

Factors Influencing Foreign Engagement to Filipino Martial Arts (FMA7) Heritage Tourism in Cebu

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Abstract

Tourism remains a vital contributor to the Philippine economy, accounting for 8.9% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2024. The Tourism Direct Gross Value Added (TDGVA) reached ₱2.35 trillion, a 11.2% increase from 2023, which is partly attributed to the Department of Tourism's (DOT) strategic push for multidimensional tourism under the National Tourism Development Plan (2023–2028). A key initiative under this plan is the development of the Filipino Martial Arts (FMA7) Heritage Tourism Program by the DOT Central Visayas region as a culturally significant and globally competitive tourism product. This study assessed the factors influencing foreign engagement in the FMA7 Heritage Tourism Program in Cebu. Using a descriptive-correlational design, data were collected through a researcher-designed survey questionnaire distributed via Google Forms, with assistance from FMA7 grandmasters and masters. Responses from 40 purposively selected foreign participants were analyzed using frequency counts, percentage, weighted mean, Chi-square test of independence, and One-way ANOVA, and Tukey's HSD post hoc test.

Predominantly, the respondents were aged 50 to 59 years old, bachelor's degree holders from the United States and the United Kingdom, who occasionally visited Cebu, practiced Balintawak Sugbu and Cacooy Canete Doce Pares, stayed 15–30 days in the Philippines, and frequently visited Cebu and Mactan Island. Using the 7Ps marketing mix, product, place, and people highly influenced foreign engagement to Filipino martial arts (FMA7) heritage tourism in Cebu, while price, promotion, process, and physical evidence moderately influence. There is a significant relationship between the respondents' amount of money spent and their responses regarding the factors that influenced their decision to join the Filipino Martial Arts (FMA) Heritage Tourism Program in Cebu. Moreover, there is a significant difference in the response to the factors influencing foreign engagement with the FMA7 Heritage Tourism Program. In cultural heritage tourism, particularly, the Filipino martial arts, 7Ps of marketing mix relevance and applicable to tourism—particularly on the social context (people), the provision of well-arranged booking, accommodations, itinerary and training needs and accessible and well-equipped training

environment (placed) like scenic spots and culturally-significant spaces emerged as the

most influential elements to entice travel intention to the Philippines.

Keywords: Cultural and heritage tourism, Filipino Martial Arts, marketing mix, correlation, Cebu, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a significant global economic driver and continues to shape how people explore and connect. According to a 2022 YouGov survey, 35% of travelers now consider travel more essential than before the pandemic, reflecting a renewed enthusiasm for travel (Stewart, 2023).

Moreover, travelers' values have been shifting toward more authentic and experiential forms of tourism. One trend that has gained significant momentum is culturally immersive travel experiences (Visser, 2023). Creative tourism is a form of tourism that enables more involvement by tourists in local communities and their tangible and intangible cultural assets, in contrast to traditional, mass cultural tourism (Carvalho, 2014). Cultural tourism, educational tourism, and similar non-entertainment tourism types align with this trend, often driven by external influences (Munsters & Melkert, 2015).

Within cultural tourism lies martial arts tourism—a unique blend of cultural, sports, and educational tourism that warrants specific recognition, particularly for the depth of knowledge it provides about martial arts (Figueiredo et al., 2020). Martial arts tourism involves travel specifically to study martial arts through direct, immersive experiences. A distinctive feature of martial arts tourism is the connection between tourists, places of visit, the travel context, or the leading destination (value and aim), and martial arts or a particular type of martial arts. This tourism phenomenon stems from the desire to learn, practice, and understand martial arts such as Wushu (also known as kung fu), which China actively promotes for nationalist and economic purposes (Theeboom et al., 2015).

The beauty of martial arts as a passion tourism micro-niche lies in its remarkable global diversity. From ancient temple traditions to modern combat systems, passionate martial arts aficionados can travel across continents to experience authentic warrior culture. This is not a niche limited to a handful of famous destinations. It is a worldwide network of living traditions, each offering distinct cultural insights and transformative experiences (Thraenhart, 2025).

In 2019, China's central regulatory bodies announced the 'deep convergence' of martial arts and the tourism, wellness, and educational sectors to facilitate industrial upgrades and improve national soft power (General Administration of Sport of China, 2019). These measures foster optimistic market prospects for martial arts tourism in post-pandemic China. Similarly, Muay Thai tourism has become one of Thailand's fastest-growing sectors, with the country's official tourism body actively promoting it (TAT News, 2019). In particular, British (11,219), Australian (6,800), French (5,852), and German (4,688) nationals are the most significant sources of martial arts tourism in Thailand (The Nation, 2017), indicating a strong Western interest in this niche market. Building on this, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) continues to promote Muay Thai to attract foreign visitors, both sport enthusiasts and those interested in learning the discipline, through its "5 Must-Do in Thailand" strategy (The Nation, 2024). Likewise, Se (2024) found that Muay Thai events and training camps for foreigners serve as effective platforms for cultural exchange, enhancing foreigners' understanding and appreciation of Thai culture. Furthermore, integrating Muay Thai into Thailand's tourism promotion strategies expands the country's tourism portfolio while enhancing its global cultural influence.

In the Philippines, tourism serves as a key economic driver, contributing significantly to the country's Tourism Direct Gross Value Added (TDGVA). In 2024, the TDGVA accounted for 8.9% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Moreover, it reached ₱2.35 trillion, representing an 11.2% increase from 2023



(Philippine Statistics Authority, 2025). This growth reflects the Department of Tourism's (DOT) strategic push for Multidimensional Tourism under the National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) 2023–2025. The initiative focuses on developing tourism products that enrich the country's cultural experiences, such as Filipino Martial Arts (FMA)—known as *Arnis* in Luzon and *Eskrima* in the Visayas and Mindanao as a distinctive cultural tourism offering.

Filipino Martial Arts (FMA) is a collective term encompassing a range of styles that refer to the indigenous martial arts and sports originating in the Philippines. It is characterized by the use of swinging and twirling movements, accompanied by striking, thrusting, and parrying techniques that serve both defensive and offensive purposes. Practitioners typically use one (1) or two (2) sticks or similar implements. Likewise, they can also practice FMA using only their hands and feet to strike, block, lock, and grapple, following the same principles applied when using sticks or canes. Notably, *Arnis* has been officially declared as the Philippine National Martial Art and Sport in the country (Republic Act No. 9850, 2009).

FMA frequently appears in Hollywood productions, capitalizing on its utilization of weapons, speed, and agility to enhance the authenticity of fight scenes (Danico, 2014). Films like *The Bourne Legacy*, shot partly in the Philippines, showcased FMA through its tightly choreographed action sequences. Similarly, *Mission Impossible: III* featured Tom Cruise and Keri Russell applying FMA techniques under the guidance of Filipino-American stunt coordinator Robert Alonzo. Even actors like Denzel Washington and Forest Whitaker have incorporated FMA into their performances, further solidifying its place in mainstream action cinema (Nepales, 2012). The martial art also maintains a recurring presence on television, appearing prominently in shows like *NCIS: Los Angeles* (Rafferty, 2015). The heightened exposure through Hollywood and television has significantly contributed to the growing interest in FMA (Godhania, 2012). Furthermore, FMA has become part of military and law enforcement training programs not only in the Philippines but also in the United States and various other countries worldwide (Malmo, 2016).

Local FMA clubs actively host international training camps and personalized sessions in various settings, including hotel function rooms, residential backyards, and outdoor venues such as public spaces, plazas, and beaches. Before 2018, cultural tourism efforts in the region mainly focused on tangible cultural heritage, with limited efforts directed to product diversification. However, as global interest in Filipino Martial Arts (FMA) grew, the Department of Tourism (DOT) Central Visayas developed the Filipino Martial Arts (FMA7) Heritage Tourism Program in 2018. This initiative formed part of a broader strategy to expand and diversify the region's tourism offering. The "7" in FMA7 represents the region number and also serves as a distinctive branding element for Central Visayas' cultural tourism products. Since its inception, the program has supported international training camps organized by groups such as the Russian House in the Philippines, the Philippine Martial Arts Alliance, as well as biennial conferences by the Pekiti Tirsia Tactical Association and tournaments hosted by Cacoy Doce Pares and Doce Pares HQ. These initiatives have attracted martial arts tourists from at least ten (10) countries.

