



Evaluating Tourism Marketing Skills among Tourism Management Students in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated the tourism marketing skills of Tourism Management students in Nueva Ecija, Philippines, focusing on their proficiency in core marketing competencies, digital marketing skills, and the challenges encountered in skill development. Utilizing a descriptive-quantitative research design, data were collected from 276 higher-year students through a researcher-developed questionnaire measured on a four-point Likert scale. Findings indicate that students demonstrate moderate proficiency in core marketing skills, excelling in customer engagement but showing gaps in market trend interpretation and campaign evaluation. In digital marketing, strengths were observed in content creation and social media management, while analytics, storytelling, and strategic campaign alignment were notably weak. Challenges such as limited access to technological resources, inadequate hands-on training, and incomplete theory-practice integration further constrained skill development. A discrepancy was also observed between students' self-assessed competencies and industry expectations, particularly in advanced digital and analytical skills. Based on these results, curriculum enhancement, structured skills training programs, and strengthened industry collaboration are recommended to bridge competency gaps and prepare students for professional roles in a technology-driven tourism sector.

Keywords: Tourism Marketing, Tourism Management Students, Digital Marketing Skills, Competency Gap, Nueva Ecija

JEL Classifications: M31, M53, I23

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism remains one of the most dynamic sectors contributing significantly to global economic development, employment generation, and cultural exchange. For emerging economies such as the Philippines, the tourism industry plays a crucial role in national growth and local community development (Department of Tourism, 2022). As global competition intensifies, tourism marketing has become a central function for destinations and service providers seeking to establish competitive advantage through effective promotional strategies, market analysis, and stakeholder engagement (Kotler and Keller, 2021).

In recent years, the rapid advancement of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed tourism marketing practices. Digital platforms, social media, and data-driven strategies now shape

how tourism businesses communicate with potential travelers and influence decision-making processes (Smith and Taylor, 2020). Digital marketing tools such as social media platforms, search engine optimization, and online content creation have become essential components in reaching and engaging modern tourists. This shift highlights the growing importance of digital literacy among future tourism professionals (Jones, 2019).

Tourism marketing competencies encompass a diverse set of skills, including market research, strategic promotion, customer relationship management, digital content creation, and analytics. These competencies enable tourism practitioners to interpret market trends, design targeted campaigns, and enhance customer engagement (Morrison, 2020). Studies have emphasized that graduates entering the tourism industry must possess not only theoretical knowledge but also practical marketing skills to

remain competitive in a rapidly evolving environment (Brown and James, 2018). Furthermore, research on tourism and hospitality education underscores the importance of integrating technology-based learning and experiential activities to strengthen students' marketing capabilities (Williams and Hall, 2018).

In the Philippine context, tourism education institutions have made efforts to align their curricula with industry demands. However, existing studies reveal that while students often demonstrate strong general tourism competencies, specific skills related to marketing—particularly in digital contexts—are less explored and assessed (Reyes and Cruz, 2021). This suggests a gap between academic preparation and the practical marketing skills required by the industry. Moreover, challenges such as limited access to technological resources, insufficient industry exposure, and gaps in the application of theoretical knowledge continue to affect students' readiness (Delos Santos, 2020).

The integration of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok into tourism promotion further underscores the need for students to develop hands-on experience in digital marketing. User-generated content, influencer marketing, and real-time engagement significantly impact tourists' perceptions and travel decisions (Lopez, 2019). Consequently, tourism management students must be equipped with competencies in content creation, platform management, and analytics to effectively navigate the digital tourism landscape.

Despite the recognized importance of tourism marketing competencies, there remains limited empirical research focusing specifically on the marketing skills of Tourism Management students in the Philippines. Most existing studies tend to evaluate general competencies without isolating marketing as a distinct and critical dimension of professional readiness. This lack of focused investigation highlights the need for a more comprehensive assessment of students' tourism marketing skills (Garcia, 2020).

