

Central Visayas Tourism Destination Attractiveness and Tourist Experience Input to Destination Image: Basis for a Competitive Destination Development Framework

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Abstract: The study aimed to determine the influence of destination attractiveness, tourist experience, and image of Central Visayas as a tourist destination to propose a competitive destination development framework. The researcher determined the attractiveness factors of the destination and tourist experiences and assessed the destination's image. It tested the significant difference when grouped according to the tourist profile and tested the significant relationship among the given variables. The researcher used a descriptive-correlation design. A total of 396 tourists who visited Central Visayas participated in the study and answered the instrument that was adapted from four different studies. The tourist profile was presented by frequency and percentage. The destination's attractiveness, tourist experience, and destination image were assessed using weighted mean. Mann Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis Test were used to test the significant differences, while the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to test the relationship of the different variables. The study concluded that most respondents were leisure travelers who traveled with family. They have traveled to Central Visayas more than three times and stayed for 2-3 nights. Central Visayas holds a strong position as a desirable tourist destination with an overall favorable perception of its attractiveness, tourist experience, and image. Scenery emerged as the most significant factor in attractiveness, aesthetics for the tourist experience, and the conative dimension for destination image. The study highlights the link between destination attractiveness and tourist experience to destination image. With all these findings, the proposed development plan aims to improve the tourism sector in Central Visayas.

Keywords: Destination attractiveness, destination image, tourist experience, tourist profile, tourism.

1. Introduction

Tourism is a vital economic player in many countries, offering economic growth, job creation, and cultural exchange (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, 2022). The Philippines is one of the countries that benefited from this phenomenon; Central Visayas, geographically located at the heart of the Philippines, draws tourists to the country that is rich in natural and cultural resources. From stunning beaches, rich cultural traditions and

heritage, gastronomical offerings and up to the warmth of the Filipino people, making the region a top destination choice for travelers (Cacho, 2023).

The attributes that make a destination attractive contribute to the overall tourist experience; these key factors influence tourists' decisions to visit a particular destination (Pereira et al., 2019). The ability of a destination to provide the needs and wants of the tourists (Reitsamer et al., 2016), the availability of natural and cultural resources, infrastructure and amenities, accessibility, safety, and security (Wan et al., 2021), and affordability contribute to the attractiveness of the destination. Destinations perceived as attractive will capture more tourists and contribute to a positive image (Amalia, et al., 2023). It is a dynamic concept that changes over time, influenced by different external and internal factors (Raimkulov et al., 2021); a destination seen as unattractive may become attractive when improvements are made and contribute to the overall tourist experience. Tourist experience serves as a fundamental metric of destination management for comprehensively assessing the value of the destination (Xue et al., 2022); it consists of activities that individuals undertake to meet a variety of personal needs (Lee et al., 2021). These experiences involve people directly and can vary widely based on individual backgrounds, values, and beliefs. When away from home, tourists create their own experiences by participating in, observing, and enjoying various activities (Luvsandavaajav et al., 2022).

Conversely, the destination image refers to the comprehensive view of a destination perceived by travelers (Jebbouri et al., 2022). The appeal of a destination plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions of that destination. A destination that possesses greater attractiveness will have a more favorable image (Pereira et al., 2019). The perception of a destination's image can be shaped by a multitude of factors, encompassing individual encounters, oral recommendations, and promotional materials (Fakultät & Greifswald, 2015). Destination image is increasingly acknowledged as a potent

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management instrument to empower the tourism business. And several studies have also examined how a destination's image influences tourists' choices, intentions, preferences, and experiences (Jebbouri et al., 2022).

How tourists perceive and feel about a place is a major factor in how they view it and whether or not they choose to visit the destination (Yoo et al., 2018). Ariesta et al. (2020) stated that a positive tourist image results from the alignment between visitor expectations and the actual experience, particularly in terms of the quality of attractions, facilities, and services. If satisfied, tourists are more likely to recommend the destination to others. With the existing and emerging destination choices, the destination must stay competitive (Rahmawati et al., 2024). The competitiveness of a destination is determined by its attractiveness through its offering, its ability to provide memorable experiences, and a positive destination image (Gonzalez-Rodríguez, et al., 2023). Learning about how tourists perceive the destination will allow us to understand their travel behavior and tailor-fit product and service offerings that best suit their needs and wants. By constantly assessing factors contributing to the destination's attractiveness and tourist behavior, destinations can maintain their competitive advantage by delivering quality service to enhance its image (Jiang et al., 2022).

In the Philippines, tourism contributes significantly to its economy by generating business and employment opportunities, encouraging foreign and local investment, and protecting and conserving natural and cultural resources (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, 2022). Central Visayas, which is composed of four provinces (Cebu, Bohol, Negros Oriental, and Siquijor), welcomed millions of tourists annually, making it one of the top-performing provinces in terms of tourism (Department of Economic Development and Planning, 2024). With the existing and emerging tourism destinations, the tourism industry in Central Visayas recognized the importance of enhancing destination attractiveness, improving tourist experience, and maintaining a positive destination image to remain competitive in the global and domestic tourism market (DOT Region 7, n.d.).

The study was inspired by different research and was anchored with several theories of various authors. Using the different anchored articles and theories, the researcher combined and localized these studies. The study focused on the attractiveness of the destination, the tourist experience, and the destination image of Central Visayas, Philippines.

