

# Digital Marketing Strategies of Small Businesses in Sorsogon City

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**Abstract**— The rise of digital marketing has transformed how businesses engage with customers, particularly in the tourism sector, where an online presence is vital for visibility and competitiveness. This study aimed to examine the use and effectiveness of digital marketing strategies among small tourism businesses, analyzing the adoption and challenges faced by small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City. Data collection used structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to examine digital marketing platforms, content strategies, and performance metrics.

Key findings indicated that all nine small tourism-related businesses utilized digital marketing tools, with 5 out of 9 small tourism-related businesses rating Facebook as the most popular platform, followed by email marketing, and websites, having the same rate of 44.4%. The primary goals of digital marketing include generating leads (7 out of 9) and sales, and enhancing brand awareness (6 out of 9). Despite significant challenges such as high costs and limited expertise, small tourism-related businesses show adaptability by leveraging free or low-cost tools, and employing trial-and-error experimentation to overcome constraints. Customer-focused content, particularly testimonials and videos, effectively engaged audiences. 4 out of 9 small tourism-related businesses that updated their content weekly or monthly reported higher engagement levels, while others used daily updates, reflecting diverse approaches to frequency.

This research underscored the critical role of digital marketing in driving visibility, customer engagement, and sales for small tourism-related businesses, particularly in Sorsogon City. It recommended actionable insights such as adopting data-driven decision-making through analytics, enhancing digital literacy through targeted training programs, and prioritizing visually rich, customer-focused content. By adopting effective digital marketing strategies, small businesses can achieve sustained growth, improve customer relationships, and navigate market challenges more effectively.

**Keywords**— digital marketing, small business, tourism sector, customer engagement, Sorsogon City

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the changing business climate, where online interactions are increasingly shaping consumer behavior, digital marketing has become an essential strategy for companies of all kinds, allowing companies to engage with customers, whether on a global scale or in local contexts, like the city of Sorsogon in the Philippines. Digital marketing refers to a range of strategies and platforms used to advertise goods and services via online platforms such as websites, email, social media, and search engines. The transition from traditional marketing methods to digital platforms allows businesses to target specific demographics, measure performance, and adjust their strategies in real-time, enhancing their overall effectiveness. Small businesses in the Philippines are defined as enterprises falling under the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) classification. According to the Magna Carta for MSMEs (Republic Act No. 6977, as amended by RA 8289 and RA 9501) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), small businesses employ 10 to 99 workers, showcasing a more structured organizational

framework with clearer role delegation and functional divisions, and a capital investment ranging from PHP 3,000,001 to PHP 15,000,000. These businesses are often involved in regional or national operations, such as small hotels, manufacturing firms, or food production enterprises. As these businesses evolve, digital marketing emerges as a critical tool for their growth and sustainability. Digital platforms enable small businesses to expand their reach, optimize operations, and compete effectively with larger firms by leveraging cost-effective strategies like social media marketing, SEO, and e-commerce integration.

The use of digital channels has transformed the way marketers communicate with today's consumers. As digital technology is growing, well-informed consumers exist, and they demand to connect and communicate with businesses or companies that can hear them out and cater to their needs. This change is a game-changer for small tourism businesses as it gives them a chance to punch above their weight with inexpensive branding solutions and a broader target audience. Whether it is

advertising local hotels and tours to foreign tourists or creating unique promotions to attract local customers, digital marketing offers the flexibility for a business to bend and grow with international goods and tools that can open new sophisticated markets. In this digitally-centered world, Travel businesses must implement digital marketing strategies that support them in reaching potential customers and keeping the competition agile.

As the world became more digitally focused, travel businesses need to leverage digital marketing strategies to reach potential customers and remain competitive. According to the Statista Mobility Market Outlook, more than two-thirds of the revenue in the global travel and tourism market came from online sales channels. Furthermore, the Statista Mobility Market Outlook predicted that online sales will continue to increase, reaching a staggering 74% by 2026. Digital marketing operates on two levels: globally, where it enables businesses to reach international tourists, and locally, where it allows for more targeted strategies that resonate with regional audiences. On a global scale, social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are instrumental in helping businesses showcase unique tourism experiences, while SEO and online travel agencies (OTAs) help small tourism businesses become more visible to international travelers. Locally, strategies such as cultural promotions, local SEO, and direct engagement on social media allow businesses to connect deeply with their community, foster brand loyalty, and encourage word-of-mouth marketing.

Sorsogon City exemplifies the local impact of digital marketing in tourism. As a growing tourist destination known for its cultural heritage and scenic landscapes, it is experiencing a rise in both domestic and international visitors. Small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon, such as hotels, restaurants, and tour operators, can leverage digital marketing to promote the city's unique attractions and cater to both global and local tourists. For example, boutique hotels might use Instagram to highlight scenic locations, while local restaurants could engage their audience through social media by promoting local dishes. Tour operators can use platforms like YouTube to share videos of activities like whale shark diving in Donsol, attracting adventure-seeking tourists.

Several factors influence how small businesses in Sorsogon City adopt digital marketing practices,

including the city's rich cultural heritage and local market dynamics. By integrating cultural elements such as festivals into their marketing campaigns and tailoring their digital strategies to suit the preferences of local consumers, businesses can enhance their visibility and appeal. Digital marketing provides tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City with the tools they need to thrive in a competitive market, connecting them with both local and global audiences and helping them achieve sustainable growth.

However, the success of digital marketing efforts does not depend solely on the businesses themselves. Collaboration among key stakeholders is vital. Policymakers play an essential role by offering subsidies or grants to alleviate financial barriers and funding community-based training programs to enhance digital literacy. Platform providers can enhance accessibility through user-friendly tools, tiered pricing models, and free resources such as tutorials. Meanwhile, educational institutions and NGOs can develop targeted workshops, equipping small business owners with practical skills in social media management, content creation, and analytics. Finally, local business associations can facilitate knowledge-sharing and networking among small enterprises, fostering a culture of innovation. These collaborative efforts ensure small businesses are prepared to overcome barriers and positioned to leverage digital tools effectively for sustainable growth.

But amid the digital revolution, implementing digital marketing tactics has become a crucial factor in determining the success of small businesses trying to compete in a market that is getting more and more crowded.

The primary goal of this research is to examine and define the transformative role of digital marketing strategies being used by small tourism-related businesses, specifically concentrating on Sorsogon City in the fiscal year 2023-2024. It investigated how digital marketing tools and platforms impact business performance and identified challenges and barriers to digital marketing adoption.

