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## Examining the Tourism Development in Bulacan Province, Philippines: Assessing Factors Shaping Tourism Growth

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### ABSTRACT

This research endeavors to assess the current state of tourism in Bulacan Province in the Philippines, examining the factors that influence its growth. It aims to provide valuable insights for local policymakers, stakeholders, and industry practitioners. Employing a quantitative approach, data is collected through surveys and statistical analyses to gain a comprehensive understanding of tourism dynamics in Bulacan. Key factors affecting tourism expansion, such as landscape, accessibility, and hospitality, are closely examined. Challenges faced by tourists, particularly in transportation and accommodation, are highlighted as significant factors influencing their experiences. Strategies to address these challenges are explored, offering practical recommendations to enhance the province's tourism potential. The study's findings contribute to the existing knowledge on destination management and regional tourism development. They offer guidance to policymakers, tourism planners, and industry stakeholders in devising effective strategies to leverage Bulacan's unique attributes, promoting sustainable tourism growth and establishing the province as a prominent tourist destination.

### INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is pivotal for economic advancement and possesses the potential to invigorate financial systems (Dhungana, 2023). Moreover, tourism is acknowledged as a potent catalyst for progress in developing nations (Khan *et al.*, 2020). Presently, tourism stands as a crucial component in bolstering the global economy and represents a principal revenue stream for both developed and emerging nations (Costa, 2017). While the benefits of tourism are widely acknowledged, there are also accompanying drawbacks, including threats to traditional lifestyles, environmental degradation, conflicts with visitors, and others (Obradović & Tešin, 2023). Despite the recognized negative impacts of economic expansion, a significant strategic objective for numerous destination managers worldwide remains the pursuit of tourism growth (Dwyer, 2023).

Analyzing the characteristics of tourists visiting destinations is proposed to enhance territorial competitiveness. This includes understanding their accommodation preferences, travel methods, primary motivations for the trip, popular tourist attractions, tourist spending patterns, and overall destination ratings (Viñán-Ludeña *et al.*, 2022). Recognizing the factors contributing to a positive tourist experience is crucial for sustaining and enhancing tourism competitiveness (De Los Reyes & Dael, 2023). Various factors influence tourists to revisit certain destinations more frequently than others (Mehedi *et al.*, 2022). In recent times, challenges such as terrorism, epidemics, and political tensions leading to economic blockades have heightened risks and threats for destinations, affecting tourist mobility (Pelit *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, dissatisfactory experiences could diminish

the overall value of hybrid tourism experiences offered, potentially lowering overall satisfaction and loyalty. This, in turn, may adversely affect the financial performance of companies involved in delivering tourism experiences (Sotiriadis & Gursoy, 2016).

Different regions of the Philippines attract travelers from around the globe seeking relaxation (Dyvette *et al.*, 2022). In Bulacan Province, tourism is gradually rebounding from the COVID-19 pandemic's impact. In 2022, the province welcomed 2.9 million tourists, marking a 13% rise from the prior year but still below the pre-pandemic level of 4.2 million in 2019 (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2020). The Department of Tourism (DOT) supports the provincial government's efforts to revive tourism. Bulacan boasts developed infrastructure, economic growth potential, and a relatively low cost of living, making it an attractive and affordable destination. The provincial government and DOT collaborate to promote Bulacan tourism. Despite progress, challenges persist in fully revitalizing tourism. While prior studies highlight the potential of tourism development plans (Madlangbayan, 2021), Bulacan's tourism sector remains uncertain about their effectiveness.

Understanding factors driving tourism growth is pivotal for informed decision-making by governments, businesses, and individuals, fostering economic development. Thus, this study aims to comprehensively assess Bulacan's tourism landscape and analyze factors shaping its growth. Insight into these factors guides sustainable and enjoyable tourism experiences for both visitors and local communities. The study's findings will enrich existing literature on the significance of the tourism industry and offer insights into Bulacan's tourism growth,

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informing strategies to promote regional tourism. As the industry expands, collaborative efforts to ensure its enduring sustainability are crucial, rendering this research highly significant.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Tourism and the Economy

Tourism and economic development share a symbiotic relationship, as each relies on the other for sustenance (IvyPanda, 2020). Tourism not only enhances the economic revenue but also generates numerous employment opportunities, facilitates infrastructure development, and fosters cultural exchanges between foreigners and locals (Yehia, 2019). The significant employment opportunities created by the tourism sector contribute significantly to the economy, along with its positive impacts on revenue, overall income, and production (Manzoor *et al.*, 2019). Ren *et al.*, (2019) highlight tourism as a primary driver of regional development and economic activity in many countries. Comerio and Strozzi (2019) underscore the potential of the tourism industry to bolster a country's economic growth by attracting tourists and enhancing its brand value, image, and identity. Furthermore, Manzoor *et al.* (2019) enumerate various components of the tourism industry, including local and international transportation, accommodations, sightseeing, and dining, emphasizing its broad impact.

Despite the wealth of studies on tourism's economic impact worldwide, comprehensive reviews are scarce. Hence, this study conducts a thorough literature review to assess the current research landscape and provide directions for future investigations into tourism's economic ramifications. Empirical studies predominantly emphasize how tourism catalyzes economic growth (Rasool *et al.*, 2021). The World Travel and Tourism Council (2021) underscores the pivotal role of travel and tourism in job creation, estimating that it accounts for 1 in 4 jobs globally, amounting to approximately 334 million positions and contributing 10.6% of global GDP. Ribeiro and Wang (2020) highlight the increasing interest among researchers in understanding tourism's impact on economic growth, with tourism often fostering economic diversification and reducing reliance on traditional industries (Khan *et al.*, 2020).

Examining the status of tourism in Bulacan and identifying factors influencing its growth parallels having a roadmap for local development. Such insights not only reveal areas of success but also pinpoint areas needing improvement, guiding the formulation of policies and initiatives aimed at fostering a vibrant and sustainable tourism sector.

