

# **Digital Governance and Tourism Promotion: An Exploratory Study of Social Media Strategies in Philippine Local Government Units**

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**Abstract.** Tourism contributes to income growth, employment generation, and citizens' quality of life. In the Philippines, local governments employ tourism promotion and development strategies, including social media and other online platforms, to maximize revenue growth. While digital platforms are integrated with promoting and developing local tourism, local governments still need to see their contribution to local revenue growth. The study evaluates digital platforms—such as social media accounts and websites—tourist inflows, and tourism-related revenue generation. Employing content analysis, the study collected data from 50 local government units from the 2023 Cities and Municipalities Competitiveness Index in the Philippines. An inventory of all social media and online platforms, the data on regional and inbound travelers, and local non-tax revenue collection of the 50 cities and municipalities was analyzed. The study's findings reveal that local governments actively engage citizens via digital platforms for information dissemination, but they have yet to be fully maximized towards tourism promotion. Highly urbanized cities and first to fourth class municipalities, showing a high influx of tourists, also reported high local revenue collection. Research findings provide insights into promoting local tourism by employing digital platforms and contributing to local revenue growth. The practical implications of the study are also discussed.

**Keywords:** local government, local tourism, local revenue, social media, content analysis

Tourism plays a crucial role in the development and growth of all countries, especially the developing ones, positively impacting economic and social conditions (FaladeObalade & Dubey, 2014). The tourism sector offers developing countries opportunities to create productive and inclusive jobs, foster innovative firms, finance the conservation of natural and cultural assets, and increase economic empowerment (World Bank, 2024). According to the World Bank (2024) report, the tourism sector was valued at over USD9 trillion in 2019, accounting for 10.4% of the global gross domestic product (GDP) and providing one in 10 jobs worldwide. The tourism industry can significantly contribute to income growth through various channels, including employment in the tourism sector, local business opportunities, and direct tourist spending (Agarwal et al., 2023). Tourism has consistently been recognized as a remunerative industry that positively contributes to a country's GDP, citizens' quality of life, and employment generation (FaladeObalade & Dubey, 2014).

A study by Rasool and colleagues (2021) found that inbound tourism and financial development positively impact economic growth in BRICS countries in the short- and long-run. They also argue that the elasticity coefficient of economic growth concerning tourism shows that a one percent rise in international tourism receipts per capita would imply an estimated increase of almost 0.31% in domestic real income in the long run—a one percent improvement in financial development will increase economic growth by 0.22% in the long run (Rasool et al., 2021). Tourism can positively impact inclusive growth but requires government interventions, inclusive employment opportunities, community participation, and addressing education quality, road infrastructure, and political instability (Bhatt et al., 2024).

In different countries, for example, in Italy, the impact of tourism on economic growth is positive but modest: a 10% increase in tourist expenditure leads to a 0.2-0.5% increase in growth (Bronzini et al., 2022). The effect of tourism is also heterogeneous across provinces, with a more substantial impact in economically lagging provinces and a null or negative impact in highly specialized tourism areas (Bronzini et al., 2022). Voltes-Dorta and colleagues (2014) posit that tourism in Spain positively impacts most municipalities' local finances, increasing financial autonomy, expenditures, and taxes per capita. However, it negatively impacts the smallest and largest municipalities, leading to higher fiscal gaps and debt (Voltes-Dorta et al., 2014). Liu (2022) found that tourism in Thailand has a significant economic impact on output and value-added, with more substantial intra-spillover effects on domestic industries, particularly downstream sectors, and weaker connections with industries in other economies in the global supply chain.

In the Philippines, a report by the Philippine Statistics Authority states that the country's tourism direct gross value added (TDGVA) reached PHP2.09 trillion in 2023—the highest since 2000—higher by 47.9% compared with the PHP1.41 trillion TDGVA in 2022 (Rocamora, 2024a). In the Department of Tourism's (DOT) latest monitoring, earnings from inbound visitors are currently pegged at PHP282.17 billion from 1 January to 30 June, which is 32.81% higher than last year (Rocamora, 2024a). The country registered 3,173,694 inbound tourists; 92.55% were foreigners—South Koreans (25.99%), U.S. (16.47%), followed by China (6.30%), Japan (5.95%), and Australia (4.33%)—while 7.45% were overseas Filipinos (Rocamora, 2024a).

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated the sector, resulting in a loss of 20% of all tourism jobs and USD1.3 trillion in export revenue (World Bank, 2024), with a decline in tourist numbers and income, and a shift in tourist behavior towards health and hygiene, safe trips, and comfortable travel experiences (Pongsuppat et al., 2023). The pandemic disrupted the status quo, halted the sharing economy, and required the government and all sectors of society to think and act in terms of public value. At this stage, public organizations were caught off guard and were reactive in addressing the effects of the global pandemic. The VUCA-ness (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) of the environment expects public organizations to be innovative and creative in employing relevant interventions, such as policies, programs, projects, or activities geared towards public service (Houtgraaf, 2024). Some scholars argue that public managers must be entrepreneurial—i.e., innovative, proactive, and risk-takers—to adapt to environmental complexities in a VUCA world (see, for example, Ugaddan, 2019; Van der Wal, 2017).

The evolution of the internet over the years has dramatically impacted how people interact with each other and has become a critical driver for public sector innovations. The emergence of social media platforms like Facebook, X, Instagram, TikTok, etc., has been dominantly used for communication and content creation. Public organizations use social media to offer transparency and accountability and increase citizen engagement (Bonsón et al., 2012; Criado et al., 2013; Mergel, 2013). Social media institutionalization occurs along a continuum of practices that ranges from the convergence of routines and standards and the alignment of innovative practices with the organizational mission to the integration of social media into the existing technology paradigm and standard operating procedures in public affairs communication (Mergel, 2016). Gradually, government social media accounts are becoming less formal and more engaging, making it easier for citizens to contact them (Miller, n.d.). Social media enables immediate interaction with citizens, leading to perceptions that the government is highly responsive and, in turn, a high level of trust in the government (Guillamón et al., 2016). One of the cheapest ways to innovate in information dissemination is through social media, a widely used and readily available communication platform. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, online intermediaries—the emergence of new distribution channels such as the Internet, mobile devices, and interactive digital television—were expected to dominate the tourism industry (Buhalis & Licata, 2002).

Recent scholarship, however, shows that social media use in tourism has evolved beyond basic Web 1.0 and 2.0 functionalities into more advanced Web 3.0 and Web 4.0 paradigms. These newer iterations incorporate artificial intelligence, real-time personalization, immersive technologies such as augmented and virtual reality, semantic search, and blockchain, enabling decentralized and intelligent user experiences (Sigala, 2018). For instance, Web 3.0 allows local governments to tailor tourism content based on behavioral data, while Web 4.0 envisions context-aware, emotion-sensitive engagement through interconnected innovative systems (Chung & Koo, 2015). In the Philippine context, some LGUs have begun experimenting with these features through influencer campaigns, short-form video storytelling, interactive mapping, and user-generated tourism content on platforms like TikTok and Instagram (e.g., Quezon City's QC More to Explore). These practices suggest that social media is not just a tool for information dissemination, but a dynamic

form of tourism innovation, serving as a key component of digital governance and citizen engagement in destination marketing.