It also explored the intricate connections between marketing strategies, technology, customer interaction, and business outcomes, as well as understanding how small businesses can leverage digital tools to expand reach, enhance customer engagement, and build brand loyalty.

Sorsogon City, the capital of the province of Sorsogon, has emerged as a dynamic hub for commerce, trade, and tourism in the region. In recent years, it has gained recognition as a top tourist destination, with the province of Sorsogon listed as the number-one holiday destination in the Philippines for Airbnb bookings in 2023 (Lim 2023). According to the Department of Tourism (DOT), by April 2023, the province had welcomed 1,613 foreign travelers and an impressive 591,128 domestic visitors. This growth highlighted the province's increasing appeal to both domestic and international travelers, contributing significantly to the local economy. Sorsogon City's strategic coastal location, abundant natural resources, and rich cultural heritage further reinforce its importance as a tourism and economic center.

The city's economy is primarily driven by agriculture, fisheries, and trade, but it is tourism that plays a significant and growing role in boosting economic activity. Sorsogon City serves as a commercial center, offering markets, shopping centers, cafes, restaurants, and retail establishments that cater to both residents and tourists. Visitors are drawn not only to the city's scenic landscapes, including the pristine beaches and mountainous terrain, but also to its vibrant cultural heritage, marked by festivals, traditions, and local cuisine.

In this fast-changing tourism industry, digital marketing has become essential for small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City. It revolutionized how small tourism-related businesses operate, fundamentally transforming their approach to customer engagement and business growth. Online reviews build customer trust, particularly for lesser-known businesses. Studies highlight that positive reviews increase purchase intentions, while negative reviews deter customers. Furthermore, Sorsogon City's unique cultural heritage and local market dynamics significantly influence the digital marketing strategies of small businesses. The city's festivals, traditions, and culinary offerings provide opportunities for businesses to attract tourists through culturally-themed digital marketing campaigns. The shift towards online platforms, including social media, websites, and e-commerce, has opened new avenues for tourism-related businesses to reach a broader audience. However, despite the potential benefits, many small businesses in Sorsogon City face challenges in fully leveraging digital marketing. Understanding the preferences and purchasing

behaviors of the local population is also crucial, allowing businesses to tailor their marketing efforts to engage more effectively with their target audience. By addressing these cultural and market dynamics, small businesses can better position themselves in both local and global markets.

With the rapid growth of tourists discovering the beauty of Sorsogon, numerous small tourism-related businesses are also emerging in the city. These diverse businesses are shaped by their geographic location, cultural legacy, and economic conditions. The city's demographics, income distribution, and population growth all have an impact on consumer behavior and the market demand for different goods and services, which opens up opportunities for small tourism-related to prosper. For small businesses, particularly, navigating the digital landscape of the tourism sector presents both challenges and unprecedented opportunities. Digital marketing gives small businesses unique insights into their customers' tastes and behavior. However, as the marketplace becomes more globalized, small businesses in Sorsogon face increasing pressure to adapt and remain competitive.

Sorsogon City, like many other regions in the Philippines, relies on businesses for economic growth and job creation. By identifying effective digital marketing practices tailored to the specific context of Sorsogon City, policymakers and business owners can work together to support the growth of small businesses and stimulate economic activity in the region. The legal frameworks provided by the Magna Carta for MSMEs (Republic Act No. 9501) and the E-commerce Act of 2000 (Republic Act No. 8792) offer valuable support for local businesses, encouraging them to embrace digital tools and platforms. The Magna Carta for MSMEs promotes collaboration between the government and the private sector, providing financial and technical assistance to help MSMEs thrive. By leveraging this support, small tourism-related businesses such as hotels, travel agencies, and tour operators in Sorsogon can improve their digital skills and access to online marketing strategies, boosting their local and global visibility and competitiveness.

Another legal framework is the E-Commerce Act (Republic Act No. 8792), wherein facilitates the growth of online business by enabling digital transactions and providing legal recognition for electronic documents. This framework helps small tourism-related businesses



in Sorsogon engage in online booking and payment systems, making their services more accessible to tourists.

Digital marketing catalyzes local businesses' growth by offering insights into consumer behavior and allowing companies to tailor their services to meet customer needs. Through social media marketing, businesses can promote local attractions, events, and unique experiences. Sorsogon's growing tourism industry presents immense potential for small businesses to thrive. By utilizing digital marketing strategies and legal support, these businesses can increase their visibility, boost sales, and contribute to the region's economic development. Through a combination of traditional values and modern digital tools, small businesses in Sorsogon City can promote their cultural heritage to the world while ensuring sustainable local growth. Small businesses globally, including those in the Philippines, are increasingly adopting digital marketing strategies to reach their target audience due to their cost-effectiveness and wide reach compared to traditional marketing methods.

## II. OBJECTIVES

This study aimed to examine the use and effectiveness of digital marketing strategies among small businesses, analyzing the adoption and challenges faced by small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City. Specifically, to address the following research objectives.

1. Describe the profile of the participating tourism business in Sorsogon City;
2. Describe the nature of the digital marketing used by small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City in terms of:
  - a. Digital Marketing Adoption
  - b. Digital Marketing Platforms Use
  - c. Goals for Digital Marketing
  - d. Digital Marketing Use
  - e. Frequency of Digital Marketing Use
3. Identify the factors that facilitate or obstruct the adoption of digital marketing use;
4. Examine the content of marketing strategies employed by small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City; and
5. Determine the effectiveness of the social media marketing strategies in terms of:
  - a. Brand Awareness
  - b. Customer Engagement
  - c. Sales Conversion

## III. METHODOLOGY

As we delved further into the domain of digital marketing and its effects on small tourism-related businesses, it became clear that adopting digital transformation was not just a choice but a vital requirement for thriving and enduring in the digital era. By using the mixed-method approach in this study, the researcher gained a deeper understanding of the impact of digital marketing strategies on small businesses and generated more impactful and actionable insights for theory and practice. The integration of qualitative and quantitative methods allowed for a deeper understanding of the research problem, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings by addressing both contextual and measurable aspects of digital marketing practices. This design ensured a holistic examination of how digital marketing contributed to customer attraction, retention, and overall business performance.