### Bulacan Tourism

Nestled in the heart of Far East Asia, Bulacan stands as a province within the Republic of the Philippines, centrally located in the country's Central Luzon Region, just north of Manila, the bustling capital city. Renowned for its rich historical heritage and vibrant culture, Bulacan has

flourished into an urban center boasting well-developed infrastructure and economic potential, positioned for further growth (Madlangbayan, 2021). Home to notable figures and adorned with numerous tourist attractions and historical landmarks, the province has swiftly emerged as a key player in Philippine tourism, its significance deeply rooted in the nation's history and cultural tapestry (David, 2021; Calingasan, 2021).

Nevertheless, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic cast a shadow over the Philippines' tourism industry, causing detrimental effects on both macroeconomic and microeconomic fronts (Kalonda, 2023). Despite the challenges, the Department of Tourism (DOT) has pledged its commitment to revitalizing tourism in Bulacan, aiming to mitigate the economic setbacks wrought by the pandemic. Legislative measures, such as the approval of House Bill 6815, underscore the government's proactive stance in providing economic stimulus packages tailored to support tourism enterprises and infrastructure development in Bulacan and across the nation (Gonzales, 2023).

The pandemic's impact on tourism in Bulacan has been substantial, leading to a notable decline in tourist activity across the region. Although historically renowned sites continue to attract visitors, overall tourism in Bulacan has faced challenges in recent years, exacerbated by the pandemic-induced downturn. However, with concerted efforts from the provincial government, initiatives aimed at rejuvenating tourism in Bulacan are underway.

Bulacan's strategic proximity to Metro Manila and its remarkable population growth rate underscore its appeal as an emerging tourist destination (UNWTO, 2019; Bayan, 2021). With a predominantly urban population, Bulacan's allure lies in its rich historical narrative and cultural heritage, driving a thriving tourism industry valued at two billion pesos and supporting the livelihoods of thousands (Velasco, 2022). Hidden within its borders are countless treasures awaiting exploration, beckoning travelers to uncover Bulacan's diverse offerings (Villareal, 2021).

### Factors affecting the Tourists to visit a destination

Tourism serves as a pivotal driver of economic and social advancement across the globe, as noted by Yehia, (2019). Responsible management of tourism ensures mutual benefits for both visitors and local communities, fostering sustainability for the future. Tourists' perceptions profoundly influence their travel choices, encompassing destination selection, activities, and accommodations (Jiang *et al.*, 2022). Positive perceptions translate into increased tourist spending, thereby bolstering local economies and businesses. Various elements such as attractions, amenities, infrastructure, transportation, and hospitality collectively shape a destination's appeal (Mim *et al.*, 2022). Notably, tourism contributes significantly to local infrastructure development and enhancement (Mim *et al.*, 2022). Abdellatif *et al.*, (2015) underscore the pivotal role of a destination's image in attracting tourists,

where positive perceptions create allure while negative perceptions may deter potential visitors. Ali, (2018) research highlights the significance of destination-bound factors such as transportation systems, accommodations, and local cuisine in influencing tourists' expenditures and satisfaction levels.

Moreover, Shaikh *et al.*, (2020) emphasize tourism as a key generator of employment, revenue, and cultural support. Tourists develop discernment regarding the most significant factors influencing their travel decisions (Shaikh *et al.*, 2020). Understanding these factors, as highlighted by Mihai *et al.*, (2023), is paramount in comprehending consumers' decision-making processes when selecting vacation destinations. The decision-making process is influenced by a myriad of internal and external factors, as elucidated by Kyriakaki *et al.*, (2020). While glacier landscapes attract millions of tourists annually, studies on the impact of landscape changes on visitor behavior remain limited (Salim *et al.*, 2021). Distance and price emerge as primary determinants shaping tourists' decision-making processes (Hooper, 2014), echoing foundational concepts in economic geography.

The resident-tourist relationship is increasingly recognized as pivotal for sustainable tourism (Linderová *et al.*, 2021). Destination attractiveness is not an isolated product but rather a synthesis of various attributes considered by travelers (Adinegara, 2017). Environmental quality, including the aesthetic appeal and upkeep of surroundings, emerges as a significant factor influencing tourist visits. The condition of a destination profoundly impacts tourists' preferences and choices, reflecting their desires and expectations. Consequently, environmental quality stands out as a critical determinant shaping tourists' destination choices and experiences.

### Challenges of Tourists Encounters

The appeal of travel often lies in its unpredictability and sense of adventure. If absolute predictability were the norm, we might all opt for meticulously planned river cruises with our grandparents. However, while unpredictability adds excitement, encountering troublesome travel issues is never welcomed (Thoesen, 2022). Notably, challenges such as insufficient public transportation and traffic congestion are prevalent in many tourist destinations (Kantawateera *et al.*, 2015). The accommodation sector significantly influences the appeal of a host destination (Nicolaia *et al.*, 2021), with lodging choices reflecting tourists' needs and expectations (Sharpley, 2000). Furthermore, effective communication, particularly through language, is pivotal for interactions between tourists and local industry stakeholders (Zalil & Lim, 2022).

Safety and security concerns have increasingly become focal points for tourism studies since the 1970s (Hamarneh & Jeřábek, 2018), alongside rising environmental awareness and demand for quality experiences (Mihalič, 2000). Cultural sensitivity, an integral aspect of tourism, facilitates meaningful interactions between

tourists and hosts, yet remains underconceptualized in tourism contexts (Mathabathe, 2019). Additionally, travel expenses pose challenges, with unexpected fees often inflating budgets significantly (Weisbaum, 2018). This framework comprehensively addresses the myriad difficulties tourists encounter when visiting destinations, including transportation, security, language barriers, lodging, and budget concerns, each potentially disrupting travel experiences.

Tourists face a multitude of challenges when exploring destinations, particularly in navigating transportation systems (Kantawateera *et al.*, 2015) and addressing physical accessibility concerns, especially for older tourists (Uribe *et al.*, 2022). In the hospitality sector, despite its profitability, hotel businesses grapple with various operational challenges (Mistry, 2023). Effective communication is key, considering cultural variations in nonverbal cues (Zucchet, 2023), while disaster risk management remains crucial for resort management (Sangat, 2023). Tourist zones often attract criminal activities due to the transient nature of tourists and lax security measures (Glensor & Peak, 2004), while tourists may inadvertently disrespect local customs and traditions (Peng, 2023).

