

# The Alphabet of Scaling G2: Perspectives of Local Mountaineers on Perceived Risks, Tourist Satisfaction and Experience at Mount Guiting-Guiting in Sibuyan Island

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## ABSTRACT

Recognizing the limitations identified by the UNWTO in quantifying domestic mountain tourism due to a lack of information on travel motivations, this qualitative study aims to delve deeper into the reasons and experiences that lead local mountaineers to repeatedly visit a specific location. Unlike the assessment of international mountain tourism, a different approach is needed domestically. The findings of this research will provide valuable insights into the dynamics of domestic mountain tourism and offer practical guidance for enhancing the professionalism of Sibuyan Island's tourism industry. By examining the target market segment, this study also seeks to inform the development of tourism products that effectively cater to consumer demand and visitor expectations. Moreover, the study contributes information and data that support informed decisions for long-term planning and evaluation processes. It lays the groundwork for formulating goals, identifying KPIs, and establishing baseline measurements for its competitive advantages. By concentrating on the lived experiences of local tourists, this research also offers valuable insights for improving infrastructure and service provisions. The data obtained can be applied to the development of projects concerning lodging, transportation, and other crucial tourism-related amenities. An inductive methodology was employed for the thematic analysis of the data, involving a data-driven exploration where the dataset initiated the process of understanding meaning. Through the study, complex interplays of factors that influence mountaineers' decisions to revisit Mount Guiting-Guiting were explored while underscoring the significance of addressing perceived risks, enhancing tourist satisfaction, and continually improving the overall climbing experience to promote sustainability and safety while preserving the natural beauty of the mountain.

Keywords: *adventure tourism, Sibuyan Island, Mount Guiting-Guiting, community-based tourism, nature-based tourism*

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## INTRODUCTION

Mountains have traditionally drawn tourists, especially when catering to domestic and local markets with existing mountaineering or rock-climbing communities. However, surprisingly, tourism development plans often lack a clear understanding of tourists' perspectives on mountaineering.

As defined by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Mountain Tourism is “a type of tourism activity which takes place in a defined and limited geographical space such as hills or mountains with distinctive characteristics and attributes that are inherent to a specific landscape, topography, climate, biodiversity (flora and fauna) and local community. It encompasses a broad range of outdoor leisure and sports activities”. When based on a domestic and local source market with an established climbing or skiing culture, mountaineering has long provided for appealing tourist destinations (Dewan & Kim, 2020).

Several countries with high elevations (some of which are landlocked) can be considered ‘pure mountain tourism destinations’, as mountains are the main driver or attraction for tourism demand. Countries like Nepal,

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Andorra, and Austria are examples of this. As described by the Nepal Promotions Board in 2022, Nepal stands as a prominent global hub for trekking, heralded as the birthplace of commercial trekking in the early 1960s under the leadership of Colonel Jimmy Roberts, who organized the inaugural commercial trek. Boasting an ensemble of eight of the tallest peaks on the planet, Nepal is revered as a sanctuary for mountaineers.

Covering a modest expanse of 468 square kilometers, with mountains and forests comprising 92% of its land, Andorra presents itself as a haven for nature enthusiasts with its easily accessible and abundant natural offerings. The allure of nature serves as the primary draw for visitors, with 'nature' emerging as the predominant motivator for travel to the region. Govern d'Andorra reported that in 2022, the destination warmly received 8.4 million international visitors, including 3 million overnight guests. Noteworthy attractions include 303 kilometers of ski slopes, protected natural reserves, and the esteemed Biosphere Reserve located in Ordino.

Austria, enveloped by the Alps, which blanket two-thirds of its terrain, features an array of villages and cities that double as premier mountain tourism locales, offering a diverse array of mountain-oriented products and services year-round. The Federal Ministry of the Republic of Austria detailed in 2023 that a significant portion of Austria's tourism activity, quantitatively speaking, is concentrated within federal provinces nestled in the Alpine region, with Tyrol accounting for 33% and Salzburg for 20% of overnight stays based on 2019 data.