Hence, Filipino Martial Arts (FMA) is now fast becoming a strong tourism product with great potential. Wanting to capitalize on this popularity, the Department of Tourism – Central Visayas (DOT-7), through its Cultural Tourism Program and in partnership with the masters and grandmasters of diverse *eskrima* systems, is developing FMA Heritage Trails to promote appreciation for both the sport and the art form. FMA consists of performance-based and competitive systems that utilize hands, sticks, and bladed weapons. It traces its beginnings to the time when Filipinos developed ways of defending themselves against attackers using only their hands, sticks, or whatever materials were within reach. Sticks, knives, and other materials were incorporated into the routines as extensions of the hand. Over time, practitioners have integrated science and culture into the art, resulting in various styles that include hand-to-hand combat, stick-fighting, grappling, and disarming (Bongcac, 2022).

One of the key milestones of the FMA7 Heritage Tourism Program was the development of the Filipino Martial Arts Heritage Trails—*Amihanan*, *Habagatan*, and *Sugbo Sentral*—which link active FMA clubs to heritage sites of cultural significance. In 2022, the Department of Tourism, in partnership with



travel trade stakeholders, conducted a validation workshop and pilot test for the Sugbo Sentral Heritage Trail to refine and prepare for the official launch of the FMA Heritage Tour Package.

Foreign nationals travel worldwide to learn from esteemed FMA Grand Masters, driving the growth of DOT Region VII's FMA Heritage Tourism Program. It promotes cross-cultural understanding and appreciation of FMA among both Filipinos and international visitors, while also strengthening the local tourism value chain, which includes accommodations, training facilities, transportation services, local restaurants, tour operators offering island-hopping activities, and souvenir shops that cater to martial arts tourists during their leisure time.

Globalization presents a dual-edged sword for cultural heritage preservation, offering both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, globalization facilitates cultural exchange, exposure, and awareness, allowing cultural practices and heritage sites to gain international recognition and support. This increased visibility can lead to enhanced funding, tourism, and collaborative preservation efforts, which are essential for maintaining and restoring cultural heritage (Kiarie, 2024).

Cultural tourism is a form of tourism that refers to the (intangible or tangible) cultural heritage and/or cultural institutions, events, projects, etc. of a destination. Through cultural tourism, these cultural assets of a destination are transformed into products that can be consumed by out-of-town/non-resident guests (Hausmann & Schubauer, 2023).

However, FMAs are getting crushed by traditional martial arts. The search trends for FMAs had declined in 2004. For many within the FMA "bubble," FMA is the most practical means of self-defense. The training utilizes multiple platforms, including the stick, knife, and empty hands. The movements are similar across all platforms, and this is an efficient training methodology. The FMA instructors struggle with attracting students since the marketing is lacklustre, parents have concerns about children working with sticks and knives; prospective students may question how weapons work, mainly stick, translate to street self-defense; Still, others may wonder whether they can become physically fit through stick and knife practice and FMAs may not be attractive to specific age groups due to prevailing cultural trends in the sporting world (Johns, 2017).

Moreover, the tourism sector remains positive in 2025, citing aggressive promotional efforts and digital transformation initiatives. However, external risks such as geopolitical tensions and rising travel costs may temper growth (Desiderio, 2025). Also, marketing heritage tourism also poses challenges, particularly in balancing authenticity with tourist expectations (Chhabra, 2009; Poria et al., 2006).

The changing intentions and motivations of travellers amid competition among Asian nations promoting their own cultural tourism assets, this investigation aims to understand the factors driving foreign engagement with Filipino Martial Arts (FMA) Heritage Tourism in Cebu, adopting the 7Ps of the marketing mix and the push-and-pull motivational factors of foreign participants.

FRAMEWORK

This study is based on the Cultural Capital Theory (CCT) of (1977), which states that people possess cultural capital in varying degrees according to their level of access to cultural resources, participation in cultural activities, and titles held in high regard by the cultural community. CCT argues that people can acquire certain forms of cultural capital, and those who are successful improve their social status (Reed & Johnson, 2023).

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu described social capital as the value derived from social relationships and cultural capital as the influence of culture and traditions on various forms of development, including tourism (Karlsson, 2005). He also introduced alternative forms of capital beyond the economic—namely, social, cultural, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986). Cultural capital relates to the assets associated with a particular place, such as cultural heritage, built structures, and traditions, or to the capital possessed by social actors, including knowledge and cultural competence (Bourdieu, 1984)



Cultural Capital Theory (CCT) is a framework that attempts to explain the way humans perceive themselves and others. It is a lens through which one can view society, systemic structures, social relationships, success, and barriers to entry, with cultural competence being the determining factor. When viewed through a CCT perspective, cultural competence and other cultural markers impact the way systems and services (Reed & Johnson, 2023).

Bourdieu (1986) argued that cultural capital can exist in three forms: (a) the embodied state, in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; (b) the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods such as pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, and machines; and (c) the institutionalized state, such as educational qualifications. Cultural capital theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the role of martial arts in tourism and cultural heritage, emphasizing how knowledge, skills, and practices serve as forms of "capital" that can be cultivated, exchanged, and valued in both social and economic contexts.

According to Kotler (1997), businesses in the hospitality industry are required to use a marketing mix consisting of several key elements. The first element, Product/Service, may include either tangible goods or intangible offerings that satisfy customer needs. The second, price, refers to the value or monetary amount that determines business revenue. The third place involves the location, environment, and channels through which products or services are delivered to customers. The fourth, promotion, serves as a vital communication tool that informs, persuades, and influences customer attitudes and purchasing behavior.

The Marketing Mix, as introduced by McCarthy (1964), focuses on four key elements: product, price, place, and promotion. In the late 70's, marketers widely recognized the need to update the Marketing Mix. This development led Booms and Bitner (1981) to introduce the Extended Marketing Mix, which added three new elements to the original 4 Ps principles. This allowed the extended Marketing Mix to include products that are both services and material goods. The 7Ps framework has been widely adopted in tourism and hospitality studies to assess service quality and customer satisfaction. In addition to these four primary elements, the Extended Marketing Mix introduces three more components. The fifth element, people, emphasizes the importance of employees who exhibit a positive attitude, creativity, problem-solving skills, and the ability to contribute value to the organization. The sixth, Physical Evidence, focuses on the tangible aspects of service presentation, such as professional appearance, courteous behavior, prompt service, and other features that shape the overall customer experience. The seventh, Process, refers to the operational methods and procedures that ensure efficient, accurate, and satisfying service delivery.

In terms of marketing and destination development, understanding consumers and the marketplace is the first step in any marketing decision of a tourist enterprise or organization. However, figuring out buyer behaviour is a primordial but significantly complicated task for marketers (Kotler et al., 2021).

Motivation is the primary driving force behind tourist behavior, with the essence of motivation being the fulfillment of these needs (Mook, 1997). The term 'motivation' is applied in tourism, specifically in the context of tourist motivation or travel motivation. Tourist motivation is determined by both social factors and personal factors, including needs. In particular, tourists typically have multiple motives based on their expectations of purchase values (Cohen et al., 2014).

The Push-Pull Theory, initially developed in migration studies by Lee (1966), has been adapted to fields such as consumer behavior. It provides a framework for understanding the factors that shape human behavior and decision-making processes. This model suggests that people are motivated by both internal forces (push factors) and external attractions (pull factors) simultaneously. Push-pull theory to explain the reason why tourists decide to visit the destination rather than other places, the kind of experience they want to get, and the type of activity they want to do (Said & Maryono, 2018).

Dann (1977) first distinguished between push (internal psychological drivers) and pull (external destination attributes), but focused on general tourism rather than heritage-specific interactions. Push motivations as physical needs, such as the need to relax after hard work, the need to escape from routine, the need to seek new experiences and novelty, the need to have esteem or pre-settling in the new place, the need to learn the culture, nationality, and different way of life, and the need to create social interaction.



Pull motivations was the motive created by tourist attractions that attract the tourists to travel in particular destinations and depending on the characteristic of each tourist attraction which could respond to the tourists' needs, such as the appeal of tourist attractions, convenient for transportation, various activities, accessible tourist information and safety of the destination etc. (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979).