Given these considerations, this study aims to evaluate the tourism marketing skills of Tourism Management students in the Philippines by examining their proficiency in core marketing competencies, digital marketing practices, and perceived challenges. By identifying strengths and gaps, the study seeks to provide evidence-based recommendations for curriculum enhancement, skills development programs, and stronger industry collaboration. Ultimately, the research intends to support the development of future tourism professionals who are well-equipped to meet the demands of an increasingly competitive and technology-driven tourism industry.

1.1. Scope and Delimitation

This study focuses on evaluating the tourism marketing skills of Tourism Management students in selected higher education institutions in Nueva Ecija, Philippines. Specifically, it examines students' proficiency in core tourism marketing competencies, practical digital marketing skills, and the challenges they encounter in the development of these skills. The study also investigates the alignment of students' self-assessed marketing skills with industry expectations and identifies competency gaps, which

serve as the basis for proposing interventions aimed at curriculum enhancement, skills training programs, and industry collaboration initiatives.

The respondents of the study are limited to higher-year Tourism Management students, specifically those enrolled in the third and fourth years of their program for the academic year 2025-2026. This delimitation ensures that participants have sufficient exposure to tourism marketing courses, practical projects, and internship experiences necessary for evaluating their competencies. First and second-year students were excluded, as they are still in the early stages of their academic program and may not have acquired the foundational knowledge and practical experience required for meaningful assessment of marketing skills (Williams and Hall, 2018).

Furthermore, the study is geographically confined to Nueva Ecija, which represents a context of emerging tourism destinations with specific industry demands. While the findings provide insights into the skill levels and challenges of these students, they may not be generalizable to Tourism management students in other provinces or regions of the Philippines due to potential differences in curriculum, access to technology, and local industry engagement.

Lastly, the study focuses on self-reported proficiency and perceptions, using a structured survey instrument measured through a four-point Likert scale. While this approach allows the collection of quantifiable data, it relies on students' honesty and self-assessment, which may not fully capture their actual competencies in real-world professional settings.

1.2. Conceptual Framework

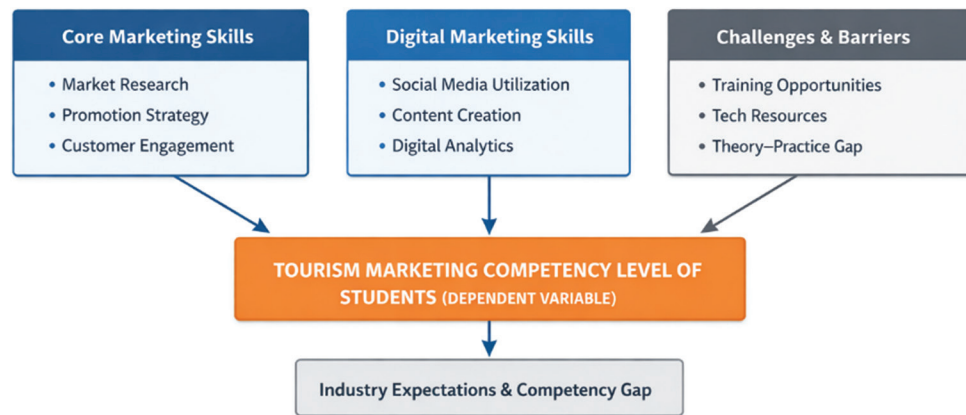
The conceptual framework of the study is anchored on the assumption that students' tourism marketing competency level is influenced by their core marketing skills, digital marketing skills, and the challenges they encounter during their academic preparation. Core marketing skills such as market research, promotional strategy, and customer engagement provide the foundational competencies necessary for tourism marketing practice (Kotler and Keller, 2021; Brown and James, 2018). Meanwhile, digital marketing skills including social media utilization, content creation, and analytics reflect the evolving demands of the tourism industry in a technology-driven environment.