2. Methods

Research Design: This study is quantitative research in nature, which utilized a descriptive correlation analysis design. Quantitative methods emphasize objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires, and surveys or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques (UTA Libraries, 2023). The same source stated that quantitative research focuses on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or explaining a particular phenomenon. This study used descriptive research

aimed to describe a phenomenon; it depicts the tourist's assessment of the destination's attractiveness, tourist experience, and the destination image of Central Visayas. Moreover, this study describes tourists' profiles and the tourist's differences in responses when grouped according to their profile variables. Lastly, correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between destination image to destination attractiveness, and tourist experience.

Participants of the Study: The study's respondents were tourists or visitors who have visited Central Visayas. The total number of respondents is three hundred ninety-six (396), determined using the Raosoft sample size calculator with a margin of error of 5% and a confidence level of 95%. The respondents were chosen using stratified random sampling, which is used to guarantee representative and unbiased sampling from a population. The population was segmented into separate subgroups or strata according to specific traits or factors important to the study. To obtain a sample that reflects the proportions of the respondents, the researcher set a predetermined quota for each of the four provinces in Central Visayas.

Research Instrument: Qualifying questions were included to ensure that respondents met the necessary criteria to participate in the survey, and upon meeting all criteria, the respondents proceeded to answer the survey.

The research questionnaire was custom-made and adapted from different studies and authors. Segmented into four (4) distinct sections. The first part was to determine the tourist profile of the people who responded to the survey. The second section was to determine destination attractiveness, from Reitsamer et al (2016). The third section was to determine the tourist experience from Lee et al (2021) and Xue et al (2022). The final section was to determine the destination image, from Afshardoost and Eshaghi (2020).

The instrument had undergone content validation from three experts. The first expert is a former Department of Tourism Regional Director of Region 7 and former National Director of the Office of Industry Manpower Development of the Department of Tourism; the second expert is a DOT Regional 7 consultant, trainer, and author; and the third expert is a PhD professor who teaches courses on Tourism and owns a DOT Accredited Travel Agency. The instrument has been adjusted in response to the recommendations and suggestions of the experts to make it more accurate and valuable for research locale.

Lastly, the instrument was also subjected to reliability testing, which yielded good and acceptable results from 31 respondents.

Data Gathering Procedure: After the research title and instrument were approved, the researcher secured the permission of the Dean of the Lyceum of the Philippines University Batangas Graduate School to conduct the study. The questionnaires were distributed on-site and asked permission before handing them out to the respondents.

The survey questions were distributed face-to-face, along with a cover letter explaining the study's objectives and a confidential agreement. The completed questionnaires were checked to see if all the statements were answered. After the

data gathered was completed, the results were tabulated. Data gathering in Central Visayas was conducted from March 13 to 17, 2024, and focused primarily on the top tourist attractions in each province and their ports of entry.

Data Analysis: Following the collection of all data, the recovered questionnaires are assigned particular codes for identifying purposes. The responses of the travelers who participated in the survey were encoded in Microsoft Excel using numeric values. After that, these were loaded into IBM-SPSS for analysis. Frequency and percentage distribution were used to present the tourist profile. While weighted mean and rank were used to assess the destination's attractiveness in terms of access, amenities, local community, and scenery. As well as determining the tourist experience in terms of entertainment experience, educational experience, escape experience, and aesthetic experience. Lastly, destination image was assessed in terms of cognitive, affective, and conative. Pearson-r was used to determine the relationship of destination image to destination attractiveness and tourist experience. All statistical calculations were performed using IBM-SPSS, and statistical significance was evaluated at the 0.05 level.

3. Results and Discussion

A. Tourist Profile

Most travelers to Central Visayas are leisure travelers with a percentage of 71.2%, indicating the region's strong appeal as a leisure destination. This suggested that the destination is usually flocked by tourists seeking leisure and going on a vacation, the region's diverse offering is suitable for leisure; drawing international and domestic visitors to different tourist attractions such as the Chocolate Hills and Tarsier Sanctuary in Bohol, historical landmarks, vibrant cityscape and pristine beaches of Cebu, the diving spots and waterfalls of Negros Oriental, and the mystical charm of Siquijor (DOT Region 7, n.d.). In 2023, Central Visayas welcomed 3.5 million visitors, more than doubling its number in 2022 (Cacho, 2023), further reinforcing its growing popularity.

Tourists generally visit Central Visayas two to three times annually (37.9%) and visited Central Visayas more than three times, with an average of fifty percent (50.0%). This suggests that travel is a crucial part of their yearly schedule, with weeks or holidays devoted to vacations and showcases Central Visayas' ability to retain tourists and encourage repeat visits. While travel has become increasingly essential in our lives, the Covid-19 pandemic temporarily disrupted this need (Cacho, 2023). After the lockdowns, there was a remarkable rise in leisure travel, resulting in a substantial increase in tourists at popular destinations (Amalia *et al.*, 2023).

Moreover, these travelers tend to stay for 2 – 3 nights with a percentage of 39.9%, which may reflect a preference for short getaways or weekend trips, possibly due to budget constraints, shortened holidays, or the ability to offer a fulfilling experience in a short amount of time (Wee & Mokhtarian, 2023). The relatively lower frequency of 4 – 5 nights stays (24.5%) suggests that many travelers opt for shorter visits while there is interest in more extended vacations. They mostly travel

(43.2%) with family, emphasizing the region's family-friendly attractions and activities as the region caters well to a range of ages and interests, making it an appealing destination for family trips and other types of travelers (Profile of Region 7, 2020).

