved in the historical events depicted.	3.06	.634	Agree
2. I found it to be emotionally impactful.	2.95	.704	Agree
3. I experienced a sense of somber reflection while exploring the dark tourism sites.	2.94	.743	Agree
4. The historical narratives presented at the dark tourism sites resonated with me emotionally.	2.92	.710	Agree
5. I did not feel a sense of sadness while visiting the dark tourism sites in Paco, Manila.	2.35	.798	Disagree
Total Mean	2.8431	.45013	Agree

Tourists exhibit a nuanced emotional experience, generally agreeing that these sites evoke emotional reactions. They found the sites emotionally impactful (Mean = 2.95) and connected with the historical narratives (Mean = 2.92). However, there was slight disagreement about a profound sense of sadness

during the visit (Mean = 2.35), indicating that while the sites carry emotional weight, sadness is not the primary emotion. Instead, tourists showed empathy toward the individuals involved in the historical events (Mean = 3.06), reflecting a sympathetic response. They also reported experiencing somber reflection, suggesting an introspective element to the visit. The results also indicate that tourists' emotional experiences tend toward empathy and contemplation rather than intense sadness. These findings align with existing research on dark tourism, which highlights the diverse emotional responses visitors have, including empathy, reflection, and occasional detachment (Light, 2017). Understanding these varied emotional experiences is essential for enhancing dark tourism experiences and engagement with historical narratives.

Table 10.
Experience of tourists in terms of Unique Learning Experience

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1. Exploring the site contributed to my awareness of the its past tragedies and challenges.	3.31	.555	Strongly Agree
2. The historical significance of the dark tourism site improved my understanding of its cultural heritage.	3.29	.554	Strongly Agree
3. Interacting with locals or tour guides enriched my learning experience at the dark tourism site.	3.24	.614	Agree
4. The guided tours at the dark tourism site effectively conveyed the significance of the historical events to me.	3.14	.595	Agree
5. The dark tourism site in Paco, Manila did not provide me with a unique and educational learning experience.	2.16	.794	Disagree
Total Mean	3.0292	.38272	Agree

Tourists visiting Paco, Manila's dark tourism sites see their experience as a unique and educational opportunity. Despite some initial skepticism, with tourists disagreeing that the sites did not offer a unique and educational experience (Mean = 2.16), the overall attitude is more positive. Tourists strongly agree that the historical importance of these dark tourism sites enhanced their understanding of Paco's cultural heritage (Mean = 3.29) and increased their awareness of the city's past tragedies and challenges (Mean = 3.31). This shows that visitors value these sites not just for their history but also for the insights they give into Paco's cultural and historical background.

With a mean score of 3.0292, the results show a strong agreement among tourists about the unique and educational experience provided by Paco, Manila's dark tourism sites. These sites are recognized as cultural and historical landmarks that enhance visitors' understanding of the past. The findings align with the idea of dark tourism as a form of educational tourism, where visitors aim to learn about and engage with a destination's historical and cultural heritage (Fabros et al., 2023). The results highlight the importance of dark tourism sites



in offering distinctive and meaningful learning experiences that deepen visitors' awareness and understanding of history.

Table 11.
Distribution on the experience of Tourists

Categories	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Unique Learning Experience	3.0292	.38272	Agree
Casual Interest	3.0094	.33709	Agree
Emotional Experience	2.8431	.45013	Agree
Overall Mean	2.9606	.31249	Agree

Across the categories of casual interest, emotional experience, and unique learning experience, tourists generally agree, with mean scores indicating a positive view of their visit. The high mean scores for casual interest (Mean = 3.0094), emotional experience (Mean = 2.8431), and unique learning experience (Mean = 3.0292) suggest that tourists found their visit both engaging and emotionally meaningful, while also providing a distinctive and educational opportunity. This aligns with the concept of dark tourism, where visitors are drawn to sites with historical significance, aiming to learn from and connect with the past (Panayidou et al., 2024). Overall, the results show strong agreement among tourists, highlighting the destination's appeal as a dark tourism spot. These findings emphasize the importance of dark tourism sites in offering meaningful and engaging experiences that deepen visitors' understanding and appreciation of a destination's cultural and historical heritage. In fact, tourists also seek out the content shared on social media (Belza et al., 2024) and reflect on their preferred destinations, such as dark tourism sites, before visiting.