Furthermore, tourism significantly contributes to waste generation and environmental impacts, while pricing disparities between tourists and locals may lead to discontent (Obersteiner, 2021; Everett, 2017). This framework underscores the multitude of challenges tourists encounter across various destinations, highlighting the importance of awareness and mitigation strategies.

### Tourism Development Planning

The evolution of tourism development planning has traversed various dimensions, often prioritizing economic and physical aspects of territories, which have proven insufficient in ensuring balanced and sustainable growth over time (Sosa, 2022). Presently, the primary objective of tourism planning is to manage the unprecedented expansion of tourism, curbing its adverse social and environmental impacts while maximizing benefits for local communities (Dallan, 2022). Stainton (2023) asserts that integrating tourism planning into destination development plans is essential for achieving optimal outcomes and satisfying all stakeholders. Sustainable tourism development management aims to fulfill tourists' needs, provide meaningful experiences, enhance sustainability awareness, and promote sustainable practices (treimikiene, 2021). Sustainable tourism development encompasses balanced economic, social, and cultural progress without jeopardizing the environment, fostering equal or enhanced development levels (Najdeska & Rakicevik, 2012).

Effective tourism planning, particularly in development initiatives, necessitates comprehensive consideration and meticulous planning to mitigate negative social, cultural, and environmental impacts while ensuring balanced growth (Sosa, 2022). Crafting a tourism development

plan offers numerous advantages, including meeting visitor expectations and needs, while incorporating all relevant aspects into the planning process.

As with any human endeavor, tourism, without proper planning, can yield catastrophic outcomes (Wariboko, 2016). Sustainable tourism development planning emerges as the foremost strategy to manage the challenges posed by the dynamic tourism landscape (Najdeska & Rakicevic, 2012). Quality of life forms the crux of tourism planning and development decisions for host community residents (Chase & Phillips, 2023). Despite being part of the broader strategic planning system, tourism planning is distinct due to its multifaceted economic and cultural dimensions (Chen *et al.*, 2015). At the local level, tourism planning becomes an integral component of development initiatives (Tamang, 2023). Tourism development planning serves as a vital framework for orchestrating sustainable growth, enhancing infrastructure, preserving cultural heritage, and fostering community engagement. This strategic approach enables diversification, economic stimulation, and effective risk management, ensuring well-rounded and meticulously administered tourist destinations.

In the context of this study, the status and growth of tourism significantly influence the tourism industry, impacting tourists' decisions regarding destination choices. These studies resonate with the analysis of factors contributing to tourism growth in the Province of Bulacan and the challenges experienced by tourists when visiting the region.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study utilized a descriptive quantitative research approach to systematically investigate the factors driving tourism growth in the Province of Bulacan through a comprehensive analysis. This method aligns with descriptive research, aiming to provide an overall summary of data, including measures of averages and variability (Bhandari, 2020). The research endeavors to uncover the factors influencing tourism growth, offering strategic insights with the ultimate goal of proposing actionable recommendations to foster the growth of tourism in the Province of Bulacan.

Survey research, defined as the collection of information

from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions (Ponto, 2015), was employed as the data collection method, utilizing a convenience sampling approach to select participants. Considering the population of the Province of Bulacan, which stood at 3,708,890 in 2020, and the significant increase in tourist arrivals to 1,045,184 in 2022, a sample size of 100 tourists across different municipalities was deemed appropriate. Convenience sampling, based on ease of access and willingness to participate, was employed to select respondents, ensuring alignment with the study objectives and availability of participants. Ethical considerations, participant consent, and organized data collection procedures were prioritized in devising the sampling strategy.

The main research instrument comprised researcher-made questionnaires tailored to gather data from tourists, incorporating Likert scale questions to assess various aspects related to tourism growth in the Province of Bulacan. The questionnaire encompassed checkbox questions to gather respondent profiles, natural tourist attractions visited, and Likert scale questions to evaluate factors influencing tourist visits and challenges encountered during their visits.

In the data gathering procedure, the researchers conducted face-to-face surveys at selected tourist attractions, obtaining consent from coordinators and managers before distributing questionnaires to 100 convenience respondents. The researchers explained the questionnaire to each respondent to ensure clarity before proceeding with the survey. Data processing involved descriptive statistics such as graphs and interpretation tables to summarize respondent answers. Likert scale interpretation was utilized to calculate frequencies, percentages, and weighted average means, enabling the identification and understanding of factors contributing to tourism growth in the Province of Bulacan (Rawat, 2021). This methodological approach facilitated a comprehensive analysis of tourism dynamics and insights into potential areas for development and improvement in the province.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1.1 presents the findings regarding the frequency

**Table 1:** Profile of the tourists in selected attractions in the Province of Bulacan

**Table 1.1:** Age

Indicators (Age of Respondents)	Frequency	Percentage
19 - 29	77	77%
30 - 39	6	6%
40 - 49	10	10%
50 and above	7	7%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

and proportion of respondents' ages. Analysis of the table indicates that the age group 19 - 29 constitutes

the highest percentage at 77%, whereas the age group 30 - 39 represents the lowest percentage at 6%. This

data suggests that the majority of tourists fall within the early adulthood category. This trend aligns with studies

indicating that millennials prioritize travel more than previous generations (Leonhardt, 2019).

**Table 1.2:** Gender

Indicators (Gender of Respondents)	Frequency	Percentage
Male	22	22%
Female	77	77%
Prefer not to say	1	1%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

Table 1.2 displays the outcomes regarding the frequency and proportion of respondents' genders. Examination of the table reveals that females account for the highest percentage, standing at 77%. Conversely, individuals who preferred not to disclose their gender constitute the lowest percentage, at 1%. These findings indicate

a predominance of female tourists. This observation is consistent with research by Collins & Tisdell (2002), which suggests that women engage in leisure travel, including visits to friends and relatives, more frequently than men.