As reported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in July 2023, the key drivers behind the growth of mountain tourism are financial gain, opportunity for local people, and the creation of sustainable products. Other reasons include preserving natural and cultural assets, distributing tourist flows, enhancing the current tourism product, and addressing seasonality. On the other hand, guaranteeing adequate infrastructure and sustainability, followed by product development, connectivity, and public-private-community cooperation, are the primary challenges for developing and promoting mountain tourism. Other difficulties include backing from policymakers, carrying capacity, safety and security measures, or locals' acceptance of tourists.

UNWTO data from 2023 indicates that domestic tourism is six times larger than international tourism. Globally, an estimated 9 billion domestic overnight trips occurred in 2018, with over half in Asia and the Pacific. In the Philippines, the Department of Tourism (DOT) and Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) report from June 29, 2022, revealed a significant 38.16% increase in domestic tourism trips in 2021, reaching 37,279,282, compared to 26,982,233 in 2020, as detailed in the 2021 Philippine Tourism Satellite Accounts (PTSA).

In 2023, Davao del Sur saw 1.5 million domestic tourist arrivals, with day tours being a significant contributor. Digos City accounted for the largest share due to the popularity of the Mt. Apo loop, according to Davao del Sur Tourism and Cultural Office head Kervin Joseph Elijay, who emphasized the importance of local tourism to the province. Additionally, the province received 27,932 foreign tourists in 2023, bringing the total arrivals to 1,527,932.

Although the Province of Romblon offers a wide range of tourism attractions that are influenced by its natural and cultural heritage, they are not properly appreciated. Romblon is highly recognized for its adventure, ecology, wildlife, and marine tourism, particularly on Sibuyan Island.

However, Sibuyan, Romblon, has not yet developed its capacity for ecotourism (Federico, 2018). Furthermore, the Province lacks both robust tourism policies and effective monitoring systems. When we zoom in on the Island of Sibuyan, we can see that there is still room to grow its mountain tourism industry. Sibuyan Island is the home of the 11th most prominent mountain in the Philippines, Mount Guiting-Guiting. Its popularity amongst mountaineers is such that it is one of the toughest mountains in the country, which has the potential to harness the power of tourism.

## Literature Review

The most significant and quickly expanding economic activity on the planet is tourism. It is a multifaceted, multicultural activity that significantly contributes to a nation's economic growth by fostering job opportunities and advancing the services industry (Dewan & Kim, 2020). Mountains have drawn tourists like a magnet, and they're one of the tourism industry's fastest-growing divisions overall (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006; Schneider, 2010). Mountain tourism represents a significant portion of the global tourism market, contributing 15–20% or US\$ 70–90 billion annually. Its appeal lies in the exhilaration and adventure offered by the inherent risks of mountaineering activities. Growing tourist demand for mountain hiking, trekking, and rock climbing has been fueled by their limitless needs and desires. While numerous studies have examined the demand side of mountain tourism—exploring motivations, expenditures, and current patterns—less research has focused on how tourists perceive the factors influencing their mountain selection and whether these perceptions impact their likelihood of returning.

Rama et al. (2019) conducted a bibliometric analysis of the indexed scientific production on "mountain tourism" in the international databases Scopus and Web of Science. This research aimed to assess the existing body of knowledge in mountain tourism and pinpoint key research areas, emerging trends, and existing gaps. The analysis encompassed 134

publications identified through a search using the term "Mountain Tourism."

The findings indicated that Scopus offers more comprehensive coverage of scientific output in this field, with limited output, with only 19 individuals contributing between two and three publications.

Europe emerged as the most active continent in mountain tourism research. The study underscores the necessity for further investigation into areas such as the social and cultural effects of mountain tourism, the influence of technology, and the consequences of climate change. Additional search results provided supplementary insights into the bibliometric analysis of mountain tourism literature within Scopus, research on economic development and mountain tourism between 2010 and 2020, and studies on tourism sustainability.