Online travel agencies, auction sites, service provider websites, and general search engines are the most prominently used in online travel searches (Yoo & Gretzel, 2016). Adapting these technological trends and drivers to local tourism development is an innovative approach to sustainable tourism. In particular, social media channels provide creative ways to strategically handle marketing information for tourism-related initiatives (Abou-Shouk & Hewedi, 2016). Local governments adopting digital local tourism management systems effectively address challenges in sustainable tourism management, such as balancing economic benefits with environmental and social impacts (Pongsuppat et al., 2023). Sustainable innovation leads to sustainable entrepreneurship and sustainable tourism development (Triantafyllidou & Tsiaras, 2018).

In this article, we address three research objectives:

(1) to describe the characteristics and activeness of local governments' social media accounts and websites, and the trends in tourist arrival in their localities; and

(2) to identify how local innovation and entrepreneurship are manifested in sustainable tourism promotion and development efforts.

In examining these objectives, the study draws attention to the institutional innovation capacity of local government units (LGUs), defined as the ability of public institutions to generate, adopt, and embed novel administrative, technological, or policy practices to address evolving governance challenges (Hall & Williams, 2008; Mergel, 2016). In this context, innovation includes the strategic use of social media platforms and digital systems to promote tourism, engage stakeholders, and enhance local revenue streams. Accordingly, the top-performing LGUs under the innovation pillar of the 2023 Cities and Municipalities Competitiveness Index (CMCI) were purposively selected. These LGUs serve as proxies for institutional readiness and potential for digital innovation. While they may not always represent the most established tourism destinations, their selection provides critical insights into emerging practices in digitally enabled tourism governance at the local level in the Philippines.

First, various studies revealed that local governments use interactive social media and websites to promote tourism. Social media platforms enable local governments to provide tourists with up-to-the-minute local updates, tourism promotional campaigns, and immersive content, thereby shaping perceptions of the local community (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). Studies found that the visibility of digital engagement platforms correlates positively with tourist arrivals (Leung et al., 2013). Digital social spaces provide local governments a relatively budget-friendly and effective way to reach potential tourists and market their tourism products and services (Hays et al., 2013). In the Philippine context, the availability and quality (i.e., service quality, system quality, and information quality) of digital engagement platforms (i.e., social media and websites) are critical for stimulating local tourism in both rural and urban areas.

Second, several studies discuss how digital innovations, such as interactive social media and website content, are increasingly used to support tourism development and enhance the visibility of local destinations (Gretzel et al., 2006). Integrating innovative digital platforms enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of tourism promotions, attracting more visitors and encouraging greater patronage of local businesses (Sigala, 2018). From a Philippine perspective, most local governments' digital platforms and communication channels are taking shape, addressing tourism promotion and revenue-generation issues.

Lastly, numerous studies underscored the importance of innovation and entrepreneurship towards sustainable tourism. For instance, Hall and Williams (2008) highlight that innovation helps the tourism industry thrive in disruptive environments. Hjalager (2010) points out that technology-led and organizational process innovations are critical in enhancing sustainability. Local entrepreneurs engaging in innovation and creativity may develop a unique, sustainable tourism experience (Thomas et al., 2011). In the Philippine tourism industry, various innovations and entrepreneurial approaches are emerging and diverse, potentially enhancing its sustainability. The government, through collaborations between agencies like the Department of Tourism (DOT) and the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), is actively promoting initiatives that leverage digital technologies, such as online booking systems, virtual reality, and smart community frameworks (Rocamora, 2024b), to enhance the sustainability, resilience, and competitiveness of the sector.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study addresses a significant gap in the literature by objectively investigating the intersection of digital tourism innovation, social media strategies, and local government revenue generation within the specific context of the Philippines. While the transformative potential of digital platforms in tourism and the revenue challenges faced by the Philippines' LGUs are recognized, there is a limited empirical understanding of how the innovative use of social media by local governments directly contributes to local tourism development and, consequently, to their revenue. Our research makes key contributions to the literature by providing empirical insights into the characteristics of LGU digital engagement in tourism. Furthermore, our study also contributes to policy and practice. The findings offer practical implications for both LGUs and national policymakers, and provide valuable perspectives for strengthening local fiscal autonomy and economic resilience through strategic digital engagement in tourism

### **Social Media, Online Platforms, and Local Governance**

Social media platforms and government websites have become increasingly essential for delivering public services and fostering citizen engagement. Digital platforms enhance transparency, responsiveness, access to government services, and citizen engagement (Torres et al., 2023). Social media are governance tools for transparency and self-promotion, complementing traditional government public service delivery approaches to citizens (Sobaci, 2016). For instance, 96.4% of U.S. local governments maintained a social media presence in 2019 to facilitate real-time interaction and communication with their citizens (Epstein, 2022).

In the Philippines, social media enables government agencies to broadcast their messages, promote their work, and engage with the public and the press (David, 2016). Different government agencies have a wide variety of approaches to social media, ranging from closed, in-house systems in which materials for posting must go through multiple layers of approval to open systems. These outsourced systems allow autonomy in content development (David, 2016). In 2004, almost all cities in the Philippines had an online presence. However, substantial content is urgently needed to enhance transparency, service delivery, public participation, and tourism promotion. Social media has yet to affect internal organizational processes and is mainly used for information dissemination rather than citizen-government interaction (Roengtam et al., 2017).

Regarding online platforms, YouTube and Facebook are widely used, and about half of U.S. adults are on Instagram; others use apps like TikTok, LinkedIn, Twitter (X), and BeReal (Pew Research Center [PRC], 2023). In the Philippines, internet users increased by 13.4% from 2022 to 2023, and the top three reasons for using the internet are finding information, staying in touch with friends and family, and researching how to do things (Howe, 2023). Filipinos' top five most-used social media platforms are Facebook, FB Messenger, TikTok, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). In a 2021 Pulse Asia poll in the Philippines, almost all internet users (99%) check their social media accounts, with Facebook and YouTube as the most popular platforms (Malig, 2021). Results show that ownership of a Facebook account is nearly universal among internet users in the Philippines as a whole (99%) and across geographic areas and socioeconomic groupings; 57% of internet users own YouTube accounts, 17% have TikTok accounts, 14% have Instagram accounts, and 8% are registered on Twitter (Malig, 2021).

### **Social Media and Local Tourism Development**

The integration of ICT in the tourism industry has disrupted and innovated the tourism ecosystem, changing tourist behavior and business operations. The information and communication systems embedded in a global network profoundly influence the tourism and travel industry (Dwivedi, 2011). Social media is strongly correlated with tourism marketing in many countries in the Asia-Pacific region, but its usage varies across nations (Rasul et al., 2020). Jeon and Ryu (2024) find that marketing in the tourism sector uses online platforms to promote tourism destination images, new tourism information, and products. Social media platforms are famous for providing information, marketing, and promoting tourist destinations, changing tourism marketing, which was previously done traditionally (Boediman et al., 2021). In South Korea, local governments actively use online platforms such as Facebook to communicate with the public and provide a wide range of information to promote tourism (Park et al., 2016).

