

Culture Shock - A Study of Domestic Tourists in Sagada, Philippines

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INTRODUCTION

Cross-cultural contact is an aspect of tourists' experiences at a destination. Contrasting cultures create pockets for tourists and/or locals to feel confused and even shocked. The term "culture shock" popularly describes the difficulties of operating in a foreign culture (Pearce, 2005). This original concept by Oberg (1960) was originally applicable to nurses, doctors and missionaries abroad. Today, the same concept applies to tourists. Moufakkir (2013) underpins this explaining that the term is widely used in tourism literature to explicate the difficulties encountered by international tourists visiting another country. Pearce (2005) suggests that culture shock can manifest in different components. He further argues, however, that the phenomenon is often linked to cultural values and communication component. While culture shock is seen in a negative light, it is also seen as an opportunity for personal growth and cultural learning (Adler, 1975; cited in Moufakkir, 2013).

Indeed, the application of the term and concept of culture shock is no longer limited to overseas travel. Culture shock can also be observed among domestic tourists. This study adopts Pearce's (2005) definition of the phenomenon. In this context, the "foreign culture" is synonymous to something that is different from one's own culture, regardless of the tourist's origin (i.e. domestic or abroad). This is to say that unfamiliar environments and unusual cultural practices that can be sources of culture shock can be found in one's own country.

This study is focused on domestic tourists in Sagada, Mountain Province in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) in northern Philippines. The locale of this study is situated in Luzon, the biggest of the 7,100 islands of the country. This study is part of a bigger project that broadly aims to understand how culture shock affects tourists' experiences in Sagada, Mountain Province in northern Phil-

ippines. More specifically, this paper aims to identify what tourists find (culturally) shocking in Sagada. The factors used were taken from an interview with Sagadan elders, who have identified local practices and Sagadan physical, cultural and social characteristics which they think cause tourists' culture shock.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative approach was employed in addressing the research aims. More specifically, a paper-based self-administered survey of domestic and international tourists in Sagada was conducted. The questionnaires were distributed by a group of student volunteers in four tourist areas in Sagada. These were the iconic Sumaguing Cave, Church of Saint Mary the Virgin, Echo Valley (where the hanging coffins are), and Kiltapan Peak (scenic lookout and campground). It was important to identify first-time visitors to Sagada, to ensure uniformity in terms of culture exposure among respondents. Out of the 320 surveys collected, 250 were usable. Nonetheless, only 4% of the sample were international tourists, and were therefore excluded from the data analysis. The analysed data hence consisted of 240 responses from Philippine-based tourists. The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

The respondents consisted of 53.5% females, and 46.5% males. More than 65% of sample were aged 21-30 years old, and most of them were employed (60.1%). It was also observed that more than 77% of the respondents were single, and about 20% were married. The rest were either legally separated, or a widow/er. Divorce was not explicitly given as an option because it is not legal in the Philippines. The term "legally separated" may also be equated to the term "divorce" if it is applicable to the respondent. As expected, majority of the respondents were based in Luzon (88.5%), the biggest island. Twenty-one of them (8.6%) were from the Visayas Islands, and only a few were from Mindanao (2.9%).

RESULTS

In identifying the factors that cause culture shock among tourists, elders in Sagada were asked about their beliefs and practices which they think often "shocked" tourists (culturally). The most common factors that were identified were used for respondents to rate according to the extent to which they experienced culture shock. Using a Liker Scale, they were asked to rate each factor where: 1 = "no shock at all" and 5 = "high level of culture shock". The findings suggest that the top three factors which were relatively higher than the rest were the native people's high level of English proficiency ($\bar{x}=2.78$), the local burial practices ($\bar{x}=2.77$) and locals spitting betel nut ($\bar{x}=2.74$).