Cebu dominates as the most visited province in Central Visayas, accounting for 68.9% of tourist arrivals, largely due to its role as the primary gateway to the Visayas region (Profile of Region 7, 2020). With an average of 141 departure flights per day for domestic and international routes (Flight Statistics, 2023), Cebu offers convenient access within the destination and to its neighboring provinces. Its strong transportation links and diverse tourism offerings solidify its position as a central hub for travelers. In contrast, Siquijor is the least visited province, attracting only 6.1% of travelers. This suggests that Siquijor is often perceived more as a side-trip destination rather than a primary stop, likely due to its smaller size and relatively limited accessibility. Yen *et al.* (2021) emphasized that accessibility plays a crucial role in influencing tourist visitation; destinations with fewer transportation options tend to experience lower visitor arrivals, as access barriers discourage travel.

Table 1
Summary table on destination attractiveness

Destination Attractiveness	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Scenery	4.42	Agree	1
Access	4.39	Agree	2
Local Community	4.37	Agree	3
Amenities	4.34	Agree	4
Overall Mean	4.38	Agree	

Legend: 1.0 to 1.49 (Strongly Disagree), 1.5 to 2.49 (Disagree), 2.5 to 3.49 (Moderately Agree), 3.5 to 4.49 (Agree), 4.5 to 5.00 (Strongly Agree)

Results showed that all factors of destination attractiveness of Central Visayas are favorable and perceived as important as they all fall under the agreed category and have an overall mean rating of 4.38, which falls under the agreed category, indicating a favorable perception of Central Visayas as an attractive destination. This suggested that all factors significantly contribute to the attractiveness of Central Visayas as a tourist destination. The result is supported by the study of Raimkulov *et al.* (2021), in which all attributes of destination attractiveness are perceived as important. Stakeholders need to understand that the appeal of a destination is multifaceted, with no single attribute carrying the sole responsibility for attracting visitors. While some factors may appear more significant, Dey *et al.* (2020) stress that it is the synergy of all elements that shapes a satisfying visitor experience, builds loyalty, and boosts destination appeal.

Among all factors, scenery got the highest mean rating of 4.42, followed by access with 4.39, local community with 4.37 and amenities with 4.34. The scenery obtained the highest average rating, suggesting that the natural landscapes, cultural, and historical attractions are regarded as the most appealing aspects of Central Visayas. The results contradicted the study of Raimkulov *et al.* (2021), in which local people and culture are the most influential factors in destination attractiveness. Mihai *et al.* (2023) also emphasize that the availability of facilities, such as dining options that enable gastronomical experience, is a key determinant in the competitiveness of a

tourist destination. Both results contradicted the result of this study; this could mean that the attractiveness of the destination can vary depending on its features, and in Central Visayas, the scenery stands out the most.

Access, the second highest mean, reflects that Central Visayas is an accessible destination and that it is important to have ease of getting to and around the destination. Yen *et al.*, (2021) suggest that access is the number one factor for the success of the destination, for without access, it can impair tourist entry and mobility, which contradicts the findings of this study. Access includes going to the destination and the availability and quality of transportation options within the destination, infrastructure, and connectivity. Good access enhances the visitor experience by making travel more convenient and less stressful, increasing the destination's attractiveness. While Accessibility and transportation is one of the pull factors that influence tourists' decisions of tourists, An *et al.* (2019) support the findings of the study that it is not the primary factor that contributes to the destination's attractiveness.

Moreover, the local community got the third highest mean, a slightly lower mean score than access, but still highly rated. This indicates that interactions with the local community, including hospitality, cultural exchanges, and community-led tourist activities, are not highly attractive or visible in the destination. The findings contradicted the results of the study of Debbagh and Azouaoui (2021) and Raimkulov *et al.* (2021). Both studies emphasized the local and local culture as the top factor contributing to the destination's attractiveness, as it appears to increase overall tourist satisfaction. The difference in findings may stem from several factors such as the degree of local participation in delivering tourism services, or the type of tourists for instance, some may prioritize scenery or amenities over cultural engagement.

Lastly, amenities received the lowest mean score among all the factors of the destination image. Although slightly lower in rank, amenities in Central Visayas are good. However, they are seen as the least attractive factor of the destination and should be given importance as they contribute to the overall attractiveness of the destination. While amenities can add to the attractiveness of the destination, this is not the main factor that could significantly affect the overall attractiveness of the destination (Zhou & Zhang, 2022). It is also important to note that the Department of Tourism has prioritized enhancing infrastructure and facilities development in the National Tourism Development Plan 2023-2028 version. To enhance the quality of travel, tourist rest areas are being developed at strategic locations around the Philippines; providing essential amenities such as clean restrooms and visitor assistance services (Department of Economic Development and Planning, (2024). This result contradicted the findings of Mohanty *et al.* (2021) in their study conducted in India, which identified the presence of facilities and support services as the most crucial factors contributing to a destination's attractiveness. This contradiction highlights the idea that each destination possesses unique strengths and weaknesses, suggesting that what appeals to tourists can vary significantly depending on the local context

and the specific expectations of visitors.

