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## ADAPTABILITY TO DIGITAL TOURISM BY THE TRAVEL AND TOUR OPERATORS IN ALBAY

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### ABSTRACT

Digitalization, the specific nature of services provided by travel firms has been a rich ground for the rapid widespread use of technology by travelers and consequently by tourism operators. However, although many tourism firms have started to develop digitalization, the industry has not yet fully exploited the potential of this emergent data and communication resource especially toward the potential of customer engagement. This quantitative research aimed in determining the travel and tour operators' adaptability to digital tourism in Albay, evaluates the capability in adapting to the use of technology in tourism services and identified the challenges on the utilization of digital tourism services. Total population sampling was used. Findings revealed that majority of travel and tour operators in Albay are using technology via online platform to boost their business, only minimal walk-in clients are being served every day. Furthermore, travel and tour operators adapt digital operation to add more sales. Therefore, all of the travel and tour operators already adapted the use of technology and there were challenges encountered on the utilization of digital services. Conversely, action plan served as means for better understanding about the benefits of digital tourism that can result to generate sales that's why enforcement of the action plan is essential.

**KEYWORDS:** Adaptability, Digitalization, Travel and Tour Operators, Technology, Quantitative Research, Philippines.

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### INTRODUCTION

Digitalization is among the most important changes in our rapidly evolving world. Digital innovations and technological novelties are engines of development and show their impact everywhere, especially in the field of manufacturing, ICT and other service industries. Given the fact that tourism is based on the cooperation between a wide range of services and products, the benefits of the digital revolution in the sector are quite obvious.

Our living environment is a combination of online and offline spaces that co-exist together, defining our everyday habitat. In tourism, the special use of spaces has always been a unique feature of the industry, and as of today, the spaces of the digital world have become part of it. The rapid development of the digital world brings novel and innovative solutions into the digital tourism spaces by the day. Peer-to-peer communication is outstandingly important in the technological environment of tourism. This type of communication, together with the spreading of smart devices have revolutionized scheduling, administration and finances, and also opened new horizons for the introduction of innovative sales and marketing technologies in the whole tourism industry. As a result of the digital revolution, the international development trends in tourism have opened the way for novel solutions like cloud-based booking sites or information and experience sharing via digital platforms.

In line with the new trends of travelling, there is a dynamically growing demand for special tailor-made offers beyond mass tourism, as conscious consumers expect personalized solutions that answer their individual needs (Anderson, C. 2018).

Tourists usually have a positive experience remembering their travels, experiences and the destination they had visited. Some specialized digital technologies can offer this assumed positive experience in a searchable and changeable form. With regards to real life objects, their connections and relations, there is only a limited amount of information available in a format that could be handled by computers. The main problem is that computers need sufficient coding solutions created by artificial intelligence to be able to store, handle and organize information. The methods of coding for tourism experience purposes affect the speed, efficiency and knowledge/experience-based computing abilities of today's computers.

Previously, tourism used to be an industry based on personal relations and connections, where the trends – and therefore travelers' decisions – were set out by a limited number of large international tourism and travel enterprises. As a result of the digital revolution, the transparency of "hidden markets" had been revealed and numerous other factors have to be taken into account (Hyde, L. 2019).

Republic Act 87923, otherwise known as the Electronic Commerce Act, an act giving legal recognition to electronic forms of data messages, documents, signatures, transactions, storage of information. It provided penalties for access of data without consent, piracy, hacking, and other violation. Provisions on

Department of Trade and Industry's (DTI) authority, under section 29 of RA 8792, gave the DTI authority to direct and supervise the promotion and development of commerce in the country with relevant government agencies. This Act can also provide information to managers for the improvement of their businesses.

The early development of ICT resulted not only in the better capacity utilization of airlines, but also on the compatibility of the prices; and soon, the emergence of the discount airlines had led to the innovation of the whole industry and forced out efficiency in all segments. The novel travel

recommendation sites (Expedia, Orbitz, Kayak, etc.) were created with the aim to make travelers' decisions easier; however, at the same time, a lot of tourism service providers who could not keep up with the new challenges were forced out of the market. Although the new trends like travel packages (including car rental) or taking into account the reviews of previous travelers (Lonely Planet) were from many aspects opposite to the former business models, the rapidly increasing popularity of online offers required quick and user-friendly tourism product development from the industry.

With the arrival of Google, this was able to rank the sites' appearance in internet searches, a fierce competition begun between blogs, tourism recommendation sites and price-comparing systems. The bidirectional communication started with the use of cookies 2.0; since then, consumers have become an integral part of the business models, because businesses who seek to be successful in the long run, need to know their customers' demands in detail. The development of digital services requires the identification of the user, information on their individual preferences and a decision-based calibration (by AI). In decision-making solutions, the former decisive factors are replaced by a virtual personal assistant, which is able to map the consumer's preferences based on their digital footprint, and create an optimal personalized offer from the available big data systems (McCrinkle M. & Wolfinger E, 2019).

The technological development cannot be stopped; however, with sufficient flexibility and openness, tourism businesses can prepare for the upcoming challenges. In the tourism of the future, the new consumers will bring forth new priorities and new demands. As a revolutionary approach, the members of the IoP (Internet of People) community offer their free time in order to reach joint IT/industrial goals, where frameworks are created in line with the preferences of other people, for a yet not specified consumer segment (Miranda et al., 2018). Beyond innovative technologies, whole new spaces have opened in tourism, completely different from the usual destinations. University researchers (Martin, Zsarnoczky, 2019) have been carried out to study the possibilities of online tourism spaces and their opportunities for the tourism and hospitality industry. In virtual reality, with a special "glass", the user can look into an optional tourism space, from which the real world is completely shut out. The Augmented reality is a different technological solution, where digital elements are projected into a real-life space.

The new trends do not seem to be problematic in the tourism industry, mostly because in this sector, the exact costs and incomes are not clearly visible yet. On the other hand, technology holds a great opportunity for the tourism and hospitality sector. The development of digitalization has finally reached a level where it can truly support the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of industrial food production, paving the way to the future of tourism and hospitality businesses (Miranda, J., Mäkitalo, N., Garcia-Alonso, J., Beroccal, J., Mikkonen, T., Canal, C. Murillo, M. J., 2019).

According to the forecasts of product development strategies in various industries, almost all of our everyday objects and equipment will be accessible through the internet in the future. As a result, all devices that are capable of two-way communication will belong in the framework of IoT (Internet of Things). The devices of the future, unlike the devices of today, will communicate in a bidirectional way, where robust safe data handling, personalized differentiation and sufficient

decision management will be part of the user experience. As a result of the continuous data collection during the use of these devices, all relevant information will eventually end up in a final centralized system at the top of the dataset (Pilkington, M. 2020).

As a faculty member of the College of Travel/Tourism Management in a college institution handling Tourism and Hospitality Management courses at the same time being an avid user of technology, the researcher was motivated to conduct this study to have an in depth understanding of digitalization in tourism industry as a marketing tool for tourism establishments. Hence, this study is focused on the travel and tour operators' adaptability to digital tourism in Albay.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study aimed to determine the travel and tour operators' adaptability to digital tourism in Albay. Specifically, it aimed to:

1. Determine the profile of the travel and tour operators in Albay in terms of:
  - a. Age;
  - b. Sex;
  - c. Highest Monthly Income;
  - d. Business Philosophy of the Owner;
  - e. Highest Educational Attainment;
  - f. Qualifications of the Staff;
  - g. Number of Years Operationalized; and
  - h. Online Platform Used.
2. Evaluate the ability to adapt to the use of technology in tourism services along:
  - a. Digitalization of Daily Operation;
  - b. Website Optimization;
  - c. Social Media;
  - d. Mobile Connectivity; and
  - e. Online Sales.
3. Identify the challenges on utilization of digital tourism services along:
  - a. Business Perspective; and
  - b. Business Operation.
4. Propose an action plan that can be adopted by the travel and tour operators.

### **ASSUMPTIONS**

This study has the following assumptions:

1. There is a record of the profile of the respondents.
2. Travel and tour operators in Albay adapted to the use of the technology.
3. There are challenges encountered on utilization of tourism services.
4. A plan maybe created for the effectiveness of the travel and tour operators in Albay to be adaptive to digital tourism.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Martin Zsarnoczky (2019) digitalization is among the most important changes in our rapidly evolving world. Our living environment is a combination of online and offline spaces that co-exists together, defining our everyday habitat. In tourism, the special use of spaces has always been a unique feature of the industry, and as of today, the spaces of the digital world have become part of it. The rapid development of the digital world brings novel and innovative solutions into the digital tourism spaces by the day. Peer-to-peer communication is outstandingly important in the technological environment of tourism. This type of communication, together with the spreading of smart devices have revolutionized scheduling, administration and finances, and also opened new horizons for the introduction of innovative sales and marketing technologies in the whole tourism industry. As a result of the digital revolution, the international development trends in tourism have opened the way for novel solutions like cloud-based booking sites or information and experience sharing via digital platforms.

According to WebEx (2019) there are several differences between traditional and digital marketing for tourism businesses. Traditional marketing gives businesses total control of the conversation. Methods like direct mail, billboards, and print ads serve to deliver information that is purely promotional, and do not offer consumers the chance to respond or ask questions. Digital marketing offers no such cover. Consumers have just as strong voice. There are so many ways to do digital marketing.

According to the founder and Chairman of VWO Paras Chopra (2019) discuss the importance of website optimization. Website optimization is the process of using tools, advanced strategies, and experiments to improve the performance of your website, further drive more traffic, increase conversions, and grows revenue. In the past decade, the internet has become a place where customers make their buying decisions and purchase products. The internet is taking a role of “asking a friend” in all industries. So by positioning your business correctly, you can consequently win turn people who had previously never heard of your company into customers. If you don’t optimize your website and your content, it does not matter how many people search for terms relevant to your business. Your site won’t show up in the results. Your website and your business won’t get noticed by anyone. But when you optimized for search, you put yourself on the map. Consumers will search for relevant terms, and your website and business will always show up. So, by optimizing your website, you can not only tap into an untapped market in the most effective and efficient manner (without paying for advertising) but open doors to more conversions and revenue gains.

