



Intrinsic motivation and satisfaction of tourists in cave tourism in Quezon Province, Philippines

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between intrinsic motivations and tourist satisfaction in cave tourism in the District 1 of Quezon Province, Philippines, with a focus on Tinipak Cave, Malaog Cave, and Lawigue Cave. The study utilized Frequency Percentage, Weighted Arithmetic Mean, Kruskal-Wallis, Mann-Whitney, and Spearman tests for data analysis. Findings indicated that most respondents, predominantly aged 18–27, male, students, and employed individuals, had their motivations fulfilled through educational and experiential activities offered at the caves. Data collected from 45 visitors revealed a significant correlation between intrinsic motivations, such as enjoyment, relaxation, novelty-seeking, escape, socialization, and knowledge, and overall satisfaction. The study underscored the importance of recognizing and addressing these intrinsic motivations to enhance visitor satisfaction and promote sustainable tourism practices. Recommendations for tourism offices include improving guide training, upgrading facilities and amenities, and involving visitors in ongoing research and conservation efforts. These strategies aim to foster a deeper appreciation for natural attractions and ensure a more fulfilling experience for all tourists.

Keywords: *cave tourism, geo tourism, intrinsic motivation, hospitality*

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1. Introduction

Cave tourism, also known as ecotourism, involves exploring natural underground landscapes and is a captivating form of nature-based travel. Depending on the country, it may also be referred to as caving, potholing, or spelunking. This type of tourism includes activities such as viewing, learning about, walking through, and climbing into and out of cave areas. Since the launch of the Cave Management and Conservation Program by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in 1994, the agency has monitored over 1,500 caves throughout the Philippines. These caves are distributed across three major biogeographic regions: Luzon (38%), Mindanao (37%), and Negros-Panay (22%). Research has demonstrated that caves offer rich geological, ecological, and cultural information valuable to both science and tourism. Earlier studies have focused primarily on scientific aspects such as geological formations and biodiversity. However, recent ecotourism literature highlights the role of caves in sustainable tourism, stressing the importance of proper management practices to protect these fragile ecosystems (Chiarini et al., 2022; Buonincontri et al., 2021; Waldemar & Dajer, 2024).

According to Psatha (2024), cave tourism holds strong potential as a specialty destination for nature and adventure enthusiasts. Caves, as spectacular natural formations, are considered attractive tourist resources and serve as anchors for broader tourism development initiatives. In May 2021, DENR issued Memorandum Circular No. 2021-05, offering guidance to the department and other agencies regarding the appropriate use and management of caves. The memorandum identifies three classifications of caves:

Class 1: Caves with fragile geological formations, threatened species, archaeological and paleontological value, and hazardous conditions. Activities are limited to mapping, photography, and educational/scientific purposes; ecotourism is not permitted.

Class 2: Caves with hazardous conditions and sensitive values, requiring seasonal or permanent closures. Accessible only to experienced cavers or guided educational tours.

Class 3: Caves without threatened species or significant values and considered safe for inexperienced visitors with guides. These may also be used for economic activities like guano extraction or bird's nest collection.

Quezon Province, home to numerous but underrated caves, possesses distinctive geological and ecological features. Notable caves in District 1 include Tinipak Cave, Lawigue Cave, Anilon Cave, and Bahaga Cave. Although exact numbers remain uncertain, it is evident

that Quezon has embraced its subterranean wonders, contributing to its natural heritage and ecotourism potential. Despite ongoing improvements, cave tourism in Quezon Province, particularly in District 1, continues to receive less attention than other forms of ecotourism. Most existing studies are region-specific and focus on well-known cave systems, leaving others unexamined due to limited public awareness.

Although cave tourism offers unique and thrilling experiences, it remains relatively unknown and underrated in many areas, particularly in the province of Quezon, where the geological and cultural significance of caves has yet to be fully explored and appreciated. Recognizing this gap, this study aims to shed light on the intrinsic motivations and satisfaction of tourists engaged in cave tourism within selected municipalities of District 1, Quezon Province. This study determined the intrinsic motivations and satisfaction of tourists in cave tourism.

2. Literature review

2.1. Intrinsic Motivation

Tourist motivation has become a prominent focus in tourism studies, attracting interest from scholars such as Graham Dann, John Crompton, Seppo Iso-Ahola, Philip Pearce, and Chris Ryan (Shavanddasht et al., 2017). It is defined as a dynamic process involving internal psychological factors, needs and wants, that create tension, prompting individuals to take action. Bandhu (2024) further describes motivation as an incentive-driven process influenced by personal desires and goals. There are two primary motivational needs: seeking experiences or escaping from unwanted circumstances. These can be intrinsic (from within) or extrinsic (from external sources). The alignment with the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which highlights autonomy, competence, and relatedness, reinforces the relevance of studying intrinsic motivations in cave tourism in District 1, Quezon Province. Understanding these drivers aids in enhancing visitor satisfaction and promoting sustainable tourism development tailored to tourists' psychological needs.