The Cordilleras is considered remote in the context of the Philippines. Because it is situated in the mountainous and often-imagined mystical and inaccessible regions of the north, many Filipinos have the misconception that Cordilleras are generally uneducated, conservative, and "tribal" in lifestyle. Also, unaware that

English is widely spoken in the Cordilleras, not only in Sagada. It was therefore surprising that the respondents were mostly shocked upon hearing the locals speak very fluent English. It was not asked whether they have previously visited other parts of the Cordilleras, so it can be assumed that the respondents were visiting the region for the first time. It is important to note that the culture shock identified here was a positive kind. The Sagada natives' proficiency in English can be attributed to American missionaries who educated the locals over a century ago. Historical accounts show that the province of Sagada was the seat of the Anglican Mission by American missionaries. The presence of the Americans in the region had a significant influence on the locals, specifically in terms of the use of English and the proliferation of Christianity.

Table 1. Causes of Culture Shock

Factors	Mean
Natives can speak fluent English	2.78
Burial practices	2.77
Betel spitting	2.74
Exotic food (e.g. etag)	2.52
Food preparation (e.g. pig butchering and pinikpikan)	2.5
Places were only accessible by foot	2.45
Thanksgiving rituals (i.e. begnas)	2.41
The roads were mostly bumpy	2.36
Jeepneys are overloaded, and people had to sit on top (not inside) the vehicle	2.28
Locals were still wearing traditional attires (e.g. wanes and tapis)	2.11
Use of indigenous musical instruments (e.g. gongs and gansa)	2.04

The local burial practices was also thought to be a culturally shocking factor, particularly with the Sagadan practice of hanging their loved ones' coffins instead of burying them. This practice is unique in the Philippines. While other tribes in the Cordilleras mummified their dead, the Sagadans believe that their deceased family member's spirit can roam around to protect their living loved ones if they were hung on a cliff or in a cave. The height of the cliff where a dead person's coffin reflects his/her social status, that is, the higher the coffin, the higher the individual's status in the community. It can be noticed that the hanging coffins are small for a full grown adult. This is because the corpses are placed in fetal position. This is linked to the local belief that the person should leave the world in the same position as they entered it. Elders in the village narrate that Lumiang Cave houses at least 100 coffins that have been hanging for about 500 years now. Another prac-

tice related to this factor is the segregation of burial caves. Women who died while giving birth are buried in a separate cave. Similarly, deceased community elders have a designated burial cave. People who have died of illnesses are often buried in more remote areas to avoid transmission of the disease.

Like the wide use of English in the Cordilleras, betel leaf/nut chewing is a masticatory indulgence in the region. The antiquity of this practice dates back to 2600 BC, and it is also commonly practiced by Muslims in the southern part of the Philippines specifically by the Maranaos, Babogos and Tausug tribes in Mindanao (Stuart, 2015). Nevertheless, it is not the chewing but the spitting of the betel juice that was thought to be shocking. When chewed and kept in the mouth for hours, the betel produces a red-coloured juice which is spat out. Stuart (2015) claims that the tell-tale residue “looks like splotches of dried blood on the ground, often mistaken as globs of phlegm”. The tourists may have similar observations and thoughts. In relation to this, the common observation that locals have “red mouths” is unsurprising. Additionally and more positively, the local custom of sharing one’s (betel) stash with familiar people and strangers alike is uncommon in most places in the country.

The factors with the least mean were unsurprising. The use of local attire and of local musical instruments are mostly expected by tourists. It was nonetheless impactful because in spite of the proliferation of modern clothing and “western” fashion, many locals are still fond of wearing the “g-string” (for men) and “tapis” (wrap-around skirt for women). Like local clothing, the Sagadans are still found users of the indigenous gongs for dances, rituals and other practices.

CONCLUSION

Cross-cultural encounters among Filipinos within the Philippines also cause culture shock. This paper aimed to identify the key factors that cause culture shock among Filipino tourists in Sagada, Mountain Province. Although the overall mean for culture shock among domestic tourists was low to moderate, it was clear that some of the factors that caused the shock were positive. The local’s ability to speak English fluently was shocking in a positive way. It was generally unexpected that people who live in the Cordilleran mountains are as educated as the people are in the lowlands. The local’s burial rituals and practices as well as the common habit of chewing and spitting betel nut/leaf have caused culture shock to their fellow Filipinos. Clearly, culture shock does not only manifest in international tourism, but also in local, domestic settings.

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