It’s no longer enough to have a website that looks and works great on laptops and desktops computers. To succeed in the online marketplace, you need to focus on your site’s mobile experience as well.

According to J. Clement (2022) mobile accounts for approximately half of the web traffic worldwide. In the fourth quarter of 2021, mobile devices (excluding tablets) generated 54.4% of global website traffic, consistently hovering around the 50% mark since the beginning of 2017 before consistently surpassing it in 2020. Due to the low infrastructure and financial restraints,

many emerging digital markets skipped the desktop internet phase entirely and moved straight onto mobile internet via smartphone and tablet devices. India is a prime example of a market with significant mobile-first online population. Other countries with a significant share of mobile internet traffic include Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya. In most African markets, mobile accounts for more than half of the web traffic. By contrast, mobile only makes up around 48% of online traffic in the United States.

Gurneer Kaur (2018) with the launch of internet technology, the rules of marketing have redefined all over the world. The internet has upended how consumers engage with brands. It is transforming the economics of marketing and making obsolete many of the function's traditional strategies and structures. For marketers the old way of doing business is unsustainable (Edelma, 2010). Digital marketing today has become the one of the key focus areas for businesses all over the world. It started as a mode of communication and has evolved not just into another source of additional revenue but most importantly, to develop and maintain long-term relationships with the various parties in the market. Interactivity, as the main feature of the Internet, has enabled a new dimension of connection between all the participants in the market. Internet users today interact not just with each other but also with their preferred brands. This has opened an opportunity of brands to talk directly with their users and to know them better.

One of the main reasons of the success of digital marketing vs. traditional marketing is the fact that the former allows businesses to track user behavior in real-time. Every campaign launched digitally can be tracked in terms of its reach, engagement and conversion. This has given a whole new meaning to the marketing research to understand the needs of the customers like never before. Thus, the need to include digital marketing in the overall marketing strategy of the business shall only contribute to the better achievement of the overall marketing and business goals by enabling brands to gain insights about consumer behavior and better satisfy their needs.

According to Alex Chris (2022) a website is a great marketing tool. It represents your business on the internet and it is one of the most important digital marketing channels you can use to get more traffic or make more sales. Every business that wants to succeed online needs to have a clearly defined website marketing strategy. This is no longer optional but a must-have for businesses who want to survive in the highly competitive online market. Website marketing is the process of promoting your website on the internet. It is one of the online marketing channels you can use as part of your overall digital marketing strategy. The main goal of a website marketing campaign is to get more visits to your website.

Tourism marketing is the collective name given to the various marketing strategies used by businesses within the tourism industry. This includes hotels and other forms of accommodation, along with airlines, car rental services, restaurants, entertainment venues, travel agents and tour operators. It is one of the world's largest industries; the tourism industry is extremely competitive. This means that businesses operating within the industry need to find ways to stand out from rivals, promote themselves as being the best option for tourists, and highlights some of the things that make them different, or superior. Marketing is essential for achieving this and many of the best tourism marketing tips focus on helping businesses to find a unique selling point and promote it. Of

course, it is also crucial that marketers keep up with the latest trends, so that they can create a diverse marketing mix for getting their message out.

Cristina Cortina (2020) says that the advantage of digital marketing in the tourism industry is that majority of the travelers refer to the internet to get ideas for their next adventures. They visit websites and social media to find the cheapest flight fares, hotel accommodations, and what to do in the places when they arrive. In tourism they basically sell and promote their experiences during travel. Marketing tourism of unknown places or less traveled destinations is inviting people to experience what these places could offer. Look how far had tourism reached through digital marketing. For example, marketing through social media, video vlog sites with influencers promoting tourist spots around the world. A lot of places for example here in the Philippines have been discovered and renowned as a tourist spot due to the posts that people see on Facebook, Instagram, and Websites. What makes it more advantageous of having a website for tourism is that it attracts and gives more informative materials and travelers could read on before deciding and helps on planning trips. A website on the other hand is more than just a webpage that you can see on the internet, it is purposeful with all the information that visitors can relate to with all the pictures, videos, and travel information. Digital marketing is undoubtedly the primary way of reaching out to people and invite them to visit your place. According to research, ninety-five percent of the travelers visit the website first to read customer reviews about the places they would like to visit before deciding on whether to go or not. Whether searching for the best deals of flight transportation, hotel accommodations, what to do's, there is a lot more with digital marketing that could help tourism.

The article of Digital Marketing Institute (2021) says that search engine optimization (SEO) is a vital digital marketing tool. SEO is made up of multiple elements, and knowing what they are and how they work is key to understanding why SEO is so important, SEO is crucial because it makes your website more visible, and that means more traffic and more opportunities to convert prospects into costumers. It's also a valuable tool for brand awareness, building relationships with prospects, and positioning you as an authoritative and trustworthy expert. As an internet marketing strategy, SEO considers how search engines work; the computer-programmed algorithms that dictate search engine behavior, what people search for, the actual search terms or keywords typed into search engines, and which search engine are preferred by their targeted audience. SEO is performed because a website will receive more visitors from a search engine when websites rank higher on the Search Engine Result Page (SERP).

A great SEO strategy will allow your business to be easily located on the web through the use of few well-placed keywords that are relevant to your business and services. Dedicating your tourism SEO strategy to both quantity and quality will help to reduce your dependence on online advertisements. While SEO can be complicated and is always evolving, keeping up with the trends will be worth your time and will provide you with optimal results when executed properly.

According to a Google workshop during the DMAI Annual Convention (2017) sixty-four percent travelers will check online first before anywhere else to look up their upcoming trip, sixty-two

percent will go online to find inspiration for their travel plans, and the global travel industry reached 1.6 trillion dollars in gross online bookings in 2017.

Moreover, the use of email marketing creates the opportunity to offer any potential interest guests to arrive at the right time at the minimum cost, and the results of such activities must be measurable, which creates a basis for decisions on future marketing activities. (Kotler, K.L. 2018). Email marketing enables users to know about the latest offers by the hotels, special deals on holiday packages, membership clubs, room availability and so much more. Transactional emails are sent to users to keep them updated about the status of their bookings. Emails are also a very good way of keeping the relationship going with customers post the transaction has been completed. Special mailers are sent to customers on their birthdays and anniversaries by offering a special price on the services. This provides an incentive to the customer to make a purchase while visiting the competitors.

People love to travel. According to Phocuswright Research (2020), thirty- six percent of travelers rated travel as an important spending priority. And with so many people willing to pay for a good travel experience, providing useful information on travel deals, trends and safety should be a priority for travel and tourism marketers. Despite the growing popularity of social media, most people still turn to travel email marketing to make their travel decisions. Fifty-eight percent of people check their email the first thing in the morning, before looking at social media or the news. This are great statistics for email marketing in the travel industry. It means an effective travel email marketing strategy will help you reach millions of potential customers eager to read the information you provide.

Travel agencies use email marketing as the main communication channel with their customers. Email helps you catch warm quality leads and turn them into customers and brand advocates. Eighty-seven percent of marketers consider email to be the most effective lead generation, it allows your travel agency to provide customers with details and updates on the date and time of their trip automatically, it creates relevant offers based on the previous activity, it brings high return of investment for the accessible price and it generates good open and click- to-open rates.

According to Amy Mullen (2021) there is a fierce battle being waged for the time and attention of prospective travelers, and like never before, more travel industry marketers are taking advantage of tried and true marketing techniques to reach consumers with highly personalized and dynamic experiences. In terms of email ROI, the travel industry leads the pack. According to a new email benchmark study from Silver pop, the travel brand get the highest email open rates at 57.7%, and comes in second for click-through rates at 15.2%. An increasing preference for engaging with email on mobile devices, desktop use still remains an important factor to consider. According to Movable Ink data (2017) many travel industry emails opens and conversions still happen on a desktop. As a matter of fact, the data shows 70% of email conversions during 2015 happened on desktop.

Article of Paige Rowett (2022) one of the fundamental marketing tactics for every tourism business should be the development and implementation of a regular e-newsletter to engage current and potential customers. It is easier to retain customers, than find new ones and the best way to retain

your customer base is to communicate to your customers regularly, and businesses can do this by using email marketing software programs. The reason why email marketing is so powerful is because it is permission based. This means that people on your database have purposefully opted-in to receive your updates, and therefore are more engaged in your brand than say those who like you on Facebook. Email marketing has the potential to be a huge driver of traffic to your website, as all of the information you share in your email updates should be redirecting people to your website. When people sign up to your database, they are expecting to hear about special deals and sales promotions, its half the reason why they signed up in the first place, email is a targeted way to let people know about your latest sales promotion or campaigns. Email reaches 77% of the people you send it to. Beyond reaching its intended targets, email marketing is also effective because you can personalize the message to what your customers are interested in, which makes it much more likely that a recipient will open and take action on your email.

In today's technology driven world, social networking sites have become an avenue where retailers can extend their marketing campaigns to a wider range of consumers. Chi (2011) defines social media marketing as a "connection between brands and consumers, while offering a personal channel and currency for user centered networking and social interaction." The tools and approaches for communicating with customers have changed greatly with the emergence of social media. Therefore, businesses must learn how to use social media in a way that is consistent with their business plan (Mangold and Faulds 2019). This is especially true for companies striving to gain a competitive advantage. This review examines current literature that focuses on a retailer's development and use of social media as an extension of their marketing strategy. This phenomenon has only developed within the last decade, thus social media research has largely focused on (1) defining what it is through the explanation of new terminology and concepts that makeup its foundations, and (2) exploring the impact of a company's integration of social media on consumer behavior. This paper begins with an explanation of terminology that defines social media marketing, followed by a discussion of the four main themes found within current research studies: Virtual Brand Communities, Consumers Attitudes and Motives, User Generated Content, and Viral Advertising.