In South Korea, metropolitan cities, their districts, and local cities in the Seoul-capital area are highly ranked in the Facebook network, indicating they have more co-liked" organizations and are more active in utilizing Facebook for tourism promotion (Park et al., 2016). Local governments' web-based tourism promotion has been identified as essential for successful tourism development (Park et al., 2016). Social media analytics can capture spatial patterns within a city related to users' presence and environmental and topical engagement, which can serve as inputs for

value creation in smart urban tourism (Brandt, 2017). For example, the social context mobile (SoCoMo)—an amalgamation of ICT, social media, and a user’s context—enables tourism organizations and destinations to generate context-specific solutions that dynamically address travelers’ individual needs through a combination of personalization based on pre-set preferences, social media interactions, and learning through patterns of behavior (Buhalis & Foerste, 2015).

By adopting a value-based adoption model grounded in prospect theory and mental accounting theory, focusing on the trade-off between benefits and sacrifices from new technology, Chung and Koo (2015) find that the traveler’s perception of social media value is a primary determinant of social media usage. Social media platforms, are most famous for tourism marketing and promotion in the Asia-Pacific region. Facebook is the most widely used platform and tool for image restoration and destination marketing, followed by Twitter and YouTube (Abou-Shouk & Hewedi, 2016; Rasul et al., 2020). Facebook user functionalities are emerging, including tourist engagement, co-creation, tour planning, and sharing service experiences through text, visual, and audio-visual content (Pabel & Prideaux, 2016; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). In India, Facebook is widely used for promotion, consumer research, and customer service, which makes it the foremost choice of destination marketing organizations (DMOs) for destination promotion (Kumar et al., 2022).

## Methodology

### Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research method employed to interpret various forms of data, such as text, images, or media (Berg, 2009). It involves identifying patterns, themes, or meanings within a given dataset. Content analysis can be quantitative, which focuses on quantifying elements, or qualitative, which identifies underlying themes and contexts (Krippendorff, 2004). This method is commonly used in social science research to understand better the phenomenon being studied (Berg, 2009). Content analysis can be done by data or content selection, coding using predetermined categories, and analysis and interpretation of data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Prior studies in the field of tourism utilized content analysis (Choi et al., 2007; Kemp & Dwyer, 2003). It is a valuable technique for studying tourism phenomena, especially in digital spaces, and can be used to analyze digital data using a mixed-methods approach (Punziano, 2022). Following the principles of content analysis, the study (a) reviews and analyzes local governments’ social media accounts, websites, mainstream media, and content creator influencers’ features; (b) analyzes inbound tourists and local revenue collection; and (c) analyzes local innovation, entrepreneurship, and tourism legislation.

### Data

The study’s data are derived from three primary sources: (a) the Cities and Municipalities Competitiveness Index (CMCI), (b) the data on regional inbound travelers and local non-tax revenue collection, and (c) social media and online platform inventory. Since the study examines the local government’s innovativeness as a critical factor in development, the top 10 cities and municipalities in the 2023 CMCI are selected for data collection (see Table 1). This selection approach is

grounded in the concept of institutional innovation capacity, which refers to a local government's ability to generate, adopt, and institutionalize novel administrative, technological, and governance practices in response to evolving challenges and opportunities (Mergel, 2016). By focusing on LGUs with high innovation scores in the CMCI, the study aims to analyze how institutional innovation manifests in tourism governance, particularly through the strategic use of digital platforms to attract tourists and enhance local revenue. While these LGUs may not all be traditional tourism destinations, they represent cases where innovation readiness can drive or complement tourism development initiatives. Innovation in communication and information dissemination is a factor in determining the success of conveying information. In tourism, providing prospective visitors with accurate information can spark curiosity, interest, and eventually lead to bookings to visit the place (Peek Pro, 2023).

The CMCI is an annual ranking of provinces, cities, and municipalities in the Philippines that evaluates the five pillars: (a) economic dynamism, (b) government efficiency, (c) infrastructure, (d) resilience, and (e) innovation. The National Competitiveness Council of the Philippines developed the index in partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry and Regional Competitiveness Committees to promote a culture of excellence and competitiveness among local governments. The index employs standardized performance evaluation metrics. Local governments are grouped into provinces, highly urbanized cities, and cities and municipalities—first- and second-class, third- and fourth-class, and fifth- and sixth-class municipalities. Rankings for cities and municipalities are based on their total scores across the five pillars. In the same vein, provinces are ranked according to the overall scores of the cities and municipalities within each province. The study used the 2023 CMCI results (the available dataset at the time of data collection), focusing on innovation—the ability of a local government to harness its creative potential to improve or sustain current productivity levels.

The data on local inbound travelers and the non-tax revenue collection of select local governments—i.e., the top ten local governments on innovation based on the 2023 CMCI results—are derived from the Department of Tourism (DOT) and the Commission on Audit (COA), respectively. The DOT's website (<http://www.tourism.gov.ph>) provides information on the influx of foreign and local visitors, based on data from various accommodation establishments across cities and municipalities. Along with this dataset, local revenue collection data are based on the COA's published 2022 audited financial reports of different local governments. The local inbound travelers and non-tax revenue are based on 2022 datasets.

**Table 1**  
*CMCI 2023 Top 10 Tank in Innovation Pillar per LGU Category*

Rank	LGU	Province	Region
Highly Urbanized Cities			
1	Quezon (MM)	Metro Manila	NCR
2	Manila	Metro Manila	NCR
3	Bacolod (NO)	Negros Occidental	VI

4	Pasay	Metro Manila	NCR
5	General Santos	South Cotabato	XII
6	Cagayan de Oro	Misamis Oriental	X
7	Davao	Davao del Sur	XI
8	Valenzuela	Metro Manila	NCR
9	Caloocan	Metro Manila	NCR
10	Muntinlupa	Metro Manila	NCR

## Component Cities

1	Naga (CS)	Camarines Sur	V
2	Biñan	Laguna	IV-A
3	Legazpi	Albay	V
4	Tagum	Davao del Norte	IX
5	Iriga	Camarines Sur	V
6	Tuguegarao	Cagayan	II
7	Dasmariñas	Cavite	IV-A
8	Bacoor	Cavite	IV-A
9	Antipolo	Rizal	IV-A
10	San Fernando (PA)	Pampanga	III

1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Municipalities

1	Argao	Cebu	VII
2	Pantukan	Davao de Oro	XI
3	Lambunao	Iloilo	VI
4	Taytay (RZ)	Rizal	IV-A
5	Bani	Pangasinan	I
6	Maramag	Bukidnon	X
7	Baliwag	Bulacan	III
8	Morong (RL)	Rizal	IV-A
9	Boac	Marinduque	IV-B
10	Carmona	Cavite	IV-A