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), intrinsic motivation comprises six components: enjoyment, relaxation, novelty seeking, escape, socialization, and knowledge.

Enjoyment. It plays a pivotal role in shaping tourist behavior, influencing longer stays, return visits, and positive word-of-mouth, all of which enhance satisfaction and loyalty (Ruan et al., 2021). Emotional responses during travel are molded by service quality, activities, and

cultural interactions. Novelty, a key contributor to enjoyment, intensifies emotional memory and sustains excitement through unpredictable and unique experiences (Skavronskaya, 2020). Naisaburi et al. (2024) emphasize that cave exploration offers a distinct form of adventure, unlike typical tourist activities, while Bharadwaj (2024) notes that Gen Z gravitates toward authentic and shareable experiences. The immersive nature of cave environments and their storytelling potential make them highly enjoyable and socially engaging destinations, aligning well with tourism satisfaction goals.

Relaxation. Tourism is recognized as a pathway to psychological recovery, particularly from work-related stress, with leisure experiences supporting emotional well-being (Chen et al., 2014). According to the Effort-Recovery Theory, psychological detachment during leisure allows for diminished stress reactions and improved life satisfaction (Meijman & Mulder, 1998). This supports the concept that trips offering relaxation and escape from daily demands promote both recovery and long-term contentment. Krsak and Strba (2022) found potential for integrating cave tourism with wellness tourism, based on local service providers' feedback. Their findings complement the SDT-based framework of the study, which seeks to meet tourists' intrinsic needs while utilizing community insights for sustainable development strategies in District 1's cave tourism sector.

Novelty. Seeking novelty is a cornerstone of tourism, defined as experiencing something distinct from everyday life, and remains central to shaping emotional and memorable travel experiences (Mitas & Bastiaansen, 2018). Whether through new destinations or the mere change in routine, novelty fosters enjoyment and aligns with tourists' personal goals. Blomstervik et al. (2021) describe these experiences as emotionally charged, often containing surprise and unpredictability, which elevate memorability and engagement. As the tourism landscape shifts from an experience to a transformation economy, such peak moments enhance travelers' growth and fulfillment. By applying SDT to cave tourism in District 1, the study explores how novelty meets psychological needs, creating engaging and transformative experiences that enhance satisfaction and support sustainable tourism outcomes.

Escape. The desire to escape the pressures of daily life and seek more genuine experiences is a key motivator for tourists, reflecting the dual nature of leisure and tourism, avoiding stress while pursuing novelty (Cohen & Taylor, 1992). Evangelista (2024) highlights that millennials, immersed in a digital environment, turn to slow camping tourism to disconnect and reflect, embracing nature's simplicity to escape daily hustle. This desire, however, stems

not merely from geographical distance but from social, cultural, and political fatigue that encourages individuals to explore alternative ways of living. Stoic philosophy cautions against relying solely on travel to ease mental discomfort, advocating instead for rational acceptance and internal change (Woolfe, 2022). Through this lens, cave tourism offers not just a physical escape but a path for personal growth and meaningful engagement, supporting sustainable tourism development in District 1, Quezon Province.

Socialization. Socialization during tourism is shaped by activity types, companions, and perceived risks, influencing tourists' behaviors and experiences (Cheng et al., 2024). Tourists accompanied by friends experience lower normative expectations and greater impulsivity compared to those traveling with family, leading to more authentic interactions but also increased likelihood of complaints in case of service failures. Before COVID-19, value co-creation (VCC) was embraced by both tourism providers and consumers, fostering collaborative benefits. During the pandemic, this model became a strategic tool for recovery, ensuring safety and engagement (Yen et al., 2021). Involving tourists in co-creation activities within cave tourism enhances their experiences and contributes to the industry's resilience and sustainable growth in District 1.

Knowledge. Tourism knowledge empowers local residents to participate in inclusive development, enhancing confidence and engagement through emotional, informational, and community support (Amani, 2024). Understanding the cultural, ecological, and geological significance of caves through scientific insight and education, what Chiarini (2022) calls "cave awareness," fosters appreciation and conservation. Integrating such awareness into cave tourism in District 1 deepens visitors' intrinsic motivation and satisfaction, aligning with the study's goals to promote sustainable and meaningful tourism experiences.

2.2. Tourist Satisfaction

The Ross and Iso-Ahola model (1991) established a structural relationship between motivation and tourist satisfaction, showing that travelers' internal motivations significantly influence their satisfaction levels and destination choices. They found that push and pull factors directly shape tourists' expectations and experiences, reinforcing how different motivational dimensions contribute to overall satisfaction. Additionally, Dela Cruz and Mandigma (2019) emphasized that guest satisfaction leads to loyalty, with satisfied tourists more likely to revisit

destinations and recommend them to others. This underscores the importance for destination marketers to continually enhance tourism appeal and deliver consistent positive experiences.

The following are the factors influencing tourist satisfaction.