The population of this study comprised small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City, including accommodations, tour services, and restaurants that actively engaged in digital marketing. A purposive sampling technique was utilized to ensure the inclusion of businesses meeting specific criteria, such as using digital platforms like social media, blogs, or websites to promote their services. This targeted sampling ensured that the study focused on businesses with relevant digital marketing experience. For the qualitative component, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with three (3) small tourism-related business owners or personnel related to the marketing section to gain insights into their experiences, challenges, and perceptions regarding digital marketing. Data from interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns. This method was chosen to uncover underlying narratives and provide a rich contextual understanding of digital marketing practices. Additionally, three (3) key informant interviews (KII) with industry experts were undertaken to contextualize findings and provide a broader perspective on digital marketing trends in the tourism sector. These qualitative methods offered rich, narrative data that revealed the "why" and "how" behind digital marketing practices, uncovering themes that were difficult to quantify.

The quantitative component involved surveys distributed to nine (9) small tourism-related businesses, designed to systematically measure variables such as content types, update frequency, and perceived

effectiveness of digital marketing strategies. The survey utilized a 5-point Likert scale to quantify respondents' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies across three key variables: brand awareness, customer engagement, and sales conversion. Respondents rated each variable based on their experiences, with options ranging from 5 (Very Effective) to 1 (Not Effective). For brand awareness, customer engagement, and sales conversion, the ratings provided measurable insights into how well digital marketing strategies performed. Statistical analysis of the Likert scale responses enabled the identification of patterns, trends, and correlations across platforms, content types, and update frequencies. This systematic approach to quantification ensured objective and actionable findings that complemented the qualitative insights gathered, providing a balanced understanding of the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies for small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City. Statistical analysis of the survey data allowed the researcher to explore relationships between variables, such as the frequency of updates and customer satisfaction, providing an objective and measurable perspective on digital marketing effectiveness.

Embracing effective digital marketing tactics contributed to the long-term sustainability and growth of small businesses in Sorsogon City. By building a strong online presence, fostering customer relationships, and harnessing the power of digital channels for promotion and sales, small business owners were able to future-proof their businesses against market fluctuations, economic uncertainties, and other external challenges.

### **Research Design**

This study endeavored to fill this gap by conducting a comprehensive analysis of the impact of digital marketing strategies on small businesses in Sorsogon City.

By employing a mixed-methods approach encompassing semi-structured interviews and KII for qualitative methods, and structured survey questionnaires for quantitative methods, this research aimed to unravel the intricacies of digital marketing adoption, implementation, and outcomes within the local small business community.

These approaches addressed the multifaceted nature of the research problem, ensuring the findings were both comprehensive and actionable.

### **Source of Data**

A structured questionnaire was administered to collect quantitative data from nine (9) small tourism-related business owners or marketing experts in Sorsogon City. The survey investigated digital marketing adoption, strategies utilized, perceived effectiveness, business performance indicators, and other relevant factors. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with a subset of small tourism-related business owners or personnel involved in the marketing section to gather qualitative insights into their experiences, attitudes, and perceptions regarding digital marketing adoption and its impact on business performance. Approximately three (3) small business owners were selected for semi-structured interviews.

### **Data Gathering Procedure and Techniques**

The researcher used the quantitative method by conducting surveys to assess the level of digital marketing adoption. The survey inquired about the types of digital marketing tactics used, frequency of use, perceived effectiveness, and factors influencing adoption rates. Data analytics tools were employed to analyze metrics such as brand awareness (e.g., reach, impressions), customer engagement (e.g., likes, comments, shares), and sales conversion rates derived from small businesses' social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter). Comparative analysis was conducted to identify patterns and correlations between social media marketing activities and business outcomes. A content analysis of small businesses' digital content, including blog posts, videos, and infographics, was conducted to identify common themes, formats, and distribution channels. Key performance indicators such as website traffic, engagement metrics, and conversion rates were tracked to assess the effectiveness of content marketing efforts.

To determine the current level of skills and competencies required to run the business effectively, a qualitative research design was employed. Semi-structured and key informant interviews were conducted with small business owners to explore their experiences, attitudes, and perceptions regarding digital marketing adoption. These qualitative data provided nuanced insights into the barriers and facilitators of digital marketing implementation. Semi-structured interviews with small tourism-related business owners or personnel involved in the marketing section delved deeper into their social media marketing strategies, content creation processes, and perceived effectiveness. Qualitative

insights provided context and explanations for quantitative findings, helping to uncover underlying mechanisms driving social media marketing success or failure.

By integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods, it tailored to address each research objective, the study provided comprehensive insights into the adoption, effectiveness, and impact of digital marketing strategies among small businesses in Sorsogon City. This mixed-methods approach ensured a holistic understanding of the research topic and generated actionable recommendations for small business owners to enhance their digital marketing practices and drive business success.

### **Statistical Analysis**

The mixed-method research design aimed at assessing the level of digital marketing adoption among small businesses in Sorsogon City, several statistical techniques and analytical tools were employed to integrate and interpret the collected data effectively. Triangulation was used to compare and contrast findings from both qualitative and quantitative data sources. By triangulating the results, the research validated data from multiple sources to enhance accuracy and consistency. This method ensured that multiple perspectives on the phenomenon of digital marketing adoption were considered, leading to more robust conclusions. Triangulation combined survey data on the types and frequency of digital marketing tools with qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews and key informant interviews (KII). This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of how businesses adopted and implemented digital marketing.

Another technique employed was Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), which was utilized to analyze qualitative data obtained from in-depth interviews and key informant interviews. This analytical approach enabled the research to identify patterns, relationships, and configurations among variables. By exploring how different combinations of factors contributed to digital marketing adoption outcomes, QCA provided insights into the complex interplay of factors influencing small businesses' digital marketing practices.

By integrating triangulation and QCA within the mixed-method research design, the study provided comprehensive insights into the adoption, effectiveness,

and impact of digital marketing strategies among small businesses in Sorsogon City. This approach ensured a holistic understanding of the research topic and facilitated the generation of actionable recommendations for small business owners to enhance their digital marketing practices and drive business success.

Triangulation addressed all research objectives by integrating qualitative and quantitative data sources to ensure the validity, accuracy, and consistency of findings. For Objective 1, triangulation combined survey data on the types and frequency of digital marketing tools with qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews and KIIs, allowing for a deeper understanding of how businesses adopted and implemented digital marketing. For Objective 2, triangulation cross-referenced survey results with interview narratives, validating both measurable factors (e.g., resource limitations, platform effectiveness) and contextual factors (e.g., skills gaps, competition) influencing digital marketing adoption.

QCA was specifically applied to Objectives 2 and 4, exploring patterns and relationships among variables influencing digital marketing adoption and effectiveness. This methodological approach illuminated the interplay of factors, offering a nuanced understanding of the barriers, enablers, and outcomes associated with digital marketing practices.