4. Educational gains of tourists

Table 12.
Distribution on the educational gains of tourists in terms of Disorienting Dilemma.

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1. Interacting with locals and tour guides at Paco Manila's dark tourism sites has strengthened my understanding of the historical events and their impact.	3.24	.608	Agree
2. Experiencing Paco Manila's dark tourism sites challenges my preconceived notions about history and its impact on society.	3.19	.627	Agree
3. Participating in tours of Paco Manila's dark tourism sites has reinforced my existing beliefs and perspectives.	3.17	.625	Agree
4. Visiting Paco Manila's dark tourism sites has changed my awareness of the complexities and contradictions of history.	3.09	.602	Agree

5. The stories and narratives presented in Paco Manila's dark tourism sites have not significantly altered my perspective on societal issues.	2.32	.828	Disagree
Total Mean	3.0044	.39307	Agree

In terms of disorienting dilemmas, dark sites have a significant impact on visitors' perspectives and understanding of history. Tourists generally agree that visiting these sites challenges their preconceived notions about history and its influence on society (Mean = 3.19). This shows that visitors are willing to reevaluate their understanding of historical events and their importance, indicating a readiness to critically engage with the narratives at these sites (Viken et al., 2021). Additionally, interacting with locals and tour guides at these locations has enhanced tourists' understanding of the historical events and their effects, highlighting the value of personal interactions in boosting the educational experience (L. Shi et al., 2023). Overall, with a grand mean of 3.0044, the results suggest a strong consensus among tourists about the educational benefits of visiting Paco, Manila's dark tourism sites in relation to disorienting dilemmas. These findings emphasize the transformative power of dark tourism in challenging visitors' perspectives and encouraging a deeper understanding of history and its complexities.

Table 13.
Educational gain of tourists in terms of Self-Examination

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1. I found an appreciation and value in my history that I had never known before.	3.47	.572	Strongly Agree
2. Visiting the dark tourism sites in Paco, Manila, impacts my understanding of history and culture.	3.45	.543	Strongly Agree
3. I left the site with a greater appreciation for the historical events associated with Paco Park and Cemetery.	3.33	.583	Strongly Agree
4. I felt a sense of respect for the deceased while exploring Paco Park and Cemetery.	3.31	.575	Strongly Agree
5. The visit did not inspire me to further explore the historical and cultural aspects of the surrounding community.	1.95	.734	Disagree
Total Mean	3.1027	.35099	Agree

The educational benefit of tourists, especially in terms of self-examination, highlights the transformative nature of these experiences. Tourists strongly agree that they gained an appreciation and understanding of their history that they had never known before (Mean = 3.47). This suggests that visiting these sites enables tourists to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of their own history and heritage, potentially fostering a stronger connection to their cultural

identity. Furthermore, tourists strongly agree that visiting the dark tourism sites in Paco, Manila, enhances their understanding of history and culture (Mean = 3.45), indicating that these experiences expand their perspectives and deepen their knowledge of the past. Additionally, tourists demonstrate a strong sense of respect for the deceased while exploring Paco Park and Cemetery (Mean = 3.31), highlighting the contemplative and respectful nature of their visit. Overall, with a grand mean of 3.1027, the results show a strong agreement among tourists regarding the educational benefits of visiting Paco, Manila's dark tourism sites in terms of self-examination. These findings emphasize the significant impact of dark tourism experiences in encouraging introspection, appreciation, and respect for history and cultural heritage (Fabros et al., 2023).