The study of Dewan & Kim (2020) analyzed the impact of the attributes of tourism service quality (TSQ) on tourists' behavioral intention to engage in mountaineering in Pakistan. The study focused on the impact of monetary advantages, convenience advantages, and safety and security on tourists' intentions. The moderating role of the destination's image in creating the tourists' intentions was also analyzed. The research model, validated through exploratory factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha, revealed that international tourists' intention to visit Pakistan was primarily driven by monetary and convenience advantages. Interestingly, personal safety and security did not significantly influence their attitude, as tourists who focused on mountaineering tended to accept inherent risks. However, the destination's mountaineering image did positively impact their intentions for future visits to Pakistan. Related research explores factors influencing tourist satisfaction and loyalty regarding local foods, the mediating role of destination image in risk and constraint perception, and cross-cultural perceptions of service quality in Pakistan.

### ***Mountain Tourism around the World***

A 2021 study, jointly developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Mountain Partnership Secretariat, and UNWTO, found that in mountainous areas, variations in temperature, humidity, heat, and daylight hours are associated with shifts in latitude and altitude. These factors impact ecosystems, human communities, and subsequently, the appeal of tourism destinations. Therefore, mountain ranges worldwide offer possibilities for a wide variety of tourism activities, of which some are more developed than others:

**Winter and Sports Tourism.** Primarily confined to higher mountain regions and snow seasons, typical activities include cross-country, alpine, and glacier skiing, heli-skiing, snowboarding, sledding, snowshoeing, and tobogganing.

**Walking Tourism.** This enables visitors to engage with mountain landscapes, wildlife, and local culture. Well-planned development can provide diverse economic and social benefits for residents and communities, especially as a summer income source in areas reliant on winter activities. With rising consumer interest in authentic experiences and the increasing popularity of active tourism, walking tourism, as highlighted by UNWTO, offers a strong potential to showcase a destination's complete offering, including its culture and nature.

**Adventure and Sports Activities.** These activities, available in mountain areas both during and outside snow seasons (weather and access permitting), include mountain biking, zip-lining, quad biking, horse-riding, rock climbing, ice climbing, paragliding, zorbing, and caving. They also encompass freshwater adventure and sports like river and lake tours, canoeing, sailing, windsurfing, paddle-surfing, kite surfing, kayaking, rafting, and freshwater fishing.

### ***Classifications of Mountains***

The United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre's (UNEP-WCMC) mountain classification system served as the foundation for a global framework aimed at creating comparable statistics worldwide. Using this system, Mount Guiting-Guiting on Sibuyan Island is categorized as Class 3. The classification defines seven types of mountains considering mountain altitude, local elevation range, and slope:

Class 1: elevation > 4,500m

Class 2: elevation 3,500 – 4,500m

Class 3: elevation 2,500 – 3,500m

Class 4: elevation 1,500 – 2,500m and slope  $\geq 2^\circ$

Class 5: elevation 1,000 – 1,500m and slope  $\geq 5^\circ$  or local elevation range [7km radius] > 300m

Class 6: elevation 300 – 1,000m and local elevation range [7km radius] > 300m

Class 7: isolated inner basins and plateaus less than 25km<sup>2</sup> in extent that are surrounded by mountains but do not themselves meet criteria of classes 1–6.

### ***Mountaineering in the Philippines***

Geotourism, a growing sector emphasizing a destination's natural and cultural heritage, sees active volcanoes as major attractions, drawing millions annually. A 2019 study by Aquino et al. explored visitor motivations for touring Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines. Their research identified push motives (escape/relaxation, novelty-seeking, volcano knowledge, socialization) and pull motives (disaster/cultural heritage, volcanic/geological attributes). The study, based on 174 surveys, found novelty-seeking to be the strongest motivator. Domestic