### **Ethical Consideration**

Ethical considerations were paramount in this research, particularly as it involved human participants. One key ethical consideration was ensuring the voluntary participation and informed consent of small business owners who were surveyed or interviewed. The purpose and procedures of the study, including the types of data collected and their intended use, were clearly explained to all participants. Participants were assured of their right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any time without facing any consequences.

Additionally, the study prioritized confidentiality and anonymity. Participants' responses were kept strictly confidential, and their identities were protected in all publications or reports resulting from the study. Anonymity was maintained by making the inclusion of names optional in the survey questionnaire, ensuring that sensitive business information and identities were safeguarded.



The study adhered to strict ethical standards to protect respondents. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were made aware of the study’s purpose, their rights as participants, and the confidentiality measures in place. These ethical safeguards ensured that participants felt secure in providing honest and candid responses, thereby enhancing the integrity and validity of the research findings. By upholding these standards, the study respected the rights and well-being of all participants while maintaining high ethical integrity.

**IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter presented the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative components of the study, integrating these results to address the research objectives comprehensively. The quantitative data, collected through surveys, provided a broad understanding of trends and patterns related to different digital marketing strategies and practices of small businesses in Sorsogon City, particularly those in the hotel, accommodation, and travel sectors. Meanwhile, the qualitative data from interviews offered in-depth insights into participants’ experiences, perspectives, and the contextual factors affecting these practices. Together, these findings offered a cohesive understanding that focused on the type of digital

marketing tools used, frequency of content updates, effectiveness of different content types, and overall satisfaction with digital marketing efforts. Each section of this chapter discussed one research objective, integrating relevant quantitative and qualitative findings to reveal both the prevalence and reasoning behind observed behaviors and perceptions.

**1. Profile of the Respondents**

The study collected data from small tourism-based businesses operating in Sorsogon City, with a total of nine (9) businesses participating in the survey. These respondents represented a diverse range of sectors within the tourism industry, including hotel accommodations and travel agencies, reflecting a cross-section of the local tourism ecosystem.

The participating businesses were identified and verified through the City of Sorsogon Permit and Licensing Division, which maintains records of registered small-business establishments for the years 2022 to 2024. This profile highlighted the inclusion of key players in Sorsogon City’s tourism industry, offering valuable insights into the effectiveness of social media strategies among businesses directly contributing to local economic and cultural activities.

*Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Business Type, Years of Operation, and Number of Employees*

	Frequency (f)
<b>Business Type</b>	
Hotel Accommodation	5
Hotel and Restaurant	2
Travel Agency	2
<b>Total</b>	9
<b>Years of Operation</b>	
Less than 1 year	0
1-3 years	0
3-5 years	1
More than 5 years	7
<b>Total</b>	9
<b>Number of Employees</b>	
1-5	0
6-10	0
11-20	6
More than 20	3
<b>Total</b>	9

Out of nine small tourism-related businesses, five were hotel accommodations, two were combined hotel and

restaurant establishments, and two were travel agencies. This distribution highlighted the need for digital

marketing strategies tailored to diverse business models. Eight out of nine businesses had been operating for more than five years, reflecting a mature tourism sector in the city. Only one business had been in operation for three to five years, and no respondents had been operating for less than three years. It also revealed that most businesses—six out of nine—employed 11–20 employees, while the remaining three small businesses had more than 20 employees.

## 2. Nature of Digital Marketing Used by Small Tourism-Related Businesses in Sorsogon City

The survey provided a comprehensive overview of the digital marketing approaches used by small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City.

These are classified by business attributes, preferred digital marketing platforms, goals, and usage frequency.

**Table 2. Digital Marketing Platforms Used**

Digital Marketing Platform	No. of respondents
Facebook	9
Instagram	1
Tiktok	0
Twitter	0
Email Marketing	4
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)	2
Website/Blog	4
Other	0

All businesses surveyed reported the use of digital marketing tools. This widespread adoption underscored the importance of digital services to the local tourism sector. Facebook was the most widely used platform, utilized by all respondents. Other platforms, such as

Email Marketing and Websites/Blogs, were used by four out of nine businesses each. SEO (two out of nine) and Instagram (one out of nine) were less commonly utilized, and no businesses reported using TikTok or Twitter.

**Table 3. Primary Goals for Digital Marketing**

Digital Marketing Goals	No of. Respondents
Generate leads or sales	7
Increase brand awareness	6
Improve Customer Engagement	5
Promote Specific Products/Services	5
Enhance online reputation	4
Build customer loyalty	2
Drive website traffic	0
Others	0

Table 3 highlighted that seven out of nine businesses identified generating leads or sales as the primary objective of digital marketing, followed by increasing brand awareness, mentioned by six businesses. Improving customer engagement and promoting

specific products or services were each reported by five businesses. Enhancing online reputation (four out of nine) and building customer loyalty (two out of nine) were identified as additional objectives.

**Table 4. Duration of Digital Marketing Use**

Digital Marketing Usage Duration	No of. Respondents
In the past 6 months	0
1-2 years ago	1
3-4 years ago	5
More than 5 years ago	3



Total	9
Digital Marketing Usage Frequency	No of. Respondents
Daily	3
Weekly	2
Monthly	2
Rarely	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>

Table 4 revealed that most businesses—five out of nine—began using digital marketing three to four years ago, while three businesses had been using it for more than five years. Only one business reported adopting digital marketing one to two years ago, and no businesses had started within the last six months. This indicated that digital marketing adoption in the sector was not a recent trend. The results also show that the frequency of digital marketing usage varied among businesses. Three businesses reported using digital marketing daily, while two businesses each reported using it weekly, monthly, or rarely.

The results indicated that small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City had embraced digital marketing as a vital tool to achieve business objectives. Facebook dominated as the preferred platform due to its cost-effectiveness and accessibility. The primary goals of digital marketing efforts were to generate leads or

sales, increase brand awareness, and improve customer engagement. However, the limited use of platforms like Instagram and SEO suggested growth opportunities, particularly in enhancing online visibility and diversifying digital strategies.

The findings provided valuable insights into the digital marketing practices of small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City. They also highlighted opportunities for targeted support and strategic optimization to further strengthen their digital presence.

### 3. Factors that Facilitate or Obstruct the Adoption of Digital Marketing

The adoption of digital marketing among small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City was influenced by several facilitating and obstructing factors based on the survey responses.