Although, social media marketing is a well-researched topic, it has only been studied through experimental and theoretical research; studies never precisely describe the benefits retailers gain from this marketing tactic. In reviewing the rich plethora of multi-disciplinary literature, it is has become clear that studies are focusing on describing what social media marketing is as well as examining what factors affect consumer behavior relative to social networking. Despite the initial progress made by researchers, development in this area of study has been limited. Research needs to expand by providing a deeper understanding of the long-term promotional gains retailers obtain from social media marketing. More formalized studies are also needed to progress beyond theorized or predicted outcomes in order to gain knowledge of real life applications. This review of literature touches upon the gaps that currently exist within social media marketing research and points out the need for future studies to explore the benefits gained by marketing on social networking sites, especially for small retailers.

To consider social media as a marketing tool, a retailer must understand every aspect of it. Social media cannot be understood without first defining Web 2.0, a term that describes a new way in which end users use the World Wide Web, a place where content is continuously altered by all operators in sharing collaborative way (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010). “It is much more to do with what people are doing with the technology than the technology itself, for rather than merely retrieving information, users are now creating and consuming it, and hence adding value to the websites that permit them to do so” (Campbell et al. 2011).

Web 2.0 has evolved from simple information retrieval to interactivity, interoperability, and collaboration (Campbell et al. 2011).

Likewise, Solar Winds (2022) said that poor website optimization has a negative impact on user engagement as they find themselves waiting even longer for all this content to load. Technical page performance is still vital to delivering a good visitor experience, as is making sure your content is relevant to your visitors. That’s why site optimization should be focused on delivering great contents as quickly; even if quickly is over two seconds.

Digital School marketing (2021) the phenomenon of social media has ushered in a cultural revolution on an international scale. It seems that this particular dynamic has also been shifted to the way in which companies operate. The intention behind the creation of platforms such as Instagram, Facebook as well as Twitter may have initially been to enable story-telling and interpersonal connections. In a digital era, those businesses which understand not only the potential of social media but also how effectively apply it will ensure that they can keep up with the accelerated place of digitalization. It’s very important to keep in mind that social media has molded consumer behaviors in ways that can be of considerable advantage of businesses.

In previous decades the result of digital development has opened the door for the real life implementation of shared economy theories. It was almost ten years ago that Chris Anderson (2009) introduced his pricing theory in digitalization, basically suggesting giving away products for free, based on the principle of shared goods and resources. Although at the time Anderson’s theory was considered as a technological solution, the principle of digital sharing has induced serious social changes as well. One of the most important positive messages of shared economy is the maximum use of resource capacities for the purpose of social-being (Sundararajan, 2014). Social well-being is also a key priority in tourism, because a well-managed tourism industry brings profit not only for the travel and tour operators but also for the local communities.

According to the forecast of Product Development Strategies (2018) in various industries, almost of our everyday objects and equipment will be accessible through the internet in the future. As a result, all devices that are capable of two-way communication will belong in the framework of IoT (Internet of Things). The devices of the future, unlike the devices of today, will communicate in a bidirectional way, where robust safe data handling, personalized differentiation and sufficient decision management will be part of the user experience. As a result of the continuous data collection during the use of this device, all relevant information will eventually end up in a final centralized system at the top of the dataset.

A very good example of digitalization in the tourism industry according to JETIR (2018), in early 1900's it was a great task to go travel agent or directly to airport, wait for a long time just to reserve a flight ticket, because of this, people used to think twice before travelling anywhere as it was a big task to show all the document and book or reserve a ticket. But now a day's, travel has become so easy and all credit goes to technology. Digital transformation is not only restricted to the big IT or any other industry, but tourism industry has also accepted the digital transformation in a very speed. Moreover, social media has a considerable influence on the lives of its users on a daily basis, and we now expect to be digitally connected to the world around us at all times. Users will therefore be constantly scrolling and browsing through their various social media accounts and exposing themselves to a range of images, messages, concepts and ideas throughout the day. Inevitably, this means that it will also influence their preferences and decisions when it comes to making purchases. This is an incredibly lucrative opportunity for businesses because the power of social media is that it completely breaks down the physical barriers which traditionally exist between a customer and a brand. In the digital era, you can communicate directly with potentials as well as existing customers.

Killarney Hotels (2018) states that digitalization has made a huge impact on the tourism industry. Consumers engage with social networking sites to research trips, make informed decisions about their travels and share their personal experiences of a particular hotel, restaurant or airline. Trip Advisor in particular has had a wide-reaching effect on the industry. It has 50 million unique monthly visitors who are actively seeking out travel information and advice from the sources they trust the most. This style of user-generated content is seen by the online community as more credible and authentic and for many hotels, restaurants and visitor's attraction, if they are not listed in the top five spots, they are losing out majorly to their competitors. With more than 200 million reviews and opinions posted on Trip Advisor to date, and more than 800 million active users on Facebook posting updates and sharing images, social media in dominating the industry.

Global Data's latest report, "Thematic Research" (2022) reveals that intermediaries are increasingly shifting from a high street presence towards an asset-light, online operation to meet changes in consumer demand and keep operating costs low. The pandemic has heightened the need to reduce physical contact and as a result consumer behavior has changed with costumers now more likely to carry out their transactions online. This trend was confirmed in a recent Global Data survey, with seventy-eight percent of consumers reporting to be "extremely", "quite" or "slightly" concerned about visiting shops because of the COVID-19 risk. Hannah Free, Travel and Tourism Analyst at Global Data, comments: "due to the changing needs and demands of the modern traveler, travel intermediation has evolved from traditional high street stores within person travel agents to a high fragment online marketplace. Global Data latest survey twenty- four percent of consumers used an online travel agent the last time they booked a holiday, with just seven percent of consumers using an in-store face-to-face travel agent.

On top of that, due to the information-intensive nature of tourism services, the breadth of information available on the internet, and ease of booking, tourism outperforms other sectors when it comes to the share of businesses, making online sales in twenty-eight countries for which data is available, with the exemption of Canada, Finland, and United Kingdom. On average seventy-seven

percent of the accommodation and food and beverage service businesses in other countries have a website or homepage and seventy percent use social media. The tourism sector has embraced e-commerce, as online platforms and payment systems have changed the way people buy travel products. A report on electronic commerce highlights that over seventy percent of internet users made at least one online purchase of goods and services over the previous twelve months' period for private use. Of that group, over half (fifty-four percent) purchased travel and holiday accommodation, behind only clothes and sports goods, which were purchased by around two-thirds. E-shoppers in the twenty-five to fifty-four age groups were most likely to purchase travel and holidays. The findings also indicated that the proportion of e-shoppers ranging from twenty-nine in Romania, ninety-one percent in United Kingdom.

While the digital transformation progressively touches all sectors in the economy, it does so with differing speeds and extends. Recent work (Calvino et al., 2018) assesses the digital intensity of sectors by looking at the technological components of digitalization, the human capital required to embed technology in production, and the ways in which digital technology impacts how firms interface with the market. In taxonomy of sectors by digital intensity, accommodation and food service activities ranked low for digital intensity, while arts, entertainment and recreation activities are ranked medium-high based on seven different metrics (OECD, 2019). These results highlight that tourism businesses have significant untapped potential when it comes to the adoption and application of digital solutions, although they may benefit from ICT investments in other sectors through the outsourcing of certain business activities.

Digitalization specifically adapting digital tourism, businesses needs to strengthen the capabilities of its employees to ensure the smooth transaction of its daily operation.

Article of European Digital SME Alliance (2021) digital skills are essential for work and life, and especially to cope with COVID-19 challenges. As small and medium enterprises the backbone of our society, we need to enable their increased adoption of digital skills via supporting measures. This can be done via ecosystem strengthening, strategic outlook development, structured skills development and trainings tailored to their needs.

Digitalization is a critical component of the European Union's response to the economic crisis brought about by COVID-19. The pandemic has illustrated how digital skills sustain both economies and societies. The need for Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) skills in coping with COVID-19 challenges within companies is also highlighted in a report by the Learning and Knowledge Development Facility (LKDF) of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the European Training Foundation (ETF) Digital skills range from basic usage skills that enable people to participate in the digital society and consume digital goods and services, to advanced skills that empower the workforce to develop new digital goods and services. These skills can be acquired in different settings such as at work or privately, and at different life stages, for example, in schools for younger learners, or as an adult or senior citizen.

In recent years, enterprises are providing more and more training to their personnel to develop or upgrade their ICT skills. Findings from a global survey of enterprises, published by the International Labour Organization (2021) revealed the following: In 2018, 24% of enterprises provided ICT training for their personnel. When looking at company size, 70% of large enterprises actively provided the training, while only 23% of small and medium enterprises did so. Thus, among small and medium enterprises, there are fewer ICT trainings provided. As small and medium enterprises are the backbone of the economy and digital skills are increasingly connected to how business is conducted, it is important to facilitate both the teaching and learning of digital skills among small and medium enterprises.

In developing countries, digital skills can be seen as even more crucial. As outlined in an article by Ms. Cristina Duarte, Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa to the United Nations Secretary-General (2019), there is a chance to leapfrog Africa's development through digitalization. Harnessing innovation and raising the level of ICT competencies among citizens in countries like Nigeria has enabled emerging economies to develop quickly capacities for the digital economy of the future and achieve international recognition as a tech hub.

Digitalization of tourism services is changing the structure of the industry by altering barriers to entry, facilitating price comparison, revolutionizing distribution channels through the internet, optimizing costs and improving production efficiency (Assaf and Tsionas, 2018). According to Abou-Shouk et al. (2013), the tourism industry has become the largest category of products and services sold over the Internet. This is supported by the internet penetration rate which globally is 51.7% and in some regions such as North America or Europe; the figure is more than 80% (Clement, 2020). With international tourism growing more quickly over the past five years than the world goods trade (World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 2019), digital tourism services continue to be one of the main online commercialization sectors.