3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Class Municipalities

1	Initao	Misamis Oriental	X
2	Buug	Zamboanga Sibugay	IX
3	Taal	Batangas	IV-A
4	Morong (BN)	Bataan	III
5	Solsona	Ilocos Norte	I
6	Salay	Misamis Oriental	X
7	Cardona	Rizal	IV-A
8	Alimodian	Iloilo	VI

9	Castillejos	Zambales	III
10	Mogpog	Marinduque	IV-B
5 <sup>th</sup> and 10 <sup>th</sup> Class Municipalities			
1	Biliran	Biliran	VIII
2	San Lorenzo	Guimaras	VI
3	Malibcong	Abra	CAR
4	Mina	Iloilo	VI
5	San Esteban	Ilocos Sur	I
6	Corella	Bohol	VII
7	Kawayan	Biliran	VIII
8	Sagada	Mountain Province	CAR
9	Pasil	Kalinga	CAR
10	Tangalan	Aklan	VI

## Analysis

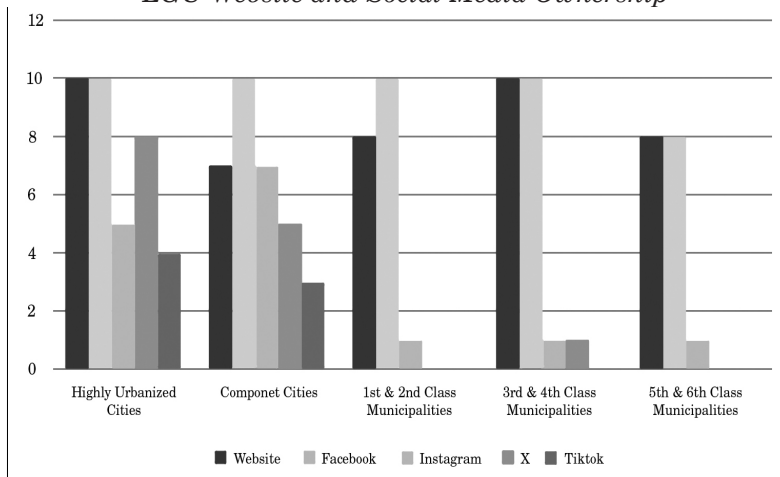
Guided by the institutional innovation capacity framework (Hall & Williams, 2008; Mergel, 2016), the analysis examined how local governments employ social media and digital platforms as instruments of institutional innovation. This framework informed the content analysis, which focused on identifying three dimensions of innovation observable in LGU practices: technological innovation (e.g., use of new digital tools, multimedia campaigns, analytics), organizational innovation (e.g., policy mechanisms, inter-LGU collaborations, institutional arrangements supporting digital tourism), and communicative innovation (e.g., interactive, participatory, and narrative-driven online content). These dimensions guided the interpretation of digital engagement activities across the selected LGUs. They provided a structured lens for evaluating the distinctiveness and replicability of each approach in advancing tourism promotion and local revenue generation.

Data from the top 10 cities and municipalities on the ‘innovation’ pillar of the 2023 CMCI were analyzed regarding tourism promotions via online campaigns, social media management, website updates, and other web-based marketing solutions. The online platform inventory provides data on the social media accounts, websites, and other digital interfaces maintained by the local governments. The content analysis emphasizes innovative tourism promotion and development, including qualitative descriptions of multimedia content, tourism promotion campaigns, and the refresh rates of website and social media content. In particular, the analysis assesses the innovativeness and activity of all online platforms related to local tourism promotion. The content analysis identifies recurring themes and approaches that local governments use to promote tourism. It highlights creative strategies such as virtual reality tours, influencer collaborations, user-generated content, and more. The DOT data on inbound tourism and COA non-tax revenue are analyzed to determine trends in tourism flows and local revenue impacts. These datasets were cross-referenced with each LGU’s social media and website activity to determine how digital engagement aligns with tourism promotion and revenue outcomes.

### Results and Discussion

Of the 50 top Philippine cities and municipalities, 48 have Facebook accounts, and 43 have their own website. However, across the other social media platforms, 15 out of 50 LGUs own an Instagram account; 12 LGUs are cities, and city LGUs own 13 out of 14 Twitter (X) LGU accounts. Lastly, seven cities have their own TikTok accounts, and no municipality does.

**Figure 1**  
*LGU Website and Social Media Ownership*



Besides serving as digital bulletin boards and communication tools, social media accounts are practical marketing tools for local governments. Social media is widely used by organizations or businesses to promote their products and services. They use social media to generate opinions on their products and services to promote or improve them (Baruah, 2012). Local governments actively utilize social media to promote their services and products, including tourism destinations, festivals, and local delicacies.

Social media provides a significant opportunity for tourism promotion (Tas, n.d.). LGUs showcase their destinations and attractions through digital platforms to capture the interest of potential travelers. According to Howe (2023), 45.5% of Filipinos research places, vacations, and travel online. Travelers would look at what the local government posts on their social media accounts and websites, as well as the social media posts of tourists who share their travel experiences in the locality.

The findings presented in this study are preliminary and correlational, reflecting the exploratory nature of our research. It is important to emphasize that this study is not intended to prove causality, but rather to identify potential relationships.

#### Local Government Units Websites, Social Media, and Media Exposure *Website Ownership*

Website ownership for this research means that each LGU has its website, which the LGU manages. Thirty-six of the 50 LGUs have a website dedicated to their

LGU; however, a few LGUs' websites or pages are linked directly to their province's website. Thus, the provincial government manages and monitors the website.

The LGUs' websites provide basic information about the city/municipality, the local government's vision and mission statements, the citizens' charter, the local government office directory, and information on local government officials. Apart from basic information on the LGU, some LGU websites serve as repositories of enacted ordinances and resolutions by their respective local *sanggunian* (municipal or city councils), as well as bulletin boards for the LGU's services, plans, and programs. Some LGU websites primarily serve as comprehensive digital platforms where citizens can interact with the LGU. However, LGU websites also showcase tourism and culture in their localities, including must-visit tourist attractions, festival calendars, maps, and dining and accommodation options.

Manila, for instance, distinguishes itself by sustaining its presence solely via a specialized website. A noteworthy event on the Manila website is the yearly commemoration of Tourism Month in September. Manila's website classifies its attractions into tourism centers, each providing a distinctive fusion of modernity, history, and culture.

Bacolod City's website serves as an entry point to the Maskara Festival, offering comprehensive event listings and essential details. It also offers an extensive directory that provides convenient access to lodging, dining, and transportation. The directory includes information about the establishment, such as its website, social media accounts, phone numbers, and email addresses.

Naga's official website presents a comprehensive itinerary specifically designed for visitors, detailing accommodations, tourist attractions, activities in Naga, regional specialties, events and festivals, and transportation. Meanwhile, in the neighboring city of Legazpi in Albay province, the official tourism website of Legazpi provides an elaborate portfolio of the city's tourism. This carefully organized portfolio offers an insight into the diverse attractions that Legazpi has to offer, urging visitors to delve into its natural, religious, cultural, and historical wonders.