Push factors induce intrinsic or intangible desires. The intrinsic desires for escape, rest, relaxation, prestige, knowledge, fulfilling spiritual needs, and social interaction are known as push factors. Push motivation can significantly influence the marketing mix (4Ps: product, price, place, promotion). Push motivations can influence product development by highlighting features or aspects that directly appeal to motivated buyers. Pull motivation refers to tourists' awareness and perception of a destination's attractiveness, which encourages them to travel to that destination. Pull motivations can have distinct implications on the marketing mix by focusing on attracting consumers through their own desires and preferences (Ngoc & Anh, 2024).

Chan (2012) noted that both push and pull factors constitute motivations. Chen (2015) linked push to internal needs (Petri, 1996) and pull to situational factors (Petri & Govern, 2004).

In cultural and heritage tourism, McKercher and Du Cros (2002) emphasized that tourist motivations influence the types of activities visitors engage in, their awareness of cultural attractions, and their trip planning behavior. Understanding these motivations enables tourism stakeholders to design programs that preserve local culture while aligning with visitors' interests and expectations (Marlina et al., 2024).

In heritage-based tourism, where authenticity and meaningful engagement are paramount, this framework is particularly valuable. Experiential tourism activities, such as martial arts training programs, illustrate how the integration of product quality, service delivery, and interpersonal interaction shapes visitors' overall satisfaction (Middleton & Clarke, 2001). Kotler (1997) likewise emphasized that successful service enterprises must manage both tangible and intangible elements to enhance customer experience.

Empirical studies further reinforce the connection between motivation and marketing strategies in martial arts tourism. Ko et al. (2010) found that personal development—particularly achievement, self-esteem, and value formation—was a dominant motivation among martial arts participants, with cultural learning as a secondary yet significant factor. Similarly, Cao and Lyu (2024) identified intrinsic motivations such as enjoyment, mastery, physical fitness, and psychological well-being as strong predictors of continued engagement in Chinese martial arts. In contrast, extrinsic factors like competition or external approval were less influential.

Cultural tourism has been identified as one of the significant growth areas in global tourism in recent years. It is increasingly being recognized as a key area of product development by tourism destinations seeking diversification. The desire for 'quality tourism', the need to find resources to support culture, and the ready availability of cultural resources make cultural tourism an attractive option for both urban and rural areas (Richards, 2005).

The United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO] (n.d.) explains cultural tourism as one of the fastest-growing segments of global tourism, driven by tourists' interest in exploring and engaging with a destination's unique cultural assets. It refers to travel motivated by the desire to experience the heritage of a city, region, or nation, encompassing both tangible and intangible elements such as monuments, traditions, festivals, and martial arts (Timothy & Boyd, 2003). Likewise, cultural tourism is a type of tourism that focuses on cultural and social experiences where the attraction is the experience of the culture itself. A tourist who is a cultural tourist has an interest in exploring and learning about the local culture in the destination, such as traditions, art, heritage, and other aspects. Tourists will get an authentic experience that can only be found at the destination through direct interaction. From this, tourists will gain a deep understanding of the local culture, which provides an opportunity for tourists to learn more about the history and socio-cultural context (Richards, 2005).

Richards (2005) posits that there is a general perception that cultural tourism is 'good' tourism, attracting high-spending visitors and causing minimal damage to the environment or local culture, while contributing significantly to the economy and supporting culture.



Martial arts tourism is a burgeoning form of tourism characterized by Western ‘martial arts pilgrims’ traveling to Asian ‘martial arts cradles’ for leisure-based learning, training, and spectatorship (Deng, 2022). A specialized form of this is martial arts tourism, which involves domestic or international travel linked to the study and practice of martial arts. This form of tourism blends self-knowledge, education, and cultural exploration, connecting visitors to the traditions and philosophies of specific martial disciplines (Cynarski, 2012). Tourists often engage in such travel to deepen their skills, learn from cultural masters, or experience the authentic origins of their art (Pawelec et al., 2020).

Martial arts tourism presents a crucial case for examining images of Asian masculinities in tourism cultures due to the intrinsic connections between martial arts and both masculinity and Asian-ness (Bowman, 2016). Martial arts tourism, nevertheless, is distinct from previous forms of travel in its tourism-ness, which reflects the modern dichotomy between ‘work’ and ‘leisure’ (Urry & Larsen, 2011).

The economics of martial arts tourism present a compelling case for destination managers to prioritize this micro-niche for both economic returns and soft power development. When most people think of martial arts, they imagine fitness routines or competitive fights. However, this is not about learning to kick and punch. It is about why these arts exist, their history, rituals, and spiritual dimensions (Thraenhart, 2025).

Globalization is a multifaceted and complex process characterized by the increasing interconnectedness and interdependence of the world's economies, cultures, and populations. This phenomenon is driven by advances in technology, communication, transportation, and international trade, which facilitate the exchange of goods, services, ideas, and cultural practices across borders (Appadurai, 2013).

One of the primary economic impacts of globalization is the integration of markets, leading to increased trade and investment flows between countries. This economic integration can boost growth and development, particularly in emerging economies, by providing access to larger markets and advanced technologies. However, it can also lead to economic disparities as wealth and resources become concentrated in specific regions or among particular groups (Stiglitz, 2017). The cultural dimension of globalization encompasses the dissemination and exchange of cultural products and practices, which can enrich societies while also posing challenges to the preservation of cultural heritage. As global media and consumer culture spread, local traditions and languages may be at risk of erosion (Tomlinson, 2019).

Towards the end of 2022, the Thai government began implementing a soft power strategy through the promotion of its national image, focusing on five aspects, namely food, film, fashion, fighting, and festival (5F), with the target of increasing the country's economic value to 3.45 trillion baht by 2027. The food, film, and fashion sectors in Thailand focus on developing significant export products. The fighting sector has its own uniqueness; fighting incorporates traditional martial arts, such as those originating from Thailand, as well as many countries that have their own traditional martial arts, like Indonesia, which features silat martial arts. However, there is still doubt about its ability to become a tourist attraction. The government hopes that Muay Thai will have a positive impact on the Thai tourism sector after the pandemic (Kaewanant & Sirisunhirun, 2024).

Soft power is an idea introduced by Joseph Nye, which encompasses a country's ability to influence other countries through its culture, ideology, or values. Culture offers a comprehensive and diverse perspective, where every country has a distinct culture, one of which is reflected in martial arts. In other words, martial arts are capable of attracting other countries through their appeal and making them a form of soft power (Jones, 2021).

In Southeast Asia, Thailand's Muay Thai tourism presents a compelling model. Kuniard and Marangkun (2016) discovered that psychological fulfillment and personal goals were key push factors for foreign participants, while price, promotion, people, and physical evidence acted as strong pull factors. Tourists valued affordability, quality instruction, and cultural immersion, perceiving Muay Thai as an authentic and transformative experience. Cultural uniqueness, historical learning, and local attributes—such as cuisine and atmosphere—are significant motivators for travel to Southeast Asian destinations (Parasakul, 2017; Plaengmarn, 2015; Ratinthorn, 2012).



As a form of self-defense, arnis, kali, or Eskrima is deemed to have evolved in the Philippines during the pre-colonial period through ingenuity, multicultural interaction, and friendship between aboriginal Filipinos and Asian traders. Arnis is a graceful yet exquisite hand-to-hand and armed combat routine with a peculiar history linked to rebellion and struggles among commoners seeking freedom from the ruling colonizers (Sanchez & Sanchez, 2021). Filipino Martial Arts (FMA) encompasses a wide range of indigenous combat systems and techniques developed across the archipelago. These include stick-fighting, kicking, and wrestling traditions, some of which have preserved their pre-Hispanic forms (Nepangue & Macachor, 2007).

Eskrima, which is also known as Arnis [De Mano] or Kali, is the indigenous martial art of the Philippine Islands. Dynamic and flexible, with a wide range of training methods, it can be practiced by students of all ages and fitness levels. Well-known and respected as an efficient weapons-based system, Eskrima is practiced worldwide by civilians, law enforcement personnel, and special units within the military. Eskrima uses training weapons [rattan sticks and daggers] from the earliest stages, alongside purely unarmed techniques. These training methods have been found particularly effective at increasing coordination and reflexes, providing a fast track to developing the qualities needed for practical self-defense (Godhania, 2010).