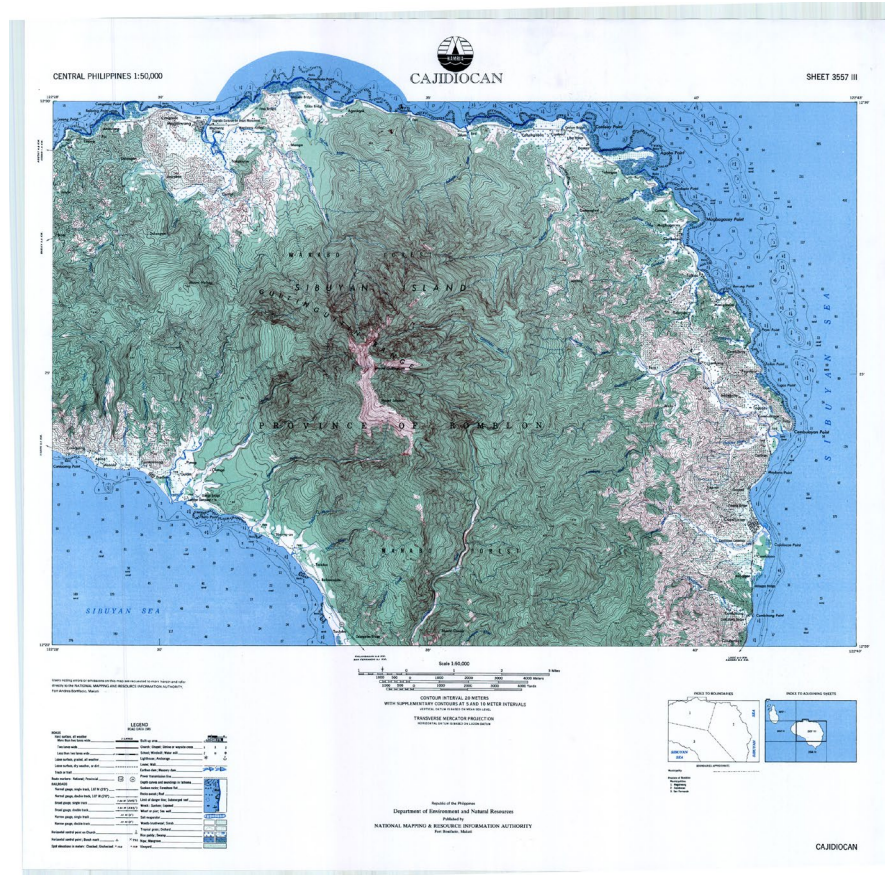


Figure 1. Topographical Map of Sibuyan Island focused on the elevation of G2 published by the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority in 2010

visitors showed stronger escape/relaxation and socialization motives than international visitors.

Geotourism, a growing sector emphasizing natural and cultural heritage, sees active volcanoes as major attractions, drawing millions annually. A 2023 study in the Philippines (Groves) explored visitor motivations for touring Mount Pinatubo. The research identified push motives (escape/relaxation, novelty-seeking, volcano knowledge, socialization) and pull motives (disaster/cultural heritage, volcanic/geological attributes), while also examining the influence of demographics and prior experience, and comparing domestic and international visitors.

The strongest driver for visiting volcanic sites was novelty-seeking. Domestic tourists were more motivated by escape, relaxation, and socialization compared to international visitors. These findings offer insights for developing and marketing volcano geotourism and diversifying Philippine tourism. The study underscores the importance of understanding visitor motivations at geotourism destinations for effective marketing and planning, contributing to the limited research on geotourism at volcanic sites.

Gian and Shiela (2016) wrote an article about their experience climbing Mt. Guiting-Guiting in the Philippines. The article describes the spiritual experience of climbing mountains and the lessons learned during the climb. The climbers woke up at 1 AM and started climbing towards the summit. After two hours of climbing, they rested at the Crash Site, where an aircraft had crashed years ago. The climbers paid their respects to the people who lost their lives in the crash before continuing their climb. The article highlights the importance of respecting the history and culture of the places visited during travel.

The article also provides information on the technical difficulty of climbing Mt. Guiting-Guiting and the natural phenomena found at the ridges and slopes of the mountain. Other search results provide additional information on the location, trails, and landmarks of Mt. Guiting-Guiting, as well as personal accounts of climbing the mountain.

### Asia's Galapagos

With a land area of around 45,600, Sibuyan Island (Figure 1) is the second largest island in the province of Romblon. The island is surrounded by the islands of

Tablas, Masbate, Panay, and Marinduque. The region's terrain is dominated by sloping areas. It is estimated that 77% of the land has a slope of 18% or more. Mount Guiting-guiting, which rises 2,058 meters above sea level, is the island's highest point. According to Corona's classification, Sibuyan Island has a Type III climate, meaning that there isn't a particularly noticeable maximum rainy season there and that the island typically experiences a short dry season that lasts between March and May or December and February (DENR- MIMAROPA, 2014).