**Table 1.3:** Address

Indicators (Address of Respondents)	Frequency	Percentage
Inside the Province of Bulacan	76	76%
Outside the Province of Bulacan	24	24%
Outside the Philippines	0	0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

Table 1.3 presents the findings regarding the frequency and proportion of respondents' addresses. Analysis of the table indicates that individuals residing within their own province constitute the highest percentage, accounting for 76%. Conversely, there is no percentage of foreign addresses among the respondents. These results suggest

that the majority of tourists are residents of their own province. This observation aligns with the notion that exploring one's own city can offer refreshing experiences and new perspectives about the familiar surroundings (Bres, 2019)

**Table 1.4:** Employment Status

Indicators (Employment Status of Respondents)	Frequency	Percentage
Employed	19	19%
Self-Employed	27	27%
Unemployed	54	54%
<b>Total</b>		<b>100%</b>

Table 1.4 illustrates the findings concerning the frequency and proportion of respondents' employment statuses. Upon examining the table, it is evident that unemployed tourists constitute the highest percentage, accounting for 54%. Conversely, the lowest percentage, at 19%, corresponds to tourists who are employed. These results indicate that a significant portion of tourists tends to travel more frequently while they are unemployed.

The researchers prepared and provided checkbox questions that pertain to the different natural attractions in the Province of Bulacan to know the possible range of the highest attraction to choose by the respondents. The respondents show their perspective through checking more than one of the choices that the researchers have provided.

**Table 2:** Selected tourist attractions in the Province of Bulacan

Selected tourist attractions in the Province of Bulacan	Frequency
Bautista Mansion (Malolos, Bulacan)	12
Basilica Minore De Immaculada Conception (Malolos, Bulacan)	30
Barasoain Church (Malolos, Bulacan)	78
Casa Real Shrine (Malolos, Bulacan)	27
Barasoain Ecclesiastical Museum (Malolos, Bulacan)	38
Bulacan Museum (Malolos, Bulacan)	28

Meyto Shrine ( Calumpit, Bulacan)	10
St. John the Baptist (Calumpit, Bulacan)	21
Bagbag Bridge (Calumpit, Bulacan)	26
Calumpit River (Calumpit, Bulacan)	26
Enriquez Ancestral House (Bulakan, Bulacan)	5
Marcelo H. Del Pilar Shrine (Bulakan, Bulacan)	30
Battle of Quingua (Plaridel, Bulacan)	6
Simborio Church (Plaridel, Bulacan)	4
Museo San Ysidro De Pulilan (Pulilan, Bulacan)	7
Pulilan Butterfly Haven and Resort (Pulilan, Bulacan)	14
Shrine of Saint Andrew Kim (Bocau, Bulacan)	27
Francisco Balagtas Museum (Balagtas, Bulacan)	8
Garden City (Guiguinto, Bulacan)	12

Table 2 shows the results for the frequency of visits and familiarity among respondents. The table clearly shows that the Barasoain Church in Malolos, Bulacan, had the highest frequency. The findings show that 78 out of

100 respondents have visited and are familiar with the Barasoain Church. This recognition is due to the church being known as the “Cradle of Democracy in the East” (Angiwan, 2018).

**Table 3:** Status of Tourism in the Province of Bulacan

**Table 3.1:** Domestic Tourism Influx

Region/Province/City	Domestic Travelers
Province of Bulacan	113,281

*Regional Distribution of Overnight Travelers. As of 2021 (DOT, 2023)*

According to data from the Department of Tourism (tourism.gov.ph), Table 3.1 provides an overview of Domestic Travelers in the Province of Bulacan for the year 2021, totaling 113,281 individuals. Domestic tourism is recognized for its potential to stimulate the

local economy, as travelers contribute to spending on accommodation, dining, and recreational activities, thereby supporting local enterprises and employment opportunities (Abbasi, 2023).

**Table 3.2:** International Tourism Influx

Regional Distribution of Overnight Travelers As of 2021 (DOT, 2023)	
Region/Province/City	Foreign Travelers
Province of Bulacan	670

Based on the Department of Tourism (tourism.gov.ph) Table 3.2 shows the distribution of International Travelers in the year of 2021 in the Province of Bulacan. It has a total of 670 travelers. Globalization has made it easier for countries to grow their economies via tourism,

as travelers from other countries can easily come and visit. International tourists are much more valuable than their domestic counterparts. Thus, for countries hoping to make money from tourism, it's crucial to attract visitors from outside their borders (Abbasi, 2023).

**Table 4:** Frequency, Weighted Mean and Descriptive Interpretation of Factors that affect tourists to visit the tourist attractions in the Province of Bulacan

**Table 4.1:** Landscape

Indicators	1	2	3	4	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
<b>Landscapes</b>						
Visiting the tourist attraction in the Province of Bulacan because of its historical landmarks and historical sites <i>Pagbisita sa atraksyong panturista sa Lalawigan ng Bulacan dahil sa mga makasaysayang historya at mga makasaysayang lugar</i>	5	10	36	49	3.29	Strongly Agree

Visiting the tourist attraction in the Province of Bulacan because of its lush greenery <i>Pagbisita sa atraksyong panturista sa Lalawigan ng Bulacan dahil sa malalago nitong balaman</i>	5	12	55	28	3.06	Agree
Visiting the tourist attraction in the Province of Bulacan because of its mountains and beach attractions <i>Pagbisita sa atraksyong panturista sa Lalawigan ng Bulacan dahil sa mga kabundukan at atraksyon sa dalampasigan</i>	3	19	43	35	3.10	Agree
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>					<b>3.15</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 4.1 presents a condensed overview of findings concerning the factors influencing tourists to visit the Province of Bulacan within the Landscape category. The data reveals that visiting Bulacan’s tourist attractions due to its historical landmarks and sites achieved a weighted mean of 3.29, indicating a strong consensus categorized as ‘strongly agree’. Similarly, visiting the province for its lush greenery garnered a weighted mean of 3.06, signaling agreement. Overall, visiting tourist attractions in Bulacan

received a weighted mean of 3.10, also interpreted as agreement. Consequently, the combined weighted mean for Landscape is 3.15, denoting agreement across the board. Landscape plays a pivotal role in tourism, contributing significantly to the development, marketing, and consumption of tourist destinations. It serves to ignite and sustain tourism markets while inspiring tourist aspirations, perceptions, and behaviors (Terkenli, 2021).