Environment. Environmental protection has become an urgent global concern, with tourism playing a dual role, both as an economic driver and a contributor to environmental stress. Viktoria (2024) emphasized that natural elements such as clean air, water, biodiversity, and landscape aesthetics are primary attractions, yet vulnerable to pollution and degradation. Meyabe et al. (2024) added that sustainable tourism fosters cultural preservation, environmental responsibility, and local unity, but requires careful resource management. The dynamic between local stakeholders and governance structures is essential to promote long-term sustainability while protecting the integrity of tourism regions, especially those most ecologically fragile.

Infrastructure. Tourism infrastructure, encompassing both natural and man-made resources like roads, water systems, and public amenities, plays a vital role in enabling visitor satisfaction and supporting tourism activities (Yoeti, 2017). Grigg (2016) classified infrastructure into essential and peripheral categories, highlighting its influence on the capacity and accessibility of tourist routes. Hamzah (2016) noted that Gelanggi Cave's improved facilities, offering cleanliness, safety, and varied experiences, have recently enhanced its appeal. Tornero-Aguilera et al. (2020) distinguished between casual cave tours and more rugged, adventure-style explorations, illustrating the importance of adaptive infrastructure. Rante and Robiansyah (2018) concluded that both the quantity and quality of tourism facilities directly impact tourist satisfaction, making site-specific infrastructure development a critical factor in tourism success.

Service. Service quality plays a vital role in tourism satisfaction and destination appeal, requiring infrastructure that reflects both the quantity of facilities available and the quality of services offered (Nejmeddin, 2020). Tour satisfaction is shaped by various factors including tour guide performance, leisure activities, and food quality, with the tour guide service being especially influential in enhancing both service and experience satisfaction (Tsai et al., 2015). Research highlights that tour guides' personal qualities, knowledge, and ecological awareness contribute significantly to tourism promotion, particularly in nature-based and ecotourism contexts. Ramadhan et al. (2024) emphasize that service excellence builds customer trust and

loyalty, motivating repeat visits even without additional marketing. This idea is echoed in Wahyudiono's (2022) model, which identifies five service quality dimensions, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibility, as key metrics in meeting customer expectations. A compelling example is Naracoorte Caves National Park in South Australia, where interpretation services enrich the adventure tourism experience by highlighting geological and ecological features aligned with higher-level needs (Kim et al., 2018). Together, these insights show that high-quality service is integral not only to satisfying tourists but also to driving sustainable tourism growth.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

This study adopted Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as the guiding framework. SDT is a well-established psychological theory that explores human motivation and personality by examining intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence why individuals engage in and sustain behaviors that promote self-growth and well-being.

According to the model developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), intrinsic motivation comprises six components: enjoyment, relaxation, novelty seeking, escape, socialization, and knowledge. The model also includes satisfaction factors such as tourism scale, environment, infrastructure, management service, and catering. However, this study focuses exclusively on intrinsic motivations and satisfaction among tourists. Intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity for its own sake and enjoyment, rather than for external rewards. This aspect of SDT is particularly useful in understanding what naturally attracts tourists to cave tourism and what they find fulfilling in the experience. Insights from intrinsic motivation research can help identify tourists' genuine interests and preferences, which are essential for enhancing the appeal of cave tourism. Additionally, measuring satisfaction allows to evaluate the overall tourist experience and determine how well it aligns with their expectations and intrinsic motivations. Satisfaction serves as a key indicator of success in tourism and hospitality and is often used as feedback to improve services and attractions.

This study maintains alignment with the core principles of SDT while ensuring direct relevance and quantifiability. This approach provides a more precise and applicable perspective for the development and promotion of cave tourism in District 1, Quezon Province. SDT, developed by psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, posits that individuals are motivated to grow and change through the fulfillment of three innate psychological needs:

autonomy, competence, and relatedness. By applying SDT, the study explored how meeting these needs enhances tourists' intrinsic motivation and satisfaction. Autonomy is supported by allowing tourists to explore caves at their own pace and make choices about their activities. Competence is fostered through engaging tourists in challenging activities such as spelunking and educational tours about cave formations. Relatedness is encouraged through group activities and interactions with local communities. Using SDT as the theoretical framework, the study offers insights into creating more fulfilling and sustainable tourism experiences that align with tourists' intrinsic motivations.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational design to analyze empirical data collected through questionnaire surveys. The questionnaires were structured around the core constructs of SDT, adapted from relevant literature and previous research. Correlational design, as defined by Wilson and Joye (2016), seeks to determine whether and how strong a relationship exists between two or more variables, whether positive or negative. Similar to descriptive research, correlational studies emphasize statistical analysis rather than data collection methods. Like experimental research, correlational studies also serve explanatory purposes. In this study, the design was utilized to identify significant differences in intrinsic motivations among cave tourists based on their demographic profile, and to examine the relationship between these motivations and overall tourist satisfaction. Respondent data was used to guide developmental planning for cave tourism in District 1.