There are 3 municipalities and 36 barangays with an annual growth rate of 0.96%. Currently, the population of Sibuyan is 57,248, and the population density is 118.2/km<sup>2</sup> (NSO, 2010). The indigenous dwellers in Sibuyan Island are called Sibuyan Mangyan Tagabukid (SMT). Two Certificate Ancestral Domain Titles (CADTs) were issued to SMT covering a total of 8,408.84 has located in two non-contiguous areas within Cajidiocan and San Fernando (Tongson & McShane, 2006).

The island is acknowledged as a major hub for biodiversity. Due to the island's complex geological history, extended periods of isolation from other islands, and diversity, it was thought that many groups of plants and animals exhibit medium to high levels of endemism (Brown et. al., 2013). Aside from that, this island still has a high remaining forest cover. Due to its ecological importance, Sibuyan Island's most prominent peak, Mt. Guiting-guiting, has been declared a Natural Park by Pres. Fidel V. Ramos under Proclamation No. 746 on February 20, 1996. The terrestrial reserve with an area of 15,260.48 hectares was mandated to be protected and conserved on a sustainable basis (DENR- MIMAROPA, 2014). In spite of its protected status, Mt. Guiting-guiting Natural Park (MGGNP) and many other natural areas on the island remain under serious threats.

Lorenz Pasion, in a February 4, 2023, Rappler.com article, attributed Sibuyan Island's "Galapagos of Asia" moniker to its exceptionally rich biodiversity and endemism. BirdLife International's (BLI) website further notes that the forests of Mt. Guiting-Guiting National Park on Sibuyan are home to several threatened and restricted-range bird species. Three bird subspecies are endemic to the island: the Philippine Hanging Parrot (*Loriculus philippensis*), locally known as colasisi; the Philippine Pygmy-woodpecker (*Dendrocopos maculatus*); and the Orange-bellied Flowerpecker (*Dicaeum trigonostigma sibuyanicum*).

Sibuyan is also home to an estimated 700 vascular plant species, 54 of which are endemic. Among its five threatened endemic mammal species is the critically endangered Philippine Tube-nosed Fruit Bat (*Nyctimene rabori*).

BirdLife International (BLI) attributes Sibuyan's exceptionally high endemism of flora and fauna to its

isolation since the middle to late Pleistocene period, as stated on their website. The Foundation for the Philippine Environment's website further highlights Sibuyan Island's biodiversity by noting that it is home to the following:

- 700 vascular plant species
- 144 species of trees, of which 33 are endemic to the Philippines, two are endemic to Sibuyan, and 10 are on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List List of Threatened Species
- 54 plant species are endemic to the island
- 83 fauna species endemic to the Philippines, of which four are endemic to Sibuyan and 18 are on IUCN's Red List
- 130 bird species
- 9 native terrestrial mammal species
- 9 bat species
- 16 reptiles

The biodiversity of Sibuyan Island remains a source of scientific discovery, with researchers documenting 14 new species of amphibians and reptiles in Mt. Guiting-Guiting as recently as 2021. This was reported in an article by the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB), where Camila Meneses, a former UPLB Museum of Natural History extension associate and current PhD student at the University of Kansas, noted the island's continued potential, writing, "There is still a lot to discover in Sibuyan Island."

Sibuyan, a 466-square-kilometer island in Romblon province, according to PhilAtlas, is divided into three coastal municipalities: Cajidiocan, Magdiwang, and San Fernando. The Philippine Statistics Authority records a combined household population of 62,745 for these three municipalities. Environmental group Seacology said on its website that Sibuyan Island's forest is believed to be "one of the densest forests in the world," with an estimated 1,551 trees per hectare.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a thematic qualitative which enabled the researchers to analyze relationships, patterns, and trends with a high level of accuracy with respect to the perceptions of local mountaineers to Mount Guiting-Guiting in Sibuyan Island. The researcher used purposive sampling techniques, specifically homogeneous sampling, and set the criteria for choosing the respondents. This is a type of non-random sampling technique wherein subjects are selected by the researcher based on their characteristics. Generally, a sample size of 30 respondents is sufficient; however, the researcher selected 37 individuals from the data provided by the Mount Guiting-Guiting Natural Park (MGGNP) – Protected Area Management Office who are amenable to an interview.