*Table 5. Factors Influencing the Adoption of Digital Marketing*

	No of. Respondents
<b>Reasons for Adopting Digital Marketing</b>	
Reach a wider audience	9
Cost-effectiveness	3
Competitor influence	1
Improve customer engagement	5
Boost brand awareness	5
<b>Influencing Factors</b>	
Popularity of the platforms	7
Ease of use	7
Affordability	3
Audience demographics	4
Customer feedback	5
<b>External Influencing Factors</b>	
Market competition	7
Customer expectations and behavior	1
Technological advancements	7
Economic conditions	2
Industry trends	6
Social and cultural shifts	3
Partnership and Collaboration Opportunities	2

All nine small tourism-related businesses (9 out of 9) identified the ability to reach a wider audience as the primary factor that drove digital marketing adoption. This capability allowed small businesses to expand their customer base beyond local exposure, which was critical for competing with other tourism destinations across the Philippines. Additionally, enhancing customer engagement and brand awareness were each cited by five small businesses (5 out of 9) as significant reasons for adopting digital marketing. Digital platforms enabled direct communication with customers, fostering trust, loyalty, and increased visibility among potential visitors.

The popularity of digital platforms and their ease of use were also top factors, with 7 out of 9 small tourism-related businesses highlighting these influences. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram offered a ready-made audience and were user-friendly, making them accessible for businesses with limited time and technical expertise. Customer feedback (5 out of 9) and awareness of audience demographics (4 out of 9) were also noted as key considerations. Tailoring marketing strategies to align with customer preferences and target audience

behavior, such as younger travelers who relied on social media for trip planning, enhanced campaign effectiveness. Meanwhile, cost-effectiveness was cited by 4 out of 9 businesses as a motivating factor, as digital platforms provided affordable alternatives to traditional advertising.

Among the external factors, technological advancements and market competition were each identified by 7 out of 9 businesses as significant influences. Advances in internet access, mobile devices, and digital tools made digital marketing more viable, while market competition pushed businesses to adopt these strategies to remain relevant. Additionally, 6 out of 9 businesses cited industry trends as a factor, recognizing the need to align their practices with competitors and industry peers. Other external influences, such as social and cultural shifts (3 out of 9), partnership and collaboration opportunities (2 out of 9), economic conditions (2 out of 9), and customer expectations and behavior (1 out of 9), also played roles, though to a lesser extent. These factors reflected evolving consumer habits and opportunities to collaborate for improved credibility and reach.

**Table 6. Barriers to and Strategies for Adopting Digital Marketing**

	No of. Respondents
<b>Barriers in Adopting</b>	
Lack of knowledge or skills	4
High cost of tools and services	8
Time constraints	1
Difficulty in measuring return on investment (ROI)	2
Limited access to reliable internet	2
Other	0
<b>Strategies Used to Overcome Barriers</b>	
Hiring external consultants or agencies	1
Attending digital marketing training or workshops	3
Trial and error experimentation	4
Partnering with other businesses	2
Using free or low-cost digital marketing tools	5
Outsourcing tasks to freelancers or contractors	1
Seeking support from government or business organization	0
Improving internal processes and time management	4
Other	0

### Obstructing Factors

The most significant barrier to digital marketing adoption was the high cost of tools and services, identified by 8 out of 9 small tourism-related businesses. Financial constraints limited small businesses' ability to

invest in paid advertisements, premium tools, and advanced analytics, despite the potential long-term benefits. The lack of knowledge or skills was the second most common barrier, reported by 4 out of 9 businesses. This highlighted a gap in expertise, particularly in areas

like social media management, content creation, and search engine optimization, which hindered businesses from effectively leveraging digital marketing platforms. Additional barriers included difficulty in measuring return on investment (ROI) and limited access to reliable internet, each cited by 2 out of 9 businesses. These factors created challenges in evaluating campaign effectiveness and maintaining consistent digital marketing efforts. Time constraints were mentioned by 1 respondent (1 out of 9), reflecting that businesses without dedicated marketing personnel struggled to allocate sufficient time for digital activities.

**Strategies to Overcome Barriers**

To address these barriers, the most common approach among businesses was the use of free or low-cost digital marketing tools, adopted by 5 out of 9 respondents. This strategy allowed businesses to access digital marketing capabilities without significant financial investment. Some businesses relied on trial-and-error experimentation and improving internal processes, indicating a commitment to learning and operational efficiency. Training and development, such as attending workshops or formal training programs, were reported by 3 out of 9 businesses. This reflected a moderate level of investment in skill-building to address knowledge

gaps. Collaborative approaches, including partnering with other businesses (2 out of 9) and outsourcing to freelancers or agencies (1 out of 9), were less common, likely due to budget constraints or a preference for maintaining internal control over marketing activities.

The results showed that small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City adopted digital marketing primarily to reach wider audiences, enhance customer engagement, and boost brand visibility, with platform popularity and ease of use being major facilitators. External factors, such as technological advancements, market competition, and industry trends, further drove adoption. However, barriers like high costs, limited skills, difficulty measuring ROI, and unreliable internet hindered businesses from maximizing digital marketing's potential. To overcome these challenges, businesses prioritized cost-effective tools, internal process improvements, and training, while opportunities remained for leveraging external partnerships and expert support.

**4. Content of Marketing Strategies Employed**

The study revealed that small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City relied heavily on visual and interactive content to drive their digital marketing strategies.

*Table 7. Types of Digital Content Used for Business Promotion*

Content Type	No. of Respondents
Blog posts	1
Videos	3
Infographics	4
Customer testimonials	5
Social media stories/reels	4
Others	0

Among the various content types analyzed, customer testimonials or reviews emerged as the most commonly used, with 5 out of 9 small tourism-related businesses incorporating them into their campaigns.

Testimonials played a significant role in building trust and credibility, as they served as social proof to influence the decisions of potential customers. Infographics and social media stories or reels were also widely used, each adopted by 4 small businesses.

Infographics were valued for their ability to visually communicate travel information, such as tips or local attractions, while social media stories and reels were

preferred for their short, engaging, and interactive nature, making them ideal for showcasing destination highlights and participating in trending topics.

Video content, though recognized for its potential to deliver compelling storytelling and high engagement, was only used by 3 small businesses due to the resource-intensive nature of video production.

Blog posts were the least utilized content type, with only one small business reporting their use, indicating a preference for more immediate and visually dynamic formats over text-heavy approaches.