Tuguegarao and Mogpog's websites showcase tourist attractions and provide a comprehensive inventory of hotels and restaurants, including detailed descriptions and contact details, ensuring travelers have a smooth, satisfying experience.

In the Calabarzon Region, the official website of Bacoor functions as a digital tour guide, offering comprehensive articles about significant tourist destinations, historical structures, ecological preserves, and mangrove plantations. Meanwhile, the website of Morong, Rizal is dedicated to demonstrating Morong's tourism treasures. Each resort, restaurant, and church featured is accompanied by a historical anecdote, providing tourists with a curated itinerary to discover the town's natural and cultural treasures. Taal's tourism website vividly showcases all that Taal has to offer, including lodging and dining options, cultural events, and local goods. It is distinguished by its detailed enumeration of barangay specializations, which, akin to a work of art, highlights one-of-a-kind artifacts and delicacies such as the *suman sa lihiya* in Barangay Buli and the knife industry in Barangay Balisong.

In the Ilocos Region, Solsona's tourism website features historical and tourist destinations, events, festivals, and activities. On the other hand, the municipality of San Esteban, renowned for its abundant cultural and historical legacy, endeavors to emphasize its historical landmarks on its website by incorporating a dedicated tourism section that showcases popular destinations such as the Bateria Watchtower.

Lastly, San Lorenzo's website serves as an entry point, offering a brief yet enlightening overview of the municipality's tourism. The beach resorts section of the website functions as a practical manual, providing prospective beachgoers with images, contact information, and addresses to streamline the information. Also, the website serves as a portal that displays tourist attractions in an orderly manner, offering visually appealing content and crucial information, such as precise locations. Also, the website provides short overviews of San Lorenzo's dynamic cultural calendar, encompassing regional festivals and signature occasions.

The digital space serves as an entry point for local government to reach people outside the locality. It also serves as a hub for good governance by making government services available to constituents online. Innovation in information dissemination, such as website ownership, enhances citizen satisfaction and strengthens tourist engagement when destinations and tourism-related establishments are adequately featured on the website.

### *Social Media Account Ownership*

Social media accounts identified in this study are Facebook, Instagram, X, and TikTok. Forty-eight out of the 50 LGUs own a Facebook page account, which is mainly used to showcase how they utilize their official websites, a dynamic platform that provides up-to-date information on the LGU's activities, public advisories, and a showcase of the LGU's culture and tourism-related activities and sites such as restaurants, parks, establishments, tourist attractions and destinations, and festivals.

Quezon City (QC) and Valenzuela are examples from the National Capital Region. QC ensures its social media accounts are active on multiple platforms (Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok). Consistently updated, QC social media accounts provide up-to-the-minute information on city events. The "Explore QC" campaign on TikTok is an exceptional endeavor. Quezon City employs this medium to take individuals on an enthralling visual expedition, highlighting the city's diverse tourist attractions and significant sites.

Valenzuela's Instagram and Facebook profiles harmoniously acknowledge the city's culture. Both platforms consistently showcase a variety of restaurants, culinary parks, and establishments. The city's TikTok account offers a visually engaging journey through its happenings, culinary delights, and everyday life.

In addition to its comprehensive website, Bacolod City's Facebook and Instagram accounts feature vibrant, colorful posts. These platforms are committed to showcasing the vibrant Maskara Festival, allowing individuals from anywhere to experience its essence. Additionally, market events are showcased on the sites, enhancing the digital experience of Bacolod's products and services.

In Mindanao, General Santos City maintains an active, interactive Facebook page with a noteworthy vlog series, "Tatak Heneral," that captures the essence of life in the city by showcasing its distinct destinations. The vlog offers an engaging, immersive experience for residents and prospective tourists by highlighting local attractions and exploring renowned restaurants. On the other hand, Davao's Instagram account constructs an aesthetically pleasing narrative that conveys Davao's attractions by promoting it as the durian capital of the Philippines and highlighting its tourist attractions, events, and landmarks.

Biñan's Facebook page focuses on updates, news, and events that align with the city's commitment to community involvement. The City Culture, History, Arts, and Tourism Office account of Biñan actively promotes events that highlight the city's vibrant cultural scene, with its content seamlessly integrated with the primary page.

In the province of Albay, Legazpi and Iriga are the cities that have active social media accounts. Legazpi's Instagram account offers a visually captivating tour of Albay's attractions. The account consistently features a wide range of locations and culturally significant landmarks. This provides spectators with an engaging visual experience that reflects the region's rich cultural heritage. Managed by the Tourism Office's tourism-focused Facebook page, Iriga effectively presents the city's dynamic essence. The page showcases various cultural events, including the Kasanggayahan and Tinagba festivals. In addition, the Facebook page provides insights into the city's attractions and activities. This includes highlighting local dining establishments, presenting historical narratives and exciting facts about notable landmarks, and distributing news and information about tourism.

### *Media Exposure*

Apart from social media, mainstream media can also be used to communicate and promote the LGU. In mainstream media, networks produce travel shows, documentaries, or storytelling shows like GMA News TV's "*Biyahe ni Drew*."

LGUs that maintain sufficient digital materials—such as website features and social media posts—are more likely to be featured in travel shows. Some LGUs were featured in "*Biyahe ni Drew*." Nine of the 50 LGUs were featured in the said show: Quezon City, Bacolod City, Pasay City, General Santos City, Cagayan de Oro City, Davao City, Naga City, Antipolo City, and the Municipality of Biliran. These LGUs have active websites and social media accounts that feature tourist destinations and activities.

Being featured in travel shows demonstrates that the LGU's efforts to promote its tourist destinations on digital platforms were practical. TV show exposure on free TV is another step toward reaching LGU audiences and prospective tourists, especially those without internet access or who are not tech-savvy.

### **Local Government Units 2022 Inbound Tourism and Local Revenue Sources**

According to Javier and Elazigue (n.d.), tourism has a significant impact on the economy and society, generating revenue for the government. Apart from the government's benefits from tourism, communities also benefit and should capitalize on these opportunities. Local governments play an essential role in promoting and ensuring the success of their local tourism industry.

Republic Act 9593, better known as the Tourism Act of 2009, tasked LGUs with developing their own tourism code and tourism development plan. The tourism code is an ordinance that supports the LGU's tourism goals and objectives. In contrast, the tourism development plan sets out the LGU's priority for community well-being in light of tourism development.

Since the hard lockdown was imposed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, inbound and domestic travel have been limited to official and essential trips only.