3.2. Research Locale

District 1 of Quezon Province, Philippines, includes several municipalities such as Tayabas and nearby towns, featuring a blend of urban and rural settings where agriculture coexists with urban development. Known for its cultural, historical, and natural attractions, the district is a compelling destination for travelers. According to Cornejo et al. (2016), the area's diverse landscape and limestone formations may conceal undiscovered cave systems, which could enrich local tourism through spelunking and ecotourism. These caves also harbor unique ecosystems and hold archaeological significance. This study focused on General Nakar (home to Tinipak Cave), Sampaloc (featuring Malaog Cave), and Tayabas City (site of Lawigue

Cave). Tinipak Cave boasts stunning rock formations and a clear underground river, making it popular with adventure seekers. Malaog Cave offers dramatic stalactites and narrow passages for a challenging spelunking experience, while Lawigue Cave features spacious chambers and supports bat populations, underscoring its ecological value. By selecting these municipalities, the researchers aimed to strengthen the district's reputation as a tourism hotspot.

3.3. Research Population and Sample

The study sampled 45 respondents from an average monthly population of 50 cave tourists across General Nakar, Sampaloc, and Tayabas City. Using purposive sampling, the researchers selected individuals who met specific criteria aligned with the study's objectives, ensuring that participants had direct cave tourism experience. This targeted approach enabled the collection of detailed and relevant insights into tourist motivations and satisfaction, capturing the nuances of the cave tourism experience in District 1.

Table 1 shows the demographic distribution of the participants.

Table 1
Demographic characteristics of the participants

Descriptors	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
18-27 yrs old (Gen Z)	25	55.60
28-43 yrs old (Gen Y or Millennials)	15	33.33
44-59 yrs old (Gen X)	4	8.90
60-78 yrs old (Baby Boomers)	1	2.20
Sex		
Male	27	60
Female	18	40
Professional Status		
Student	17	37.80
Unemployed	2	4.40
Self-employed	8	17.80
Employed	17	37.80
Retired	1	2.20
TOTAL	45	100%

3.4. Research Instrument

The research instrument was adapted from Mercede Shavanddasht (2017). The researchers formally requested permission from the author to modify the tool for the present study. Since the original questionnaire was limited in scope, modifications were made to better fit the study's focus. The tourism scale was excluded due to its lack of relevance to the selected

caves and the hospitality management context. Additionally, the term "catering" was revised to "value proposition" for greater clarity across cultural contexts. Instrument validation involved three experts: one for face validation (language proofreading) and two for content validation, with specialization in cave tourism. The questionnaire included five demographic questions, three psychographic items, and 35 intrinsic motivation questions rated on a five-point Likert scale from "1 - Strongly Disagree" to "5 – Strongly Agree." The second section contained 32 questions measuring tourist satisfaction across five response categories: very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, neutral, satisfied, and very satisfied. For pilot testing, 30 participants with cave tourism experience outside District 1 were surveyed to ensure relevant and reliable feedback. Results were analyzed using SPSS software, yielding Cronbach's alpha values of 0.964 for intrinsic motivation and 0.977 for tourist satisfaction, indicating excellent reliability and internal consistency.

3.5. Data Gathering Procedures

The study underwent thorough validation to confirm the appropriateness of its methodology and objectives. Upon approval of the research proposal and pilot testing, the instrument was reviewed and refined by the research adviser. Due to time constraints and adverse weather conditions, both in-person and online surveys were used to reach respondents. The researchers engaged with communities of hikers, mountaineers, and cave enthusiasts through social platforms to broaden participation. All respondents had prior cave tourism experience and were given identical questionnaires. In compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, participants received a consent letter and confidentiality agreement to safeguard their privacy.

3.6. Statistical Treatment

Survey data were systematically collected, organized, and analyzed to address the study's core questions. Likert scales enabled the quantification of respondent perceptions, with each response assigned a numerical value. The resulting averages represented evaluations of intrinsic motivations and overall satisfaction. Respondents rated their experiences based on six motivational dimensions, enjoyment, relaxation, novelty seeking, escape, socialization, and knowledge, and satisfaction with environmental conditions, infrastructure, value proposition, and service quality.

The following statistical methods were applied throughout all sections of the survey questionnaire: Frequency, Percentage, Weighted Arithmetic, Kruskal-Wallis test, Mann-Whitney U test, and Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation (Spearman's rho).