The Department of Tourism - Central Visayas (DOT-7) recently took another significant step in promoting heritage tourism through its FMA7 Program by hosting the Forum on FMA7 Tourism Product Readiness: Promoting Filipino Martial Arts through Heritage Tourism. The forum was designed explicitly for the diversely rich Filipino Martial Arts (FMA) community, focusing on practitioners who: a) host students from other regions in the Philippines and abroad, and b) organize domestic and international training camps in Central Visayas, and c) responding to requests made during previous workshops, DOT-7 facilitated the creation of a Technical Working Group (TWG) to foster stronger collaboration between local FMA systems and clubs, DOT-7, and other government agencies. This initiative highlights the region's commitment to promoting Filipino Martial Arts as a key heritage tourism product, thereby enriching the multidimensional tourism landscape in Central Visayas (Department of Tourism Visayas Office, 2024). The passage of Republic Act No. 9850 in 2009 formally recognized Arnis (FMA) as the national martial art and sport of the Philippines, reinforcing the government's commitment to its preservation and promotion.

Cultural heritage preservation encompasses efforts to maintain and safeguard the physical artifacts, monuments, traditions, and practices that define a community's historical and cultural identity. These endeavors are crucial for providing a sense of continuity and belonging in a rapidly evolving world. As globalization accelerates, it presents both opportunities and challenges for the preservation of cultural heritage. Global interconnectedness facilitates the exchange of cultural practices and ideas but also poses risks of cultural homogenization and loss. Thus, preserving cultural heritage becomes an essential task for maintaining diversity and identity in the global landscape (Kiarie, 2024).

Additionally, community-based heritage initiatives empower local populations to take an active role in preserving their cultural heritage, ensuring that preservation efforts are relevant and sustainable (Waterton & Smith, 2018). The Department of Tourism (DOT-7) vowed to take the lead in promoting national sports Arnis to further promote sports tourism in Cebu and Central Visayas (Dagooc, 2018).

Kotler and Armstrong (2016) defined marketing mix as 'the set of tactical marketing tools that the firm blends to produce the response it wants in the target market'. The marketing mix is a tool that provides marketers with a framework to support their operational and strategic management. It helps them consider the market in depth, allowing them to develop their products, services, and business strategies that best suit the consumer (Solomon et al., 2018).

Malmo (2016) investigated the motivational factors that influence instructors to teach Filipino martial arts and revealed that intrinsic motivation, such as cultural preservation, personal expression, and mentorship, outweighed economic considerations. These findings align with other contexts that emphasize meaning, legacy, and self-actualization as key drivers of engagement.



Additionally, Sanchez and Sanchez (2021) examined the cultural and historical significance of arnis, an indigenous art form developed by early Filipinos for their own self-preservation. Symbolic authentic Filipino Martial Art (FMA), which has been passed down through generations, has eventually reached the pinnacle of recognition as a national sport, art, and culture of the Philippines under Republic Act 9850. Arnis continued to gain popularity, from the local to the international arena, where Filipino grandmasters, masters, and practitioners conduct seminars, training sessions, and promotional tournaments to engage with their counterparts in high regard and camaraderie. As a sport, it contributes to the physical development, well-being, discipline, and character of players and practitioners from diverse backgrounds. The Filipino people's sense of nationalism, patriotism, and national identity is reflected in arnis as a part of their rich historical and cultural heritage.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study assessed the factors influencing foreign engagement with Filipino Martial Arts (FMA7) Heritage Tourism in Cebu. Specifically, it aims to present the following: 1) profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, highest educational attainment, nationality, training level, FMA system/style, total amount of spending, length of stay and place visited; 2) factors influencing foreign engagement in FMA7 Heritage Tourism in relation to the seven elements of the marketing mix—product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence; 3) significant relationships exist between respondents profile and their responses on the factors influencing their engagement in FMA Heritage Tourism in Cebu; and 4) significant differences on the responses on the factors influencing their engagement in FMA Heritage Tourism in Cebu.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive correlational design to examine the factors influencing foreign engagement in Filipino Martial Arts (FMA) Heritage Tourism in Cebu, Philippines.

Correlational research is a scientific method used to explore the relationships between two or more variables, which may include statistics, behaviors, or other observable factors. This approach helps researchers determine how variables interact, whether they increase or decrease simultaneously, or if they appear unrelated. While correlational research can provide valuable insights into various scientific questions—such as the effects of prolonged sitting on heart disease—it does not establish causation, meaning it cannot definitively prove that one variable causes changes in another (Mertens, 2024).

Research Environment

The study was conducted in Cebu, Philippines, specifically along the FMA7 Heritage Trails, where FMA clubs were located, spanning from Bantayan Island to Santander, Cebu, as mapped and documented by the Department of Tourism Central Visayas [DOT-CV] through its Filipino Martial Arts (FMA7) Program.



Research Respondents

The foreign participants of the Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu Program served as the research respondents. The respondents were drawn from participants of international FMA7 training camps and one-on-one training sessions held in Cebu. These events were co-hosted or supported by the FMA7 Heritage Tourism initiative of the Department of Tourism (DOT) Region 7. The inclusion criteria specify that respondents are foreign nationals who have completed at least three days of Filipino Martial Arts (FMA) training in Cebu, Philippines, as part of a certification process. Those who did not meet the minimum training duration were excluded from the study. According to available records, in 2023, these camps and sessions collectively accommodated approximately 90 participants. Local FMA7 clubs organized some events, while others were initiated by internationally based Filipino Martial Arts organizations that selected Cebu as a destination for learning and training in FMA.

Based on these records, the sample size was 40 respondents. The assumption of normality was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), which returned a p-value of 0.200 ($n = 40$), indicating that the data did not significantly deviate from a normal distribution. Therefore, the sample size was considered adequate for parametric analysis.

Research Instrument

This study employed a researcher-designed research instrument to gather data on the factors influencing foreign engagement in FMA 7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu, Philippines. The first (1st) part discusses the profile of the respondents. The second (2nd) part examines the factors influencing foreign engagement in Filipino Martial Arts (FMA) heritage tourism in Cebu using the 7Ps of marketing (product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence). A 4-point Likert scale was used.

A dry run was conducted with 15 respondents who met the inclusion criteria. The Cronbach's alpha of 0.956 indicated that the self-made survey tool was reliable and had a high level of internal consistency, confirming that the instrument is suitable for actual administration.

Data Gathering

The survey instrument was digitally administered using Google Forms, with support from Grand Masters and Masters of the FMA7 clubs. This method of data collection enabled convenience and accessibility for the target respondents, who are foreign visitors to Cebu.

The questionnaires were distributed and collected using purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique in which units are selected based on their possession of specific characteristics required for the study. In other words, units are deliberately chosen in purposive sampling (Nikolopoulou, 2022). Cebu, known as the stick-fighting capital of the world, was selected for its historical significance dating back to the pre-colonial era (Cebu Insights, 2024).

Treatment of Data

Frequency count and percentage were used to analyze the profile of the respondents. The weighted mean was used to measure the level of influence of various factors on each marketing mix for foreign engagement in the FMA 7 Heritage Tourism Program in Cebu. The Chi-Square Test of Independence was used to determine the significant relationships between the dependent and independent variables. One-way ANOVA and Tukey's HSD post hoc test was utilized to determine the significant differences in responses to the factors influencing foreign engagement in the FMA 7 Heritage Tourism Program in Cebu.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This part presents and analyzes data on the factors influencing foreign engagement in Filipino Martial Arts (FMA) Heritage Tourism in Cebu. The data was collected from a survey questionnaire, completed by 40 respondents.

Table 1 presents the first part of the personal profile of the respondents, including age, sex, educational attainment, nationality, training level, frequency of visits to Cebu, FMA style, amount of spending, and places visited.