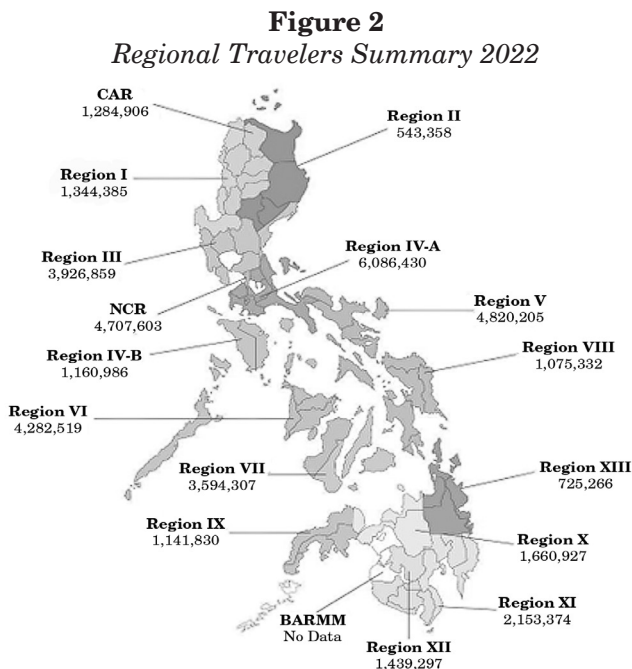
Economic activities in tourism have halted, affecting the city/municipality's income and the income of locals who depend on tourists.

In 2022, travelers embarked on their so-called revenge travel after almost three years of being confined to their homes as travel restrictions were eased. This year, Filipinos overseas also decided to travel back to the country to visit family or return permanently.

As seen in Figure 2, the number of inbound travelers (foreign travelers, OFWs, and domestic travelers) almost reached the 2019 pre-pandemic level (see Appendix 2). It is evident that Region IV-A is the top tourist destination, and Region II is the least visited in 2022.

According to the Philippine News Agency (Rocamora, 2024c), 5,003,475 international visitors entered the country, exceeding its target of 4.8 million. This recorded more than PHP480 billion in international tourism receipts. This shows that people around the globe are already traveling again, and the country's local tourism industry is recovering fast. Strengthening digital tourism promotion and attracting more inbound travelers directly contribute to increased LGU revenue.

Comparing the number of inbound travelers with local revenue collection for our sample LGUs in Figure 3, we observe that highly urbanized cities, 1<sup>st</sup>- and 2<sup>nd</sup>-class municipalities, and 3<sup>rd</sup>- and 4<sup>th</sup>-class municipalities leveraged the influx of tourists to boost local revenue collection. However, local revenue is reflected in the total of the different local revenue sources. On the other hand, the component cities and the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>-class municipalities had a high number of inbound tourists but recorded low local revenue collection in 2022.



*Source.* Accommodation Establishments (collected by Local Tourism Offices)

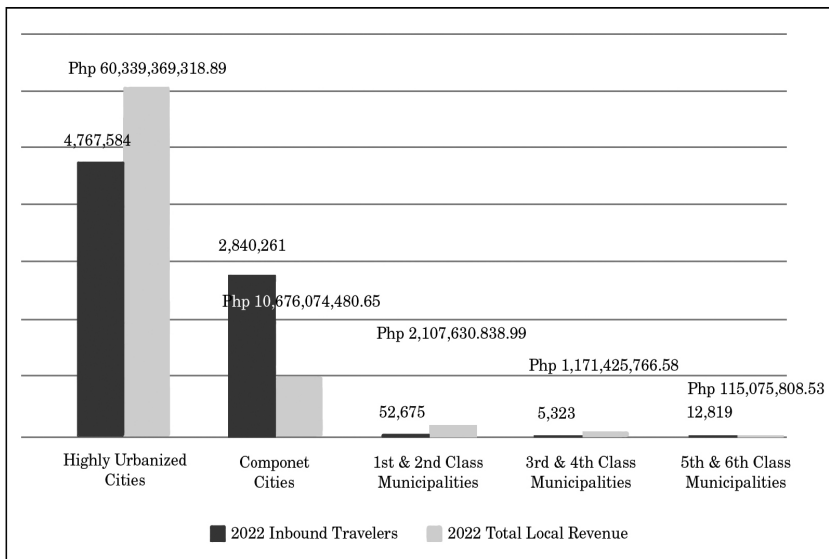
Several factors can affect local revenue collection. One is the local revenue code. The LGU must ensure it is regularly updated to collect reasonable tax, especially from businesses that benefit from inbound tourists. Second, local economic enterprises (LEEs), in this case, tourism facilities and other tourist attractions, can be established to maximize revenue potential from inbound tourists.

Apart from the local revenue code and LEE setup, an increase in local business tax collections can occur if LGU businesses earn more income. Tourist expenditures generate more income for local businesses, and the influx of tourists will create more employment opportunities.

**Local Government Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Tourism**

In the Philippines, laws on tourism and innovation were enacted, recognizing that both are catalysts for socioeconomic growth and a source of revenue. As mentioned earlier, the country’s law on tourism is the Republic Act 9593, which tasked the country with developing its own tourism code and tourism development plan. Meanwhile, Republic Act 11293, or the Philippine Innovation Act, aims to remove obstacles to innovation and encourage entrepreneurial attitudes to stimulate growth. This law enabled the establishment of the National Innovation Council, which provides aid to beneficiaries with innovation projects.

**Figure 3**  
*LGU Inbound Travelers and Total Local Revenue Sources 2022*



Effective social media-driven tourism promotion by LGUs is critically shaped by the interplay of enabling legal frameworks, innovative approaches, and an entrepreneurial spirit. Local ordinances and national laws establish the foundational environment for tourism development and foster innovation, legitimizing digital investments and providing content for platforms. Innovation, as both a strategic pillar

and a proactive organizational behavior, drives the creative adoption and utilization of social media for destination marketing and visitor engagement. Simultaneously, an entrepreneurial mindset within LGUs propels the initiative to leverage social media's dynamic capabilities and foster partnerships. These legal, innovative, and entrepreneurial dimensions collectively create the essential environment that enables LGUs to effectively engage in digital tourism, ultimately influencing tourist engagement and contributing to local revenue.

Two LGUs have ordinances on innovation, all of which are related to being business-friendly LGUs. Quezon City's ordinance institutionalized the QC Startup program and appropriated funds for it. This program aims to strengthen, promote, and develop the QC Startup Business Ecosystem. Bacolod City has a program similar. Their ordinance projects of Bacolod as an ideal location for startups and small to medium-sized information and communications technology (ICT) enterprises. It provides funds for the development of the startup ecosystem.

Among the nine LGUs with tourism ordinances, Pasay City, Iriga City, the Municipality of Solsona, and the Municipality of Tangalan have established their respective tourism codes. Bacolod City's ordinance, on the other hand, provides rules and regulations governing tourism-oriented and tourism-related establishments. Meanwhile, Bacoor City's ordinance declares 36 properties and structures as Bacoor's cultural properties. The municipality of Kawayan was created through an ordinance regulating tourism activities during the pandemic.

However, some LGUs have significant tourism ordinances. Quezon City's ordinances are more focused on tourism sites within its jurisdiction. Quezon City declared barangays Apolonio Samson, Bahay Toro, Tandang Sora, and Krus na Ligas as Katipunan Heritage Sites and instituted the redevelopment of the areas that constitute part of the Katipunan Trail and the development of the Katipunan Freedom Trail as a significant tourism activity in Quezon City, as these areas played a vital role in the Philippine Revolution. The city also has ordinances that declare La Loma District as a tourism district, as it is also known as the Lechon Capital of the Philippines, which would further boost the economic activity in the area; the Cubao Growth Center, also known as the Araneta Center, which has been Manila's Mecca of entertainment for more than 60 years, and the Tomas Morato-Timog Avenue area, also known as the Lifestyle District, which houses restaurant and entertainment establishments.