**Table 8. Effectiveness of Content Types Used by Small Tourism-Related Businesses in Attracting and Retaining Customers**

Content Type	Attracting		Retaining	
	Rating	No. of Respond-ents	Rating	No. of Respond-ents
<b>Blog posts</b>	5	2	5	2
	4	1	4	1
	3	1	3	1
	2	1	2	1
	1	2	1	2
<b>Videos</b>	5	2	5	1
	4	4	4	5
	3	0	3	0
	2	1	2	1
	1	1	1	1
<b>Infographics</b>	5	2	5	2
	4	3	4	4
	3	0	3	0
	2	1	2	1
	1	1	1	1
<b>Customer Reviews</b>	5	4	5	4
	4	3	4	3
	3	0	3	0
	2	1	2	1
	1	0	1	0
<b>Social Media Stories/Reels</b>	5	3	5	3
	4	3	4	4
	3	1	3	0
	2	1	2	1
	1	0	1	0

The effectiveness of these content types was assessed on a Likert scale, revealing varying levels of success. Customer reviews were rated as the most effective, with 4 small tourism-related businesses considering them very effective and 3 small businesses rating them as effective. Social media stories and reels were also highly effective, with 3 small businesses rating them very effective (5) and 4 small businesses rating them effective (4) for engaging audiences and showcasing real-time experiences. Infographics received positive feedback, with 6 out of 9 small tourism-related businesses rating

them effective (4) or very effective (5); however, a few respondents found them less impactful, indicating a need for improved execution or differentiation. Video content performed well, receiving effective or very effective ratings from 6 small businesses for attracting customers and 5 small businesses for retaining them, though its adoption was limited by production costs. Blogs, on the other hand, received mixed responses. While 2 businesses rated them very effective, another 2 rated them as ineffective, reflecting challenges such as low visibility and insufficient SEO optimization.

**Table 9. Frequency of Content Updates for Digital Marketing Campaigns**

Frequency	Number of Responses
<b>Weekly</b>	2
<b>Monthly</b>	4
<b>Quarterly</b>	1
<b>Rarely</b>	2

The frequency of content updates varied among the businesses. Monthly updates were the most common, reported by 4 small tourism-related businesses, as they provided a balance between consistency and the resources required for producing high-quality content. Weekly updates, reported by 2 small businesses, were particularly effective for maintaining visibility on dynamic platforms like Instagram and TikTok. However, 2 small businesses rarely updated their content, which could lead to reduced engagement and a diminished online presence. One small business reported quarterly updates, which may work for specific

campaigns but risks losing relevance in the fast-paced digital marketing landscape. The level of satisfaction with digital marketing efforts among businesses also varied.

Three businesses rated themselves as very satisfied, reflecting strong engagement, brand awareness, and sales outcomes. Five businesses reported being satisfied, indicating moderate success but highlighting opportunities for improvement. One business expressed neutral satisfaction, possibly due to challenges such as limited resources or underperforming content strategies.

**Table 10. Overall Satisfaction with Digital Marketing Efforts**

Satisfaction Level	Number of Responses
Very Satisfied	3
Satisfied	5
Neutral	1
Unsatisfied	0
Very Unsatisfied	0

Overall, the findings emphasized that small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City benefited most from visual storytelling and trust-building content, such as customer reviews, social media reels, and infographics. However, there was room for improvement, particularly in adopting strategies to optimize the use of video content and blogs. Increasing the frequency of updates and aligning content strategies with audience preferences could further enhance engagement and

customer retention, ultimately driving greater satisfaction with digital marketing efforts.

**5. Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing Platforms**

The data in Table 11 evaluated the effectiveness of social media marketing platforms in promoting business outcomes across three areas, including brand awareness, customer engagement, and sales conversion, based on respondent ratings.

**Table 11. Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing Platforms**

Social Media Marketing Platforms	Brand Awareness	Customer Engagement	Sales Conversion
Facebook	4.22	4.56	4.00
Instagram	2.67	2.33	2.33
Twitter	1.33	1.33	1.33
TikTok	1.33	1.33	1.33

**Brand Awareness**

Facebook emerged as the most effective platform for brand awareness among small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City, with an average rating of 4.22. This success could be attributed to Facebook’s broad reach, targeting capabilities, and tools for visual storytelling, such as targeted advertising and frequent content sharing. However, some businesses rated Facebook lower, citing challenges such as resource limitations and competition in saturated markets. Instagram received a lower rating (2.67), suggesting limited adoption or unfamiliarity with its potential.

Although Instagram is a visual-heavy platform well-suited for tourism-related businesses, its effectiveness is likely hindered by a lack of expertise in leveraging features. Meanwhile, Twitter and TikTok both received the lowest rating at 1.33, showing that these platforms are rarely used or simply do not align well with the marketing strategies of local tourism businesses.

**Customer Engagement**

For customer engagement, Facebook also ranked as the most effective platform, with a rating of 4.56. Interactive features like comments, likes, shares, and messaging

facilitated direct interaction, and Facebook’s algorithm encouraged engaging content. However, not all businesses found Facebook equally effective, as some may struggle with low audience interaction or difficulties in creating engaging content. Instagram, with a rating of 2.33, had mixed feedback. While the platform is designed for visual engagement, businesses may find it challenging to maintain consistent interaction, especially if their audience is not very active on Instagram. Twitter and TikTok were rated the least effective for customer engagement, with a rating of 1.33. Their formats and demographics may not align with the engagement strategies of small tourism businesses.

### **Sales Conversion**

Facebook proved to be the most effective platform for sales conversion, with a rating of 4.00. Many businesses find Facebook’s tools—such as targeted ads, call-to-action buttons, and online marketplaces—helpful in generating revenue. The platform’s ability to guide potential customers from awareness to purchase is a major advantage. Instagram, however, received a lower rating of 2.33, suggesting that while it has features that support sales (such as shoppable posts), it may not be as effective as Facebook in driving actual transactions. Twitter and TikTok, both rated at 1.33, were not considered useful for generating sales, likely because they are not commonly used for direct business transactions in this particular setting.

Overall, Facebook consistently outperformed other platforms in brand awareness, customer engagement, and sales conversion, demonstrating its value for small tourism-related businesses.

Instagram showed moderate potential but was hampered by low utilization and limited resources. Twitter and TikTok were ineffective across all objectives, highlighting the need for businesses to prioritize platforms that align with their marketing goals and industry needs.

### **Suggested Improvements for Digital Marketing Platforms**

Small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City provided various suggestions for improving digital marketing platforms. The feedback highlights areas where platforms can better serve small businesses, focusing on usability, analytics, and innovation, and others expressed satisfaction with the current tools and features available.