The study also employed an unstructured or open-ended interview via ZOOM. The purpose of this kind of interview, which frequently takes the shape of a conversation, is for the researcher to learn more about the participant's opinions, thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs regarding particular events or phenomena. An unstructured or open-ended interview typically comprises of several interviews spaced out over time. The primary emphasis lies in the participants' subjective interpretations of the event or phenomena under investigation (Maree, 2020).

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **5As of Encountered Risks**

Atmospheric Conditions, Architectural Features of G2, Ailment-related Issues, Access to Essentials, and Amateur Hikers are the codes used to discuss the result for the interview question: "Can you provide examples of risks you encountered during your climb/s?". One of the risks of climbing is the extreme weather conditions caused by the high altitude of the mountains. Cold weather can cause hypothermia and may pose health-related issues to climbers. Along with this, torrential rains and strong winds brought forth by bad and unpredictable weather can also cause harm. In relation to this, injuries during a hike, such as fatigue and altitude sickness, are but some of the risks encountered during climbs.

The unlimited ravines, rock climbing partnered with unstable rocks, jagged rock formations, and steep trails are architectural features of G2 that are deemed to be risky. Although this may add to the uniqueness of the climb, one should not eliminate this as a risk. Access to essentials and amateur hikers are also noted to be risks encountered. Scarce water and food supply are also observed to be risky. Finally, in the event that some mountain climbers in the group are untrained and unfit to climb, the whole group can be placed in a dangerous position.

### **8Bs of Climbing Satisfaction and Tourist Experience**

The evaluation of a mountaineer's overall satisfaction with the previous climb of G2 varies based on the specific aspects that contribute to their satisfaction. The satisfaction brought by the scenery and views is one. However, the human input should not be overlooked, for the guides and porters are able to add a sense of safety and comfort to mountaineers. A breakthrough moment or a feeling of accomplishment, knowing that a climber was able to conquer one of the hardest climbs in the country, adds to this; climbers who are well-integrated with nature throughout the hike feel a certain feeling of bliss that is incomparable to most. Additionally, living in a temperate climate, the change of feeling in terms of the weather or temperature

enhances the tourist experience. Breathtaking Scenery, Blazers of Trail, Breakthrough Moment, Balmy Weather, Blissful Experience, Bonding of Climbers, Beginner's Hike, and Bad Feedback are the overarching themes under this subcategory.

### **3Cs of Climbers' Perceived Risks**

When asked about the importance of the level of perceived risk when deciding to climb G2, the responses of the interviewees were categorized into: 1. Careful Decision; 2. Crucial Reason; and 3. Climber's Well-Being.

A respondent was able to point out that the 9/9 difficulty rating of G2 should not be underestimated. This is in accordance with another respondent who mentioned that it is of utmost importance because it allows mountaineers to remain level-headed and not too arrogant while traversing the trail. We categorized this as a careful decision, as the emerging theme focuses on ensuring that the sense of objectives prior to the climb was set. In addition, Crucial Reason is also prevalent in the responses of the interviewees as the perceived risk, per respondents, is a matter of life and death. Lastly, the Climbers' Well-Being is also at play here as the perceived risks necessitate careful consideration of one's climbing skills, physical preparedness, and ability to handle potential challenges along the way.

### **5Ds of Ancillary Factors and Tourist Satisfaction**

Down-the-line Suggestions, Delighted Experience, Dependable Tour Guides, Dismayed Climbers, and Domestic Bliss, are the codes utilized to categorize the theme that emerged through the guide question: "How do you think the quality of the trail, facilities, and support from the local community impact your tourist satisfaction?" While respondents were able to point out their satisfaction towards ancillary factors of their trip, suggestions were also raised pertinent to maintaining the natural beauty of the site. With this in mind, suggestions for facilities with a low environmental impact, such as hanging bridges to aid river crossings, were also mentioned.

It is interesting to point out as well that the tour guides were able to make a positive mark on the climber's experience, citing their professional know-how of the trail, which entails the safety of the group. Along with this, the local reception towards the climbers also added delight to their overall experience. The limitations imposed by an unstable internet connection and limited ATMs were also factors to be considered.