Additionally, external factors such as limited training opportunities, inadequate technological resources, and gaps between theory and practice may hinder the development of these competencies. The study further examines how students' self-assessed competencies align with industry expectations, allowing for the identification of competency gaps. This framework serves as the basis for evaluating students' readiness and proposing targeted interventions for curriculum enhancement and skills development (Figure 1).

1.3. Statement of the Problem

This study aims to evaluate the tourism marketing skills of Tourism Management students in the Philippines. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions:

Figure 1: Conceptual framework illustrating the influence of core marketing skills, digital marketing skills, and developmental challenges on the tourism marketing competency level of students, including alignment with industry expectations and identification of competency gaps



1. How may the level of students' proficiency in core tourism marketing skills be described in terms of:
 - 1.1 Market Research Skills
 - 1.2 Promotional Strategy Skills
 - 1.3 Customer Engagement Skills
2. How may the level of students' practical digital marketing skills be described in terms of:
 - 1.4 Social Media Utilization
 - 1.5 Content Creation Skills
 - 1.6 Digital Analytics Skills
3. What challenges do students encounter in developing tourism marketing skills in terms of:
 - 3.1 Training Opportunities
 - 3.2 Technological Resources
 - 3.3 Theory-Practice Integration
4. How do students' self-assessed marketing skills align with industry expectations in terms of:
 - 4.1 Perceived Competency Level
 - 4.2 Industry Required Skills
 - 4.3 Competency Gap
5. What interventions may be proposed to enhance students' tourism marketing skills in terms of:
 - 5.1 Curriculum Enhancement
 - 5.2 Skills Training Programs
 - 5.3 Industry Collaboration Initiatives.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive–quantitative research design to evaluate the tourism marketing skills of Tourism Management students in Nueva Ecija, Philippines. The descriptive approach was used to systematically assess the level of students' proficiency in core tourism marketing skills, digital marketing skills, and the challenges they encounter in the development of these competencies. A quantitative method was adopted through the use of a structured survey questionnaire, allowing the collection of measurable data that can be analyzed statistically. This design is appropriate for identifying patterns, determining competency levels, and examining the gap between students'

self-assessed skills and industry expectations within the local tourism context.

2.2. Participants and Sampling

The participants of the study consisted of Tourism Management students specifically those enrolled in the third and fourth years of their program for the academic year 2025-2026 in Nueva Ecija, Philippines. The province serves as a relevant setting due to its growing tourism sector, particularly in farm tourism, cultural tourism, and emerging local destinations, which require competent marketing professionals. A purposive sampling technique was utilized to select respondents who are currently enrolled in the program, have taken, or are taking tourism marketing-related courses, and are willing to participate in the study. The sample size was determined based on the available population of qualified students in the selected institutions.

2.3. Research Instrument

The data for this study were gathered using a researcher-developed questionnaire anchored on the variables identified in the conceptual framework. The instrument was designed to measure students' level of proficiency in core tourism marketing skills, digital marketing skills, the challenges encountered in skill development, and the alignment of their competencies with industry expectations. The responses were measured using a four-point Likert scale to eliminate neutrality and encourage more definitive answers. The scale was interpreted as follows: 4 for Very High or Strongly Agree, 3 for High or Agree, 2 for Low or Disagree, and 1 for Very Low or Strongly Disagree. This scaling approach allows clearer differentiation of respondents' perceptions regarding their competencies and experiences.

2.4. Validity and Reliability

To ensure the accuracy and relevance of the instrument, the questionnaire underwent content validation by experts in tourism and marketing. Their feedback was used to refine the items for clarity, coherence, and alignment with the objectives of the study. A pilot test was conducted among a group of tourism management students who were not included in the final sample. The reliability of the instrument was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, and a coefficient of 0.70 or higher was

considered acceptable, indicating that the instrument has good internal consistency.

2.5. Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, the researcher secured permission from the administrators of the selected higher education institutions in Nueva Ecija. After approval was granted, the validated questionnaire was distributed to the respondents through online platforms such as Google Forms and, when necessary, through printed copies. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and were assured that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would be kept confidential. Sufficient time was given for the respondents to complete the questionnaire. Upon completion, the responses were collected, organized, and prepared for statistical analysis.