4. Findings and Discussion

Table 2

Psychographic profile of the participants

Descriptors	Frequency	Percentage
Frequency of visit		
First time	11	24.40
Only once before	21	46.70
Two or more visits before	10	22.20
I have been visiting for a long time	3	6.70
Frequent companion		
	45	100
Friends	21	46.70
Family	18	40.00
Colleagues	1	2.20
Organized Group	5	11.10
Cave visited		
Tinipak Cave	17	37.80
Malaog Cave	17	37.80
Lawigue Cave	11	24.40
TOTAL	45	100

Table 2 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of the participants. The majority of respondents, 21 individuals (46.70%), have visited one of the caves only once, representing the highest proportion. In contrast, the lowest percentage is found among those who have been visiting caves for a long time, with only 3 respondents (6.70%). As the majority of respondents belong to Generation Z, their tourism behavior appears to align with their frequency of cave visits. This implies that this generation's demand for shareable experiences encourages them to be one-time visitors, constantly seeking new and exciting destinations instead of revisiting the same places. According to Haddouche and Salomé (2018), Generation Z's tourism behavior is significantly influenced by their use of social media. They often seek unique travel experiences to share online, contributing to their preference for one-time visits. Candrea et al. (2024) also emphasize that Generation Z travelers, driven by their desire for unique and shareable experiences, are more likely to be one-time visitors.

The data further show that most respondents prefer to explore caves with friends or family, highlighting the social nature of cave tourism. According to Antic (2022), family-

oriented visitors are highly motivated by educational and adventurous aspects of cave tourism. These motivations make cave visits appealing family activities. Similarly, Agnes and Gamueda (2019) emphasize that family trips to cultural sites like caves are primarily aimed at creating shared memories and enriching learning experiences.

The majority have visited Tinipak and Malaog Caves, with 17 respondents (37.80%) comprising the highest proportion. Conversely, Lawigue Cave has the lowest number of visits, with only 11 respondents (24.40%). According to the classification memorandum of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Tinipak Cave is categorized as Class III, while both Malaog Cave and Lawigue Cave are classified as Class II. Despite its Class II classification, Malaog Cave attracted the same number of respondents as Tinipak Cave, with seventeen visitors (37.80%). This is likely because Malaog Cave remains open for ecotourism and academic studies, drawing interest due to its ongoing discoveries. In contrast, Lawigue Cave has had the lowest number of visits. This is attributed to its closure since 2022, following the pandemic, due to hazardous conditions and the presence of sensitive natural features. Supporting this analysis, Lakbay Pinas (2024) highlights that Mt. Daraitan, where Tinipak Cave is located, offers a moderately challenging yet highly rewarding trek. Its manageable difficulty level, scenic views at 739 meters above sea level, and proximity to Tinipak Cave make it an ideal destination for day hikers from Metro Manila and nearby areas. In addition, studies on Malaog Cave in Sampaloc, Quezon, have explored its hydrochemical properties, providing insights into its unique natural characteristics. Oblena (2015) found that the water samples from the cave were generally colorless (though slightly brownish in some), odorless, and had a salty taste. Moreover, Agcaoili (2022) reports the reclassification of Lawigue Cave from Class III to Class II by the DENR in 2022, which further justifies its closure to the public due to safety concerns and environmental sensitivity.

Table 3 shows the assessment of tourists' intrinsic motivation for cave tourism in terms of enjoyment, relaxation, novelty, escape, socialization and knowledge.

In terms of enjoyment, the composite mean was 4.68, with all indicators verbally interpreted as "strongly agree." Individual indicators show that thrilling experiences and opportunities to capture rare photographs are the main sources of enjoyment in cave tourism. This aligns with the profile of the majority of respondents, who belong to Generation Z—a group known for their energy, digital fluency, and strong engagement with social media. Their

desire for unique, visually appealing, and shareable experiences likely drives their preference for adventurous activities and scenic locations such as caves.

Table 3

Intrinsic motivation of tourists in cave tourism

Indicators	WAM	Verbal Interpretation
Enjoyment	4.68	Strongly Agree
Relaxation	4.18	Agree
Novelty	4.64	Strongly Agree
Escape	4.51	Strongly Agree
Socialization	4.51	Strongly Agree
Knowledge	4.51	Strongly Agree

Legend: 1.00 - 1.80 Strongly Disagree; 1.81 - 2.60 Disagree; 2.61 - 3.40 Moderately Agree; 3.41 - 4.20 Agree; 4.41 - 5.00 Strongly Agree.

In terms of relaxation, all given indicators were verbally interpreted as strongly agree with a composite mean of 4.18. The data explicitly shows that the natural and serene atmosphere of caves ranks high among the reasons for relaxation for tourists. This means, that the cool temperature environment and serene ambiance of caves are what set them apart. It offers a perfect place to be in a quiet, relaxed, and refreshing environment free from the hustles and bustles of daily life. Meanwhile, novelty has a composite mean of 4.64, with all indicators verbally interpreted as strongly agree. Tourists are motivated to visit caves because of the opportunity to discover underrated caves in District 1, signifying that the exclusivity and novelty of these lesser-known caves make the adventure even more thrilling and memorable, perfectly catering to those who seek new and unique experiences. Thus, the exploration of less trodden caves has, inherently, a feeling of discovering something.

In terms of escape, with the composite mean of 4.51, all indicators were verbally interpreted as strongly agree. As acknowledged by the participants, tourists are motivated to visit caves because of the opportunity to unplug from technology and modern life. Since internet and mobile signals cannot reach most cave settings, the caves afford the visitor the ability to completely interact with the environment in complete tranquility. Apart from this, most respondents are Gen Z, which makes adventure, exploration, and seeking new

experiences with very enticing motivations. This generation values experiences that are unique and memorable as they are out of the ordinary.