Table 2
Summary table on tourist experience

Tourist Experience	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Aesthetic Experience	4.48	Agree	1
Educational Experience	4.40	Agree	2
Entertainment Experience	4.38	Agree	3
Escape Experience	4.36	Agree	4
Overall Mean	4.40	Agree	

Legend: 1.0 to 1.49 (Strongly Disagree), 1.5 to 2.49 (Disagree), 2.5 to 3.49 (Moderately Agree), 3.5 to 4.49 (Agree), 4.5 to 5.00 (Strongly Agree)

All the factors contributing to the tourist experience which have an overall mean of 4.40 and fall under the category of agree, implying that travelers have a pleasant experience in Central Visayas. This level of satisfaction reflects the region's ability to meet various travel motivations through its beauty and cultural, educational opportunities, and recreational and its ability to capture tourists' desire to break away from their everyday life, highlighting the importance of each factor, which all factors fall under the agreed category. Humairah & Alversia (2021) and Xue *et al.* (2022) value the importance of all factors in enriching the overall tourist experience as it encompasses multiple aspects of the interaction between the tourist and the destination.

Among all factors, aesthetic experience got the highest mean rating of 4.48, followed by educational experience with 4.40, entertainment experience with 4.38 and escape experience with 4.36. Aesthetic experience having the highest mean score indicates that it is the strongest factor that contributed to their experience while visiting Central Visayas and the most valued aspect of tourist experiences. This also suggests that Central Visayas is a destination that eludes natural beauty and cultural richness and is visually appealing to tourists; driven by the natural beauty and enriched by cultural encounters and unexpected discoveries, that is central to the journey of travelers. As supported by An *et al.* (2019), the aesthetic dimension contributes significantly to a trip's perceived value and enjoyment, making it a top priority for destination planners and tourism marketers aiming to improve the quality of the tourist experience. When tourists find a location visually captivating, they are more likely to feel a deeper connection to the place, for aesthetic appreciation entails a reasoning component. When tourists find inspiration in the beauty of objective elements or the destination's environment, it motivates them to explore and engage in different activities in the destination (Pereira *et al.*, 2019). Benedict and David (2023) highlighted that aesthetic is a crucial aspect of tourist experience that directly influences satisfaction. Pereira *et al.* (2019) emphasize the importance of aesthetic experience, especially with the rise of social media.

Educational experience, the second highest mean, reflects that Central Visayas is a destination that fosters learning experiences. This suggests that travel can enrich the traveler's journey by offering a deeper understanding of the destination's history, culture, and environment, fostering learning through different activities (Franco *et al.*, 2022). Research has shown that educational encounters significantly enhance overall

satisfaction and emotional engagement with the destination (Chavarria & Phakdee-auksorn, 2017). The learning aspect adds an intellectual dimension to travel, which can be as rewarding as the leisure and recreation component (Kolb & Kolb, 2009). Xue et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of educational experience as tourists actively seek new ways to acquire knowledge and skills to identify new and better possibilities, stimulate tourist imagination, and generate innovative ideas relevant to the tourism offering of destination products and services.

Entertainment experience got the third highest mean, a slightly lower mean score than educational experience, but still highly rated and plays a significant role in tourist satisfaction. This indicates that Central Visayas offers acceptable leisure entertainment relaxation options, suggesting that tourists appreciate a balanced mix of fun and relaxation alongside more profound experiences that keep them occupied during their visit. Entertainment is another crucial dimension of the tourist experience, especially in a culturally rich destination like Central Visayas. Engaging in local festivals, enjoying vibrant nightlife, and participating in community events heighten the entertainment quality of the visit and are vital for creating lasting memories, as they contribute to a joyful and engaging atmosphere (Aliedan et al., 2021). The tourist entertainment experience is a diverse and essential aspect of the overall journey as it heightens their stay (Xue et al., 2022). Recognizing the multifaceted benefits of entertainment activities is essential for understanding their value to travelers (Villamediana-Pedrosaa et al., 2020).

Lastly, escape experience ranks the lowest among all the factors. This reflects the desire for travel to take a break from daily routines and stresses and is also seen as a reward for working so hard (Chylińska, 2022). Although it is essential, it seems that tourists did not experience much being of escapism in their visit to Central Visayas. Wee and Mokhtarian (2023) suggested that escapism is directly attributed to travel, as it is common to use travel to temporarily escape obligations, routines, and/or tensions at home or work. The psychological benefits of escapism have been documented in several studies, which confirm that travelers experience increased satisfaction when they immerse themselves in activities that allow them to elude their usual environments (Yang et al., 2023). Hendijani (2023) indicated that motivations for escape directly correlate with overall tourist satisfaction and shape future tourism experiences, further supporting the idea that escapes enhance tourist satisfaction.

has a strong destination image, indicating that tourists not only have a positive perception of the destination, they are also emotionally connected to the destination and are also willing to engage in behaviors that positively affect the destination such as promotion and recommendation. This strong image is shaped by several key factors, especially the region's natural and cultural offerings (Profile of Region 7, 2020).

Among all factors of destination image, conative got the highest mean rating of 4.47, followed by affective with 4.42, and cognitive with 4.29. The conative component is the most influential factor in shaping the destination image of Central Visayas and suggesting that tourists are most likely to exhibit positive behaviors such as returning to or promoting the location. Yang et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of conative image in destination marketing; for a positive conative image is often influenced by tourists' perceptions of the overall satisfaction with their travel experience. who emphasized that conative image is a strong predictor of travel decision-making. Afshardoost and Eshaghi (2020) highlighted that the different dimensions of behavioral intentions, destination image has the greatest impact on the intention to recommend. Emphasizing the critical role that both cognitive and affective components of the destination image play in shaping the conative image of the destination. Positive conative images correlate with tourist satisfaction, higher tourist arrivals and economic growth (Riptiono et al., 2023), this is evident in Central Visayas, where the number of tourist arrivals continues to rise (Department of Economic Development and Planning, 2024). The conative image is essential since it is directly associated with actions that can yield tangible advantages for the place's tourism industry; a strong conative image is a powerful indicator of the destination's success in creating satisfying experiences that motivate tourists to act as an advocate to the destination and return visitors (Alcocer & Ruiz, 2019).