Table 14.
Distribution on the educational gain of tourists in terms of Interdisciplinary Learning

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1. Experiencing history discipline enriches my crucial perspective for understanding the dark tourism in Paco Park & Cemetery.	3.30	.597	Strongly Agree
2. My visit to Paco, Manila's dark tourism sites challenges or reinforce my previous knowledge about similar historical events or phenomena in other parts of the world.	3.28	.576	Strongly Agree
3. Paco, Manila's dark tourism sites integrate knowledge from fields such as anthropology.	3.28	.563	Strongly Agree
4. Experiencing various disciplines such as sociology enriches my overall tourist experience.	3.27	.630	Strongly Agree
5. Visiting the dark tourism sites at Paco, Manila, did not enhance my understanding of Philippine history and culture.	1.99	.861	Disagree
Total Mean	3.0215	.40211	Agree

In terms of interdisciplinary learning, as shown in Table 14, the experiences highlight an enriching and comprehensive nature. Tourists strongly agree that experiencing history enhances their crucial perspective for understanding dark tourism sites like Paco Park & Cemetery (Mean = 3.30). This suggests that historical knowledge plays a significant role in improving tourists' understanding and appreciation of these sites, providing them with a deeper context and perspective. Furthermore, tourists strongly agree that experiencing various disciplines, such as sociology, enriches their overall tourist experience (Mean = 3.27). This indicates that tourists value a multidisciplinary approach to learning at these sites and recognize the importance of different disciplines in offering a

holistic understanding of the historical and cultural significance of Paco, Manila's dark tourism sites.

Overall, the results suggest strong agreement among tourists regarding the educational benefits of visiting Paco, Manila's dark tourism sites. These findings emphasize the value of interdisciplinary methods in dark tourism, giving tourists a comprehensive and immersive learning experience that deepens their understanding of history, culture, and society (García-Madurga & Grilló-Méndez, 2023).

Table 15.
Overall Mean distribution on the educational gain of tourists towards Paco, Manila

Categories	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Self-examination	3.1027	.35099	Agree
Interdisciplinary Learning	3.0215	.40211	Agree
Disorienting Dilemma	3.0044	.39307	Agree
Overall Mean	3.0429	.31584	Agree

Across the categories of disorienting dilemma, self-examination, and interdisciplinary learning, tourists generally agree that their visit provided valuable educational insights. The results suggest that tourists found their visit to be intellectually stimulating and thought-provoking, challenging their perspectives and giving them a deeper understanding of history and culture. Overall, there is strong agreement among tourists about the educational benefits of visiting Paco, Manila's dark tourism sites, highlighting the value of dark tourism as a platform for education and learning, and offering tourists unique opportunities to engage with history, culture, and society in meaningful and transformative ways (Wee, 2019).

Comparison of Tourists' Perception, Experience, and Educational Gain in Paco, Manila Based on Demographic Profile

Table 16.
Differences in Perceptions, Experience, and Educational Gain of Tourists Based on Age

Categories	Age	Mean	F	p-value	Interpretation	Decision
Perception of the tourists	17 years old and below	2.9710	1.811	.112	Not Significant	Fail to Reject Ho
	18 - 25 years old	2.9896				
	26 - 33 years old	2.7762				
	34 - 41 years old	3.1667				
	42 - 49 years old	3.0667				
	50 years old and above	2.8667				
Experience of the tourists	17 years old and below	2.9798	1.640	.151	Not Significant	Fail to Reject Ho
	18 - 25 years old	2.9919				
	26 - 33 years old	2.7619				
	34 - 41 years old	2.9917				
	42 - 49 years old	3.0667				
	50 years old and above	2.8000				

Educational gain of the tourists	17 years old and below	3.0776	.567	.725	Not Significant	Fail to Reject Ho
	18 - 25 years old	3.0615				
	26 - 33 years old	2.9357				
	34 - 41 years old	3.0917				
	42 - 49 years old	3.1333				
	50 years old and above	2.9333				

The analysis of differences in perceptions, experiences, and educational gains among tourists in Paco, Manila, grouped by age, reveals interesting patterns. For perception, the F-value is 1.811 with a p-value of .112, indicating no significant difference among age groups regarding perception. This suggests that tourists of different ages perceive the dark tourism sites in Paco, Manila, similarly. Additionally, tourists' experiences show no significant differences across age groups, implying that visitors from different age brackets have similar experiences at these sites.