**Table 4.2:** Accessibility

Indicators	1	2	3	4	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
<b>Accessibility</b>						
Visiting the tourist attraction in the Province of Bulacan because of its well-connected transportation networks <i>Pagbisita sa atraksyong panturista sa Lalawigan ng Bulacan dahil sa maayos nitong koneksyon sa mga network ng transportasyon</i>	4	20	53	23	2.95	Agree
Visiting the tourist attraction in the Province of Bulacan because of its public transport without logistics challenges <i>Pagbisita sa atraksyong panturista sa Lalawigan ng Bulacan dahil sa mabilis na pampublikong transportasyon na walang hamon sa logistika</i>	4	33	42	21	2.80	Agree
Visiting the tourist attraction in the Province of Bulacan because of its close proximity to Metro Manila <i>Pagbisita sa atraksyong panturista sa Lalawigan ng Bulacan dahil sa lapit nito sa Metro Manila o ka-maynila-an</i>	8	21	46	25	2.88	Agree
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>					<b>2.87</b>	<b>Agree</b>

According to Table 4.2, accessibility is generally rated at 2.87, indicating an agreement. Specifically, visiting tourist attractions in the Province of Bulacan benefits from well-connected transportation networks, scoring 2.95 with an interpretation of agreement. Moreover, the absence of logistical challenges in public transport contributes to a score of 2.80, also indicating agreement. Additionally, the close proximity of these attractions to Metro Manila yields a score of 2.87, reflecting agreement. The significance of accessibility in tourism lies in its ability to foster a sense of appreciation and welcome for all travelers (Winstead, 2023).

In Table 4.3, the Hospitality category is depicted with an overall weighted mean of 3.20, indicating agreement. Specifically, visiting tourist attractions in the Province of Bulacan benefits from friendly and warm welcome from locals, scoring 3.23 with an interpretation of agreement. Moreover, the local hospitality, personal touch, and quality amenities contribute to a score of 3.20, also indicating agreement. Additionally, the memorable experiences and sense of connection further enhance the score to 3.19, reflecting agreement. The attraction of locals to tourists is often influenced by the belief that a willingness to cultivate personal relationships signifies friendliness (Udoh, 2019).

**Table 4.3:** Hospitality

Indicators	1	2	3	4	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
<b>Hospitality</b>						
Visiting the tourist attraction in the Province of Bulacan because of the friendly and warm welcoming of locals <i>Pagbisita sa atraksyong panturista sa Lalawigan ng Bulacan dahil sa magiliw at mainit na pagtanggap ng mga lokal</i>	3	6	56	35	3.23	Agree
Visiting the tourist attraction in the Province of Bulacan because of the local's good hospitality, personal touch, and good amenities <i>Pagbisita sa atraksyong panturista sa Lalawigan ng Bulacan dahil sa magandang pag-aasikaso ng mga lokal, personal na atensyon, at mga magagandang kagamitan</i>	8	5	46	41	3.20	Agree
Visiting the tourist attraction in the Province of Bulacan because of its memorable stay and sense of connection <i>Pagbisita sa atraksyong panturista sa Lalawigan ng Bulacan dahil sa hindi malilimutang pananatili dito at pakiramdam ng koneksyon</i>	9	3	48	40	3.19	Agree
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>					<b>3.20</b>	<b>Agree</b>

**Table 5:** Frequency, Weighted Mean and Descriptive Interpretation of the challenges tourists encounter when visiting the tourist attractions in the Province of Bulacan

**Table 5.1:** Transportation Challenges

Indicators	1	2	3	4	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
<b>Transportation Challenges</b>						
I experience challenges in traffic congestion when I visit the tourist attractions in the Province of Bulacan <i>Nakakaranas ako ng mga hamon sa pagsisikip ng trapiko kapag bumisita ako sa mga atraksyong panturista sa Lalawigan ng Bulacan</i>	9	8	41	42	3.16	Agree
I experience challenges in limited transportation options, especially in more remote areas when I visit the tourist attractions in the Province of Bulacan <i>Nakakaranas ako ng mga hamon sa limitadong opsyon sa transportasyon, lalo na sa mas malalayong lugar kapag bumisita ako sa mga atraksyong panturista sa Lalawigan ng Bulacan</i>	5	15	45	35	3.1	Agree
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>					<b>3.13</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 5.1 presents a summary of results regarding the frequency of transportation challenges encountered by tourists when visiting tourist destinations in the Province of Bulacan. Personally, I encounter challenges with traffic congestion when visiting these attractions, scoring 3.16 with an interpretation of agreement. Similarly, I face challenges with limited transportation options, particularly in more remote areas of the province, scoring 3.10 with an interpretation of agreement. Consequently, the overall weighted mean for transportation challenges

is 3.13, signifying agreement. Moreover, issues such as lack of public transportation and traffic congestion are significant concerns in numerous tourist destinations (Kantawateera *et al.*, 2015).

In Table 5.2, the challenges related to accommodation encountered by tourists when visiting tourist destinations in the Province of Bulacan are outlined, with an overall weighted mean of 2.66, indicating agreement. Personally, I find limited availability, options, or amenities in accommodation when visiting these attractions, scoring

**Table 5.2:** Accommodation Challenges

Indicators	1	2	3	4	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
<b>Accommodation Challenges</b>						
I experience limited availability, options, or amenities in accommodation when I visit the tourist attractions in the Province of Bulacan <i>Nararanasan ko ang limitadong kakayahang magamit, mga pagpipilian, o kagamitan sa tiraban kapag binisita ko ang mga atraksyong panturista sa Lalawigan ng Bulacan</i>	8	32	46	14	2.66	Agree
I experience standard inconsistency in their accommodation when I visit the tourist attractions in the Province of Bulacan <i>Nakakaranas ako ng hindi pare-parehong kalidad ng kanilang tulhyan kapag bumibisita ako sa mga atraksyon sa Lalawigan ng Bulacan</i>	14	22	47	17	2.67	Agree
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>					<b>2.66</b>	<b>Agree</b>

2.66 with an interpretation of agreement. Similarly, I encounter inconsistency in standards of accommodation in the province, scoring 2.67 with an interpretation of agreement. It is worth noting that while availability of

accommodation is crucial, seasonal demand often poses a significant challenge for accommodation establishments, resorts, and tourist facilities (Gany, 2017).