2.6. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools to address the research objectives. Frequency and percentage were used to describe the respondents' profile. The weighted mean was used to determine the level of students' tourism marketing skills across core marketing competencies, digital marketing skills, and encountered challenges. Standard deviation was also utilized to measure the variability of responses. Gap analysis, through mean comparison, was applied to examine the difference between students' self-assessed competencies and industry expectations. Additionally, ranking was used to identify the most and least developed skills among the respondents.

2.7. Ethical Considerations

The study strictly adhered to ethical research standards to protect the rights and welfare of the respondents. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. The respondents were assured that their identities would remain anonymous, and that all information gathered would be treated with utmost confidentiality. The data collected were used solely for academic purposes, and respondents were given the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Part 1: The Level of Students' Proficiency in Core Tourism Marketing Skills

Students' proficiency in market research skills is moderate, with an overall weighted mean of 2.75 (Agree) (Table 1). They demonstrated higher competence in identifying target markets (3.25) and gathering/analyzing tourism data (3.10), but lower skills in interpreting market trends (2.46), preparing research reports (2.49), and evaluating research findings (2.44).

This indicates that students are more confident with procedural or routine research tasks but struggle with critical interpretation and analytical decision-making, which are essential for strategic tourism marketing. It suggests a gap in applying theoretical knowledge to practical decision-making, potentially affecting the effectiveness of marketing campaigns they may design in the future. The findings align with recent studies showing that

tourism students often perform well in basic data collection but struggle with analytical interpretation and strategic use of data. Analytical and decision-making gaps among tourism students were highlighted as a key concern in marketing education (Mariani and Baggio, 2021; Sigala, 2020).

Students' overall proficiency in promotional strategy skills is moderate, with a weighted mean of 2.74 (Agree) (Table 2). They scored highest in developing promotional campaigns (3.29) but lower in evaluating campaign outcomes (2.46) and adjusting strategies based on results (2.49).

The results imply that students understand basic promotional techniques but lack the evaluative and adaptive skills required to optimize marketing strategies. This reflects a limited capacity for reflective practice and evidence-based adjustments to promotions.

The difficulty in evaluating and adjusting campaigns reflects a lack of data-driven marketing competence.

Effective tourism marketing requires continuous performance evaluation and adaptive strategy, which many students lack due to limited exposure to real campaign analytics (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2022).

Students' customer engagement skills showed an overall weighted mean of 3.10 (Agree) (Table 3). They scored highest in handling customer complaints professionally (3.33) and effectively managing customer inquiries (3.20). This indicates that students are comfortable with interpersonal and relational aspects of marketing, showing strength in communication and service management. However, slightly lower scores in personalizing

Table 1: Market research

Statement	Weighted mean	Interpretation
I can identify target markets effectively.	3.25	Agree (A)
I am able to gather and analyze tourism data.	3.10	Agree (A)
I can interpret market trends for strategic planning.	2.46	Disagree (D)
I can prepare market research reports.	2.49	Disagree (D)
I can evaluate research findings to inform decisions.	2.44	Disagree (D)
Overall weighted mean	2.75	Agree (A)

Table 2: Promotional strategy

Statement	Weighted mean	Interpretation
I can develop effective promotional campaigns.	3.29	Strongly Agree (SA)
I can apply branding techniques to tourism products.	2.56	Agree (A)
I can use advertising channels to reach target audiences.	2.90	Agree (A)
I can evaluate promotional campaign outcomes.	2.46	Disagree (D)
I can adjust strategies based on campaign results.	2.49	Disagree (D)
Overall weighted mean	2.74	Agree (A)

services (2.90) suggest a need to enhance customer-centric and adaptive engagement skills.

Strong performance in customer interaction supports the idea that hospitality-related programs emphasize interpersonal skills. Tourism students typically demonstrate strong communication and service orientation due to curriculum focus on customer experience (Buhalis and Sinarta, 2021).