In terms of socialization, with a composite mean of 4.51, all indicators were verbally interpreted as strongly agreed. Tourists are motivated to visit caves to travel with friends, family or someone special, and to have an opportunity to talk and interact with new people and to bond with others. Meanwhile, in terms of knowledge, the composite mean was 4.51 with all indicators verbally interpreted as strongly agreed. The participants motivated to visit caves to learn new things and enhance knowledge in cave tourism. Visitors gain a deeper understanding of local customs and beliefs. For instance, Malaog Cave's prehistoric cave drawings and signatures provide a direct window into the past. The narrative in the paintings and inscriptions are particularly important for teaching history and culture since they depict early human life, artistic expression, and communication.

Exploring caves offers a unique and adventurous experience that sets it apart from typical tourist activities. According to Bharadwaj (2024), the images and storytelling that emerge from cave adventures are ideal for digital sharing, adding flair and attracting online attention. However, cave exploration can also involve narrow and confined spaces, which may limit opportunities for social interaction. Chiarini et al. (2022) found that some tourists are drawn to the introspective and quiet aspects of caves, prioritizing discovery and physical challenge over social engagement. Many tourists seek momentary pleasures such as adventure and photography rather than focusing on historical or geological education during their visit. Zajac et al. (2014) further explain that natural settings like caves help reduce stress and promote relaxation, allowing visitors to reconnect with nature. However, not all tourists find caves relaxing, some are disturbed by unfamiliar sounds like dripping or echoes, which can disrupt the otherwise tranquil environment (Chylińska, 2024). Bassiouni and Hackley (2014) support this by stating that discovering rare, hidden locations and sharing them online is a powerful motivator for Generation Z, who value uniqueness and social recognition. At the same time, safety concerns remain a major deterrent for some tourists. According to Constantin (2021), the unpredictability of cave environments, including encounters with unfamiliar creatures, can discourage deeper exploration and underscore the importance of risk management.

On a deeper level, cave tourism also offers psychological benefits by providing disconnection from digital life. Chiarini et al. (2022) emphasized that caves offer a serene, signal-free environment that allows tourists to escape from the stress of constant connectivity,

leading to improved mental well-being. Marques et al. (2024) add that Generation Z places a high value on unique and memorable experiences, preferring physically challenging activities such as caving over typical leisure routines. This sense of adventure resonates with their desire to break from the ordinary. Popsa (2024) affirm that socialization is a strong motivator among Generation Z, as traveling with friends or family enhances enjoyment and meaning. Agustina and Astari (2022) similarly note that social media and travel influencers shape Generation Z's travel behavior. Stories and shared experiences not only generate content but also encourage confidence in exploring new destinations. Cave tourism satisfies these motives by allowing visitors to uncover hidden passageways, observe biodiversity, and marvel at formations like stalactites and stalagmites. However, Shavanddasht et al. (2017) found that while enjoyment and novelty-seeking are strong intrinsic motivators, tourists often prioritize pleasure over research-based activities. Once the experience leans more toward scientific engagement, interest tends to wane. This indicates that the primary appeal of cave tourism lies in recreation and discovery rather than educational enrichment.

Table 4 presents the assessment on level of satisfaction of tourist in cave tourism in District 1 in terms of environment (4.57), infrastructure (4.45), value proposition (4.63) and service (4.64). All given indicators were verbally interpreted as very satisfied.

Table 4

Level of satisfaction of tourist in cave tourism

Indicators	WAM	Verbal Interpretation
Environment	4.57	Very Satisfied
Infrastructure	4.45	Very Satisfied
Value proposition	4.63	Very Satisfied
Service	4.64	Very Satisfied

Legend: 1.00-1.80 Very Dissatisfied; 1.81-2.60 Dissatisfied; 2.61-3.40 Moderately Satisfied; 3.41-4.20 Satisfied; 4.21-5.00 Very Satisfied

Participants are very satisfied with the natural beauty and scenery of the cave, maintenance of the cave and its infrastructures, knowledge and helpfulness of the cave guides, and hospitality and friendliness of the staff before, during, and after the tour.

A study by Gaikwad et al. (2020) validated that the visual appeal of caves plays a crucial role in attracting and retaining tourists, highlighting the importance of scenic value and natural beauty in enhancing visitor satisfaction. This underscores how natural aesthetics

contribute to memorable experiences that encourage repeat visits and positive referrals. Additionally, Syakier and Hanafiah (2021) found that tour guides significantly influence visitor contentment and behavioral intentions; tourists accompanied by knowledgeable and engaging guides were more likely to return and recommend the destination. Supporting this, Rebuya and Meñez (2024) reported high levels of visitor satisfaction, particularly due to well-maintained park amenities and infrastructure.

