INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY: APPLIED BUSINESS AND EDUCATION RESEARCH
2026, Vol. 7, No. 11, 5009 – 5029
http://dx.doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.07.11.20

Research Article

Understanding Competitiveness Among Small Tourism Transportation Enterprises: A Qualitative Case Study

Rainer A. Cena, Peter G. Narsico*

College of Management, Business, and Accountancy, Cebu Institute of Technology-University, Cebu City, Philippines

Article history:
Submission 31 October 2026
Revised 15 November 2026
Accepted 23 November 2026

**Corresponding author:*
E-mail:
petergnarsico@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The capacity of small tourism transportation enterprises to maintain competitiveness given the constraints of scale and resources is not well understood from the perspective of the operators themselves of which they are an important part of local tourism. The qualitative study examined the experiences and perspectives of 20 transportation van drivers and owners in the travel and tours industry to understand the factors that contribute to the competitiveness of small tourism transportation enterprises. Data were collected using an open-ended qualitative questionnaire and analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis identified 11 emergent themes, which were distilled into five core themes: Service Quality and Customer Assurance; Personalized and Experiential Value; Adaptive and Market Capabilities; Community-Embedded Resources; and Institutional and Enabling Support. The findings are the basis for the development of the Small Tourism Transportation Competitiveness Framework (STTCF). The STTCF portrays the competitiveness as the outcome of the interrelated and mutually reinforcing linkages among the five core dimensions rather than one capability or resource. The findings also indicate that small scale and local embeddedness of tourism transportation operators can be sources of competitive value in terms of personalized service, operational flexibility, community relations and locally grounded knowledge. In general, the study indicates that small tourism transport companies can convert their smallness and local embeddedness into competitive value through the combination of reliable service, personalized experience, adaptability, community relationships, and enabling support.

Keywords*: Competitiveness, Resource-based view, Social capital, Small tourism enterprises, Tourism transportation*

How to cite:
Cena, R. A., & Narsico, P. G. (2026). Understanding Competitiveness Among Small Tourism Transportation Enterprises: A Qualitative Case Study. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*. *7*(11), 5009 – 5029. doi: 10.11594/ijmaber.07.11.20

Introduction

Transportation plays a key role in tourism as it enables visitors to move to the destination, access various attractions, and take part in activities that contribute to the overall travel experience. Besides mobility, transportation services can also influence tourists' perceptions of convenience, accessibility, reliability, and quality of experience in a destination (Azman et al., 2024). Similarly, studies on tourist mobility indicate that transportation features such as accessibility, travel time, service availability and pricing are crucial elements for visitors when discovering new destinations (Masiero et al., 2023). Small, local transportation enterprises have a unique role to play in the tourism system, as their services bring operators directly into contact with travelers and connect visitors with local places, establishments and communities. Small tourism enterprises also support destination development through locally rooted services, entrepreneurship and links with other tourism actors (Tinsley & Lynch, 2007). Thus transport in tourism can be viewed not just as the transfer of visitors between places but as part of the range of services through which tourists meet and experience a destination.

The resource-based view helps to understand the competitive position of small tourism enterprises. The resource-based view suggests that firms can gain advantage by developing and utilizing resources and capabilities that are valuable and difficult for competitors to imitate (Barney, 1991). Resources for small tourism firms do not have to depend on financial capacity or the size of the organization; they can include local knowledge, personal relationships, service flexibility and the capacity to respond closely to the needs of individual customers. This view can be supplemented with the concept of social capital emphasizing the value created by relationships, trust, networks and access to resources embedded in social connections (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). These relational resources can ease information sharing, referrals, cooperation and access to opportunities in tourism contexts where small businesses are often embedded in networks of local enterprises and community actors (Tinsley & Lynch, 2007). Collectively these perspectives suggest that the competitiveness of small tourism transportation enterprises might be explained not only in terms of the resources that they individually possess, but also in terms of the distinctive local knowledge, relationships and adaptive capabilities they might mobilize within the destinations in which they operate.