### **6Es of Climbers' Perceived Difficulty when Climbing G2**

The Escalation of Trails includes factors like altitude, length of the climb, elevation gain, and exposure to harsh weather conditions, which play a

significant role in the climber's physical performance during the ascent. The difficulty of G2 influences a climber's decision as it is a matter of readiness as much as a matter of life and death. With this in mind, an Elated Feeling, knowing that it was one of the Philippines' hardest climbs, but still being able to reach the summit, is an accomplishment enough for some to make the trip to Sibuyan Island. The Eureka Moments, which include the satisfaction after a hard climb and an overall life-changing experience as described by one of the climbers, are a factor that positively influences a climber's revisit intention.

To a trained hiker and an experienced mountaineer, however, G2 posits itself as an average climb. Some of which are not in agreement with the 9/9 difficulty rating of the mountain. This is in total contrast to the responses categorized under the Encountering a Hurdle code. As some climbers were able to acquire bruises, and are in complete agreement with the mountain's reputation as one of the toughest Philippine mountains. Lastly, it is integral to point out that, still, the intentions of mountaineers were positively affected by the experience they had with the local mountain guides.

#### **4Fs of Choosing Other Destinations aside from G2**

When asked: "Have you ever considered other mountaineering destinations instead of revisiting Mount Guiting-Guiting? What factors led you to choose another destination?", Finding New Experience, Framing Comparisons, Fortified with Satisfaction, and Fulfillment of Hiking were the codes used to categorized the theme. Citing that a different mountain equates to a different experience, some mountaineers would rather visit another mountain. Along with this, hikes that test a climber's limit draw them to consider other mountains that are harder than G2 to scale. In line with this, whether G2 is truly one of the toughest or not, one can only do so if they have comparisons to consider. As the Philippines is a treasure trove for adventure travelers, alternatives to G2 are not limited.

#### **8Gs of Climbers' Suggestions for Improving G2 Experience**

The 8G's of Climbers' Suggestions for Improving G2 Experience encapsulate a diverse range of insights and recommendations gathered from local mountaineers regarding their experiences at Mount Guiting-Guiting. The thematic analysis of the interviews highlights the multifaceted nature of factors that contribute to a fulfilling and safe climbing experience, including environmental conservation, community collaboration, safety protocols, and enhancing overall satisfaction. By synthesizing the responses into these eight categories, it becomes evident that there is a shared vision among climbers for creating a more sustainable, enjoyable, and well-rounded experience on the mountain.

The results of the interview underscore the importance of holistic approaches to mountain climbing that go beyond the physical act of ascent. Suggestions such as "Grasping the fundamentals of hiking" and "Groups for guides and porters" emphasize the significance of education, preparation, and teamwork in ensuring a successful and enriching climb. Furthermore, the emphasis on "Green environment" and "Guarding Guiting-Guiting" highlights a collective commitment to preserving the natural beauty and ecological integrity of Mount Guiting-Guiting. By addressing these various aspects, climbers can work together to cultivate a culture of safety, sustainability, and appreciation for the unique experience that this mountain offers.

#### **Lived Experience**

##### ***Safety Measures and Preparedness***

Considering the risks identified during climbs, such as extreme weather conditions, architectural features, and access to essentials, it would be beneficial to focus on enhancing safety measures and preparedness for climbers. Providing training sessions, guidelines for proper gear, and ensuring climbers are physically and mentally prepared for the challenges can help mitigate risks and ensure a safer climbing experience.

##### ***Tourist Satisfaction and Experience***

To enhance tourist satisfaction and overall experience, it is important to continue highlighting the positive aspects that contribute to climbers' enjoyment, such as breathtaking scenery, interaction with knowledgeable guides and porters, and the sense of accomplishment. Efforts to maintain a welcoming and supportive local community can also significantly impact tourists' experiences.

##### ***Perceived Risks and Decision-Making***

Understanding climbers' perceptions of risks and the decision-making process is crucial. By acknowledging the factors that influence climbers' revisit intention, such as the difficulty level, weather conditions, and personal well-being, strategies can be developed to address these concerns effectively. Providing accurate information on the challenges and rewards of climbing Mount Guiting-Guiting can help climbers make informed decisions.