Affective, the second highest means, reflects that Central Visayas generally evokes strong positive emotions, finding it enjoyable, interesting, and meaningful. A pleasant affective image refers to a pleasing encounter that meets the emotional or psychological demands of tourists, it is crucial for building lasting relationships with tourists, as emotions play a significant role in memory and decision-making processes (Pereira et al., 2019). The emotional connection between individuals and a destination can strongly influence their inclination to revisit or endorse it, as people frequently make choices guided by their emotions. According to the study of Afshardoost and Eshagi (2020) affective image has larger effects than the cognitive image on behavioural intentions. It means that feelings are better predictors of intentions. When people travel, they often feel a mix of emotions; these feelings are influenced by their personal experiences and the cultural significance they associate with the destination (Michael et al., 2017). Experience evokes different emotions; these responses are shaped by diverse experiences ranging from awe and excitement to peace and nostalgia. Different emotional responses would differ depending on different factors; Barrett (2017) discussed in her theory that the capacity to feel emotion is universal, so most tourists will have an emotional reaction, but to what kind of

Table 3
Summary table on destination image

Tourist Experience	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Conative	4.47	Agree	1
Affective	4.42	Agree	2
Cognitive	4.29	Agree	3
Overall Mean	4.38	Agree	

Legend: 1.0 to 1.49 (Strongly Disagree), 1.5 to 2.49 (Disagree), 2.5 to 3.49 (Moderately Agree), 3.5 to 4.49 (Agree), 4.5 to 5.00 (Strongly Agree)

The destination image which has an overall mean of 4.39 and falls under the category of agree, implies that Central Visayas

Table 4
Relationship between destination image to destination attractiveness

Variable	r_{xy}	p-value	Interpretation
Cognitive to Destination Attractiveness	.469**	0.000	Highly Significant
Affective to Destination Attractiveness	.383**	Agree	Highly Significant
Conative to Destination Attractiveness	.330**	Agree	Highly Significant

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

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

emotion and how they interpret or express that emotion can differ. For instance, Siquijor is known for its mystique charm, emotions such as awe can be felt by other visitors, but others might see Siquijor as haunting because of its mystique charm. A strong emotional engagement is strengthened by the meaningful experiences promoted by the Department of Tourism's new initiatives, such as the Philippine Experience Program. This initiative focuses on heritage, arts, and local gastronomy, offering travelers deeper cultural immersion that fosters a sense of pride and connections that go beyond enjoyment, elevating the overall travel experience into something significant and meaningful (Department of Tourism, 2023). This experiential program will have emotional depth and will set Central Visayas apart from other destinations, encouraging repeat visits and heartfelt recommendations.

Cognitive, got the lowest mean rating among all factors of destination image. While the overall feedback is good, it indicates that there is potential for boosting tourists' understanding and views of the Central Visayas attributes, including its natural charms, cultural richness, and safety. A lower cognitive image may imply that tourists' perceptions and knowledge regarding the destination's attributes are not as positive or misconceptions, lack of awareness, or unfulfilled expectations about the destination's offerings (Yang et al., 2022). However, lowest in rank, the cognitive image of Central Visayas is still seen as favorable. Different National and International recognition has validated the region's appeal (Department of Tourism, 2023); the World Travel Awards named Cebu Asia's Leading Wedding Destination in 2024. Bohol's Chocolate Hills was named as the 7th World's Most Wild and Beautiful Places by National Geographic (Kahibalo Foundation, 2024). While Balinsasayao Twin Lakes Natural Park in Negros Oriental was designated as an ASEAN Heritage Park in 2024, and Siquijor has been recognized as a rising star in Philippine tourism (Philippine News Agency, 2024). These different recognitions and awards contribute to a positive tourists' perception of Central Visayas. Such recognitions validate the region's tourism offerings and act as persuasive marketing tools that influence travel decision-making, which is reflected in the region's arrival of over 5 million tourists in 2023 (Department of Economic Development and Planning, 2024).

Lastly, it is also important to mention that an aspect of the cognitive image needs to be addressed, especially on its waste management system, which got the lowest mean rating of its cognitive image. Although rich in natural resources and biodiversity, Central Visayas is not perceived as a clean destination with little to no proper waste management system in place. Central Visayas is lagging in complying with key environmental laws, such as the Republic Act (RA) 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, which are essential

for proper waste segregation and disposal (Virador, 2024). These shortcomings highlight the urgent need to improve the regional waste management systems to protect public health and the environment. Piles of uncollected garbage are unpleasant to look at and can be a breeding ground for different parasites, but they can also tarnish the appeal of a place, leaving a negative impression on visitors (Debbagh & Azouaoui, 2021); improper waste is sore eyes and can negatively affect the destination's attractiveness and the tourists' overall experience. Hatzithomas et al. (2021) and Mangali and Ortaleza (2021) emphasized that a clean destination is crucial because it enhances the comfort of tourists and has been documented as a defining attribute of their experiences and future intentions to revisit. Further cementing the importance of cleanliness as a vital factor influencing overall tourist satisfaction, a clean environment leads to a more pleasant experience.