Given that digital citizens investigate information required to prepare and book their travel experiences via the Internet or electronic devices, including smartphones and other portable devices (Amaro and Duarte, 2015; Chung and Koo, 2015; Filieri and McLeay, 2014; Navío-Marco et al., 2018; Suki and Suki, 2017; Wang et al., 2016), the emphasis on employees' skills to respond to these trends is becoming increasingly important. As these more digitally savvy tourists enter the travel market it allows companies to stay permanently connected with their customers, track their preferences over time (Buhalis et al., 2019) and build close relationships and loyalty (Asperen et al., 2018).

In addition to the fast and effective response required for digitally savvy customers, travel and tourism companies manage and monitor their business functions via computer technology for human resource management (Boella and Goss-Turner, 2019), customer reservations and electronic point of sales contact (EPOS) (Cunha and Miguel, 2019), supply chain management (Kayikci, 2019), property management systems (PMS) for monitoring and enhancing inventory control, environmental impact measurement, waste reduction, monitoring staff, gathering customer data, financial accounting, customer self-service, etc.

When it comes to the effects of digital tourism there are some factors to consider that travel and tour operators are experiencing.

While looking through their photos, tourists usually have a positive experience remembering their travels, experiences and the destination they had visited. Some specialized digital technologies can offer this assumed positive experience in a searchable and changeable form. With regards to real-time objects, their connections and relations, there is only a limited amount of information available in a format that could be handled by computers. The main problem is that computers need sufficient coding solutions created by artificial intelligence to be able to store, handle and organize information. The methods of coding for tourism experience purposes affect the speed, efficiency and knowledge/experience-based computing abilities for today's computers.

Digital skills can be taught in different ways: online, offline or blended. According to UNESCO (2021), approximately half of the world's population (3.6 billion people) still lacks an internet connection. However, the digital divide is not the only obstacle that small and medium enterprises face in the acquisition of digital skills.

Based on the 2019 European Commission report Digital Skills New Professions, New Educational Methods, New Jobs, from an operational standpoint, the greatest barrier to providing digital skills training to employees is a lack of time. Further obstacles relate to the availability of training programs, with cost, inflexible timetables and distance indicated as the main obstacles to participation, as well as an inability to fully understand the content of the training from the limited information provided.

According to the Journals of Tourism (2021) the most important future digital skills include online marketing and communication skills, social media skills, MS Office skills, operating systems use skills and skills to monitor online reviews. The largest gaps between the current and the future skill levels were identified for artificial intelligence and robotics skills and augmented reality and virtual reality skills, but these skills, together with computer programming skills, were considered also as the least important digital skills. Three clusters were identified on the basis of their reported gaps between the current level and the future needs of digital skills. The country of registration, sector and size shape respondents' answers regarding the current and future skills levels and the skills gap between them.

Tourism creates employment for people of different ages and skill levels with around half of the tourism workforce member countries working in small and medium enterprises or SME's (OECD, 2018). Tourism generates export revenues and makes relevant contributions to the GDP of countries worldwide. In 2016, tourism directly contributed, on average, 6.9% of employment, 21.7% of service exports and 4.2% of GDP in OECD countries (OECD, 2018). According to Eurostat (2020) 11.7 million people, 9% of the labor market worked in tourism. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), tourism accounted for 10.4% of global GDP and 313 million jobs or 9.9% of total employment in 2017 (WTTC, 2019). Clearly, these figures have changed in 2020 as Covid-19 severely impacts employment statistics in the tourism industry. However, in a post-Covid environment as employment steadily returns and as digital connectivity of populations has

increased significantly, the need for digital skills have become increasingly important. The need to virtualized work due to Covid-19 has accelerated digital transformation, as well as deepened differences of digital skills gaps across people and companies. This indicates that a significant number of employees require new digital skills in the workplace via in-house training and those who need to improve their digital skills prior to entering the industry.

Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) simulations are becoming increasingly important (Guttentag, 2010; Israel et al., 2019; Tussyadiah et al., 2018; Yung and Khoo-Lattimore, 2019). Immersive previews or pre-experiences give customers a VR experience of their hotels, destinations and holidays. While VR's most promising travel applications are in marketing and sales-related fields, VR also provides alternatives for tourist experiences in areas where the environment is too vulnerable or culturally sensitive to allow actual visitors (OECD, 2018). All these information and communication technologies (ICTs) tools require the capacity to use and manage them within the organization. Although many digital skills may be outsourced to external companies the extensive field of VR, AR, artificial intelligence (AI) and Social Media needs a strategic understanding of the use and potential of ICT by senior management to deliver business transformation and avoid costly risk of losing relevance and competitiveness in the digital landscape. Ultimately, robots, artificial intelligence and service automation are disrupting the way travel, tourism and hospitality companies operate and raise specific skills requirements for employees (Ivanov, 2019; Ivanov and Webster, 2019). Therefore, bridging these technical skills gap to enable staff already in the workforce to become digitally-empowered can support in-house digital innovation and provide sustainable digital skill sets for all levels of staff.

The effective and efficient use of technology to serve customers and implement the various business processes within the company requires that tourism and hospitality employees have digital skills respective to their job position. On the one hand, if employees have greater digital skills than the required level for their job positions, they will be able to be more productive and efficient, although they may be considered overqualified (Erdogan et al., 2011). On the other hand, if the level of their digital skills is lower than the level necessary for the respective job role, the lack of sufficient digital skills could be a hurdle to economic efficiency and productivity. In this respect, it becomes important to put emphasis on digital skills to support job roles and functions that can cut across different job positions as the wide variety of job roles in tourism need to work with more sophisticated devices and software packages. Therefore, it is important to identify the digital skills gaps of tourism and hospitality employees according to their role in the company and identify those digital skills that tourism and hospitality companies would need to invest in.

On the other hand, Department of Tourism (2021) and its attached agencies are making sure that Philippine tourism remains competitive, adapts well and takes advantage of the digital revolution. "The Department of Tourism will continue to optimize the role of technology to promote tourism and digital learning to provide new opportunities across the tourism sector" Puyat said.

The Philippine Department of Tourism (2018) is tapping into social media influencers to promote their tourist attractions in their hometowns. The DOT has also called on the Filipinos to be the "Ambassadors of Fun" and promote their hometown's tourist attraction using various social media

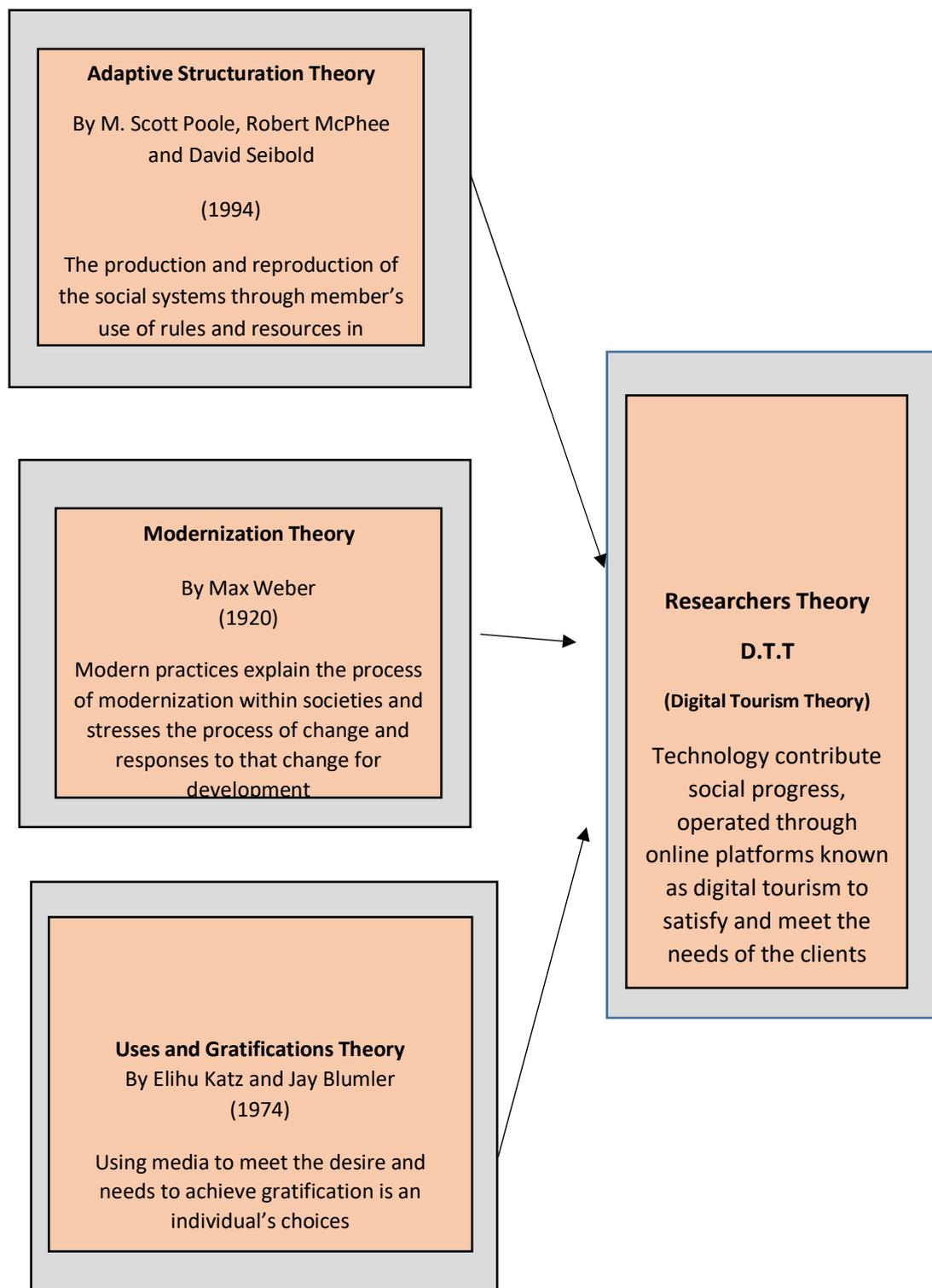
platforms. This measure was part of the department's crowd sourcing campaign wherein netizens will become "tour guides of their locale by posting their own virtual tours and sharing their own photos on their recommended destination, activity or dishes. It will tap both ordinary netizens and local content creators as ambassadors of fun and the people can choose a platform of Tiktok, Facebook, Instagram or Twitter on which they can post a photo or video of the destination/cuisine/activities in their area that they think should be experienced by tourists".