Small tourism enterprises are operating in a more competitive environment where larger firms may have advantages of financial resources, market access, technology and economies of scale. But the smaller operators can compensate for these drawbacks by leveraging their size and local presence, including their flexibility, direct contact with customers, specialized knowledge and close relationships with other tourism players. Studies of tourism SMEs have shown that collaboration and networking can improve competitiveness, by providing access to knowledge, resources and opportunities that may be difficult for smaller businesses to develop independently (Novelli et al., 2006). Digital platforms have also broadened the possibilities for small tourism businesses to access customers, handle customer relations and compete in the tourism markets. Yet, they benefit from digitalization based on the resources and capabilities available to them (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020). These conditions mean that the competitiveness of small tourism companies does not necessarily lie in replicating the size and resources of bigger companies, but their viability may also depend on the way they make use of their unique capabilities, customer relations, local networks and the adaptability of their services to the changing demands of tourists.

While tourism competitiveness, small tourism enterprises and business networks have been attracting increasing attention, relatively less attention has been paid to the perceptions and sustainability of small local transport operators' competitiveness in the travel and tours industry. While current research provides

valuable insights into tourism networks, small-enterprise cooperation, destination development, and the digital transformation of tourism businesses, these more generalized perspectives may not fully capture the daily realities of van drivers and owner-operators who, while directly engaging with tourists, also have to cope with the operational demands of a small business (Novelli et al., 2006; Tinsley & Lynch, 2007; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020). Frameworks developed around larger or more resource-endowed tourism enterprises may therefore overlook how micro-transport operators compete without comparable economies of scale, relying instead on personalized service, operational flexibility, local knowledge, and community relationships. In particular, there is still value in examining how these operators understand what customers value, how they utilize personalized service and local knowledge, how they compete with larger businesses, how community relationships figure into their work, and what kinds of institutional support they see as necessary. The examination of these interconnected dimensions from the operators' perspective can provide a more grounded understanding of how small transportation enterprises operate and stay competitive in local tourism settings.

Against this background, the present study investigates the experiences and perspectives of transportation van drivers and owners operating in the travel and tours industry. The aim is to understand how these small local operators perceive the factors that customers value in their transportation services, the role of personalized care and local knowledge in service delivery, and the strategies they use to remain competitive with the larger tourism businesses. The study also explores the significance of relationships with local communities and tourism businesses in their operations, and the types of support from government or institutions that they deemed necessary to sustain and improve their businesses. The study aims to create a grounded understanding of small tourism transportation firms from the perspective of the entrepreneurs themselves and recognize trends that might explain the interaction between customer service, local knowledge, competitive practices, community relationships and external support in their day-to-day business environment by combining these dimensions.

In line with the study's aim and the scope of the participants' stories, the study wants to understand how small transportation van drivers and owners experience and sustain their business in the travel and tours industry. It seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What do customers value most in the transport services provided by small van drivers and owners? (2) How do transportation van drivers and owners use personalized care and local knowledge to improve service to customers? (3) How do small local tourism transport businesses compete with bigger companies? (4) What roles do community connections play in generating competitive advantage for small local tourism transportation firms? (5) What forms of government or institutional support do transportation van drivers and owners perceive as necessary to sustain and improve their businesses?

Methods

Research Design and Context

This study used a qualitative research design with thematic analysis to examine the experiences and perspectives of transportation van drivers and owners working in the travel and tours industry. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate as the study was interested in the way participants described customer expectations, personalized service and local knowledge, competitive strategies, community relations, and needed institutional support from their own experiences as small tourism transportation operators. Rather than measuring these dimensions by pre-determined numerical indicators, the study examined participants' narrative responses to find recurring patterns of meaning throughout their accounts. Thematic analysis was chosen as it is a systematic but flexible method of identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns in qualitative

data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021). This approach enabled the study to preserve the participants' perspectives and analyze the commonalities and differences across their experiences and develop broader themes characterizing the operation and competitiveness of small transportation enterprises within the travel and tours industry.

Research Participants

The participants of the study consisted of 20 transportation van drivers and owners operating within the travel and tours industry. They were selected because their direct involvement in providing transportation services to tourists positioned them to describe the everyday realities of small-scale tourism transportation operations. Their experiences provided first-hand perspectives on the service attributes valued by customers, the use of personalized care and local knowledge, strategies for competing with larger tourism businesses, the contribution of community relationships, and the forms of government or institutional support considered important to their operations. Across the participants' responses, their roles extended beyond the physical transportation of customers, as some described providing destination recommendations, itinerary assistance, local cultural and food information, route planning, and other forms of personalized travel support. These experiences made the participants information-rich sources for understanding how small transportation operators function within the broader travel and tours environment.