Table 4 presents data that analyzes the correlation between different factors that contribute to the appeal of a place, such as access, amenities, local community, and scenery and the overall perception of the destination into three categories; cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions. The correlations provided in the table are all statistically significant at the 0.01 level, indicating strong confidence in the reliability of the results. All factors of destination image and destination attractiveness have an overall highly significant relation, indicating a strong and positive correlation between how a destination is perceived and how appealing it is to potential visitors (Wee & Mokhtarian, 2023). Raimkulov et al. (2021) emphasized that destination image and attractiveness are functionally interrelated; this interdependence highlights the need for integrated destination management strategies that focus not only on physical and service-related enhancements but also on shaping and communicating a compelling image of the destination.

Cognitive Dimension: The highest correlation in the cognitive dimension is with scenery (.499), suggesting that tourists' knowledge or perception of the destination's scenery has the most substantial influence on their overall image of the destination. This implies that the scenic attributes of a destination are crucial in forming tourists' cognitive impressions (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020).

Affective Dimension: Amenities show a strong correlation (.405), indicating that amenities significantly affect how tourists feel about the destination emotionally. Researchers like Zhou and Zhang (2022) have found that tourists' feelings about a place's "quality" and "value" have a big impact on their emotional connections to it. This is because services affect people emotionally. Improving the quality of amenities and coming up with new, unique experiences can boost this emotional reaction, leading to a stronger emotional connection, repeat visits, and positive recommendations.

Table 5
Relationship between destination image to tourist experience

Variable	r_{xy}	p-value	Interpretation
Cognitive to Tourist Experience	.581**	0.000	Highly Significant
Affective to Tourist Experience	.548**	Agree	Highly Significant
Conative to Tourist Experience	.476**	Agree	Highly Significant

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

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

Conative Dimension: Access shows a strong correlation in the conative dimension (.430), suggesting that ease of access is a critical factor influencing tourists' intentions or likelihood of visiting the destination. The study by Zhou and Zhang (2022) shows how important infrastructure and its growth are in determining a destination's competitiveness in the conative dimension, which looks at the actual steps tourists take to visit it and how practical factors like access affect those steps. Making things easier to get to, like through better transportation networks, visa processes, or information availability, can make visiting a lot more likely, turning potential interest into actual trip plans (Alcocer & Ruiz, 2019).

In conclusion, access and scenery consistently show strong correlations across all three dimensions of destination image, highlighting their significant role in shaping tourists' rational perceptions, emotions, and future behavioral intentions. The cognitive dimensions of the destination image are highly attributed to factors of attractiveness, like access and scenery. In contrast, the affective dimension is highly attributed to the amenities in the destination. The conative dimension, on the other hand, is primarily shaped by the accessibility of the destination. This indicates that the various components of the destination image have different levels of influence on the destination's attractiveness. The overall correlations across all dimensions show that these factors collectively contribute to the tourists' overall image of the destination.

Table 5 presents data that analyzes the correlation between different factors that contribute to the tourist experience, entertainment, educational, escape, and aesthetic overall perception of the destination into three categories: cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions. The correlations provided in the table are all statistically significant at the 0.01 level, indicating strong confidence in the reliability of the results. All factors of destination image and tourist experience have an overall highly significant relation, indicating a strong and positive correlation between them. This suggests that a positive destination image greatly influences tourists' satisfaction, perceived value, and likelihood of returning or recommending the destination to others (Škravan *et al.*, 2021). Afshardoost and Eshaghi (2020) discussed that the destination image is a multidimensional construct that significantly shapes tourists' expectations and evaluations of their experiences. When all related factors are significantly related, it highlights the holistic nature of tourism, that all components play an integral role in shaping a meaningful tourist experience (Xu, 2022).

Cognitive Dimension: Entertainment shows the highest correlation (.510), indicating that fun and engaging activities are crucial in shaping tourists' cognitive perceptions of the destination. The high correlation between entertainment and tourists' cognitive perceptions corresponds to the study of

Afshardoost and Eshaghi (2020), which suggests that destination attractiveness, including entertainment and leisure activities, is significantly related to tourists' destination loyalty behavior. Entertainment options can also shape how the destination is perceived in terms of its vibrancy, offering, and appeal (Alcocer & Ruiz, 2019). Furthermore, entertainment is crucial in the era of social media and peer reviews Huang (2018). Tourists are likely to share their experiences, which becomes a part of the destination's image online, further influencing the cognitive perceptions of potential tourists.

Affective Dimension: Aesthetic experiences have the strongest correlation (.455) within this dimension, highlighting that the beauty and visual appeal of the destination are significant in forming emotional connections. Educational experiences also have a strong correlation (.483), suggesting that learning opportunities significantly enhance tourists' knowledge and perception of the destination. A fascinating observation arises when examining the entire experience, which exhibits the strongest connection (.581) inside the cognitive dimension. This supports the idea that tourists' overall perceptions are influenced by a combination of many events, highlighting the significance of a complete destination experience that combines entertainment, education, beauty, and other elements to create a total mental image (Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). When we shift our attention to the whole emotional experience, we observe a stronger connection (0.548), indicating a greater emphasis on the combined emotional effects of these different events. The emotional reaction evoked by a combination of offerings significantly influences visitors' feelings about the site (Alcocer & Ruiz, 2019). The consequence is evident: places that carefully select and combine a diverse range of experiences, incorporating elements of beauty, education, and entertainment, have the potential to create stronger emotional bonds and deeper cognitive impressions in the brains of tourists.