Albay's newly discover ecotourism sites are now selling like the proverbial hotcakes which further strengthen the province's recent overwhelming tourism gains and further consolidate its new status as a global tourist destination in southern Luzon. Albay governor Joey Salceda said that the new sites, well- clustered within a 15-kilometers radius with the postcard perfect Cagsawa Ruins as focal point, have recently become favorite destinations among tourists are now favorite selfie posts in the social media.

Albay boosts digital tourism drive according to Philippine News Agency (2018) Daraga, Albay, the provincial government of Albay and Smart Telecommunications Inc. (SMART) once again joined hands this time, in the launch of digital tourism in Albay on Friday afternoon at the historic church of Nuestra Senora de Porteria, which lies atop the Santa Maria Hill in this town, with the majestic Mayon Volcano at the background. The partnership made Albay the first province in the Philippines to employ digital tourism. The occasion was led by Albay governor Joey Salceda, Jose FL. Rosete, Smart external relations manager for Luzon; representatives from the National Historic Commission and the Catholic church, Albay provincial and Daraga and Camalig municipal officials; tourism officers; media and other sectoral group representatives. Salceda said that digital tourism is the third collaborative project of the province with smart, "this is a concrete proof of the continuously rising level of the tourism industry in the province". He added that as a free mobile application, one can see in just a single press on the button of an Android cellphone the needed information about tourism in Albay, thus, serving a handy tourism guide to the province.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is anchored on three (3) theories: The Adaptive Structuration Theory (AST), Modernization Theory (MT) and Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT).



**Figure 1.** Theoretical Paradigm of the Study

AST was developed by M. Scott Poole, Robert McPhee and David Seibold (1994). This theory is formulated as the production and reproduction of the social systems through members' use of rules and resources in interaction. Groups and organizations using information technology for their work dynamically create perceptions about the role and utility of the technology and how it can be

applied to their activities. These perceptions can vary widely across groups and these can influence the way how technology is used and hence mediate its impact on group outcomes.

The AST could be used to analyze the advent of various innovations such as the printed press, electricity, telegraph, mass transpirations, radio, telephone, TV, the Internet, etc., and show how the structures of these innovations penetrated the respective societies, influencing them, and how the social structures of those societies in turn influenced and modified innovations' original intent. In conclusion ASTs appropriation process might be a good model to analyze the utilization and penetration of new media technologies in our society.

Modernization Theory (MT) is used to explain the process of modernization within societies. It was developed by German sociologist Max Weber (1920). The theory looks at the internal factors of a country while assuming that with assistance, traditional countries can be brought to development in the same manner more developed countries have been.

MT both attempts to identify the social variables that contribute to social progress and development of societies and seeks to explain the process of social evolution. Modernization theory stresses not only the process of change but also the responses to that change. It also looks at internal dynamics while referring to social and cultural structures and the adaptation of new technologies. MT maintains that traditional societies will develop as they adopt more modern practices.

The UGT, developed by Elihu Katz and Jay Blumler (1974), seeks to explain the relationship between an audience and how this audience uses the media. The main questions posed by these researchers is why people use certain mediums or media platforms and what gratifications do they get from it. Individuals use media for a variety of reasons and these motives vary depending on one's situation.

UGT discusses how users deliberately choose media that will satisfy given needs and allow one to enhance knowledge, relaxation, social interactions/companionship, diversion or escape. tk assumes that audience members are not passive consumers of media. Rather, the audience has power over their media consumption and assumes an active role in interpreting and integrating media into their own lives. Professionals in the communications industry, including public relations, can apply this theory to their work.

Unlike other theoretical perspectives, UGT holds that audiences are responsible for choosing media to meet their desires and needs to achieve gratification. This theory would then imply that the media compete against other information sources for viewers' gratification.

Based from the three (3) theories above, the researcher come up with a Digital Tourism Theory (DTT) that the travel and tour operators in Albay contribute to social progress and development by using technology — operated platforms known as digital tourism in order to satisfy and meet the needs of their clients.

### **Research Framework**

Conducted study, the researcher prepared the survey questionnaire, she wrote a letter affixing the signature of her research professor and research adviser, sent to the Department of Tourism asking for the complete list of accredited travel and tour operators in Albay. Completed list of travel and tour operators was sent through the email of the researcher after a day and served as the basis to come up with the right number of respondents of the present study.

Another letter was sent to the owner/manager of travel and tour operators, asking for permission to distribute the survey questionnaire and retrieved on the same day by the researcher.

Retrieval of the questionnaire. A total of nineteen respondents answered the survey questionnaire. All answers are tallied by the researcher with the help of her adviser that was also her statistician. From the data obviously gathered, result and conclusion are formulated after the computation.

The study utilizes the system approach consisting of three parts: input, process and output. The input component consists of profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, highest monthly income, business philosophy of the owners, highest educational attainment, qualifications of the staff, number of years operationalized, and online platform used, the ability to adapt to the use of technology along digitalization of daily operation, website optimization, social media, mobile connectivity, online sales, the challenges on utilization of digital services along business perspective and business operation.

The process component consists of preparing the instrument survey questionnaire), data gathering (distribution and retrieval of research instrument) tabulation, and analysis and interpretation of data collected.

The output is an action plan which can be adapted by the travel and tour operators in Albay. These were taken from the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered which include: Profile of the Respondents, Ability to Adapt to the Use of Technology, and Challenges on Utilization of Digital Services.

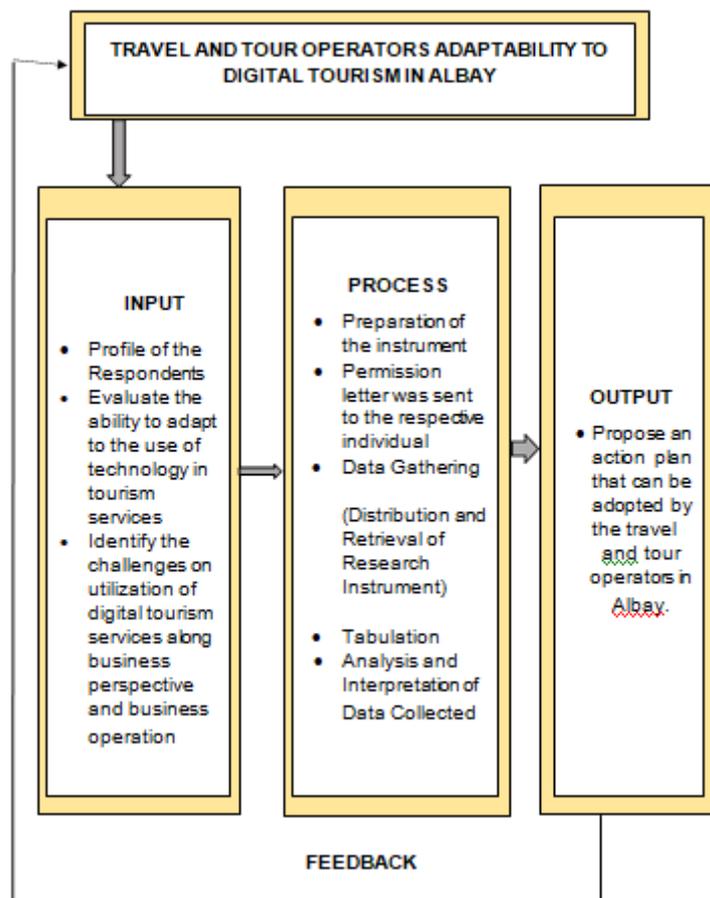


Figure 2. Research Paradigm

### Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study is limited to the travel and tour operators in Albay. The respondents were the travel and tour operators that are existing and operationalized for at least 2.5 years in the industry and duly accredited by the Department of Tourism. Specifically, within the second district of Albay only such as travel and tour operators in the city of Legazpi and the entire municipality of Daraga. This research study shall finish this second semester preferably on the month of April, academic year 2022-2023.

This study is delimited to the travel and tour operators in the first and third district of Albay. Non accredited travel and tour operators was also excluded since majority of the travelers are more comfortable to transact with those travel agency that are operationalized with complete permits and papers to avoid fraud, additional reason was the study duration of the researcher is very limited, she must finish her degree this second semester academic year 2022-2023, on top of that, the determination, dedication and perseverance of the researcher is highly present during the conduct of the study.

This study has nineteen (19) respondents from the accredited travel and tour operators in Albay that was coded alphabetically to protect the privacy of each respondents as applied the RA 10173: (1) A Travel and Tours, (2) B Travel and Tours, (3) C Travel and Tours, (4) D Travel and Tours, (5) E

Travel and Tours, (6) F Travel and Tours, (7) G Travel and Tours, (8) H Travel and Tours, (9) I Travel and Tours, (10) J Travel and Tours, (11) K Travel and Tours, (12) L Travel and Tours, (13) M Travel and Tours, (14) N Travel and Tours (15) O Travel and Tours (16) P Travel and Tours, (17) Q Travel and Tours, (18) R Travel and Tours, and (19) S Travel and Tours.

Anyone can ask the names of the travel and tour operators from the researcher. Send your request through her email (roldansarah04@gmail.com).

### **Significance of the Study**

The results of this study will be beneficial to the following organizations and individuals:

**Travel and Tour Operators-** The travel and tour operators can gain a better understanding of their visitors/guests and will be more equipped when it comes to tourism marketing.

**Tourists/Travelers-** The result of this study will be beneficial to the tourists/travelers as this can provide them greater knowledge to whom accredited travel and tour operators they can avail services personally or through online platform with fast transaction through the use of technologies.

**Department of Tourism-** The result of this study will serve an avenue to help tourism industry promote their services. The agency can implement digital tourism to boost the industry.

**Digital Tourism-** this study will help tourism industry to further understand the benefits when they adapt digital revolution.