**Table 5.3:** Language and Communication Challenges

Indicators	1	2	3	4	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
<b>Language and Communication Challenges</b>						
I experience limited communication because the local language is different from mine when I visit attractions in Bulacan Province <i>Nakakaranas ako ng limitadong komunikasyon dahil sa iba ang wika ng lokal kumpara sa akin kapag bumibisita ako sa mga atraksyon sa Lalawigan ng Bulacan</i>	42	24	26	8	2.00	Disagree
I experience challenges due to the lack of signs that should be posted in different languages when I visit attractions in Bulacan Province. <i>Nakakaranas ako ng mga hamon dahil sa kakulangan ng mga tanda na dapat ay nilalagyan ng iba't ibang wika kapag bumibisita ako sa mga atraksyon sa Lalawigan ng Bulacan</i>	23	34	32	11	2.31	Disagree
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>					<b>2.15</b>	<b>Disagree</b>

Table 5.3 displays the language and communication challenges encountered by tourists when visiting tourist destinations in the Province of Bulacan, with an overall weighted mean of 2.15, indicating disagreement. Personally, I do not experience significant communication limitations due to differences in local language when visiting attractions in Bulacan Province, scoring 2.0 with an interpretation of disagreement. Similarly, challenges stemming from the absence of signs in various languages at these attractions yield a score of 2.31, also indicating disagreement. However, it's notable that according to the findings, 86 tourists (52%) did face language challenges related to factors such as a lack of knowledge

of international languages and cultural identification (Musoni, 2014).

Table 5.4 illustrates the safety and security challenges encountered by tourists when visiting destinations in the Province of Bulacan, with an overall weighted mean of 2.25, suggesting disagreement. Personally, I do not typically experience incidents such as petty theft and pickpocketing when visiting tourist attractions in Bulacan Province, scoring 2.19 with an interpretation of disagreement. However, challenges arising from factors like limited lighting, security measures, and emergency services at these attractions yield a score of 3.32, also indicating disagreement. It's worth noting that when

**Table 5.4:** Safety and Security Challenges

Indicators	1	2	3	4	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
<b>Safety and Security Challenges</b>						
I experience petty theft and pickpocketing when I visit the tourist attractions in the Province of Bulacan <i>Nakakaranas ako ng pagnanakaw at mandurukot kapag bumibisita ako sa mga tourist attraction sa Probinsya ng Bulacan</i>	32	34	17	17	2.19	Disagree
I experience challenges because of limited lighting, security measures, and emergency services when I visit the tourist attractions in the Province of Bulacan <i>Nakakaranas ako ng mga hamon dahil sa limitadong pag-iilan, seguridad, at mga serbisyong pang-emerhensiya kapag bumisita ako sa mga atraksyong panturista sa Lalawigan ng Bulacan</i>	19	39	33	19	2.32	Disagree
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>					<b>2.25</b>	<b>Disagree</b>

safety and security measures fall short of expectations, tourists tend to perceive a destination as less safe (Zou & Yu, 2022).

**Table 5.5:** Environmental Challenges

Indicators	1	2	3	4	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
<b>Environmental Challenges</b>						
I experience challenges because of the lack of waste management when I visit the tourist attractions in the Province of Bulacan <i>Nakakaranas ako ng mga hamon dahil sa kawalan ng pamamahala ng basura kapag bumibisita ako sa mga atraksyong panturista sa Lalawigan ng Bulacan</i>	16	40	32	12	2.4	Disagree
I experience challenges because of the environmentally sensitive activities when I visit the tourist attractions in the Province of Bulacan <i>Nakakaranas ako ng mga hamon dahil sa mga aktibidad na sensitibo sa kapaligiran kapag bumibisita ako sa mga atraksyong panturista sa Lalawigan ng Bulacan</i>	17	51	25	7	2.22	Disagree
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>					<b>2.31</b>	<b>Disagree</b>

Table 5.5 presents the environmental challenges faced by tourists when visiting tourist destinations in the Province of Bulacan, with an overall weighted mean of 2.31, indicating disagreement. Personally, I do not typically encounter significant challenges related to waste management when visiting tourist attractions in Bulacan Province, scoring 2.40 with an interpretation of disagreement. Similarly, challenges arising from environmentally sensitive activities at these attractions yield a score of 2.22, also indicating disagreement. It's important to note that like any other human activity,

tourism, as a consumer of space and resources, can contribute to environmental degradation and pollution, either directly through tourist activities or indirectly through improper planning and development of tourist areas (Mazilu & Ispas, 2009).

Table 5.6 presents the cultural sensitivity challenges encountered by tourists when visiting tourist destinations in the Province of Bulacan, with an overall weighted mean of 2.42, indicating disagreement. Personally, I do perceive limited local respect for my own customs and traditions when visiting tourist attractions in Bulacan

**Table 5.6:** Cultural Sensitivity Challenges

Indicators	1	2	3	4	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
<b>Cultural Sensitivity Challenges</b>						
I experience limited local respect for my own customs and traditions when I visit tourist attractions in Bulacan Province <i>Nararanasan ko ang limitadong paggalang ng lokal sa mga kaugalian at tradisyon ko kapag bumibisita ako sa mga atraksyong panturista sa Lalawigan ng Bulacan</i>	10	36	34	20	2.64	Agree
I experience challenges because locals are not aware in my own culture and traditions when I visit tourist attractions in Bulacan Province <i>Nakakaranas ako ng mga hamon dahil hindi alam ng mga lokal ang sarili kong kultura at tradisyon kapag bumibisita ako sa mga tourist attraction sa Bulacan Province</i>	25	36	33	6	2.2	Disagree
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>					<b>2.42</b>	<b>Disagree</b>

Province, scoring 2.64 with an interpretation of agreement. However, challenges stemming from locals' lack of awareness of my own culture and traditions yield a score of 2.20, indicating disagreement. It's worth

noting that cultural sensitivity significantly influences the global perception of a destination, with greater sensitivity leading to an improved post-visit image compared to the pre-visit image at a global level (Palacio & Santana, 2018).