### **Usability and Analytics**

A common theme among responses was the need for greater user-friendliness and simpler analytics tools. Two respondents specifically mentioned that platforms should be easier to use, emphasizing that a streamlined interface would benefit small businesses with limited technical expertise. Studies showed the role of digital marketing platforms in small businesses, noting that user-friendly systems enhance adoption and performance, particularly for SMEs adapting to social media strategies (Alghizzawi, M., et.al., 2023). Additionally, one respondent suggested that analytics should be more intuitive and easier to interpret. Simplified data visualization and actionable insights would enable small business owners to track campaign performance more effectively without needing specialized knowledge.

### **Innovation and General Enhancements**

The call for innovation and platform enhancement reflects businesses' awareness of the evolving digital landscape and their desire to access more advanced features or capabilities. This suggests that while current platforms are functional, businesses see the potential for more sophisticated tools to serve their marketing needs better. This may incorporate features like AI-driven content recommendations, predictive analytics, or more advanced customer targeting options. According to Yosep, M.A., et.al. (2021), the adoption of marketing innovations like chatbots and automated email marketing has significantly improved engagement and reduced workload for small businesses. Such innovations could help small businesses compete more effectively in the digital space. The feedback highlights a mix of satisfaction and opportunities for improvement. While some small tourism-related businesses feel current platforms are adequate, others see the need for enhanced usability, easier-to-interpret analytics, and ongoing innovation to better meet their needs. Addressing these suggestions could further empower small businesses to achieve greater success in their digital marketing efforts.

## **V. HELPFUL HINTS**

### **A. Figures and Tables**

Because the final formatting of your paper is limited in scale, you need to position figures and tables at the top and bottom of each column. Large figures and tables may span both columns. Place figure captions below the figures; place table titles above the tables. If your figure has two parts, include the labels —(a) and —(b) as part



of the artwork. Please verify that the figures and tables you mention in the text exist. Do not put borders around the outside of your figures. Use the abbreviation —Fig. I even at the beginning of a sentence. Do not abbreviate —Table. I Tables are numbered with Roman numerals. Include a note with your final paper indicating that you request color printing.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from this study provided a comprehensive understanding of how small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City utilize digital marketing, the factors influencing its adoption, and the effectiveness of their marketing strategies in achieving brand awareness, customer engagement, and sales conversion.

Small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City actively leverage digital marketing as a key component of their operations. Facebook emerged as the dominant platform due to its accessibility, cost-effectiveness, and versatility. It is widely used for lead generation, customer interaction, and showcasing tourism-related services. However, while Instagram offers significant potential for visual storytelling and audience engagement, it remains underutilized due to limited resources and expertise. Platforms like Twitter and TikTok are rarely adopted, as their formats are less aligned with the needs of tourism businesses, reflecting a preference for tools that provide more immediate and measurable returns.

The adoption of digital marketing is driven by the need to enhance brand visibility, reach broader audiences, and improve customer engagement. Facebook's user-friendly features and ability to deliver cost-effective advertising have made it an enabling tool for businesses with limited resources. However, several barriers hinder the full utilization of digital marketing, including a lack of expertise, budget constraints, and challenges in measuring return on investment (ROI). These obstacles often lead businesses to rely on trial-and-error methods or focus exclusively on platforms they find most accessible, such as Facebook. The study highlighted the importance of targeted support in addressing these challenges, including skills development, affordable tools, and collaborative opportunities to strengthen digital marketing efforts.

The marketing strategies employed by small tourism businesses emphasize visual and trust-building content,

such as photos, customer testimonials, and social media reels, which are effective for showcasing services and engaging audiences. Despite this success, the study revealed significant underutilization of dynamic content formats, such as videos and blogs, which have the potential to enhance storytelling and boost audience engagement. Moreover, inconsistent content updates, particularly on platforms like Instagram, limit businesses' ability to maintain sustained visibility and interaction. Increasing the frequency of updates and diversifying content strategies, such as incorporating infographics, interactive posts, and video campaigns, can further optimize their marketing impact.

Facebook emerged as the most effective platform for small tourism-related businesses in terms of brand awareness, customer engagement, and sales conversion, due to its wide reach, targeted advertising tools, and interactive features. Instagram showed moderate potential but faced challenges such as limited adoption, resource constraints, and low impact on sales. In contrast, Twitter and TikTok were deemed ineffective across all areas, reflecting their misalignment with the marketing objectives and strategies of the tourism sector.

In conclusion, the study underscored Facebook as the most effective and widely adopted digital marketing platform for small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City, excelling in brand awareness, customer engagement, and sales conversion. While Instagram holds promise, its adoption is limited by resource constraints and inconsistent use. Platforms like Twitter and TikTok remain largely ineffective, emphasizing the importance of aligning marketing strategies with platform capabilities and business goals. To maximize digital marketing success, businesses must address challenges such as expertise gaps, limited resources, and content inconsistency. Targeted support, including training programs, affordable tools, and strategic partnerships, will be essential for overcoming these barriers. By diversifying content strategies, increasing the frequency of updates, and exploring underutilized platforms like Instagram, small tourism-related businesses can strengthen their digital presence, improve competitiveness, and achieve sustained growth in the evolving tourism industry. Globally, digital marketing trends emphasize AI-driven personalization, video marketing, and user-generated content, areas that Sorsogon businesses could explore to align with broader practices.

When compared to broader trends in digital marketing, Sorsogon's practices and challenges align with findings from other regions, such as CALABARZON. In CALABARZON, strong brand positioning and cultural promotions reflect global trends like hyper-personalization and authentic marketing (Ylagan, A.D., et al., 2021). However, the region's financial and infrastructural constraints underline the need for targeted interventions to bridge gaps in resources and skills.

Policymakers, businesses, educational institutions, and platform providers all have essential roles to play in addressing these challenges. Policymakers should implement subsidies and training programs to lower financial and knowledge barriers while promoting affordable internet access and digital tools to bridge infrastructure gaps. Businesses must develop tailored strategies that incorporate underutilized platforms like Instagram and video marketing while exploring partnerships to alleviate cost constraints. Educational institutions and NGOs can contribute by offering workshops on advanced practices such as analytics and ROI measurement to enhance local capacity. Meanwhile, platform providers should offer simplified tools and flexible pricing models designed for small businesses to encourage adoption and improve effectiveness.