**System Providers-** after the conduct of the study, system providers will continue to give better services, provide continuous availability of the systems and help tourism industry to boom in this new normal.

**Industry Providers-** The result of this study will help them realize that digital revolution can have brought additional income and can promote employment.

**Local Government Unit-** The result of this study will be beneficial to the LGU especially in their local tourism office, they can also offer their services and answer queries through Email, Facebook, Messenger, Twitter, Etc.

**Community-** This study will bring awareness to the community, especially when they are looking for hospitality and tourism services via online platform.

**Department of Information, Communication and Technology (DICT)-** The study could be a basis for agency to craft and implement supplementary laws and regulations governing the use of online platform in businesses.

**Commission on Higher Education (CHED)-** The findings of this study will provide this agency an idea to develop new curriculums focusing on the technologies and online platform marketing.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)- Results of the study may lead the HEIs to develop programs such as trainings and seminars related to digital tourism.

**Students-** The student/researcher will find this study as a good take off point for them to undertake subsequent studies on the same areas concern.

**Future Researchers-** they can use this study as a reference in making their research. This will serve as a guide where they can gather some information to accomplish their research.

**Faculty-** This study will help faculty to further broaden their knowledge about the tourism industry and digital tourism.

**Researcher-** This study will enable the researcher to have an in-depth understanding about the digital revolution in the tourism industry.

### **Definition of Terms**

To give readers an understanding of concepts/factors that will be discussed throughout the study, as well as contextual information as to how each term are used in this study. This section will provide a list of terms and the definition of each of them.

**Adaptability-** an ability or willingness to change in order to suit different conditions. As used in the study travel and tour operators need to adjust to new conditions in their business ventures. (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org>)

**Digital Tourism-** is the use of digital technologies to change a business model and provide new revenue and value-producing opportunities. As used in the study digital tourism refers on using technologies to improve services and customer experiences. (<https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org>)

**Travel and Tour-** is normally taken with an intention of enjoyment and relaxation. As used in this study travel and tour are the package (product) and services that the tourism industry offers to its clients, and the reason why they are engaged to use online platform to buy the offerings made by the travel agency. (<https://www.differencebetween.com>)

**Travel and Tour Operators-** is a private retailer or public service that provides travel and tourism related services to the public on behalf of suppliers such as airlines, car rentals, cruise lines, hotels, railways, and package tour. As used in this study travel and tour operators needs to adapt the new normal setting where they can sell their services and make transactions online and off site. (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>)

**Tourism Industry-** the tourism industry is a broad category of fields within the service industry that includes lodging, food and drink service, event planning, theme parks, transportation, cruise line, traveling and additional fields within the tourism industry. As used in this study, this refers to the industry where hotel establishments, sightseeing tours, transportations, food establishments are the industry's main offerings to its clients. (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org>)

**Technology-** machinery or equipment that has been developed using scientific knowledge or processes. As used in the study, technology is referring to smartphones, laptops, computer and other gadgets that can be used to purchase product or services offered by the travel and tour operators online. (<https://www.bartleby.com>)

**Services-** refer to intangible products such as accounting, banking, cleaning consultancy, education, insurance, medical treatment or transportation. As used in the study, it is the primary offering that travel agency in the second district of Albay sell to guests or clients for profit. (<https://www.slideshare.net>)

**Products-** an article or substance that is manufactured or refined for sale. In this paper, product refers to the services that the travel and tour operator offer to clients to gain profits. (<https://www.encyclopedia.com>)

**Digital Process-** a method of using digital technology to automate processes and optimize workflows. As used in this study digital process should be incorporated by the travel and tour operators in their daily transaction to give faster service to their customers by just clicking in their mobile devices or other technologies anywhere, they are. (<https://kissflow.com>)

**Search Engine Optimization-** is the science of improving a website to increase its visibility when people search for products or services. In this study SEO must be acquired by the travel and tour operators to boost their offering online. (<https://www.techtarget.com>)

**Social Media Marketing-** social media marketing is the umbrella term for using social networks, online communities, blogs or any other internet form of media for marketing purpose (Mabry and Porter, 2010). In this study, it refers to the use of social media platforms to promote tourism products and services.

**Digital Marketing-** is the means of advertising and selling products through the internet. As used in the present study, digital marketing refers to the method and strategies used by travel and tour operators in the second district of Albay to improve their sales. (<https://www.marketo.com>)

**Facebook-** Facebook is a free social network platform that promotes and facilitates interaction between friends, family and colleagues. Facebook was founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg and several Harvard University classmates. In this study, it refers to a form of social media used by travel and tour operator to market their products and services. (<https://www.techopedia.com>)

**Google-** a social networking platform served by Google and relished by millions of users. Besides being a networking platform, it is a channel makes known to search engines. The Google design team sought to replicate the way people interact offline more closely than is the case in other social networking services, such as Facebook and Twitter. The project slogan is “real-life sharing rethought for web 2.0” As used in the study, Google is one of the social media platforms utilized by travel and tour operators in order to market its products and services. (<https://www.techtarget.com>)

**Business Perspective-** describes the structures and interactions of the company without necessarily dictating design decisions for business roles and business units in terms of role relationships. As used in the present study, business philosophy refers to the core values that the owner of the travel agency has that serves as the key driver for a success in business venture. (<https://www.esprit-trail.com>)

**Business Operation-** everything that happens within a company to keep it running and earning money. As used in this study, business operation refers to the daily operation that the tourism industry has such as using technology on a daily basis, and using internet for marketing their services/products. (<https://www.shopify.com>)

**Traveler-** any individual who is travelling for a professional or leisure purpose and is employed by a company of academic institution. In this study, travelers are the main element because they are the ones to serve by the tourism industry. (<https://www.mytravelclinic.com>)

**Income-** referred to as money received on a regular basis, for work or through investments. In this research, it is the revenue generated by hotels in the second district of Albay in exchange of their products and services. (<https://www.investopedia.com>)

## METHODOLOGY

This presents the discussion of the research method, the determination of the respondents, research instruments, preparation of the instrument, procedure in data gathering and statistical treatment of data.

### Research Design

This study will employ the quantitative type of research. This method emphasizes the objective measurement and the statistical, mathematical, numerical analysis of data collected from the research instrument which is the survey questionnaire. The study made an inquiry on the travel and tour operators' adaptability to digital tourism in Albay.

### Research Instrument

This study will use survey questionnaire as the main instrument in data gathering. The researcher used the accredited local travel and tour operators in the 2nd District of Albay to validate the questionnaire prepared by the researcher. Upon presentation of the survey questionnaire, the travel and tour operators will check and validate it. The questionnaire will be having three (3) parts. Part I focus on the profile of the travel and tour operators in Albay; Part II evaluate the ability to adapt to the use of technology in tourism services; and the Part III identify the challenges on utilization of digital tourism services.

### Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher will personally seek permission from the manager/owner of the travel and tour operators to conduct the study. Upon approval, the researcher will start to distribute the survey questionnaire to the respondents and will request them to answer all questions as honestly as

possible. The researcher will personally retrieve the questionnaires. The gathered data will be tabulated and tallied, and computed to determine the perceptions of the respondents.

### Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this study will be the owner, manager or one of the staff of the nineteen (19) accredited travel and tour operators in Albay.

### Sampling Technique

The researcher chooses nineteen (19) travel and tour operators in 2nd District of Albay who are accredited by the D.O.T and run its agency for more than 3 years, so total population sampling will be used. It is a type of total enumeration that involves examining the entire population that have a particular set of characteristics. (<https://dissertation.laerd.com/total-population-sampling.php>)

### Research Locale/ Study Site

The study will be conducted in the province of Albay, particularly in the second district of Albay. Accredited travel and tour operators located in Legazpi City and Albay will be the scope of the study.

### Data Analysis Plan

Tourism sector in Albay needs to know the advantage of adapting digital tourism. The researcher will distribute survey questionnaires and conduct structured interview to the respondents of this study. Structured interview is a type of interview that relies on a set of standardized and premeditated questions in order to gather information.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### I. Profile of the Respondents

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

Age of the Respondents		
Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
25-30	3	15.79
31-35	4	21.05
36-40	3	15.79
41 and above	9	47.37
Total	19	100
Sex of the Respondents		
Male	8	42.11
Female	11	57.89
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100</b>
Highest Monthly Income		
Number of Travel and Tour Operators disclosed their Monthly Income	1	5.26

Number of Travel and Tour Operators do not disclosed their MonthlyIncome	18	94.74
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Business Philosophy of the Owners</b>		
Number of Travel and Tour Operators who givetheir Business Philosophy	1	5.26
Number of Travel and Tour Operators who do not give their Business Philosophy	18	94.74
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Highest Educational Attainment</b>		
Vocational Course		
College Undergraduate	1	5.26
College Graduate	18	94.74
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Number of Years Operationalized</b>		
3 years	1	5.26
4-5 years	5	26.31
6-8 years	8	42.11
9 years and above	5	26.31
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 reveals the age of the respondents. The age bracket of 25-30 y/o had a frequency of three (3) with the 15.79%, the age bracket of 31-35 y/o had a frequency of four (4) with the 21.05%, the age bracket of 36-40 y/o had a frequency of three (3) with 15.79%, while the age bracket of 41 and above had the highest frequency of nine (9) with the 47.37%.

Vantage, P. (2022) older workers can tap into both professional and personal experiences that help them excel in the workplace. It's an obvious but sometimes overlooked asset. Some employers might worry about learning curve when it comes to technology. However, research proves that older employees can and are willing to learn technological skills and programs. On the other hand, you cannot teach a younger worker what the older worker has learned after 20 years on the job.

The sex of each profile of the respondents. The table illustrated that majority are female with a frequency of eleven (11) with the 57.89%, while the male had the least frequency of eight (8) with the 42.11%.

The highest monthly income of the respondents. Majority of the respondents did not allow to disclose their highest monthly income because it is confidential, this got a frequency of eighteen (18) with the 94.74%, while one of the respondents answered Php100, 000 as their highest monthly income, had a frequency of one (1) with the 5.26%.