The findings of the Kruskal-Wallis test in table 5 show that respondents' age does not result in significant differences in the intrinsic motivations of tourists engaged in cave tourism in District I. Intrinsic motivations such as enjoyment, relaxation, novelty seeking, escape, socialization, and knowledge are fundamental psychological needs that tend to remain stable across different age groups. These motivations drive individuals to seek experiences that are fulfilling and enjoyable, regardless of age. In the context of cave tourism, tourists of varying ages often share similar interests and preferences. In this study, both younger and older visitors to Tinipak Cave, Malaog Cave, and Lawigue Cave were likely drawn to the adventure, natural beauty, and educational value offered by cave exploration. This shared interest in unique and engaging experiences contributes to comparable levels of intrinsic motivation across all age demographics.

Table 5

Significant difference in the intrinsic motivations of tourists when grouped into age

Variable	H statistic	p value	Statistical Decision	Interpretation
Enjoyment	2.260	0.520	Accept H_o	Not Significant
Relaxation	2.480	0.479	Accept H_o	Not Significant
Novelty Seek	1.779	0.620	Accept H_o	Not Significant
Escape	5.831	0.120	Accept H_o	Not Significant
Socialization	2.805	0.423	Accept H_o	Not Significant
Knowledge	1.667	0.644	Accept H_o	Not Significant

Supporting this, Vujičić et al. (2020) employed a fuzzy logic approach to examine intrinsic motivations among tourists of different ages in multi-attraction urban destinations. Their findings revealed that while age may influence motivations to some extent, the differences were not statistically significant. Similarly, Yousaf et al. (2021) emphasized that intrinsic motivations—such as the pursuit of self-fulfillment and personal growth—remain

consistent across age groups. Agnes and Gamueda (2019) also found that tourists visiting cultural sites in Sagada, Philippines, were motivated by adventure and the desire to escape daily routines, regardless of age. These studies collectively affirm that intrinsic motivations in tourism are broadly shared across age demographics, reinforcing the findings of this research.

The findings of the Mann-Whitney test in table 6 show that respondents' sex does not result in significant differences in the intrinsic motivations of tourists engaged in cave tourism in District I. Modern tourism marketing and accessibility initiatives often target a broad audience, making cave tourism appealing to both men and women. As a result, tourists are exposed to similar promotional materials and messaging, which can lead to comparable intrinsic motivations across genders. Additionally, social and cultural factors influencing intrinsic motivation—such as the pursuit of adventure, relaxation, and knowledge—are common among all individuals, regardless of sex. These shared psychological drivers help explain the minimal differences in intrinsic motivations between male and female tourists, highlighting the universal appeal of cave tourism in District I.

Table 6

Significant difference in the intrinsic motivations of tourists when grouped into sex

Variable	Z statistic	p value	Statistical Decision	Interpretation
Enjoyment	-0.248	0.804	Accept H_o	Not Significant
Relaxation	-1.444	0.149	Accept H_o	Not Significant
Novelty Seek	-0.448	0.654	Accept H_o	Not Significant
Escape	-1.477	0.140	Accept H_o	Not Significant
Socialization	-1.547	0.122	Accept H_o	Not Significant
Knowledge	0.000	1.000	Accept H_o	Not Significant

Supporting this, Ramchurjee (2013) found no notable differences in tourist motivations based on sex. Both male and female tourists exhibited similar intrinsic motivations, including enjoyment, relaxation, novelty seeking, escape, socialization, and knowledge. These consistent psychological needs led tourists to seek fulfilling and enjoyable experiences, irrespective of gender. Similarly, Milićević et al. (2021) concluded through factor analysis, Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and regression analysis that sex does not significantly impact visitor motivation and satisfaction.

The findings of the Kruskal-Wallis test in table 7 show that respondents' professional standing does not influence their assessment of intrinsic motivation in cave tourism; however, knowledge does have a notable impact on tourists' intrinsic motivation.

Table 7

Significant difference in the intrinsic motivations of tourists when grouped into professional status

Variable	H statistic	p value	Statistical Decision	Interpretation
Enjoyment	2.410	0.661	Accept H_o	Not Significant
Relaxation	2.994	0.559	Accept H_o	Not Significant
Novelty Seek	2.119	0.714	Accept H_o	Not Significant
Escape	2.279	0.685	Accept H_o	Not Significant
Socialization	2.191	0.701	Accept H_o	Not Significant
Knowledge	9.736	0.045	Reject H_o	Significant

The data collected from tourists visiting Tinipak Cave, Malaog Cave, and Lawigue Cave indicates that all professional groups exhibit strong intrinsic motivation to gain and apply knowledge. Students aim to enhance their academic understanding, while employed and self-employed individuals seek to utilize their professional skills. Unemployed visitors often pursue personal enrichment, and retired individuals are drawn to lifelong learning. The broad appeal of these caves as educational resources highlights their value in providing enriching and fulfilling experiences for visitors across diverse professional backgrounds. Professional status plays a crucial role in shaping intrinsic motivation related to knowledge, with distinct differences observed among students, employed, self-employed, unemployed, and retired individuals. By addressing these varied motivations, the caves serve as vital platforms for personal and professional development, fostering a deeper appreciation for natural history and environmental conservation. This underscores how professional status influences the ways tourists engage with and benefit from cave tourism.