Conative Dimension: Aesthetic experiences again show the highest correlation (.519), indicating that beautiful environments not only affect emotions but also strongly motivate tourists to engage more deeply or return to the destination. Aesthetic experiences' impact on tourists' motivation and engagement is supported by findings from Zhou and Zhang (2022). and Le *et al.* (2019), which highlight the attractiveness of a destination as a key driver for tourism competitiveness and suggest that appealing environments are likely to incentivize tourist engagement and repeat visits.

In conclusion, across all three dimensions, aesthetic experiences show the highest correlation with destination image, suggesting that a destination's visual and sensory appeal plays a crucial role in shaping the cognitive, affective, and conative. The escape experience has a relatively weak influence

on all three dimensions of the destination image. Tangible and identifiable factors, such as entertainment and aesthetic experiences, highly influence the destination image in terms of tourists' rational perceptions and knowledge, evoking emotion and future behavioral intentions. The findings suggest that destinations should focus on enhancing tangible offerings rather than relying solely on the emotional appeal of providing an escape to better shape tourists' overall image and increasing their satisfaction, loyalty, and recommendations.

B. Proposed Framework

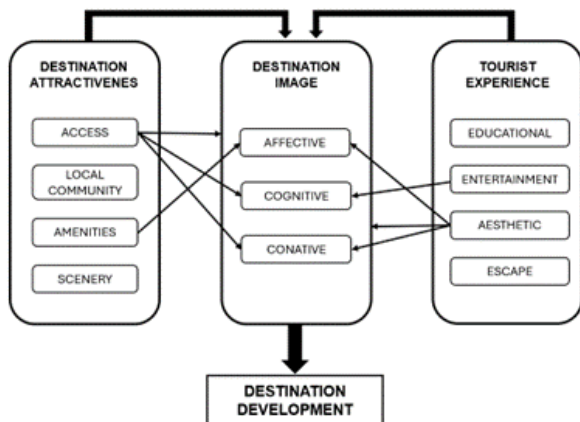


Fig. 1. JLR Framework for destination development of central Visayas

The proposed framework is derived from the data interpretation and findings. It outlines the key variables and sub-variables that are employed, along with how they relate to one another. The JLR Framework offers a visual process demonstrating how these components support a destination's overall development and growth, using destination attractiveness, tourist experience, and destination image as the foundation for destination development. A comprehensive tourism management model that highlights the interdependence of numerous components essential to destination development and fosters sustainability, growth, and competitiveness is another way the framework exemplifies the complexity of tourism.

The proposed framework is a combination of different concepts such as destination attractiveness (Reitsamer et al., 2016), destination image (Michael et al., 2017; Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020), and tourist experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Lee et al., 2021) to offer a holistic view on tourism development. The interconnectedness of these components underscores the importance of a multifaceted approach to tourism management and development, contributing to the destination's long-term success and competitiveness. The Product Life Cycle (PLC) by Vernon (1960) and Butler's (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC) shared similarities with the proposed destination development framework for Central Visayas. While the PLC and TALC models focus on the different stages of a product and destination, such as the introductory stage and the decline stage, they recognize the importance of managing and sustaining the destination.

Destination attractiveness indicates four main components of access, local community, amenities, and scenery, based on

Crompton's (1979) Push and Pull Theory, which was used by Reitsamer et al (2016) to examine the attractiveness of the destination; Push and Pull Theory illustrates the different factors of a destination that attract tourists, which are physical attributes such as access, local community, and natural beauty. The destination image in the framework utilizes affective, cognitive, and conative dimensions, which aligns with Michael et al. (2017) and Afshardoost & Eshaghi (2020), who state that the destination image is comprised of knowledge (cognitive), emotions (affective), and they impact tourist behavior and decision making and lastly the behavioral action (conative) which is influenced by the affective and cognitive images, which creates an important relationship for future behavioral actions. For the tourist experience, four types of experience were identified: educational, entertainment, aesthetic, and escape, which is consistent with Pine and Gilmore's (1999) model of Experience Economy, which reflects modern tourism activity. Finally, the last component of the framework is the destination development, which consists of the processes resulting from the interplay of destination appeal, tourist experience, and destination image.

Each sub-factor of destination attractiveness, destination image, and tourist experience is ranked according to the strongest component based on the study's findings and analysis, as shown in the framework. Access emerged as the strongest component of destination attractiveness in Central Visayas, followed by the local community, amenities, and scenery. The educational experience is the strongest component of the tourist experience, followed by entertainment, aesthetics, and escape. Lastly, the affective image has the strongest impact on the destination image, with the affective aspect being the most significant factor, followed by cognitive and conative in shaping the overall image of a destination.

The arrows above represent the connections between destination attractiveness and tourist experience to the overall destination image and the complexities in this intersection of factors. The arrows between destination attractiveness, tourist experience, and destination image use an arrow indicating a "two-way" relationship. This indicates the destination attractiveness, and tourist experience can both help create a positive destination image for the destination. The positive relationship creates a competitive edge in the tourism sector, and supports overall destination development. Furthermore, when both destination attractiveness and the quality of the tourist experience are enhanced, they contribute to a positive destination image. This positive image contributes to destination attractiveness and tourism experience, which will help attract more visitors and increase the destination's overall success in the tourism industry.