Research Instrument and Data Collection

The study employed an open-ended qualitative questionnaire to obtain narrative answers from transportation van drivers and owners on their experiences in the travel and tours industry. The open-ended questions were administered primarily through personal face-to-face interviews. When face-to-face interviews were not feasible because drivers were traveling or operating at distant locations, the questions were administered through messaging applications, allowing participants to respond despite the mobility and distance constraints associated with their work. The instrument included five open-ended questions: (1) what customers value most about car rental or transportation services, (2) how to provide better service through personalized care and local knowledge, (3) strategies used by small local tourism businesses to compete with larger companies, (4) how strong community connections contribute to competitive advantage, and (5) what government or institutional support was deemed necessary by the operators. The open-ended nature of the questions allowed participants to describe their experiences and perceptions in their own words, rather than constraining their responses to predetermined categories. The narratives generated provided a range of experiences relating to service quality, local recommendations, personalized arrangements, community relations, business strategies and support needs, thus providing the qualitative data needed for thematic analysis.

Data Analysis

The narrative responses were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis following the general procedures described by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021). The analysis began with repeated reading of the participants' responses to develop familiarity with the data and to identify meaningful statements related to customer expectations, personalized service and local knowledge, competitive strategies, community connections, and institutional support. Initial codes were assigned to recurring ideas within and across the responses, after which related codes were grouped into broader patterns of shared meaning. These patterns were then examined and refined into themes that captured important aspects of the participants' experiences as transportation van drivers and owners. The developing themes were repeatedly compared with the original responses to ensure that the interpretations remained grounded in the participants' accounts while also allowing relationships among themes to become visible. Rather than predetermining a conceptual model, any higher-order categories or relationships identified in the study were developed from the thematic patterns evident in the data.

Ethical Considerations

The study recognized the importance of protecting the rights, privacy and well-being of the transportation van drivers and owners who provided the narratives that served as the basis for the analysis. Participation in the survey was voluntary. Respondents were anonymous and their responses were used for research purposes only. Respondent codes (personal names were not used) were used to protect the identity of the participants, and reporting of findings focused on the participants' experiences and viewpoints, not information that would identify individual operators. The researchers also sought to maintain the integrity of the participants' accounts by ensuring that coding, theme development, and interpretation were grounded in the narratives provided, and did not deliberately alter or misrepresent the meanings of the narratives. The study therefore adhered to the principles of informed participation, confidentiality, anonymity, responsible handling of the data and faithful representation of the perspectives of the participants throughout the research process.

Results and Discussions

Emergent Themes from Participants' Experiences

Theme 1: Reliable and Safe Service

Respondents always described safety and reliability as basic expectations of transportation service. These expectations were seen in references to punctuality, vehicle condition, maintenance, experienced drivers, and insurance coverage. Together, these responses suggest that customers care for transportation that assures along the way. Therefore, reliable and safe service is a basic service requirement through which customers develop confidence in small tourism transportation operators.

This finding is consistent with the tourism transportation literature where the role of dependable mobility, safety, reliability and transportation quality are highlighted for the tourist's movement and destination experience (Azman et al., 2024; Velastegui-Hernández et al., 2024). From a resource-based perspective, the consistent provision of safe and reliable service may also be an operational capability through which small enterprises create customer value (Barney, 1991). Thus safety and reliability appear to be a basic service capability which can then be used to build up other types of customer value.

Theme 2: Comfortable and Convenient Mobility

The respondents also pointed out comfort and convenience as important dimensions of customer value. Their responses mentioned cleanliness, comfortable vehicles, enough space for traveling, air-conditioning, easy arrangements and overall convenience. Such features set the standard for customer expectations to not just get to a destination safely, but also with quality and ease. In this way, comfortable and convenient mobility becomes a distinct dimension of service value that reflects customers' preference for a transportation mode that does not bring about inconvenience and offers a pleasant travel experience.

This finding complements the above theme that the transportation quality is a blend of functional assurance and experiential quality. Convenience and service quality are relevant to tourists' mobility and their experience of destinations in tourism transportation research. Recent evidence from Bali also emphasizes the importance of transportation quality in determining tourist satisfaction (Aryasih et al., 2024; Azman et al., 2024). Hence, for small transport operators, quality of clean, comfortable, accessible and hassle free services can be added to the customer value along with safety and reliability. Reliable and safe service means you can make the journey as expected but comfort and convenience impact on how customers feel about that journey.