Barangay Tagalog was declared an ecotourism zone in Valenzuela City through an ordinance. It is recognized as an ecotourism zone because of its rich biodiversity and potential for sustainable tourism development. It is widely known for its vast expanse of aquatic resources, stemming from the three connected rivers of Coloong, Polo, and Meycauayan. Valenzuela City has declared Fatima Avenue a pedestrianized open space and a tourist spot, similar to some European cities. Fatima Avenue is a vibrant open space designated as a dedicated tourism place.

Legislative measures make government programs more binding. Apart from the tourism code, orders would reflect the LGU's dedication to promoting tourism in their locality. They would also direct the country and LGUs toward their end goals and protect all stakeholders involved. Likewise, ordinances enacted to promote innovation would demonstrate the LGU's commitment to fostering innovation and growth in its locality.

### **Manifestations of Institutional Innovation in Local Digital Tourism**

The results demonstrate that the top 50 most innovative LGUs in the 2023 Cities and Municipalities Competitiveness Index (CMCI) exemplify how digital tourism promotion can serve as an avenue for institutional innovation. Drawing from the Institutional Innovation Capacity framework (Hall & Williams, 2008; Mergel, 2016), three dimensions of innovation (i.e., technological, organizational, and communicative) emerge as defining characteristics of these LGUs' approaches to tourism governance and promotion.

First, technological innovation is reflected in how these LGUs harness digital tools and platforms to enhance their visibility and engagement with tourists. Quezon City's Explore QC campaign on TikTok and its active presence across multiple platforms demonstrate a deliberate effort to use new media technologies for city branding. Bacolod City's integration of colorful, dynamic social media posts, livestream coverage of the Maskara Festival, and online event directories exemplifies the use of multimedia content and analytics for destination marketing. General Santos City's vlog series "Tatak Heneral" and Davao City's visually curated Instagram feed are additional examples of creative, technology-driven storytelling that transform digital platforms into experiential tourism spaces. These practices show how LGUs translate digital capability into innovation, allowing audiences to experience tourism virtually while sustaining interest in physical visitation.

Second, organizational innovation is evident in LGUs' institutionalization of digital tourism through policies, programs, and partnerships. Quezon City and Bacolod City both passed ordinances that provide funding support for startups and innovation ecosystems, demonstrating a proactive approach to enabling technological entrepreneurship and creative industries. Pasay City, Iriga City, Solsona, and Tangalan have formalized their tourism governance through local tourism codes, integrating tourism management into the broader local development agenda. Similarly, Valenzuela City's pedestrian tourism initiative at Fatima Avenue reflects how physical infrastructure design and policy interventions converge to promote sustainable tourism experiences. These examples reveal that top-performing LGUs embed innovation within their governance systems—transforming digital tourism from an ad hoc marketing activity into a structured, policy-backed governance practice.

Third, communicative innovation emerges through how LGUs design narratives that connect cultural identity with digital engagement. Valenzuela City's online promotion of Fatima Avenue as an open tourism space, Bacoor's highlighting of cultural heritage properties, and Taal's barangay-based specialization stories (e.g., *suman sa lihiya*, knife industry) exemplify place-based storytelling that strengthens local identity. In Legazpi and Iriga, social media content emphasizes cultural festivals, regional cuisines, and religious heritage, creating a digital narrative that blends authenticity with interactivity. Through these efforts, LGUs foster what Silverstone (2013) calls a *mediapolis*—a digital public sphere—in which citizens, tourists, and local institutions engage in shared experiences that promote pride, belonging, and cultural continuity.

Taken together, these three dimensions (i.e., technological, organizational, and communicative) illustrate how institutional innovation capacity manifests at the local level. The top-performing LGUs demonstrate that innovation is not

limited to adopting technology but extends to reconfiguring governance structures and cultural narratives to sustain digital tourism. Strengthening these capacities through continued investment in digital infrastructure, creative human capital, and innovation-oriented policies will be vital in ensuring that digital tourism in the Philippines becomes inclusive, resilient, and globally competitive.

### **Conclusion and Limitations**

The study evaluates digital platforms, such as social media accounts, websites, tourist inflows, and tourism-related revenue generation. Using content analysis, the study collected data from 50 local government units—the top-performing cities and municipalities in the Philippines on the 2023 CMCI's innovation pillar. An inventory of all social media and online platforms, data on regional and inbound travelers from the DOT, and local non-tax revenue collection from the COA of the 50 cities and municipalities were analyzed.

The study reveals that local governments have active online platforms for promoting and developing local tourism. They recognize the value of digital channels, such as websites, social media, and other virtual gateways, for advertising, raising awareness of local tourism offerings, enticing prospective travelers, and engaging locals in self-employment and entrepreneurship. While this study does not attempt to establish causal relationships among digital platform use, tourist inflows, and local revenue, it highlights how local governments use social media to promote tourism and engage audiences. Prior studies have shown that social media strategies are associated with tourism development and destination visibility across various contexts (Fathy et al., 2024; Pranaja et al., 2023). However, almost half of the studied local governments have yet to fully exploit the features and potential of their digital platforms, limiting their online engagement and reach. These results indicate that local governments are slow to adopt, deploy, and integrate digital marketing strategies and tools in promoting local tourism initiatives and projects. These findings underscore the significance of institutional innovation capacity. The variation in platform use, engagement levels, and content strategies across LGUs reflects broader disparities in innovation readiness and digital governance maturity. By focusing on LGUs ranked highly on the CMCI's innovation pillar, the study shows how institutional innovation can serve as a foundational enabler of effective tourism promotion in the digital age. Notably, LGUs such as Quezon City, Bacolod, and Legazpi illustrate varied yet distinctive approaches to digital tourism innovation—ranging from cross-platform campaigns and festival-centered branding to interactive tourism portfolios that integrate cultural and economic narratives. This capacity extends beyond adopting platforms and includes the managerial, organizational, and policy infrastructure needed to sustain digital innovation in tourism governance. Some scholars argue that underutilizing digital platforms is a missed opportunity in an emerging digital ecosystem (Leung et al., 2013). Leung and colleagues (2013) posit that local tourism industries embrace innovative technologies to cope with the evolving digitalization trend but fail to grasp the true nature of a digital world.

Beyond its function as a low-cost communication tool, social media is increasingly becoming a platform for technological and experiential innovation in tourism, particularly as local governments experiment with features aligned with Web 3.0 and Web 4.0 paradigms. These include personalized content delivery, AI-

powered interaction, immersive digital storytelling, and co-created experiences through user-generated content (Fathy et al., 2024; Sigala, 2018; Um et al., 2022). For example, LGUs using TikTok reels, interactive mapping, or real-time feedback mechanisms signal a shift from traditional broadcasting to intelligent, responsive systems that enable dynamic tourist engagement. These practices demonstrate that social media is not merely an extension of tourism marketing but a core site of digital public innovation. Embracing this shift enhances promotional reach and the inclusiveness, responsiveness, and sustainability of local tourism governance.