The business philosophy of the owners. Majority of the travel and tour operators did not answer this question because they are not the owner; they are only the staff/s of the said agency. Researcher asked if they have mission and vision but staff/s of the agencies answered back “we don’t have it Ma’am, we are not the owner to answer your questions, he don’t show to us even mission and vision but I think Boss can answer your queries including the whole operation of this agency. This got a frequency of eighteen (18) with the 94.74%, while only 1 of the travel and tour operators answered the business philosophy “render good service first, before asking for fast return of investment. Once you have enough satisfied client, money will surely follow next”, he answered it directly, since he was the owner of the C Travel and Tours, this got a frequency of one (1) with the 5.26%.

The highest educational attainment of the respondents. The table illustrated that majority are college graduate with a frequency of eighteen (18) with the 94.74%, while college undergraduate had a frequency of one (1) with the 5.26%.

According to Chapman, C. (2021) not talking the old saying “you can’t teach an old dog new tricks” too literally, college graduates definitely have the ability to absorb, understand and execute new instructions and training at a much higher rate than those undergraduate. Because they are quick learners with the ability to multitask. On top of that, college graduates are usually more willing to help other coworkers when needed.

The number of years operationalized. Majority of the travel and tour operators are 6-8 years being operationalized with a frequency of eight (8) with the 42.11%. Five (5) travel and tour operators are 4-5years operationalized with the 26.31%. Five (5) travel and tour operators are nine (9) years and above being operationalized with the 26.31%. Only one (1) travel and tour operator are 3 years being operationalized with the 5.26%.

**Table 1.1 Qualifications of Staff**

<b>Qualifications of Staff (Multiple Response)</b>		
Proven work experiences as a travel agent	2	3.77
Excellent knowledge of computer reservation system, GDS systems and e-travelling	1	1.89
Fluency in English; multilingualism is a plus	4	7.55
Strong sales skills and commercial awareness	1 9	35.85
Ability to interact, communicate and negotiate effectively	1 9	35.85
Degree in Hospitality, Travel, Tourism, Business or relevant field	8	15.09

Others	<b>5 3</b>	<b>100</b>
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The qualifications of staff. For strong sales skills and social awareness together with the ability to interact, communicate and negotiate effectively had the highest number, with a frequency of nineteen (19) with the 35.85%, while the degree in Hospitality, Travel, Tourism, Business or relevant field got the second highest frequency of eight (8) with the 15.09%, while fluency in English, multilingualism had a frequency of four (4) with the 7.55%. Proven work experience had a frequency of two (2) with the 3.77%. Excellent knowledge of computer reservation system, GDS system and e-travelling got the least number of frequencies which is one (1) with the 1.89%.

According to Travel Daily News by Laura Jelen (2021), one of the top eight skills you need in tourism business is strong sales skills and ability to socialize or the ability to interact with your client/s because these varieties of skills successful people possess. Selling skills can help you navigate and understand how to nurture relationship with your clients. This can result to higher-quality leads, and can boost your brand visibility.

Second highest frequency is hiring employees who are Hospitality, Travel, Tourism and Business or relevant field graduates. According to the staff, they are tourism and others are hospitality management graduates. Wolters Kluwer (2020) attests that when hiring employee, we need to be as certain as possible that you will find person that is right for the position. Education requirements are as varied as the positions and the people that fill them. Some jobs require more advanced thought and responsibilities and, therefore, may require more advanced education. The least number of frequencies is excellent knowledge of computer reservation system, GDS systems and e-travelling. Staff stress to the researcher that ability to operate GDS is not necessarily required as their sales comes from basic using of technology. Some clients shoot messages in their messenger app or sometimes inquiries are being asked through sent email messages.

Transaction of payment is being done using Gcash or via fund transfer.

**Table 1.2 Online Platforms Used**

<b>Online Platform Used (Multiple Response)</b>		
Website	9	8.82
Facebook	19	18.63
Instagram	12	11.76
LinkedIn	2	1.96
Messenger	19	18.63
Email	19	18.63
YouTube	7	6.86
Viber	8	7.84
Twitter	3	2.94
Google	4	3.92
Total	102	100

Online platform used. Table 1.3 also reveals that among the online platforms utilized by the travel and tour operators in Albay as marketing tools for their products and services, Facebook, Messenger, and Email with the same highest frequency of nineteen (19) with the 18.63%, Website with a frequency of nine (9) with the 8.82%, Viber with a frequency of eight (8) with the 7.84%, YouTube with a frequency of seven (7) with the 6.86%, Google with a frequency of four (4) with the 3.92%, Twitter with a frequency of three (3) with the 2.94%, and lastly LinkedIn with a frequency of two (2) with the 1.96%.

It can be gleaned from the result that all travel and tour operators utilize Facebook account for marketing. This supports the study of Chan and Guillet (2011) where they found out that Facebook and Email are the most widely used online platform in the tourism industry in Hong Kong. These online platforms are advantageous to all travel and tour operators because these platforms can be used as marketing tools by providing them the ability to connect with the target market in a more convenient way.

This also backs up the study of Hsu (2012) in Taiwan where he stated that Facebook is the most popular social media platform that grows interests in tourism social research and presented Facebook as opportunities for the international eMarketing of travel agencies. Facebook is suitable tool for creating an online community.

Facebook's primary mission is to give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together. For travel and tour operators, this is a new unique opportunity to celebrate existing market segments and embrace new and renewing market segments. Facebook has developed a number of useful tools and features that allow marketers to reach their audiences in creative and highly targeted ways and not just through advertisements. Facebook is also a great tool for engaging customers and cultivating guest loyalty.

The least online platform utilized is Google, Twitter, and LinkedIn. These forms of online platforms are not user friendly and have lesser number of users in general. LinkedIn and Twitter is not very suitable for marketing. All networks have a reputation. Many assume LinkedIn is overrun. Spam is also prevalent on this platform. Some companies try to bombard LinkedIn users with affiliate shopping links and other link spam. This makes it somewhat harder for travel and tour operators to penetrate in the market.

The unpopularity of Google is best summed up by the fact that there are still many companies that don't have a Google+ page. Therefore, travel and tour operators have seen that their social media marketing strategies and messages are not relevant, credible or worthwhile being shared to the Google+ audience. They should explore more on the use of Google+ and other platforms.

As the findings of the study of Kim et al. (2013) reveals, people are mostly familiar with Facebook and Facebook Messenger only. Facebook is not only the most widely used platform. It is also the most frequently accessed platform by its users because of its features easily understood by its users. All travel and tour operators in the second district of Albay use Facebook. Those agencies who knew about YouTube only understand that this platform is used only for viewing videos unaware of

the marketing benefits it may bring them. Some travel agency staff also heard of Twitter, Instagram, Viber and LinkedIn also but most of them have no idea on how to operate these platforms. Also, majority of the respondents are not familiar with Viber and Twitter.

Travel and tour operators in the second district of Albay should also consider using Twitter, LinkedIn and Google since these platforms also offer features that should provide benefits to them. Proper education relative to these platforms should be provided to these existing travel and tour operators by conducting technical trainings and orientations for them to be aware of the benefits it would give them. Since most of the travel and tour operators are only familiar with Facebook, there should be clear understanding about other online platforms.

Using Facebook on the other hand, should be enhanced and maintained by conforming to the guidelines set by authorities and regulating bodies. These travel and tour operators have to make sure that they are using Facebook accordingly. Orientations and trainings with regards to the responsible use of social media should be conducted. Trainings and orientations regarding these platforms maybe proposed.

## II. Ability to Adapt to the Use of Technology

**Table 2. Ability to Adapt to the Use of Technology**

Indicators	Frequency (Multiple Responses)	Percentage
<b>1. Digitalization of Daily Operation</b> (Building digitalization into your internal business operations, such as linked calendars, email systems and automatic billing process)	19	24.05
<b>2. Website Optimization</b> (Having your own website and using technology to assess performance, monitor your business health and optimize it for your target market)	3	3.80
<b>3. Social Media</b> (Managing social media accounts, planning and implementing campaigns)	19	24.05
<b>4. Mobile Connectivity</b> (Ensuring all your products and services are available via mobile devices)	19	24.05
<b>5. Online Sales</b> (Selling trips, tours, holidays and other experiences online, either using your own website or using e-commerce platforms)	19	24.05
<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 revealed that Digitalization of Daily Operation, Social Media, Mobile Connectivity and Online Sales got the highest frequency of nineteen (19) with the 24.05%. Website optimization get the lowest frequency of three (3) with 3.80%.

All of the travel and tour operators adapt the digital operation (online billing process). Their clients pay through Gcash or fund transfer because all of their clients are connected with them online, proofs of payment are being sent to the messenger of the travel and tour operators. Only minimal walk-in clients are being served every day. They are sending confirmation slip once paid through the email of their clients. They are all using Facebook to attract more clients, some of their customer find them using social media, and add more sales.

According to Khurramov Ortikjon Kayumovich (2020), one of the trends in the development of the global tourism industry at the present stage is the development of internet technologies, in other words, the modern development of tourism is taking place in a digital economy. The digitalization process has not bypassed the tourism industry itself. Digitalization in tourism is aimed at making the tourism business not only more flexible, consistent with the realities of time, but also more competitive in the developing “digital world”. Digitalization in the tourism industry ensures a situation where customers get excellent results, and the owners of travel companies get higher incomes.

According to Statistica Research Department (2022), consumers are also looking for more digital experiences when travelling. as estimated by Statistica’s Digital Market Outlook, the global revenue of mobile apps in the travel segment increased by 38% in 2021 over the previous year, amounting to 296 million U.S dollars. The Covid-19 pandemic could also play a key role in accelerating the digitalization of this sector, with social distancing and hygiene concerns making consumers keener to use digital rather than in-person services. In this respect, September 2021 study found that roughly 4 in 10 surveyed travelers worldwide indicated contactless mobile payments.