##### ***Ancillary Factors and Support***

The support from local communities, tour guides, and facilities plays a significant role in climbers' satisfaction. Enhancing facilities with minimal environmental impact, improving communication channels, and ensuring reliable support systems can contribute to a more positive and fulfilling climbing experience for tourists.

### ***Continuous Improvement and Collaboration.***

Encouraging collaboration between climbers, local communities, and authorities for the improvement of Mount Guiting-Guiting experiences is essential. Implementing climbers' suggestions for trail maintenance, safety protocols, and environmental conservation can lead to sustainable practices and a better overall experience for all stakeholders.

### ***Education and Awareness.***

Increasing awareness about the unique challenges and rewards of climbing Mount Guiting-Guiting can help manage climbers' expectations and foster a deeper appreciation for the natural environment. Providing educational resources, workshops on sustainable hiking practices, and promoting responsible tourism can contribute to a more positive and respectful relationship between climbers and the mountain ecosystem. Additionally, the LGU and the MGGNP may devise a handbook that would serve as a guide on climbing G2.

### ***Health and Wellness Assessment.***

It is strongly recommended to establish a dedicated medical station at the base of G2 for assessing the health condition of mountaineers before permitting them to undertake the hiking expedition. The research sheds light on the unique challenges and risks faced by mountaineers during their ascent of G2, emphasizing the physical and psychological demands of such an arduous endeavor. By implementing a medical station equipped with qualified healthcare professionals and necessary diagnostic tools, mountaineers can undergo comprehensive health assessments to ensure their fitness and readiness for the expedition. This proactive measure not only safeguards the well-being of the individuals but also enhances overall safety protocols, mitigating potential health emergencies or complications that may arise during the climb. Furthermore, providing access to pre-hike medical evaluations demonstrates a commitment to promoting responsible adventure tourism practices and prioritizing the welfare of mountaineers, thereby contributing to a more sustainable and ethically sound approach to mountain tourism on G2.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from local mountaineers' perspectives on their experiences at Mount Guiting-Guiting in Sibuyan Island, it can be concluded that various key themes emerged that influence their revisit intentions.

The study revealed that factors such as perceived risks, tourist satisfaction, and tourist experience play crucial roles in shaping mountaineers' decisions to

revisit Mount Guiting-Guiting. The encountered risks, climbing satisfaction, climbers' perceived risks, ancillary factors and tourist satisfaction, climbers' perceived difficulty, choice of other destinations, and climbers' suggestions for improving the G2 experience were thoroughly discussed and analyzed.

Mountaineers highlighted the importance of careful decision-making, crucial reasons related to perceived risks, and considerations for climbers' well-being when deciding to climb G2. The overall satisfaction derived from the climb, the breathtaking scenery, the guides' professionalism, and the local community support significantly influenced tourists' experiences and revisit intentions. Furthermore, the study uncovered that climbers' perceptions of the difficulty of G2 varied, with some considering it a tough climb while others viewed it as average. This discrepancy may influence their choices to revisit the mountain or explore other destinations for new experiences and challenges in mountaineering.

Lastly, climbers provided valuable insights and suggestions for improving the G2 experience, emphasizing the need for environmental conservation, community collaboration, safety protocols, and overall satisfaction enhancement. By addressing these recommendations, climbers can work towards creating a more sustainable, enjoyable, and well-rounded climbing experience at Mount Guiting-Guiting.

Summing it all up, the study highlights the complex interplay of factors that influence mountaineers' decisions to revisit Mount Guiting-Guiting, underscoring the significance of addressing perceived risks, enhancing tourist satisfaction, and continually improving the overall climbing experience to promote sustainability and safety while preserving the natural beauty of the mountain. By taking into account these crucial aspects, stakeholders can uphold Mt. Guiting-Guiting as a leading and enduring adventure tourism destination for future generations.

## **AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS**

The authors declare equal contributions.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The authors declare no financial, personal, or professional conflicts of interest that could have influenced this dissertation's research, analysis, or findings.

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