3.2. Part 2: The Level of Students' Practical Digital Marketing Skills

Students' social media utilization skills received an overall weighted mean of 2.89 (Agree) (Table 4). They demonstrated competency in managing official tourism pages (3.10) and creating engaging posts (3.05), but lower ability in monitoring metrics (2.55) and scheduling campaigns (2.85).

This suggests that students understand content creation and basic platform management but lack data monitoring and strategic scheduling skills, which are crucial for effective digital marketing campaigns. Students' strength in content posting but weakness in metrics monitoring reflects a common imbalance between creativity and analytics. Social media skills among students tend to focus on content creation rather than performance measurement and optimization (Hudson et al., 2020; Tuten and Solomon, 2023).

Content creation skills scored an overall weighted mean of 2.79 (Agree) (Table 5). Students performed relatively well in creating visual content (3.05) and writing captions (3.00), but

lower in storytelling techniques (2.45) and aligning content with campaigns (2.53).

This indicates a competency in producing basic multimedia content, but students struggle with strategic content planning and audience engagement, reflecting limited experience in campaign alignment and narrative marketing.

Weakness in storytelling and campaign alignment indicates limited strategic marketing integration.

Strategic storytelling and brand alignment are advanced competencies often underdeveloped in tourism education without industry exposure (Loureiro et al., 2020; Gretzel et al., 2020).

Students' digital analytics skills are the lowest among digital competencies, with an overall weighted mean of 2.50 (Disagree) (Table 6). They struggle to interpret metrics (2.48), use analytics tools (2.48), and apply insights to strategies (2.47). This reflects a significant skills gap in analyzing digital data, which may limit their ability to make data-driven marketing decisions and optimize campaigns effectively.

Low performance in analytics confirms a critical skills gap in tourism education. Digital analytics remains one of the most lacking competencies among tourism graduates despite its importance in decision-making (Xiang et al., 2021; Mariani et al., 2022).

3.3. Part 3: Challenges Students Encounter in Developing Tourism Marketing Skills

Overall, students scored 2.51 (Agree) for training opportunities (Table 7). They report insufficient practical marketing training

Table 3: Customer engagement

Statement	Weighted mean	Interpretation
I can manage customer inquiries effectively.	3.20	Agree (A)
I can engage customers through social media channels.	3.10	Agree (A)
I can handle customer complaints professionally.	3.33	Strongly Agree (SA)
I can maintain long-term customer relationships.	2.95	Agree (A)
I can personalize services to meet customer needs.	2.90	Agree (A)
Overall weighted mean	3.10	Agree (A)

Table 4: Social media utilization

Statement	Weighted mean	Interpretation
I can manage official tourism pages on Facebook/Instagram.	3.10	Agree (A)
I can create engaging posts for social media.	3.05	Agree (A)
I can monitor engagement and reach metrics.	2.55	Agree (A)
I can schedule posts and campaigns effectively.	2.85	Agree (A)
I can interact with followers to increase engagement.	2.90	Agree (A)
Overall weighted mean	2.89	Agree (A)

Table 5: Content creation

Statement	Weighted mean	Interpretation
I can create visual content for tourism promotion.	3.05	Agree (A)
I can write compelling captions and descriptions.	3.00	Agree (A)
I can produce multimedia content (images, videos).	2.90	Agree (A)
I can align content with marketing campaigns.	2.53	Agree (A)
I can use storytelling techniques to engage audiences.	2.45	Disagree (D)
Overall weighted mean	2.79	Agree (A)

Table 6: Digital analytics

Statement	Weighted mean	Interpretation
I can interpret website traffic and social media metrics.	2.48	Disagree (D)
I can use analytics tools to inform marketing decisions.	2.48	Disagree (D)
I can generate reports from digital campaigns.	2.53	Agree (A)
I can identify trends from digital data.	2.56	Agree (A)
I can apply insights from analytics to improve marketing strategies.	2.47	Disagree (D)
Overall weighted mean	2.50	Disagree (D)

(2.48) and limited workshop participation (2.49), though alignment with industry standards (2.51) is slightly better. This implies that while formal training exists, students perceive it as inadequate for developing practical skills, reflecting a need for more experiential and industry-linked learning opportunities.