Table 1. Personal Profile of the Respondents (n = 40)

Profile	Frequency	Percent
A. Age (in yrs)		
28-39	10	25.00
40-49	8	20.00
50-59	17	42.50
60-69	3	7.50
70-72	2	5.00
B. Sex		
Male	36	90.00
Female	4	10.00
C. Highest Educational Attainment		
Doctorate	3	7.50
Masters	12	30.00
Bachelors	14	35.00
High School	9	22.50
Others	2	5.00
D. Nationality		
<i>North America</i>		
American	9	22.50
Mexican	1	2.50
<i>South America</i>		
Chilean	2	5.00
<i>Europe</i>		
Belgian	2	5.00
British	9	22.50
French	1	2.50
German	2	5.00



Swiss	2	5.00
<i>Asia</i>		
Chinese		
Indian	1	2.50
Japanese	2	5.00
Korean	2	5.00
Singaporean	3	7.50
<i>Oceania</i>		
Australian	1	2.50
New Zealander	2	5.00
	1	2.50
E. Training Level		
Beginner	3	7.50
Intermediate	4	10.00
Advance	7	17.50
Instructor	26	65.00
F. Frequency of Visit in Cebu		
First Time	9	22.50
Occasionally	17	42.50
Regularly	1	2.50
Other	10	25.00
G. FMA System/Style		
Academy of Eskrima	4	10.00
Applied Eskrima	1	2.50
Balintawak Sugbu	6	15.00
Baraw Sugbu	1	2.50
Cacoy Canete Doce Pares	6	15.00
Dacayana Eskrima	5	12.50
Eskrima Carin International	3	7.50
Eskrima De Campo	1	2.50
Filmocan San Miguel Eskrima	2	5.00
Lapulapu Arnis De Abanico	1	2.50
Lapunti Arnis De Abanico	1	2.50
NARAAS Philippines	1	2.50
Pableo Eskrima	1	2.50



World Nickelstick Eskrima	5	12.50	Of the forty (40)
Others	2	5.00	
H. Total Amount of Spending			
Php30,000.00-Php50,000.00	7	17.50	
Php50,000.00-Php100,000.00	9	22.50	
greater than Php100,000.00	24	60.00	
I. Length of Stay			
4-7 days	2	5.00	
8-14 days	12	30.00	
15-30 days	16	40.00	
More than 30 days	10	25.00	
J. Place/Visited			
	f	Rank	
Banaue/Sagada	1	8	
Bohol	23	2	
Boracay	12	4.5	
Cebu/Mactan	40	1	
Davao	6	6	
Iloilo	4	7	
Manila/NCR	17	3	
Palawan	12	4.5	

respondents, seventeen (17) or 42.50% were aged 50 to 59 years old, while only two (2) or 5% were in the age range of 70 to 72 years old. This result indicates that, predominantly, foreign visitors who engage in the Filipino martial arts program in Cebu at the middle adulthood stage find it a healthy outlet for stress relief, allowing them to find release and mental balance.

Exercise programs, including those based on martial arts, reduce the likelihood of several negative consequences of aging (Cromwell et al., 2007). Martial arts improve physical function in adults over 40 (Dijk et al., 2014).



Moreover, thirty-six (36) or 90% of the respondents were males, and only four (4) or 10% were females. This figure indicates that the majority of foreigners who traveled to Cebu to join the Filipino Martial Arts (FMA) Heritage Tourism in Cebu, Philippines, considering that such physical activity usually attracts male enthusiasts.

Martial arts have traditionally been male-dominated due to cultural norms (Kavoura et al., 2012).

There were fourteen (14) respondents, or 35%, who held a bachelor's degree, and twelve had a master's degree, while only three (3) respondents, or 7.5%, held a doctorate. A higher percentage of foreign participants in Filipino Martial Arts (FMA) Heritage Tourism in Cebu were college graduates. In contrast, those who hold postgraduate degrees were FMA instructors, indicating a well-educated and professional market.

The predominant nationalities of the foreign participants in the FMA7 Heritage Tourism Program in Cebu were American (9, 22.5%) and British (9, 22.5%). In contrast, the rest of their nationalities were diverse, coming from other North American countries, South America, Europe, Asian neighboring countries, and Oceania. This data shows that more foreign participants came from the United States and Great Britain since the people in the Philippines can speak and communicate in English, which is essential during the training sessions.

Many reported frequent visits to Cebu, reinforcing its status as a leading international destination in the Philippines (Travel and Tour World 2025).

Of the forty (4) respondents, twenty-six (26), or equivalent to 65% of the foreign participants in the FMA7 Heritage Tourism Program in Cebu, were instructors, while only three (3) were beginners. This indicates that the majority of those who join the international training camps organized by Cebu-based FMA clubs are instructors of other martial arts from other countries.

Regarding frequency of visit, seventeen (17) or 42.50% of the respondents occasionally visit Cebu, Philippines, while only one (1) regularly comes to the city. This means that foreigners who participated in FMA camps had visited Cebu more than once, suggesting their intention to have a deeper engagement in Filipino martial arts training.

In terms of FM system style, six (6) or 15% of the respondents were trained in Balintawak Sugbu, and another six (6, 15%) were also trained in Cacoy Canete Doce Pares. Ather respondents had training in Dacayana Eskrima (5, 12.50%), World Nickelstick Eskrima (4, 10.0%), and the Academy of Eskrima (4, 10.00%), suggesting that these clubs are more popular or appealing to foreigners participating in FMA.

Twenty-four respondents (24) reported spending more than ₱100,000 during their stay in the Philippines, while seven (7) or 17.50% spent between ₱ 30,000.00 and ₱ 50,000. This data suggests that foreign FMA trainees were high-value cultural tourists who were willing to invest in immersive experiences. However, this amount of money in Philippine pesos was of lesser value compared to the earnings of these foreign participants, since the value of their money in the global market is high.

In terms of the length of stay, sixteen (16) or 40% stayed in the Philippines for 15 to 30 days, while only two (2.5%) stayed for 4 to 7 days. These foreign martial arts enthusiasts who join the training camps in Cebu express a strong preference for extended visits that allow for deeper engagement with both training and cultural experiences.

The top three (3) places visited by the respondents were Cebu, particularly in Mactan (ranked first), Manila or at the National Capital Region (ranked second, and Bohol (ranked third). These three places are accessible to foreign tourists, as they have their own airports and seaports, offering convenient transportation options via air, land, and sea. Cebu and Manila are highly urbanized cities with a significant number of hotels, resorts, restaurants, bars, and other recreational facilities for visitors to visit and enjoy. Additionally, Cebu and Bohol are commonly visited by foreign tourists due to their natural tourist destinations, including white sand beaches, diving spots, and other ecotourism sites.

This section presents the data about the factors influencing of foreign engagement in Filipino Martial Arts (FMA7) Heritage Tourism in Cebu in terms of the 7Ps of the marketing mix: product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence.

Table 2 presents the data on the factors influencing foreign engagement in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA] 7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu in terms of product.

Table 2. Factors influencing foreign engagement to Filipino martial arts (FMA7) heritage tourism in Cebu in terms of product (n=40)

	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1	Engaging in FMA training, combined with cultural immersion activities, enhances my Cultural Experience and motivates me to engage in FMA7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu.	3.73	Highly Influential
2	The practical self-defense techniques taught in FMA motivate me to participate in FMA7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu, as they address my push factors for personal safety and skill development.	3.75	Highly Influential
3	The physical fitness benefits of FMA training, including improved strength and endurance, act as a pull factor that encourages my participation in FMA7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu.	3.48	Highly Influential
4	The focus on discipline, self-confidence, and character development within FMA training aligns with my push factors for Personal Growth and Character Development, motivating my engagement with FMA7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu.	3.45	Highly Influential
5	Earning certifications or ranks in FMA serve as a pull factor, recognized as a measure of skill and progress, motivates my continued participation in FMA7 Heritage Tourism and pursuit of advanced training opportunities.	3.13	Moderately Influential
	Aggregate Mean	3.51	Highly Influence

No Influence (1.00-1.74); Less Influential (1.75-2.49); Moderately Influential (2.5-3.24); Highly Influential (3.25-4.00)

The highest weighted mean of 3.75 indicates that the respondents were *highly influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu since the practical self-defense techniques taught in FMA motivate them to participate as they address their push factors for personal safety and skill development. This includes not only stick fighting but also knife defense, footwork, and empty-hand techniques. These practical applications made FMA attractive to those seeking effective and comprehensive self-defense systems, a point reinforced by

McClung (2015) noted that the multidimensional nature of FMA, which encompasses both armed and unarmed combat, has increasingly drawn the interest of non-Filipinos seeking a practical and holistic martial art.

Conversely, the lowest weighted mean of 3.13 indicates that the respondents were *moderately influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu since earning certifications or ranks in FMA serve as a pull factor, recognized as a measure of skill and progress, which motivated them to continue participation in FMA7 Heritage Tourism and pursuit of advanced training opportunities. It suggests that formal credentials are not the primary motivation for foreign participants to attend the FMA; instead, they are more strongly drawn to the hands-on, experiential, and cultural aspects of the training.

Ryan et al. (1997) argued that intrinsic motivations—such as personal enrichment and cultural appreciation—are more effective in sustaining engagement over time than external rewards like certifications.