Website optimization got the least number of frequency with 3.80%. Journal (Communication and Information Technology) 2020, website optimization is a digital marketing technique to increase web accessibility. In the globalization world, people use search engine, such as Google, to know or find out more about various information quickly and visually. The result in this journal shows that the most important thing in making Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is to increase visibility and branding on search engines (Google). SEO is done by developing website content and setting keywords as backlinks.

Researcher asked the respondents why they are not engaged in website optimization, they answered back “fees are being collected once we boost our marketing online”.

### III. Challenges on Utilization of Digital Services

**Table 3 Challenges on Utilization of Digital Services N=19**

#### A. Business Perspective

Challenges	5		4		3		2		1		TWM	Adj. Int.
	F	WM	F	WM	F	WM	F	WM	F	WM		
1. Brand Differentiation	0	0	11	2.31	4	0.63	4	0.42	0	0	3.36	Sometimes
2. Budgeting	0	0	1	0.21	12	1.89	5	0.53	0	0	2.63	Sometimes
3. Customer Security	2	0.52	9	1.89	5	0.79	3	0.32	0	0	3.52	Often
4. Customer Loyalty	6	1.58	8	1.68	3	0.47	1	0.10	1	0.05	3.88	Often
5. Marketing Automation	1	0.26	14	2.95	3	0.47	1	0.10	0	0	3.78	Often

Table 3.a shows the challenges on utilization of digital services by the travel and tour operators in Albay along Business Perspective. Customer security got a weighted mean of 3.52% described as often, Customer loyalty had a weighted mean of 3.88% described as often and Marketing automation got a weighted mean of 3.78% described as often, while Brand differentiation got a weighted mean of 3.36% described as sometimes and Budgeting got a weighted mean of 2.63% described as sometimes. This suggest that the data also implies that the top three

(3) Challenges are customer security, customer loyalty, and marketing automation.

Customer security when it comes to digitalization, especially when it comes to payment is hard. One of the staff says “there are some clients that are hesitant to give personal details; we find it hard to win their trust”.

Customer loyalty is a customer’s willingness to repeatedly return to a company to conduct business. This is typically due to the delightful and remarkable experiences they have. One of the main reasons to promote customer loyalty is because those customers can help you grow your business faster. There are several reasons why customer loyalty is critical to your success (Bernazzani, S. 2020). One of the travel agencies says that it is very hard to keep customers, especially now that they have many options in availing online services in just one click away using their mobile phones through several marketing automations.

Brand differentiation and budgeting is the least challenges that the travel and tour operators experienced.

**Table 3.1 Challenges on Utilization of Digital Services N=19**

**B. Business Operation**

Challenges	5		4		3		2		1		TWM	Adj. Int.
	F	WM	F	WM	F	WM	F	WM	F	WM		
1. Lack of access to resources, such as knowledge to network and skills	0	0	1	0.21	1	0.15	17	1.78	0	0	2.14	Rarely
2. Barriers to access to digital infrastructure such as high speed internet and Wi-Fi networks	0	0	15	3.16	2	0.31	2	0.21	0	0	3.68	Often
3. Poor restructuring of workforce, such as fewer frontline jobs and demand for ICT experts	1	0.26	5	1.05	11	1.73	1	0.10	1	0.57	3.71	Often
4. Poor knowledge of the staff about technologies	0	0	1	0.21	1	0.15	17	1.78	0	0	2.14	Rarely
5. Unwillingness to undertake digital transformation	5	1.36	12	2.53	1	0.15	1	0.10	0	0	4.14	Often

Table 3.b shows the challenges on utilization of digital services by the travel and tour operators in Albay along Business Operation. The least challenges that the travel and tour operators encountered are poor knowledge of the staff about technologies and lack of access to resources, such as knowledge to network and skills with the same weighted mean 2.14% described are rarely.

Three (3) major challenges that they encountered. First, Unwillingness to undertake digital transformation with a weighted mean of 4.14% described as often. Second, poor restructuring of workforce, such as fewer frontline jobs and demand for ICT experts with a weighted mean of 3.71% described as often. Lastly, Barriers to access to digital infrastructure such as high-speed internet and Wi-Fi networks with a weighted mean of 3.68% described as often.

As the researcher interview the respondents, as to the first major challenges they encountered the unwillingness to undertake digital transformation, they answered, “we are not willing to exert effort and time to explore technologies and other online application, sometimes, it is much better that clients will drop by here if they have concerns or questions”, other staff answered “work is easier if they will provide us up to date technologies like high ram and high storage”. Second major challenges they’ve encountered is the poor restructuring of workforce, such as fewer frontline jobs and demand for ICT experts, C Travel and Tours answered the researcher “no need to hire ICT expert, as long as my staff know to operate and use the basic of computer, besides, I have an on-call technician if my staff needs it”. Staff from H Travel and Tours answered “I am a Hospitality Management Graduate but i know how to use gadgets. It is easy for me, what makes my job so hard is my co-staff who doesn’t know how to use computer, almost all paperwork’s are assigned to me”. Last challenges encountered are the Barriers to access to digital infrastructure such as high-speed internet and Wi-Fi networks. Travel and tour operators who are located inside the mall does not experience power interruption, on the other hand, travel agencies having their physical store in their Respective location without generator will experience power interruption which has effect to loss of WiFi connection. This is the reason why access to digital infrastructure is one of the major challenges they encountered.

With these challenges on utilization of digital tourism services the researcher opted to prepare an action plan designed to highlight the benefits when travel and tour operators adapt digital revolution.

**ACTION PLAN**

<b>Key Results Area</b>	<b>Strategies/Activities</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Personnel Involved</b>	<b>Expected Output</b>
<p><b>A. Business Perspective</b></p> <p><b>Identified Key Results Area</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer Security for Number 3 of the Travel and Tour Operators (with 3.52%, often encountered)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Give them a secure customer experience</li> </ul> <p>(1. Make sure customer faith is justified, social media exchanges should never mention personal customer data)</p> <p>(2. Indicate to customers that all sales interactions are secured by established online payment systems and following up each purchase with a detailed confirmation slip)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Free of Charge (travel and tour operators should render quality service in every client)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Manager/Staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Travel and tour operators can gain trust of their clients</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer Loyalty for Number 4 of the Travel and Tour Operators (with 3.88%, often encountered)</li> <li>• Marketing Automation for Number 5 of the Travel and Tour Operators (with 3.78%, often encountered)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Develop a reward program</li> <li>➤ Improve customer relationship by sending welcome email series, special birthday offer, anniversary promos.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Free of Charge</li> <li>➤ Free of Charge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Marketing Staff</li> <li>➤ Manager/ Staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Retain customers</li> <li>➤ Drive massive revenue and always connected/ engaged with customers</li> </ul>
<p>B. Business Operation</p> <p>Identified Key Results Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Provider for Number 2 of the Travel and Tour Operators (with 3.68%, Often encountered)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Constant coordination with the internet service provider</li> <li>➤ Avail/ upgrade double speed MBPS up to 1 GBPS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Free of charge (Coordination will be made through sending email to the service provider)</li> <li>➤ Php 2,699/month (400 MBPS) or Php9,499/month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Owner/ Manager</li> <li>➤ Owner/ Manager</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ High performance of the employees</li> <li>➤ More sales</li> </ul>

<p>• Technical/Limited ICT Experts for Number 3 of the Travel and Tour Operators (with 3.71%, often encountered )</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Secure a Broadband, in case of poor internet connection, Travel and Tour Operators may still run their business operation</li> <li>➤ Secure a generator, in case of power interruption Wi-Fi is still available</li> <li>➤ Hire at least 1 technician (full-time or on-call technician)</li> <li>➤ Staff/s should have proper training on how to use computers</li> </ul>	<p>(1GBPS Fastest Plan)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Php1, 499 (Prepaid WiFi-LTE Advanced)</li> <li>➤ Php 100, 000 (Powerho use Generator -10KVA, 18HP, 633cc, 220v/60 Hz)</li> <li>➤ 18, 000 for full- time technician. For on-call technician, salary will be based on the number or repair jobs done per visit.</li> <li>➤ 3,000/On e Trainor (half-day Training/o nline workshop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Owner/ Manager</li> <li>➤ Owner/ Manager</li> <li>➤ Owner/ Manager</li> <li>➤ Owner/ Manager</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Wi-Fi down system will not affect daily transaction of the agency</li> <li>➤ Workers can still do their job effectively and efficiently</li> <li>➤ Accelerates software solutions</li> <li>➤ Staff will be knowledgeable</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resistance to Change for Number 5 of the Travel and Tour Operators (with 4.14%, often encountered)</li> </ul>	<p>and other types of technologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Hire flexible employee/s, who can embrace change in workplace</li> <li>➤ Prepare the employee/s for the upcoming change</li> </ul>	<p>s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Php 10,000 per month, per staff (incentives will be subjected if quota was hit).</li> <li>➤ Free of Charge (managers will be the one to facilitate his/her staff)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Owner/Manager</li> <li>➤ Owner/Manager</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Improve productivity</li> <li>➤ Staff can adjust in the workplace</li> </ul>
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The aim of this is to present the conclusions drawn from the results of the analysis of the questionnaires and interviews, and then make recommendations for further research.

### Conclusions

Based from the findings of this study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The profile of the respondents varied.
2. All of the respondents already adapt the use of technology.
3. There were challenges encountered on the utilization of digital services.
4. Formulation of action plan is essential.

### Recommendations

In the light of the findings and conclusions from this study, the following recommendations were endorsed:

1. Proper education and orientation relative to digital tourism be provided to these existing travel agencies by conducting technical trainings and orientations. Knowledge on using technologies and online platforms be introduced, be given emphasis and be provided by the owners to staff management.

2. Owner/s or managers should hire at least one staff who is well rounded when it comes to technology, especially hiring an ICT expert to monitor, boost and maintain the efficiency of technology being used in daily operations.
3. Caution is practiced when using online platforms and social media to prevent the negative effects that may arise.
4. Design an action plan to serve as means for better understanding about the benefits of digital tourism that can result to generate sales. Enforcement of the action plan is essential.

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