**Table 5.7:** Pricing Value for Money Challenges

Indicators	1	2	3	4	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
<b>Pricing Value for Money Challenges</b>						
I experience overpriced attractions when I visit the tourist attractions in the Province of Bulacan <i>Nakakaranas ako ng mga atraksyon na sobrang mahal kapag bumibisita ako sa mga ito sa Lalawigan ng Bulacan</i>	24	34	29	13	2.31	Agree
I experience quality-price mismatch when I visit the tourist attractions in the Province of Bulacan <i>Nakakaranas ako ng hindi tugma sa kalidad at presyo kapag bumibisita ako sa mga atraksyon sa Lalawigan ng Bulacan</i>	20	29	37	14	2.45	Disagree
<b>Overall Weighted Mean</b>					<b>2.38</b>	<b>Disagree</b>

Table 5.7 outlines the pricing value for money challenges faced by tourists when visiting tourist destinations in the Province of Bulacan, with an overall weighted mean of 2.38, indicating disagreement. Personally, I do not typically encounter overpriced attractions when visiting tourist attractions in Bulacan Province, scoring 2.31 with an interpretation of disagreement. Similarly, I do not experience a mismatch between quality and price when visiting these attractions, scoring 2.43 with an interpretation of disagreement. It's worth noting that the relationship between price and perceived value for money is an important consideration in assessing destination competitiveness (Wu *et al.*, 2014).

**Summary of Findings**

The following findings were drawn from the analysis of the data:

1. Regarding the age distribution, the results of the survey indicate that the vast majority of participants, or 77%, are between the ages of 19 and 29. In the meantime, 10% of respondents are in the 40–49 age range, 7% are over 50, and 6% are in the 30-39 age range. In terms of gender demographics, the data shows that 22% of respondents identify as male and 77% of respondents as female. Furthermore, 1% of participants would rather keep their gender a secret. In the context of employment, the survey suggests that 54% of participants do not have

a job. In the meantime, 19% are working full-time and 27% are independent contractors.

2. Based on the data gathered, the respondents chose different natural attractions that they were most familiar with. With the highest frequency of 78, Barasoain Church is a major and highly popular tourist destination; Basilica Minore De Immaculada Concepcion (Malolos, Bulacan), with a frequency of 30, is also a popular attraction. It is known for its religious or historical significance, drawing both local and tourist visitors; sharing the same frequency of 30, this shrine is moderately popular. With a frequency of 38 Barasoain Ecclesiastical Museum (Malolos, Bulacan) is well-visited and likely appeals to those interested in the ecclesiastical history of the region; Bulacan Museum (Malolos, Bulacan) has a frequency of 28, suggesting it's a notable destination, possibly featuring exhibits related to the cultural and historical aspects of Bulacan; Shrine of Saint Andrew Kim (Bocaue, Bulacan) has a frequency of 27, indicating it is a popular religious or cultural site in Bocaue, attracting a significant number of visitors; With a frequency of 27, Casa Real Shrine (Malolos, Bulacan) is moderately popular and is known for its historical or cultural significance; The Bagbag Bridge and Calumpit River got the same frequency of 26 respectively; Pulilan Butterfly Haven and Resort (Pulilan, Bulacan) with a frequency of 14; Bautista Mansion (Malolos, Bulacan) with a frequency of 12, Bautista Mansion is relatively less visited compared to others on the list; St. John the Baptist (Calumpit, Bulacan) has a frequency of 21, indicating a moderate level of popularity; Meyto Shrine (Calumpit, Bulacan) has a frequency of 10, indicating a relatively lower level of visitation. It appeals to a specific niche or have limited recognition; Museo San Ysidro De Pulilan (Pulilan, Bulacan) has a frequency of 7, suggesting a moderate level of popularity among visitors interested in the cultural and historical aspects of Pulilan; Enriquez Ancestral House (Bulakan, Bulacan) has a lower frequency of 5, indicating is less visited. It is a place of interest to those specifically interested in ancestral homes; and Simborio Church (Plaridel, Bulacan) has a relatively low frequency of 4, indicating it's one of the less visited attractions on the list.

3. According to data sourced from the Department of Tourism ([tourism.gov.ph](http://tourism.gov.ph)), domestic tourism in the Province of Bulacan in 2021 far exceeded international tourism. Specifically, domestic travelers numbered 113,281, whereas international travelers were only 670. This highlights the substantial predominance of domestic tourism as a key contributor to tourism activity in the Province of Bulacan compared to international tourism.

4. Respondents strongly expressed their interest in visiting local landmarks primarily due to their historical significance, with a high weighted mean of 3.29, corresponding to a 'strongly agree' interpretation. Additionally, the lush greenery of the region positively influenced visitors' preferences, earning a weighted mean of 3.06 and an interpretation of 'agree.' Overall, the combined weighted mean for visiting tourist spots in

Bulacan was 3.10, signaling a general agreement among respondents regarding the appeal of the province's tourist destinations. Regarding accessibility, respondents generally agreed with an overall weighted mean of 2.87, suggesting a consensus that tourist attractions in Bulacan are easily accessible. Specifically, visitors acknowledged the benefits of well-connected transportation networks, evidenced by a weighted mean of 2.95. Additionally, the convenience of public transport without logistical challenges was positively acknowledged, with a weighted mean of 2.80. Moreover, the proximity of these attractions to Metro Manila was also viewed favorably, with a weighted mean of 2.87. In summary, these results collectively underscore the perceived convenience and accessibility of tourist destinations in the Province of Bulacan. In terms of hospitality factors affecting tourists' decisions to visit the province, accessibility to tourist attractions was generally well-received, with an overall weighted mean of 2.87, interpreted as 'agree.' Specifically, the ease of reaching these attractions due to well-connected transportation networks was positively acknowledged, with a weighted mean of 2.95. Additionally, the accessibility facilitated by public transport without logistical challenges received a favorable weighted mean of 2.80, also interpreted as 'agree.' The proximity of tourist spots in Bulacan to Metro Manila similarly garnered positive perceptions, with a weighted mean of 2.87 and an interpretation of 'agree.' Overall, these findings highlight a consensus among respondents regarding the ease of access to tourist destinations in the Province of Bulacan.