The aggregate mean of 3.51 indicates that the respondents were *highly influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu in terms of product, including cultural immersion, self-defense benefits, physical fitness, personal growth, and certification opportunities, which motivate foreign participants to engage in the program. This cultural heritage program enabled them to have an authentic experience in Filipino Martial Arts with the grand masters, who hold certifications.

Table 3 presents the data on the factors influencing foreign engagement in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA] 7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu in terms of price.

Table 3. Factors influencing foreign engagement to Filipino martial arts (FMA7) heritage tourism in Cebu in terms of price (n=40)

	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1	Bundled tourism packages enhance my interest in Cebu by combining FMA training (push factor) with cultural tours and accommodations (pull factor).	2.58	Moderately Influential
2	Tiered pricing options motivate me to join FMA7 programs (push factor) by offering flexible choices that match my training needs and budget (pull factor).	2.60	Moderately Influential
3	Discounts for extended stays encourage me to deepen my FMA training (push factor) while making long-term stays in Cebu more affordable (pull factor).	3.03	Moderately Influential
4	Group and family discounts inspire me to participate in FMA7 training (push factor) while making it easier to share the experience with companions in Cebu (pull factor).	2.48	Less Influential



5	Seasonal promotions and early-bird rates encourage me to commit to FMA7 training (push factor) by making participation more cost-effective and time-sensitive (pull factor).	2.48	Less Influential
Aggregate Mean		2.63	Moderately Influential

The highest weighted mean of 3.03 indicates that the respondents were *moderately influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu since discounts for extended stays encouraged them to deepen their FMA training (push factor) while making long-term stays in Cebu more affordable (pull factor). This means that the savings they accrued by staying in the country longer allowed them to maximize their immersion in FMA training and cultural experiences. This finding is comparable to the motivations of foreign Muay Thai practitioners in Thailand, where extended training packages combined with affordable accommodation serve as a key push factor for participation.

According to Kuniard and Marangkun (2016), tourists were motivated to stay and train longer due to the reasonable cost of living and training, making affordability a critical enabler of immersive martial arts tourism.

The lowest weighted mean of 2.48 indicates that the respondents were *less influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu due to group and family discounts, which inspired them to participate in FMA7 training (push factor) while making it easier to share the experience with companions in Cebu (pull factor). This means that the package that enabled the foreign participant to bring their family members to the Philippines, while they were training, did not thoroughly entice them.

Another lowest weighted mean of 2.48 specifies that the respondents were *less influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu relating to the seasonal promotions and early-bird rates to encourage them to commit to FMA7 training (push factor) by making participation more cost-effective and time-sensitive (pull factor). This type of marketing offer had minimal influence on the participation in such an event. While individual financial flexibility—especially for long-term stays—appears important, group-oriented or time-sensitive promotions are less effective in influencing foreign engagement in FMA.

Dhar and Nowlis (1999) argued that when limited-time offers pressure consumers to make quick decisions, they often conduct incomplete information searches and make lower-quality choices. Similarly, Hogarth and Makridakis (1981) found that urgency-based promotions can undermine careful evaluation, which may not align with the planning behavior of cultural or niche tourists, such as martial arts trainees, who tend to prioritize meaningful experiences over short-term deals.

The aggregate mean of 2.63 denotes that the respondents were *moderately influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu in terms of price. This result indicates that while cost affordability, discounts especially for extended stays in the Philippines, and perceived value of joining the program are vital considerations, they are not the primary factor determining whether foreign participants choose to engage in Filipino Martial Arts Tourism. Instead, participants were more motivated by the experiential, practical, and cultural value of the training itself, in which they had more time to get involved in the actual execution.

Table 4 presents the data on the factors influencing foreign engagement in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA] 7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu in terms of place.

Table 4. Factors influencing foreign engagement to Filipino Martial Arts (FMA7) Heritage Tourism in Cebu in terms of place (n=40)

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1 The opportunity to train in Cebu, home of the renowned Grand Masters from various FMA styles and systems, pulls me to engage by offering authentic instruction and expert-led practice that enhances my skills.	3.85	Highly Influential
2 Training in scenic outdoor white sand beaches in Cebu pulls me to join FMA training by combining martial arts practice with a tranquil and visually appealing environment.	3.18	Moderately Influential
3 Training in culturally significant locations in Cebu pushes me to immerse myself in the Filipino martial arts tradition while deepening my appreciation for local heritage.	3.38	Highly Influential
4 The proximity of FMA training centers to Cebu's popular tourist destinations pulls me to participate by allowing me to combine martial arts training with leisure and exploration.	2.98	Moderately Influential
5 Affordable accommodation packages with training-friendly facilities push me to choose Cebu for FMA training (push factor) by ensuring cost-effective and convenient lodging options (pull factor).	3.45	Highly Influential
Aggregate Mean	3.37	Highly Influential

The highest weighted mean of 3.85 shows that the respondents revealed that they they were *highly influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu due to the opportunity to



train in Cebu, home of the renowned Grand Masters from various FMA styles and systems, which pulls me to engage by offering authentic instruction and expert-led practice that enhances my skills. This underscores the strong appeal of Cebu's authenticity and expert-led instruction, which significantly motivates foreign participants to engage in FMA7 Heritage Tourism. The presence of highly respected instructors and the cultural richness of the training environment enhance the perceived value of the experience.

Freeman (2022) said that the integration of FMA7 into Cebu's heritage tours enriches the cultural experience of tourists visiting the province.

The lowest weighted mean of 2.98 shows that the respondents revealed that they were *moderately influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu due to the proximity of FMA training centers to Cebu's popular tourist destinations draws them in, allowing participants to combine martial arts training with leisure and exploration. Accessibility of the training venue is a vital consideration for foreigners who are familiar with the country, as they must consider the hassle of traveling from their accommodation to the venue, the cost of the fare, and the time. However, the quality and cultural authenticity of the training experience outweigh the convenience of location, emphasizing a preference for meaningful engagement over ease of access. This aligns with documentation by the Department of Tourism–Region 7 (DOT-7), which noted that many foreign participants appreciate training in informal yet culturally immersive settings, such as in Grand Masters' home backyards or even in the streets—places that embody the living tradition of FMA and resonate with participants seeking authentic experiences.

The aggregate mean of 3.37 shows that the respondents revealed that they were *highly influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu in terms of place. This means that the beauty of the Philippines, particularly in Cebu and other tourist destinations, as well as cultural sites, scenic spots, nearby tourist areas, and accessible accommodations, significantly motivates foreign participation in the FMA7 Heritage Tourism Program in terms of location. Cebu's identity as an FMA destination, offering opportunities to train with internationally-renowned Grand Masters and experience culturally rich training sites, serves as a powerful driver of engagement and travel motivation.

Table 5 presents the data on the factors influencing foreign engagement in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA] 7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu in terms of promotion.

Table 5. Factors influencing foreign engagement to Filipino Martial Arts (FMA7) Heritage Tourism in Cebu in terms of promotion (n=40)

	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1	Partnerships between FMA clubs and government agencies like the Department of Tourism Central Visayas Region through its FMA7 program push me to engage in FMA training by ensuring legitimacy, making it a trusted choice for cultural experience.	3.30	Highly Influential
2	The collaboration between Cebu-based FMA clubs and travel agencies pulls me to participate by offering seamless travel arrangements and packages	2.48	Less Influential



	that enhance the convenience of engaging in FMA training.		
		3.15	
3	Hosting of international training camps by Cebu-based FMA clubs pushes me to participate by offering high-level, specialized training that aligns with my goals of skill improvement and cultural immersion.		Moderately Influential
4	Seeing FMA prominently featured in international films pulls me to engage in FMA training in Cebu.	2.73	Moderately Influential
		2.58	
5	FMA's presence in international tourism fairs pushes me to engage by enhancing its visibility and credibility as a unique cultural experience, encouraging me to participate in FMA training in Cebu.		Moderately Influential
		2.85	Moderately Influential
	Aggregate Mean		

The highest weighted mean of 3.30 specifies that the respondents revealed that they they were *highly influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu due to the partnerships between FMA clubs and government agencies like the Department of Tourism Central Visayas Region through its FMA7 program, which pushed the, to engage in FMA training by ensuring legitimacy, making it a trusted choice for cultural experience.