Supporting this analysis, Lin (2023) found that professional status affects both motivation and the acquisition of knowledge, with employed and self-employed individuals showing greater interest in sustainable tourism and conservation efforts. These groups tend to leverage their professional expertise to understand and advocate for environmental initiatives. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2023) emphasized that professional status influences the knowledge and skills tourists bring to cave tourism, affecting their understanding of conservation and management practices. Employed and self-employed individuals, often possessing hands-on

experience and specialized knowledge, engage more deeply with sustainability and preservation efforts.

Table 8, the findings of the Spearman test, a non-parametric measure of statistical dependence, shows that tourists' intrinsic motivation in cave tourism in District 1, Quezon Province has a significant relationship with tourist satisfaction. The data clearly demonstrates a significant relationship between the intrinsic motivations of tourists and their overall satisfaction. Tourists visiting Tinipak Cave, Malaog Cave, and Lawigue Cave are often driven by motivations such as enjoyment, relaxation, novelty, escape, and the pursuit of knowledge. These intrinsic factors greatly enhance their experience as they engage with the natural beauty, adventure, and educational opportunities offered by the caves. When these motivations are fulfilled, tourists report higher levels of satisfaction. For example, those seeking adventure and novelty are captivated by the caves' unique geological formations and thrilling spelunking challenges. Similarly, individuals looking for relaxation and an escape from daily routines find the serene cave environments deeply rewarding. Educational aspects, such as insights into geological history and ecological significance, satisfy the intellectual curiosity of many visitors. This alignment between intrinsic motivations and the experiences available at these caves leads to a heightened sense of fulfillment and lasting memories, emphasizing the importance of addressing these motivations to enhance the overall tourist experience.

Table 8

Significant relationship between intrinsic motivations and satisfaction

	Satisfaction							
	Environment		Infrastructure		Value Proposition		Service	
Intrinsic Motivations	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i> -value	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i> -value	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i> -value	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i> -value
Enjoyment	.704**	.000	.659**	.000	.620**	.000	.590**	.000
Relaxation	.543**	.000	.522**	.000	.523**	.000	.637**	.000
Novelty Seek	.431**	.003	.500**	.000	.361*	.015	.549**	.000
Escape	.355*	.017	.553**	.000	.429**	.003	.556**	.000
Socialization	.438**	.003	.529**	.000	.458**	.002	.496**	.001
Knowledge	.487**	.001	.540**	.000	.430**	.003	.506**	.000

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Supporting this, Shavanddasht et al. (2017) found a strong connection between intrinsic motivation and tourist satisfaction in cave tourism, particularly in the case of Alisadr Cave. Enjoyment, relaxation, novelty seeking, and the desire to escape were shown to significantly influence satisfaction. When tourism experiences align with these core motivations, visitors are more likely to feel satisfied, create positive memories, and develop a deeper appreciation for the destination. By recognizing and catering to these intrinsic motivations, tourism operators can tailor their services to provide more rewarding and enjoyable experiences. Additionally, Sinambela (2021) revealed that tourist motivation significantly impacts the intention to revisit a destination. Intrinsic motivations, especially relaxation, adventure, and escape—play a crucial role in boosting satisfaction and encouraging repeat visits. When tourists engage in experiences that align with their personal desires, they are more likely to feel fulfilled and return, highlighting the need for tourism providers to understand and address these motivations to sustain high satisfaction levels and promote destination loyalty.

5. Conclusion

Tourists expressed high satisfaction with the caves' natural beauty, citing unique formations, captivating landscapes, and awe-inspiring features like stalactites, stalagmites, and underground rivers. These elements create a serene and memorable experience. Infrastructure, such as clean and accessible pools, added comfort and refreshment during exploration. Tour guides were praised for their knowledge and engaging delivery, enriching visitors' understanding of the caves' history and ecology. Additionally, the hospitality and friendliness of staff before, during, and after the tour significantly enhanced the overall experience, making tourists feel welcomed and well-supported.

The significant difference in intrinsic motivation related to knowledge, based on professional status, stems from professionals' higher education, broader exposure, and inclination toward lifelong learning. Their interest in geological and ecological insights, combined with greater financial resources and time flexibility, drives a stronger motivation to seek educational experiences in cave tourism compared to other groups.

A strong relationship exists between tourists' intrinsic motivations and their satisfaction in cave tourism. Motivations such as adventure, personal growth, and connection with nature align with fulfilling experiences that meet psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Exploring at one's own pace, overcoming challenges, and

sharing the journey with others contribute to enjoyment and satisfaction. When these intrinsic needs are met, tourists report higher satisfaction, reinforcing their motivation and enhancing the overall cave tourism experience.

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