Moreover, the educational gain of tourists does not significantly differ among age groups indicates that tourists of different ages gain similar educational insights from their visit to Paco, Manila's dark tourism sites. Overall, this implies that age may not be a significant factor in shaping the perceptions, experiences, and educational gains of tourists visiting Paco, Manila. As mentioned by (Kara & Mkwizu, 2020), age may not always be a determining factor in tourists' perceptions and experiences. Instead, other factors such as personal interests, travel motivations, and previous knowledge may play a more significant role in shaping tourists' experiences in dark tourism sites.

Table 17.
Differences in Perceptions, Experience, and Educational Gain of Tourists Based on Sex

Categories	Age	Mean	F	p-value	Interpretation	Decision
Perception of the tourists	17 years old and below	2.9710	1.811	.112	Not Significant	Fail to Reject Ho
	18 - 25 years old	2.9896				
	26 - 33 years old	2.7762				
	34 - 41 years old	3.1667				
	42 - 49 years old	3.0667				
	50 years old and above	2.8667				
Experience of the tourists	17 years old and below	2.9798	1.640	.151	Not Significant	Fail to Reject Ho
	18 - 25 years old	2.9919				
	26 - 33 years old	2.7619				
	34 - 41 years old	2.9917				
	42 - 49 years old	3.0667				
	50 years old and above	2.8000				
Educational gain of the tourists	17 years old and below	3.0776	.567	.725	Not Significant	Fail to Reject Ho
	18 - 25 years old	3.0615				
	26 - 33 years old	2.9357				
	34 - 41 years old	3.0917				
	42 - 49 years old	3.1333				
	50 years old and above	2.9333				

The analysis of differences in perceptions, experiences, and educational gains among tourists in Paco, Manila, categorized by sex, offers some interesting insights. Regarding perception, there is no significant difference among sexes, indicating that female, male, and LGBTQ+ tourists view the dark tourism sites in Paco, Manila, similarly. However, when examining tourists' experiences, there is a significant difference among sexes. Post-hoc analysis shows that female tourists have a slightly higher average experience score compared to male and LGBTQ+ tourists, with a mean difference of 0.10250 ($p = .012$) and 0.16778 ($p = .035$), respectively.

Moreover, the educational benefits for tourists do not significantly vary by gender. This indicates that female, male, and LGBTQ+ tourists gain comparable educational insights from their visits to Paco, Manila's dark tourism sites. Overall, these results suggest that although there may be some differences in tourists' experiences based on gender, these differences are relatively minor in comparison to their overall perceptions and educational gains. These findings help us understand how various demographic factors can influence tourists' experiences at dark tourism sites. While gender may influence the overall experience, it is not a major factor in shaping perceptions or educational outcomes (Pasaco-González et al., 2023).

Table 18.
Differences in Perceptions, Experience, and Educational Gain of Tourists Based on Nationality

Categories	Nationality	Mean	Z	p-value	Interpretation	Decision
Perception of the tourists	Filipino	2.9693	-1.286	.198	Not Significant	Fail to Reject Ho
	Non-Filipino	2.8111				
Experience of the tourists	Filipino	2.9615	-.248	.804	Not Significant	Fail to Reject Ho
	Non-Filipino	2.9222				
Educational gain of the tourists	Filipino	3.0457	-1.239	.215	Not Significant	Fail to Reject Ho
	Non-Filipino	2.9222				

The analysis of differences in tourists' perceptions, experiences, and educational gains in Paco, Manila, by nationality reveals interesting patterns. In terms of perception, there is no significant difference between Filipino and non-Filipino tourists, indicating that both groups view the dark tourism sites similarly. Additionally, there is no significant difference in the experiences reported by tourists based on nationality, suggesting that Filipino and non-Filipino visitors have comparable experiences at these sites.