The integration of the local heritage dimension into FMA 7 (Filipino Martial Arts) encounters is allowing a richer and more relevant experience. The DOT documented over 30 diverse FMA systems or styles in the region, 90% of which are located in Cebu (MyCebu, n.d.), emphasizing the strategic role of promotion in attracting foreign participants.

The lowest weighted mean of 2.48 shows that the respondents revealed that they were *moderately influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu due to the collaboration between Cebu-based FMA clubs and travel agencies, which pulls me to participate by offering seamless travel arrangements and packages that enhance the convenience of engaging in FMA training. In many cases, foreign participants were enticed to participate in training camps in the country due to the well-arranged accommodation, itinerary, and other needs.

The aggregate mean of 2.85 shows that the respondents revealed that they were *moderately influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu in terms of promotion, suggesting that in many cases, the promotional offers to target foreigners with clear government partnerships are effective to entice them to travel to Cebu and participate in the training camps. More targeted promotional efforts, particularly those leveraging digital platforms, martial arts influencers, and cultural endorsements, enhance the visibility and global appeal of the FMA7 program.

Table 6 presents the data on the factors influencing foreign engagement in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA] 7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu in terms of people.

Table 6. Factors influencing foreign engagement to Filipino Martial Arts (FMA7) Heritage Tourism in Cebu in terms of people (n=40)

	Indicators	Weighed Mean	Interpretation
1	The presence of qualified and culturally knowledgeable instructors pushes me to engage in FMA training because it assures me of authentic learning experiences and expert guidance, enhancing my cultural understanding.	3.78	Highly Influential
2	The opportunity to engage with local communities during FMA training pulls me to participate as it offers an immersive cultural experience, helping me connect with the local way of life while learning martial arts.	3.53	Highly Influential
3	A supportive training environment pushes me to stay committed to FMA training as it fosters personal growth, ensuring a positive and motivating atmosphere that encourages continuous participation.	3.55	Highly Influential
4	The hospitality of the local people pushes me to engage in FMA training as it creates a welcoming and comfortable environment, making my stay in Cebu more enjoyable and culturally enriching.	3.55	Highly Influential
5	The strong bond and network within the FMA community pull me to participate, as it offers opportunities for meaningful connections, mentorship, and long-term engagement with fellow practitioners worldwide.	3.53	Highly Influential
	Aggregate Mean	3.59	Highly Influential

The highest weighted mean of 3.78 denotes that the respondents revealed that they were *highly influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu due to the presence of qualified and culturally knowledgeable instructors, which pushed them to engage in FMA training because it assures me of authentic learning experiences and expert guidance, enhancing my cultural understanding. This emphasizes the crucial role of the grand master in Cebu in providing expert training while fostering a deeper appreciation of Filipino culture that other places do not offer. By integrating technical proficiency



in martial arts with cultural connection, the Filipino instructors significantly enrich the training experience for foreign participants, making it both educational and immersive.

Yunfeng (2023) emphasized that qualified martial arts instructors should possess not only a solid theoretical foundation but also strong professional competencies and advanced teaching skills. Martial arts are deeply rooted in traditional culture and embody values such as patriotism and self-improvement. Hence, instruction should integrate these cultural dimensions to ensure that the teaching of martial arts simultaneously promotes skill development and preserves cultural heritage.

The lowest weighted mean of 3.53 specifies that the respondents revealed that they they were also *highly influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu due the opportunity to engage with local communities during FMA training, which pulled them to participate as it offers an immersive cultural experience, helping them connect with the local way of life while learning martial arts. The opportunity to interact with members of Arnis, Eskrima, and other clubs, coupled with the reputation of Filipino hospitality and friendliness, sparked interest among foreigners to join the training camps in Cebu.

Another lowest weighted mean of 3.53 indicates that the respondents revealed that they were further *highly influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu due to the strong bond and network within the FMA community, which pulled them to participate, as it offers opportunities for meaningful connections, mentorship, and long-term engagement with fellow practitioners worldwide. The propensity to forge friendships, share experiences, and learn martial tactics lured foreign martial arts enthusiasts to join training programs in Cebu, Philippines.

The aggregate mean of 3.59 shows that the respondents revealed that they were *moderately influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu in terms of people. The interpersonal and community-related factors of the Filipino martial arts community, along with the opportunity to experience the instructors' expertise, local hospitality, and peer support, ignited a motivation to join the training camps in Cebu. This also aligns with the broader cultural context of the Philippines, where hospitality is deeply rooted.

The genuine warmth of the Filipino people is indeed our greatest asset, and the hospitality we extend to visitors is a unique characteristic that is innately embedded in the social fabric of being Filipino.' This cultural trait likely contributes to the welcoming atmosphere that attracts and retains foreign martial arts practitioners (Presidential Communications Office [PCO], 2023).

Table 7 presents the data on the factors influencing foreign engagement in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA] 7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu in terms of process.

Table 7. Factors influencing foreign engagement to Filipino Martial Arts (FMA7) Heritage Tourism in Cebu in terms of process (n=40)

	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1	A simple and customizable booking process makes it easier for me to plan and personalize their experience.	3.05	Moderately Influential
2	Well-structured training schedules with cultural activities help me understand and enjoy both aspects of the program.	3.20	Moderately Influential
3	Clear safety guidelines and orientation sessions make me feel safe and prepared before starting the training.	3.03	Moderately Influential
4	Follow-up support after the experience, like training materials or online resources, helps me stay engaged with FMA.	3.20	Moderately Influential
5	Accessible customer support and assistance ensure that I receive timely guidance and answers to my inquiries, making the entire FMA training experience smooth and hassle-free.	3.00	Moderately Influential
	Aggregate Mean	3.10	Moderately Influential

The highest weighted mean of 3.20 denotes that the respondents revealed that they were *moderately influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu due to the well-structured training schedules that incorporate cultural activities and follow-up support after the experience. These results suggest that foreign participants place a high value on programs that offer a balanced experience—combining intensive martial arts training with meaningful cultural immersion.

Another mean of 3.20 denotes that the respondents divulged that they were *moderately influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu due to follow-up support after the experience, like training materials or online resources, which helps me stay engaged with FMA since it helps them sustain connection to Filipino Martial Arts (FMA) even after their left he Philippines.

The program is providing “a good balance—exposure to the sport and art of FMA and immersion in local arts and culture. It is exceptionally curated for Filipino martial artists. This highlights the importance of designing experiences that are not only skill-based but also culturally enriching, thereby enhancing overall satisfaction and promoting long-term engagement among foreign participants (MyCebu, n.d.).

The lowest weighted mean of 3.00 denotes that the respondents revealed that they were *moderately influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu due to the accessible customer support and assistance that ensured them received timely guidance and answers to their inquiries, making the entire FMA training experience smooth and hassle-free. In many cases, providing an avenue for foreign participants to communicate and ask questions offers convenience and support during their stay in the Philippines.

Albrecht et al. (2021) emphasized that effective customer service plays a critical role in delivering value and fostering long-term differentiation in service-oriented industries.

The aggregate mean of 3.10 indicates that the respondents revealed that they were *moderately influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu in terms of process. This suggests that in many instances, the various aspects relating to booking ease, program structure, safety protocols, provision of services for the training camp, cultural integration, smooth communication of details, provision of customer support, and arrangement of the itinerary that suits their expectations and needs provided them with satisfaction and a momentous experience in Cebu.

Table 8 presents the data on the factors influencing foreign engagement in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA] 7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu in terms of physical evidence.

Table 8. Factors influencing foreign engagement to Filipino Martial Arts (FMA7) Heritage Tourism in Cebu in terms of physical evidence (n=40)

	Indicators	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1	A culturally rich training environment pushes me to engage in FMA training as it provides a deeper understanding of Filipino heritage, enhancing my learning experience beyond just physical skills.	3.48	Highly Influential
2	The availability of branded and locally crafted souvenirs pulls me to participate in FMA training, as it offers a tangible connection to the culture and memories of my training experience.	2.98	Moderately Influential
3	The opportunity to have documented memories of my FMA training pulls me to stay engaged with the experience, as it allows me to share and cherish the memories of my martial arts journey.	3.25	Highly Influential
4	Access to educational materials and resources pushes me to continue learning and improving my FMA skills, as it supports my ongoing development even after the training ends.	3.18	Moderately Influential
5	Certificate of completion and recognition pull me to participate, as they serve as proof of my training achievement and add value to my FMA journey.	3.10	Moderately Influential
	Aggregate Mean	3.20	Moderately Influential

The highest weighted mean of 3.48 denotes that the respondents revealed that they were *highly influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA]7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu due to the culturally rich



training environment that pushed them to engage in FMA training as it provided a deeper understanding of Filipino heritage, enhancing my learning experience beyond just physical skills. The foreign participants were greatly motivated by an immersive atmosphere that enhances their understanding of Filipino heritage alongside martial arts training.