In terms of the subfactors for destination attractiveness, access has the most significant relationship to the overall destination image, as indicated by the arrow pointing to the destination image; this implies that among the different elements that make a destination attractive to tourists, access plays the most crucial role in shaping the overall image of Central Visayas. Access has long been recognized as one of the major driving forces of destination attractiveness and a key

factor influencing travel decisions among tourists (Reitsamer *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, when a destination is easily accessible, it has a stronger influence on the image of the destination, and no matter how beautiful or culturally rich a destination might be, if it is difficult to reach, potential visitors may have a less favorable image of the destination.

Aesthetic experience has the most significant relation to all subfactors of the tourist experience to the overall destination image, as indicated by the arrow pointing to the destination image; this implies that sensory enjoyment and appreciation of the destination's beauty have the strongest influence on the overall destination image of Central Visayas. The aesthetic experience entails tourists sensing and valuing both the objective elements of their destination and the ambient environment (Jebbouri *et al.*, 2022). Throughout this process, travelers become truly engaged with their surroundings. When the destination offers beautiful views or an impressive cultural atmosphere, these aesthetic qualities can evoke strong positive emotional reactions (affective), increase the overall knowledge or perception of the destination (cognitive), and influence tourists' intentions to revisit or recommend the place (conative). An *et al.* (2019) support this claim by mentioning that the most important factor for tourists is the aesthetic of a destination, in which aesthetic appreciation entails a reasoning component (Şimşek, 2023), and when tourists find inspiration in the beauty of the destination's environment, it motivates them to explore and engage in different activities in the destination.

Furthermore, the framework also shows the connection of the strongest sub-factors that influence each of the sub-factors of the destination image. The amenities component of destination attractiveness and the aesthetic experience of the tourist experience have the strongest relationship to the affective component. The availability of amenities and aesthetic qualities of the destination shape emotions, influencing the overall perception of the destination. The stronger the appeal of these elements, the more positive the emotional response, and shaped people's image of the destination. The access component of destination attractiveness and the entertainment experience of the tourist experience has the strongest relationship to the cognitive component of the destination image. The accessibility of the destination and entertainment options available makes it more perceived to be a positive, informed view of that destination, shaping how people think about the place and influencing their overall cognitive perception. Lastly, the access component of destination attractiveness and the aesthetic experience of the tourist experience have the strongest relationship to the conative component of the destination image. The more accessible and visually appealing a destination is, the more likely tourists act on their behavioral intentions. These factors strongly influence the actions and future decisions of tourists, such as recommending and revisiting intentions, shaping the overall conative perception of the destination.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

Central Visayas holds a strong position as a desirable tourist destination with overall favorable perceptions in terms of destination attractiveness, tourist experience, and destination

image. Scenery, with the highest mean rating, emerges as the most significant factor in the attractiveness of Central Visayas, suggesting that the natural and cultural landscapes are paramount in the minds of tourists. Accessibility is crucial, emphasizing the importance of ease of transportation and infrastructure. While rated slightly lower, the local community and amenities still play important roles in contributing to the destination's appeal, indicating that tourists appreciate a holistic experience that includes interactions with locals and the quality of facilities. Tourist experience in Central Visayas is positively rated, with aesthetic experience identified as the most influential factor. This aligns with the importance placed on scenery in the attractiveness category and reinforces the idea that natural beauty and cultural richness are pivotal to visitor satisfaction. The destination image is strong across its cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions. Notably, the conative dimension scores the highest, showing that tourists are likely to participate in positive behaviors such as revisiting and promoting the destination.

Central Visayas's Destination Marketing efforts should utilize its scenic attractions, such as natural and cultural resources. Local tourism offices should enhance the destination's visual appeal, as this impacts tourists' cognitive impressions of the destination. Preserving and improving the destination's natural and cultural attributes must be highlighted in marketing efforts, as these features significantly shape the destination's cognitive image. Local Government units must focus on improving infrastructure and connectivity within the region. Transportation and infrastructure are key factors driving the country's tourism industry. Improving these aspects will enable tourists to enjoy the destination and attract more tourists. Moreover, partnering with different transportation providers such as airlines and water transport is essential to provide efficiency in reaching neighboring provinces, especially due to the region's geographical formation. Local Community engagement in tourism projects that promote authentic cultural exchanges affects tourist experiences. Local government units need to strengthen the presence of community-based tourism in the destination by prioritizing the local community in tourism planning and development and diversifying ways to showcase local customs and traditions, enabling them to empower their community. Diversify tourism offerings in the region, such as educational, entertainment, and aesthetic activities, to enhance the overall experience of tourists and ultimately lead to the attractiveness and positive image of the destination. Local government units, local communities, and investors must come together to develop unique tourism products that can differentiate Central Visayas from other destinations to enhance its competitive advantage. This can include eco-tourism packages, cultural immersion experiences, or adventure tourism that leverages the natural terrain as the destination's most attractive aspect. Continued research in tourism is imperative, as it is a dynamic and ever-changing phenomenon that has also brought about generational changes. Thus, continuous data collection and analysis are imperative to have updated knowledge to help guide the strategies for destination development. Doing the study again as Central Visayas

officially has only two provinces left (Cebu and Bohol). Siquijor and Negros Oriental, together with Negros Occidental, are now part of a new region which is the Negros Island Region. It would be good to know if there will be changes in the results. Future studies should include demographic profiling in looking at the profile of respondents and replication of the study in other parts of the Philippines to compare results, which can be added to the body of knowledge. Also, compare the dynamics of destination attractiveness, tourist experience, and destination image to other parts of the Philippines to help identify the best features and attributes of different variables to have a consolidated output that could be the basis for a uniform destination development framework in the Philippines.

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