Limited hands-on exposure supports findings that experiential learning is still insufficient. Practical training and experiential learning are essential but often under-implemented in tourism programs (Benckendorff et al., 2020).

Technological resources are a challenge, with an overall weighted mean of 2.47 (Disagree) (Table 8). Students have limited access to updated tools (2.75) and software (2.46), and internet connectivity is inadequate (2.37). This indicates that insufficient access to technological resources hampers skill development, particularly in digital marketing and analytics.

Lack of access to tools and infrastructure affects skill acquisition. Access to digital tools and infrastructure significantly influences students' ability to develop marketing competencies (OECD, 2021; UNWTO, 2022).

Students reported moderate proficiency in applying theory to practice, with an overall weighted mean of 2.75 (Agree) (Table 9). Internship and classroom exercises support skill development, though practical projects show slightly lower effectiveness (2.65). This suggests that while some experiential learning exists, students still face challenges in bridging theoretical knowledge with

real-world application, indicating a need for enhanced applied projects and industry collaboration.

Moderate integration suggests partial effectiveness of internships and applied learning. Bridging theory and practice remains a challenge in tourism education, requiring stronger industry immersion (Farmaki, 2021).

3.4. Part 4: Students' Self-Assessed Marketing Skills vs. Industry Expectations

Students reported moderate confidence in their tourism marketing skills, with an overall weighted mean of 2.95 (Agree) (Table 10). They feel capable of applying marketing concepts (3.00) and handling industry tasks (2.95), but slightly less confident in meeting professional expectations (2.85). This indicates that while students have a foundational understanding of marketing principles, they may lack confidence in real-world application and professional readiness. The results imply a need for more applied practice to reinforce their self-perceived competence.

Students' confidence despite skill gaps reflects overestimation of abilities. Self-assessment among students often differs from actual competence, especially in technical and analytical skills (Jackson, 2020).

Students perceive that industry expectations are higher than their current skill level, with an overall weighted mean of 3.20 (Strongly Agree) (Table 11). They recognize the need for advanced digital

Table 7: Training opportunities

Statement	Weighted mean	Interpretation
I have sufficient access to practical marketing training.	2.48	Disagree (D)
I participate in workshops and seminars regularly.	2.49	Disagree (D)
Training provided aligns with industry standards.	2.51	Agree (A)
I am encouraged to take part in skill development programs.	2.53	Agree (A)
Opportunities for hands-on projects are adequate.	2.57	Agree (A)
Overall weighted mean	2.51	Agree (A)

Table 8: Technological resources

Statement	Weighted mean	Interpretation
I have access to updated digital marketing tools.	2.75	Agree (A)
I can use software and applications for tourism marketing.	2.46	Disagree (D)
Technological resources are adequate for learning purposes.	2.44	Disagree (D)
Internet connectivity and devices are sufficient for learning.	2.37	Disagree (D)
I can access industry-standard marketing software.	2.32	Disagree (D)
Overall weighted mean	2.47	Disagree (D)

Table 9: Theory-practice integration

Statement	Weighted mean	Interpretation
I can apply theoretical knowledge in real marketing situations.	2.85	Agree (A)
Internship experiences reinforce classroom learning.	2.80	Agree (A)
Industry collaboration provides practical exposure.	2.75	Agree (A)
Classroom exercises prepare me for real-world marketing tasks.	2.70	Agree (A)
Practical projects help me integrate theory into practice.	2.65	Agree (A)
Overall weighted mean	2.75	Agree (A)

Table 10: Perceived competency level

Statement	Weighted mean	Interpretation
I am confident in my tourism marketing skills.	3.05	Agree (A)
I can apply marketing concepts effectively.	3.00	Agree (A)
I am prepared for industry marketing tasks.	2.95	Agree (A)
I can handle real-world marketing projects.	2.90	Agree (A)
I can meet professional expectations in marketing.	2.85	Agree (A)
Overall weighted mean	2.95	Agree (A)

marketing (3.30), analytics and content creation (3.25), and social media management (3.15).