The lowest weighted mean of 2.98 denotes that the respondents revealed that they were *highly influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA] Heritage Tourism in Cebu due to the availability of branded and locally crafted souvenirs pulled them to participate in FMA training, as it offers a tangible connection to the culture and memories of my training experience. The participants also appreciated the souvenirs from Cebu as tangible mementos, in motivating engagement in FMA training in many cases. Although the experiential and educational benefits offered by the training environment itself is the main motivating factor.

The aggregate mean of 3.20 indicates that the respondents revealed that they were *moderately influenced* to engage in Filipino Martial Arts [FMA] Heritage Tourism in Cebu in terms of physical evidence. In many instances, the foreign participants were enticed to join the activities in the FMA Heritage Tourism Program in Cebu due to the tangible aspects of the training camp, such as facilities, training venues, and documented memories play a meaningful role, their impact is especially heightened when these elements reflect cultural authenticity. In this context, the physical setting becomes more than just a backdrop—it functions as a cultural space that reinforces the identity, heritage, and overall value of the FMA experience, including the cultural richness of the training environment, availability of branded and locally crafted souvenirs, opportunities for documented memories, access to educational materials, and certificate of completion.

Iwasaki et al. (2009) emphasized that culturally grounded, enjoyable, and meaningful activities can be integrated into daily life as expressions of cultural strength, sources of positive emotion, and ways to sustain meaningful social ties. A culturally rich training environment significantly contributes to the perceived value and appeal of the FMA Heritage Tourism Program.

Table 9 shows the results of the test of significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and their responses on the factors influencing their engagement to Filipino martial Arts (FMA) heritage tourism in Cebu.

Table 9. Significant relationship between the profile of the respondents and their responses on the factors influencing their engagement to Filipino martial Arts (FMA) heritage tourism in Cebu

FMA Influence Level vs Paired Variables	n	Chi-square Value	df	p-Value	Decision	Remark
A. Age Groups	40	14.95	12	0.244	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
B. Sex	40	1.175	3	0.759	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
C. Educ Attainment	40	10.848	12	0.542	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
D. Nationality	40	28.727	42	0.941	Failed to Reject	Not Significant

E. Training Level	40	11.115	9	0.268	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
F. Frequency in Cebu	40	10.294	12	0.59	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
G. FMA System/Style	40	25.677	43	0.978	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
H. Amount Spent	40	13.589	6	0.035	Reject Ho	Significant
I. Length of Stay	40	7.705	9	0.564	Failed to Reject	Not Significant
J. Places visited	40	8.176	9	0.516	Failed to Reject	Not Significant

Significant @=0.05 level

There is a significant relationship between the respondents' amount of money spent and their responses regarding the factors that influenced their decision to join the Filipino Martial Arts (FMA7) Heritage Tourism Program in Cebu, as indicated by the P-value of 0.035, which is less than the 0.05 alpha value. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that foreign participants who spent a larger amount of money—particularly those whose expenditures exceeded Php100,000.00 and who engaged in extended stays, more intensive training sessions, or participation in more immersive cultural experiences—enhanced the overall engagement and value of the heritage tourism experience.

High-value tourists, who exhibit the highest expenditure elasticity, are more willing to invest in authentic, cultural, and skill-based travel experiences. These tourists gain greater benefits from such programs, not only in terms of learning and skill development but also by forming deeper emotional and cultural connections with the host destination (Pai et al., 2024).

Table 10 shows the results of the test of significant difference on the responses on factors influencing foreign engagement to Filipino martial arts (FMA7) heritage tourism in Cebu, in terms of the 7Ps marketing mix.

Table 10. Significant difference on the responses on factors influencing foreign engagement to Filipino martial arts (FMA7) heritage tourism in Cebu in terms of the 7Ps marketing mix

FMA Influence Level vs	n	Mean	sd	F-test Value	p-Value	Remark	Interpretation
Paired Variables							
1. Product	40	3.49	0.55	10.919	< 0.001	Reject Ho	Significant Difference
2. Price	40	2.64	0.91				

3. Place	40	3.34	0.74
4. Promotion	40	2.85	0.78
5. People	40	3.56	0.59
6. Process	40	3.56	0.59
7. Physical	40	3.18	0.64

Significant @0.05 level of significance

There is a significant difference in the response to the factors influencing foreign engagement with the FMA7 Heritage Tourism Program, as indicated by the F-test value of 10.919 and the P-value of less than 0.001. Therefore, the null hypothesis (that there is no difference among the mean influence scores) is rejected. The findings indicate that foreign participants in training camps in Cebu had varying reactions to the marketing and promotion strategies of the FMA Heritage Tourism Program, due to variations in age, experience, monetary value, attractiveness of Cebu and the Philippines to them, and many other factors.

To further determine which specific elements differed, a Tukey's HSD post hoc test was conducted. The responses on the influence of price differed significantly from those on people, process, and product, confirming that cost considerations are perceived as much less influential than quality-driven and human-centered factors. Similarly, promotion was found significantly lower than people and process, but not as distinctly separated from place, suggesting that its role remains secondary in influencing engagement. In contrast, the differences among product, people, process, and place were less pronounced, indicating that foreign participants consistently value these factors. Foreign martial arts tourists are experience-driven rather than price-sensitive, and are willing to invest in high-quality, culturally immersive programs.

Among the 7Ps marketing mix, people and process recorded the highest mean (both at 3.56), closely followed by product (mean = 3.49) and place (mean = 3.34). These results suggest that human interaction with renowned grand masters, training structure, and the quality of the martial arts experience played central roles in attracting and engaging foreign participants. This reflects the high value placed on skilled instructors, efficient program delivery, and the cultural integrity of the training environment.

Promotion (mean = 2.85) also showed a lower influence than other factors, such as product, people, and process. The existing promotional strategies were less effective or less visible to international markets. Meanwhile, the influence of the product and place, though both rated highly, displayed fewer significant differences compared with the other factors. These marketing elements had a more consistent and balanced influence, aligning closely with the overall expectations of foreign FMA participants.

Kim et al. (2009) reported that demand factors influencing Taekwondo consumption included instruction quality, program offerings, and opportunities for cultural learning. These dimensions, much like in the case of FMA, are directly aligned with participants' intrinsic motivations for training—emphasizing quality of experience over cost.



CONCLUSIONS

In cultural heritage tourism, particularly, the Filipino martial arts, 7Ps of marketing mix relevance and applicable to tourism—particularly on the social context (people), the provision of well-arranged booking, accommodations, itinerary and training needs and accessible and well-equipped training environment (placed) like scenic spots and culturally-significant spaces emerged as the most influential elements to entice travel intention to the Philippines. This highlights the importance of enhancing instructor quality and fostering meaningful human interaction, which can be strengthened through formal certification systems or recognition from governing bodies such as the Philippine Eskrima Kali Arnis Federation (PEKAF). Additionally, system founders and/or Grand Masters should undergo ‘Train-the-Trainers’ certification administered by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) to ensure instructional competence.

Equally vital are the authenticity of the cultural environment and the overall quality of service delivery, which play a central role in shaping the experiences of foreign participants. The FMA7 Heritage Tourism Program’s strong focus on these dimensions significantly drives international engagement and encourages martial arts enthusiasts to visit the Philippines. By continuing to anchor efforts on these core areas, FMA7 Heritage Tourism in Cebu and across the Central Visayas region can further develop as a globally competitive and culturally significant tourism product.

RECOMMENDATION

It is hereby recommended that the 7Ps of the Marketing Mix be applied as a strategic framework to be adopted by FMA clubs and to guide the planning, development, and promotion of the FMA7 Heritage Tourism Program to the foreign market, highlighting the people, product, and place as the main objects of the marketing campaign to attract more foreign participants. This approach aligns with the core components of the program and effectively positions Filipino Martial Arts (FMA) as a culturally significant tourism product.

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