This multi-stakeholder approach highlighted the potential of digital marketing to transform Sorsogon's tourism landscape, enabling businesses to compete more effectively in a rapidly evolving market. By addressing these challenges collaboratively, stakeholders can empower small businesses to unlock their full potential, fostering sustainable growth and contributing to the region's economic development.

Despite these hurdles, this study demonstrated that effective digital marketing strategies yield substantial benefits. Small tourism-related businesses that regularly updated their digital content achieved better customer engagement and visibility compared to those that did not. Cost-effective platforms such as Facebook and Instagram enabled small businesses to reach a broader audience with minimal costs.

The proactive efforts observed – including the use of free or low-cost tools, trial-and-error strategies, and alignment with customer behavior – reflect the resilience and adaptability of these small tourism-related

businesses. These innovative practices underscored a forward-thinking approach, is critical for thriving in a competitive tourism landscape. Moreover, emerging tools like AI-driven analytics and customer engagement systems (e.g. chatbots) presented unprecedented opportunities for innovation. A McKinsey & Company study found that organizations investing in AI-driven marketing experienced a 25% increase in customer satisfaction and a 30% boost in customer retention (Reddy, S.R.B., 2022). Future studies should explore the scalability and long-term effects of these advanced technologies, especially for small businesses seeking to streamline operations and maintain competitiveness.

Beyond individual business outcomes, these findings have broader implications for Sorsogon's tourism industry. As digital marketing continues to evolve, the challenges identified suggest a critical need for capacity-building initiatives, such as workshops, affordable digital tools, and peer-learning opportunities. By addressing these needs, small businesses can unlock greater opportunities, not just for growth but for sustained relevance in an increasingly digital world. This study highlighted the importance of collaboration among stakeholders – business owners, policymakers, and platform providers – to ensure that these small tourism-related businesses remain agile, competitive, and equipped to meet the demands of modern audiences.

Ultimately, digital marketing served as more than a promotional tool – it is a transformative force enabling small tourism-related businesses to innovate, thrive, and promote their unique cultural offerings. These businesses are not only vital players in the local economy but also ambassadors of Sorsogon's rich heritage and natural beauty. By overcoming barriers and leveraging their existing advantages, small tourism-related enterprises in Sorsogon City can secure an economically viable and sustainable future, contributing to the region's growth and ensuring their place in a thriving, connected global economy.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study highlighted the potential for small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City to enhance their competitiveness through strategic digital marketing practices. To address the current gaps and maximize the benefits of digital marketing and address identified challenges, recommendations have been provided to tackle these issues.

Although Facebook dominates as the most-used platform of small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City due to its wide reach and affordability, it offers limited reach in isolation. A strategic recommendation includes expanding to platforms like Instagram or TikTok for visually rich content, which aligns with user-generated content trends identified in the study to amplify visual storytelling, and utilizing platforms like Canva for cost-effective content creation – showcasing Sorsogon’s vibrant festivals, stunning landscapes, and eco-tourism experiences to a broader, global audience. Small businesses, specifically in the tourism and hospitality sector should participate in digital marketing training programs to improve their knowledge and skills in content creation, platform optimization, and performance measurement. Training in areas like SEO optimization, video production, and targeted advertising can help businesses utilize underused tools, such as Instagram and blogs, more effectively. Partnerships with local government units, industry associations, or educational institutions can provide affordable access to such programs

Small businesses should explore affordable digital marketing tools and strategies. Cost-sharing or collaborative efforts among businesses, such as joint campaigns, can help overcome resource constraints while maximizing reach and impact. Collaboration and training initiatives such as the "Go Digital ASEAN" program, which provides free digital skills training and promotes digitalization of MSMEs through training subsidies and upskilling activities (The Asia Foundation), ought to be given top priority also. These efforts are supported by laws like the "Bayanihan to Recover as One Act" and partnerships with organizations like The Asia Foundation and Google.org, which aim to enhance digital literacy and bridge infrastructure gaps in rural areas (The Asia Foundation). Educational institutions and digital marketing experts must collaborate with local government units (LGUs) and tourism-related organizations to provide training that is specifically designed to meet the technical requirements of small business owners. Programs like the Department of Trade and Industry's (DTI) "Ctrl+Biz Reboot Now!" provide programs that offer a series of free webinars that target MSMEs that need to transform their operations digitally. This includes insights on using social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube to expand their reach and visibility (Philippine News Agency).

By equipping entrepreneurs with the abilities and know-how to use digital tools efficiently, these programs would guarantee their continued market relevance. Another program that could cater to the needs of the small businesses to limit their barriers is the DTI’s Small and Medium Enterprise Roving Academy (SMERA) offers workshops and expert guidance on business development services, including digital marketing analytics and ROI measurement. These programs are designed to enhance local capacities and enable businesses to effectively compete in digital marketplaces (Department of Trade and Industry).

To integrate advanced digital tools gradually, small tourism-related businesses should adopt a phased roadmap. With easily available and free tools like Google Analytics, businesses may learn more about the performance of their campaigns and customer behavior. They can eventually switch to more complex solutions, such as AI-powered marketing platforms and customer relationship management (CRM) systems. This gradual approach will help small tourism-related businesses build their digital capability without straining limited resources.

Another significant recommendation is to develop authentic and localized content. Small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon should create content that reflects the authenticity and unique characteristics of the region. This includes showcasing traditional cuisines, cultural festivals, and eco-tourism activities that highlight the area’s distinct identity, by emphasizing meaningful and sustainable travel experiences, businesses can attract niche markets seeking authentic and responsible tourism options. Since one of the unique characteristics of the tourism and hospitality industry is focused on emotional marketing, to further strengthen their digital presence, businesses should utilize engaging storytelling that connects with audiences on an emotional level. Narratives that emphasize Sorsogon’s cultural and natural attractions can effectively capture interest and build trust. Additionally, investing in high-quality visuals, such as photos and videos, alongside genuine customer testimonials, can significantly enhance audience engagement and credibility.

Establishing shared marketing ecosystems can also bring significant benefits. By pooling resources, small tourism-related businesses can create collaborative platforms such as shared websites or co-branded digital campaigns that reduce marketing expenses while



amplifying visibility. These ecosystems encourage collective promotion and foster a sense of community among local enterprises.

By implementing these strategies, small tourism-related businesses in Sorsogon City will not only maximize the benefits of digital marketing but also drive sustainable growth and solidify their position as key players in the competitive tourism sector.

These approaches ensure that Sorsogon's rich cultural heritage and natural beauty are effectively showcased to the world.

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