This suggests a skills gap between students' self-assessed capabilities and the demands of employers, particularly in digital, analytical, and content-related competencies. Students are aware that industry standards require stronger applied proficiency. Recognition of higher industry expectations aligns with global trends.

Employers increasingly demand advanced digital, analytical, and strategic marketing skills in tourism (World Economic Forum, 2023).

Students acknowledged a gap between their skills and industry expectations, with an overall weighted mean of 2.80 (Agree) (Table 12). Areas needing improvement include hands-on digital marketing experience (2.80), analytics and reporting (2.75), and industry collaboration (2.70).

This confirms that students' current academic preparation only partially meets professional requirements. The competency gap highlights the need for more practical exposure, mentorship, and industry-aligned projects to ensure readiness for professional tourism marketing roles.

The identified gap reflects misalignment between education and industry needs. Competency gaps in tourism graduates are widely reported, particularly in digital and data-driven marketing (UNWTO, 2022; Mariani et al., 2022).

Table 11: Industry required skills

Statement	Weighted mean	Interpretation
Industry requires advanced digital marketing skills.	3.30	Strongly Agree (SA)
Industry expects proficiency in analytics and content creation.	3.25	Strongly Agree (SA)
Industry emphasizes real-world marketing experience.	3.20	Agree (A)
Employers value social media management skills.	3.15	Agree (A)
Industry requires strong customer engagement abilities.	3.10	Agree (A)
Overall weighted mean	3.20	Strongly Agree (SA)

Table 12: Competency gap

Statement	Weighted mean	Interpretation
Gap exists between my skills and industry expectations.	2.90	Agree (A)
I need further training to meet professional requirements.	2.85	Agree (A)
I need more hands-on digital marketing experience.	2.80	Agree (A)
Analytics and reporting skills require improvement.	2.75	Agree (A)
Industry collaboration is insufficient for skill development.	2.70	Agree (A)
Overall weighted mean	2.80	Agree (A)

3.5. Part 5: Proposed Interventions

Students strongly agree (Overall Weighted Mean 3.20) with curriculum enhancement proposals, particularly integrating digital marketing courses (3.30) and applied projects (3.25) (Table 13). This indicates that students recognize the need for updated and practical learning opportunities to improve competency in both core and digital marketing skills.

Students strongly agreed (overall weighted mean 3.20, Strongly Agree) that skills training programs are essential (Table 14). They prioritize regular workshops and seminars (3.30) and training on software/digital tools (3.25) as key strategies to enhance their competencies.

This shows that students recognize experiential, structured training as critical for developing both digital and core marketing skills. Such programs can bridge gaps between classroom learning and practical application.

Students strongly agreed (overall weighted mean 3.15, Strongly Agree) on the importance of industry collaboration initiatives (Table 15). Establishing partnerships with tourism companies (3.25) and facilitating internships/mentorship programs (3.20) were rated as most impactful.

This indicates that students perceive direct industry engagement as vital to gaining hands-on experience, networking, and improving their professional readiness. Collaborative programs provide opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge and develop practical skills in real-world settings.