5. Tourists visiting attractions in the Province of Bulacan face various challenges, as highlighted by survey respondents. They commonly encounter transportation issues, including traffic congestion and limited options, with an overall agreement on these difficulties. Accommodation challenges are also noted, with respondents agreeing on the limited availability and inconsistent standards of accommodations. However, language and communication barriers are generally not perceived as significant, as respondents disagree with experiencing such challenges. Safety concerns are mixed, with disagreements on petty theft but concerns regarding lighting and emergency services. Environmental challenges are not widely perceived, with respondents disagreeing on issues like waste management and environmentally sensitive activities. Cultural sensitivity challenges vary, with respondents expressing some agreement on limited local respect for customs and traditions. Pricing concerns are generally not prominent, with respondents disagreeing on overpriced attractions and perceived mismatches between quality and price. Overall, these findings suggest a nuanced perspective on the challenges faced by tourists in the Province of Bulacan.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the discoveries of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

The demographic profile of respondents significantly

influences tourists' preferences when visiting attractions in the Province of Bulacan, with young adults, females, and the unemployed comprising the majority of visitors. Among the tourist attractions registered in PHACTO Bulacan, Barasoain Church stands out as the most popular, recognized, and frequently visited site, exerting a considerable impact on tourism growth in the province. The findings highlight that Domestic Tourism plays a more substantial role in driving tourism growth in the Province of Bulacan compared to International Tourism, particularly evident across various attractions. Tourists demonstrate a strong and positive inclination towards visiting attractions in the Province of Bulacan, with considerations such as landscape, accessibility, and hospitality playing pivotal roles in their decision-making process.

Transportation and accommodation challenges significantly impact tourists when visiting attractions in the Province of Bulacan, whereas other challenges have relatively less effect on their overall experience at these tourist sites.

In summary, the collected data underscores the substantial untapped potential within the Province of Bulacan, particularly in its tourist attractions.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings and the conclusions of the study, the researchers recommend the following:

1. Considering the insights gleaned from the tourists' demographic profiles, including age, gender, and employment status, the researchers propose implementing tailored Tourism Programs across these categories to bolster tourism growth in the Province of Bulacan.

2. The researchers advocate for the continuous preservation and safeguarding of Barasoain Church, given its status as the most popular and frequently visited tourist site. Additionally, they suggest introducing Tourism programs aimed at revitalizing lesser-known attractions such as Bautista Mansion and Simborio Church, based on respondents' feedback.

3. Through an analysis of the data, the researchers recommend the establishment of a program focused on streamlining visa processing and entry procedures for international tourists. These efforts aim to position the Province of Bulacan as an enticing destination for international visitors, ultimately boosting international tourist arrivals.

4. With regards to factors influencing tourists' decisions to visit destinations in the Province of Bulacan, the findings indicate unanimous agreement regarding the appeal of good landscape, accessibility, and hospitality. Consequently, the researchers advocate for the maintenance of these positive factors within tourist attractions, recognizing their significant influence on tourist visitation.

5. Addressing challenges encountered by tourists, particularly transportation and accommodation issues, remains paramount. The researchers advocate for continued efforts to enhance transportation infrastructure to ease travel to tourist attractions in the Province of Bulacan. Additionally, they recommend improving accommodation options at each tourist site to minimize challenges faced by visitors. Furthermore, future researchers are encouraged to explore additional factors influencing tourist preferences in Bulacan, thus contributing to further advancements in this field.

If tourism is handled in a sustainable and responsible manner, it's crucial to strike a harmonious equilibrium between promoting tourism and safeguarding the environment and local communities. This can be achieved through various methods, including (1) Controlling tourist numbers in specific regions. (2) Promoting visits to underdeveloped destinations. (3) Providing tourists with education on responsible behavior. (4) Allocating resources to sustainable tourism initiatives. (5) Collaborating closely with local communities to guarantee they reap benefits from tourism. By implementing these actions, we can ensure that tourism becomes a constructive influence for everyone involved.

**Matrix for PPATs (Projects, Programs, & Activities for Tourism)**

Nature of Activity	Description	Person-In-Charge	Beneficiaries	Outcomes
Sports Tourism	Sports activities or programs such as Adventure Sports (Surfing Camps & Bungee Jumping and Skydiving) Cycling and Mountain Biking (Cycling Tours & Mountain Biking Trails) Community and Charity Sports Events (Participate in Marathons & Sports for a Cause)	Department of Tourism, Sports Association, Private Sector, Local Government Unit.	Tourist	Participating in sports activities or programs can be a rewarding and beneficial experience for males in tourism. These activities can provide an opportunity for males to improve their physical and mental health, connect with others, learn about different cultures, and experience new things.

Socializing Tourism	Music Festivals and Concert Tours, Cultural Festivals, Fitness and Wellness Retreats	Department of Tourism, Private Sector, Non-Government Organization, Local Government Unit.	Tourists	Socializing tourism activities offer a range of potential benefits for young adults, including enhanced social connections, cultural immersion, personal growth, improved well-being, and increased self-awareness. These experiences can contribute to a more fulfilling and enriching life for young adults.
Improvement of Tourist Attraction	Making them more sustainable, Develop more immersive and experiential attractions, Embrace technology	Department of Tourism, Private Sector, Non-Government, Organization, Local Government Unit.	Local and International Tourist, Local Community, Local Government Unit	It can develop immersive experiences that allow visitors to feel like that they are part of the story
Improvement of Tourism Transportation	Embrace Sustainability (Promote Public Transportation),	Department of Tourism, Private Sector, Non-Government, Organization, Local Government Unit.	Local and International Tourist, Local Community, Local Government Unit	Increased Domestic and International visitors.
Improvement of Accommodation	Cater to Diverse Needs (Offer a variety of accommodation options and Offer comfortable bedding and amenities)	Department of Tourism, Hotels, Local Government Unit.	Local and International Tourist, Hotel Operators, Local Community, Local Government Unit	Less hustle to the tourist, Increased revenue and profitability, Enhanced reputation and brand image, Positive impact on the community
Increasing International tourist arrivals	Intensive tourism campaign, Investing and Renovation of infrastructure	Department of Tourism, Tour Operators, Travel Agency, Local Government Unit.	Local and International Tourist, Local Community, Department of Tourism, Local Government Unit	Economic boost, Improved infrastructure

**Limitation**

One potential limitation of the study could be the reliance on self-reported data from tourists. This method may introduce biases or inaccuracies, as respondents might provide socially desirable answers or misinterpret the questions. Additionally, there could be discrepancies in how tourists recall their experiences, leading to variability in the data collected.

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