Analyzing the digital platforms of the 50 local government units, Facebook emerged as the primary platform utilized for tourism promotion. Local governments are taking the opportunity to save public money by using Facebook, which offers low-cost access and is widely used locally and globally. Prospective tourists, particularly those from younger and international demographics, are provided quick and easy access to tourism information on Facebook pages. In addition, Facebook allows local governments or travel brands to use the platform to identify target travelers and interact with various users (Rahman, 2020). However, in some cities and municipalities, the content on their Facebook pages is primarily static—i.e., social media posts, photos, and tourism-related links (e.g., hotel booking)—and is rarely updated. Similarly, most of the studied local governments maintain websites that primarily serve as platforms for disseminating information on government activities and services, as well as for promoting local tourist spots, festivals, and other tourism-related services. Compared to Facebook, website visitors and engagement are relatively low. This is likely due to various Facebook algorithms and features that engage users and generate personalized content that directly appears in a user's feed. It is also partly due to sociomateriality in social media, where technological algorithms enhance social interaction and website features are not optimized for engagement (Orlikowski & Scott, 2014).

The variability in digital platform adoption, integration, and maturity across the studied local governments reveals a digital skills gap, a lack of social media management, and an absence of a unit to manage public information dissemination. According to Carlisle and colleagues (2023, p. 260), the most critical digital skills may include (a) self-learning capacities, (b) digital fluency, (c) skills for conducting e-business, (d) AI, virtual reality, and augmented reality skills, (e) gamification, and (f) profession-specific knowledge (e.g., attractions, hotels, food, “non-Googleable” travel options). In the context of digital tourism promotion and management, the following are the needed skills: (a) marketing and communication skills or branding and marketing expertise; (b) social media skills or the capacity to create content, engage users, analysis, and social media optimization; (c) MS Office skills or the ability to utilize MS Office applications—document and spreadsheet management, analysis, and presentation capabilities; (d) operating systems skills; and (e) online monitoring and reviewing skills or analyzing and responding skills (Carlisle et al., 2023). Enhancing these skills may help transform Facebook pages and websites into more appealing tools for promoting local tourism.

A local government builds its social media persona or influencer-like roles in tourism promotion, optimizing Facebook and expanding it to other platforms. Local governments can reconceptualize social media platforms like Facebook through the lens of mediapolis (Silverstone, 2013) to leverage them for local tourism promotion. In

line with these principles, tourism management and services can seamlessly deploy and integrate social media as a fundamental component of local tourism design (Um et al., 2022). For example, social media content showcases authentic cultural and traditional practices, making them feel genuine and personal, thereby fostering engagement. By employing user participation features such as live Q&A sessions, interactive maps or tours, and user-generated content, local governments can create a public sphere where locals and tourists can connect, fostering a sense of community and responsibility. A prior study found that intention to travel is associated with a tourist's place attachment and perceived value of a destination, even without visiting it (Tang et al., 2024).

The study's findings highlighted the importance of local policies (e.g., ordinances and resolutions) that support and promote tourism programs. Studied local governments had tourism-oriented ordinances and resolutions with diverse tourism programs. They assign historical and cultural sites as tourist spots or organize and promote cultural events showcasing local traditions and practices. Legislative support for social media use in local tourism can harness tourism opportunities, increase local revenues, and develop sustainable tourism (Kansra et al., 2024).

The policy implications below emerge from patterns and distinctions observed among the 50 LGUs, particularly in how they adopt, innovate, and institutionalize digital tourism strategies. Building on these practices, this study identifies several recommendations grounded in the empirical findings. First, LGUs with more dynamic digital engagement, for example, Quezon City's cross-platform Explore QC campaign and Bacolod City's vibrant online promotion of the Maskara Festival, demonstrate how structured social media strategies enhance local tourism visibility. These cases suggest the need for policies institutionalizing comprehensive online and real-time community engagement within tourism and public information offices. Second, the uneven digital performance across LGUs, particularly those with static Facebook pages or provincial-dependent websites, underscores the need for investment in digital infrastructure and human resource development. Policies supporting capacity-building in social media analytics, content creation, and digital marketing management are necessary to bridge the observed digital skills gap. Third, several LGUs exhibited context-specific innovations worth replicating, for instance, Legazpi's online tourism portfolio and Naga's interactive itineraries, indicating that interlocal cooperation and knowledge-exchange mechanisms should be institutionalized to scale these practices. Finally, aligning online tourism promotion with broader fiscal and development frameworks, as seen in LGUs that connect tourism branding with local business registration or cultural preservation ordinances, supports the creation of policies that integrate digital tourism initiatives into local development and revenue generation plans.

### **Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

While the extant research employed multiple secondary data sources, some limitations may require careful interpretation of the study's results. For instance, analyzing data from 50 Philippine cities and municipalities on the CMCI's innovation pillar may not have fully captured the diverse social media strategies employed by local governments for tourism promotion. Nonetheless, the analysis's insights remain applicable, given the apparent benefits of digital presence and interactions in the

tourism industry. This study was designed as a qualitative and descriptive analysis and does not seek to infer statistical relationships among social media use, tourist inflows, or local revenue. Its focus is limited to examining how local governments use digital platforms in tourism promotion. In the study, however, qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis, which was limited to descriptive capture of the data. Arguing for causality using qualitative data is weak and can only lead to speculative assumptions. The study explained these possible relationships by citing prior studies showing positive correlations among social media, tourist visits, and local revenue.

Furthermore, we acknowledge that selecting LGUs solely on their ranking in the CMCI's innovation pillar may limit the representativeness of well-established tourist destinations such as El Nido, Baguio City, and Caticlan. While the chosen LGUs offer valuable insights into digital innovation and governance practices, they do not necessarily reflect the dynamics of traditionally popular tourism areas. Future research may address this by comparing innovation-ranked LGUs and recognized tourism hotspots. Such studies can deepen understanding of how institutional innovation capacity intersects with existing tourism assets and whether digital innovation can serve as a compensatory mechanism for less prominent destinations.

Another significant limitation of this study is its primary focus on the official tourism promotion content generated by the LGUs across identified social media platforms. While this provides valuable insights into LGU strategies, it is equally important to recognize that user-generated content, such as authentic reviews and traveler experiences, significantly influences destination perception and choice because it is inherently reliable. Future research could build on these findings by investigating the distinct influence and incorporation of user-contributed content within LGU digital tourism efforts, and by exploring how official promotional content interacts with and strategically leverages authentic or organic traveler-generated content to enhance destination appeal and stimulate economic growth.

Although the study has limitations, its findings offer opportunities for further research in public policy and tourism. Testing for causality provides strong evidence of the impact of social media innovation on tourist inflows and local revenue. This may require developing a quantitative research model and survey instruments for the variables. Also, a longitudinal study may help establish the impacts of digital platforms on tourism growth and revenue over time.

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