Table 13: Curriculum enhancement

Statement	Weighted mean	Interpretation
Integrate more digital marketing courses.	3.30	Strongly Agree (SA)
Include applied projects and case studies.	3.25	Strongly Agree (SA)
Strengthen analytics and research modules.	3.20	Agree (A)
Add workshops for practical marketing applications.	3.15	Agree (A)
Update course content to reflect industry trends.	3.10	Agree (A)
Overall weighted mean	3.20	Strongly Agree (SA)

Table 14: Skills training programs

Statement	Weighted mean	Interpretation
Conduct regular workshops and seminars.	3.30	Strongly Agree (SA)
Offer training on software and digital tools.	3.25	Strongly Agree (SA)
Organize mock campaigns and practical exercises.	3.20	Agree (A)
Provide certifications for skill development.	3.15	Agree (A)
Facilitate mentorship from industry experts.	3.10	Agree (A)
Overall weighted mean	3.20	Strongly Agree (SA)

Table 15: Industry collaboration initiatives

Statement	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
Establish partnerships with tourism companies.	3.25	Strongly Agree (SA)
Facilitate internship and mentorship programs.	3.20	Agree (A)
Organize industry-led projects and events.	3.15	Agree (A)
Invite professionals as guest lecturers.	3.10	Agree (A)
Encourage collaborative research with industry.	3.05	Agree (A)
Overall weighted mean	3.15	Strongly Agree (SA)

4. CONCLUSION

This study assessed the tourism marketing skills of Tourism Management students in Nueva Ecija, Philippines, focusing on core marketing competencies, digital marketing skills, and the challenges affecting skill development. The findings reveal that students generally demonstrate moderate proficiency in both core and digital marketing domains. They exhibit strengths in customer engagement, content creation, and basic social media management, indicating a solid foundation in communication and creative aspects of tourism marketing.

However, significant gaps were identified in analytical and strategic competencies, particularly in market trend interpretation, campaign evaluation, digital analytics, and the application of data-driven decision-making. These limitations suggest that while students are capable of executing basic marketing tasks, they face difficulties in higher-order thinking skills required for strategic planning and performance evaluation.

The study also found that limited access to technological resources, insufficient hands-on training opportunities, and gaps in theory-practice integration hinder the development of students' competencies. Although students reported moderate confidence in their abilities, there is a clear discrepancy between their self-assessed skills and industry expectations, especially in advanced digital marketing and analytics.

Overall, the findings confirm the presence of a competency gap that may affect students' readiness for professional roles in the tourism industry. This highlights the need for a more responsive and industry-aligned educational approach to ensure that graduates are equipped with both foundational knowledge and practical, technology-driven marketing skills.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Curriculum Enhancement

Higher education institutions should strengthen their tourism curriculum by integrating advanced digital marketing courses, including analytics, search engine optimization (SEO), and data-driven marketing strategies. Greater emphasis should be placed

on applied learning, such as case studies, real-world marketing simulations, and campaign development projects. Updating course content to reflect current industry trends and technological advancements is essential to maintain relevance.

5.2. Implementation of Structured Skills Training Programs

Institutions should conduct regular workshops, seminars, and certification programs focused on digital tools, analytics platforms, and content strategy. Practical training activities such as mock campaigns, social media management projects, and performance evaluation exercises should be incorporated to enhance experiential learning. These initiatives will help students develop both technical and strategic marketing competencies.

5.3. Strengthening Industry Collaboration

Partnerships between academic institutions and tourism-related organizations should be intensified to provide students with hands-on industry exposure. Internship programs, mentorship opportunities, and industry-led projects should be expanded to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Inviting industry professionals as guest lecturers can also provide students with insights into current market demands and professional expectations.

5.4. Improvement of Technological Resources

Schools should invest in updated digital infrastructure, including access to marketing software, analytics tools, and reliable internet connectivity. Providing students with hands-on access to industry-standard platforms will significantly improve their technical skills and readiness for digital marketing roles.

5.5. Enhancement of Analytical and Strategic Skills

Instructional strategies should focus on developing students' critical thinking, data interpretation, and decision-making abilities. Activities such as data analysis exercises, campaign performance reviews, and strategic planning workshops should be emphasized to strengthen higher-order competencies.

5.6. Continuous Assessment and Industry Alignment

Institutions should regularly assess students' competencies and align them with evolving industry standards. Feedback mechanisms involving industry partners can help ensure that academic programs remain responsive to workforce demands and reduce competency gaps.

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