Furthermore, the educational benefits gained do not differ significantly between the two groups, indicating that both Filipino and non-Filipino tourists gain similar insights from visiting Paco, Manila's dark tourism sites. Overall, these findings suggest that nationality may not be a major factor in shaping tourists' perceptions, experiences, and educational gains in Paco, Manila.



As García-Sastre et al. (2022) note, nationality may not always determine tourists' perceptions and experiences. Instead, factors such as personal interests, travel motivations, and prior knowledge might play a more significant role in shaping how tourists experience dark tourism sites.

Discussion

The study revealed that young adults aged 18–25 and teenagers are the primary visitors to Paco, Manila's dark tourism sites, highlighting their appeal to younger demographics. Female visitors slightly outnumbered males, and the majority of tourists were Filipinos, which is significant as a basis for understanding the motivations and behavioral tendencies of this market segment. This insight can help educational institutions incorporate cultural awareness into their curriculum, foster respect, and promote education. This data is useful for site managers to design the sites in an ethically sensitive way, enriching the educational experience for visitors.

Tourists expressed strong interest in exploring these sites, valuing their historical and educational significance while also raising concerns about commercialization and storytelling. Visitors appreciated the sites' ability to evoke emotional responses such as empathy and reflection, seeing them as unique opportunities to engage with history and culture in meaningful ways. This aligns with the transformative learning theory by Mezirow (Fleming, 2018), which emphasizes critical reflection, learning, and action. Site managers can use these findings to be more ethically cautious.

The findings suggest that dark tourism sites in Paco, Manila, provide a transformative experience that deepens visitors' understanding of historical events and challenges their perspectives. The emotional and educational aspects of these visits were widely recognized, with tourists noting the importance of interactive learning through engagement with locals and tour guides. Despite some concerns about commercialization and interpretive issues, the study found no significant differences in perceptions, experiences, or educational gains across age, sex, or nationality, indicating that these sites have broad, inclusive appeal.

To enhance the impact of Paco, Manila's dark tourism sites, efforts should focus on improving storytelling and interpretive features, addressing commercialization concerns, and promoting interactive learning experiences. Balancing ethical considerations with tourism development will help preserve the dignity of these sites. Additionally, marketing strategies should target both younger and international audiences while maintaining a strong emphasis on local heritage. Further research is recommended to explore factors such as personal interests and travel motivations that influence visitors' experiences and learning outcomes.

Conclusions

The study on tourists visiting Paco, Manila's dark tourism sites reveals a complex and multifaceted picture of visitors' perceptions, experiences, and educational gains. The demographic profile of the respondents, with a significant representation of young adults and teenagers, highlights the appeal of these sites to a wide range of visitors. Despite concerns about commercialization and exploitation, tourists show a strong interest in exploring Paco's dark history, indicating genuine curiosity and a desire to learn. This aligns with the concept of dark tourism, where visitors are drawn to sites associated with tragedy and historical significance, seeking to understand and engage with the past.

Tourists' experiences are characterized by a mix of emotions, including empathy, reflection, and somber contemplation. While visitors find these sites emotionally impactful and educational, there are also concerns about the storytelling and interpretive elements. The educational benefits of these visits are significant, challenging preconceived notions about history and offering deeper insight into historical events. Interactions with locals and tour guides further enrich the educational experience, emphasizing the importance of personal engagement in learning.

The study also suggests that age, sex, and nationality might not be key factors influencing tourists' perceptions, experiences, and educational gains at Paco, Manila's dark tourism sites. Instead, other factors such as personal interests, travel motivations, and prior knowledge may have a greater impact. Overall, the findings highlight the role of dark tourism sites as platforms for education and learning, providing visitors with unique opportunities to engage with history, culture, and society in meaningful and transformative ways.

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