Theme 3. Trust-Based Service Relationships

The respondents described good customer service as professionalism, honesty, transparent pricing, courteous behavior, responsive communication and good relationships with drivers. It is not the vehicle or the journey that shapes the customer's perception of transportation providers but also the quality and integrity of their interactions with the operator. Therefore, trust-based service relationships are the result of consistent and transparent dealings that give the customers confidence in

the service and the person that provides it. Recent evidence from the Philippine transportation sector also suggests that trust is strongly associated with customers' perceptions of service quality and satisfaction, highlighting the significance of trust in transportation service relationships (German et al., 2024).

This result is consistent with the relational dimension of social capital that emphasizes the importance of trust and relationships for facilitating productive exchanges (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). For small transport firms the direct contact between operator and customer makes these relational qualities particularly important as the person who provides the service becomes part of the customer's own assessment of the business . Thus, professionalism, honesty, communication and transparency can be relational resources to build customer trust, besides the operational reliability, comfort and convenience identified in the previous themes.

Theme 4. Personalized Customer Care

Respondents defined personal care as the adaptation of transport and travel services to the specific needs and preferences of the customers. This meant understanding the clients' needs, offering a personalized service, recommending options based on their interests, age or budget, changing itineraries, handling last minute requests and interacting with the customers. The answers point to the fact that the value created by small operators is in dealing with customers as individuals rather than delivering an undifferentiated service. Personalized customer care is knowing what the customer needs and customizing the service for their needs. Similarly, recent tourism studies have revealed that personalization can generate unique service value when service providers customize their efforts to customers in a way that is perceived as significantly unique (Lei et al., 2024).

The resource-based view argues that responding closely to individual customers may be an organizational capability small enterprises can use to create distinctive value (Barney, 1991). It does not depend on standardized service provision, but on attentiveness, direct interaction and the ability to modify arrangements to changing customer requirements. Thus, personalized care can be a customer-oriented competence allowing relatively small operators in tourism transportations to take advantage of their small size in trying to develop closer and more flexible service relationships.

Theme 5. Local Knowledge as Experiential Value

The respondents stated that local knowledge was an important way to enrich the customers' travel experience. They shared information and suggestions about local destinations, restaurants, cultural attractions, traditions, festivals, markets, hidden places, routes, traffic conditions and other information of local interest. Some also noted that they acted as driver and informal guide on the tour. The responses suggest that local knowledge enables transport operators to provide customers with more than just mobility, helping them to understand, navigate and experience the destination in ways that may not otherwise be readily available.

This discovery is in line with the resource-based perspective that knowledge and capabilities can be potential sources of organizational value (Barney, 1991). The knowledge of familiarization with destinations, communities, routes and local practices is an experiential resource that can be directly applied to customer service for local transport operators. Its value is most evident when this knowledge helps operators to offer relevant recommendations and locally rooted experiences. Hence, local knowledge is an experiential resource that extends transportation to a broader tourism service. In support of this, recent research demonstrates that local knowledge can generate different types of perceived tourist value through improving tourists' understanding of a destination and deepening their cultural and experiential engagement with the destination (Zhang et al., 2023).

Theme 6. Operational Flexibility and Responsiveness

Flexibility and responsiveness were important ways in which the respondents said they adapted their services to changing customer circumstances. They answered with flexible schedules, tailor-made itineraries, flexible pricing or payment terms, accommodating last-

minute requests, direct communication, quick decision-making and quick responses to customer concerns. This implies that small operators can adapt service arrangements relatively quickly rather than force customers to adapt to standardized procedures. Thus operational flexibility and responsiveness is an adaptive capability to meet customer needs as they arise. Similarly, recent research on tourism SMEs also points to adaptive capability as an important organizational capability that enables small firms to respond to changing conditions and to improve their resilience (Seow et al., 2024).

From a resource based perspective, this kind of flexibility can become a valuable organizational capability that makes possible a business to respond effectively to customer requirements and changing operating conditions (Barney, 1991). Flexibility can compensate for the scale disadvantages of small tourism transport firms at least in part through quicker adjustments and more direct decisions. The results therefore suggest that smallness may have adaptive advantages, especially when owners can turn their relatively simple structures and close contact with customers into rapid and flexible service responses.

Theme 7. Relationship-Based Market Reach

Respondents pointed out the significance of customer relationships and interpersonal networks in the ability of small operators to attract and retain business. Generally identified ways of reaching potential customers and maintaining a market presence were referrals, positive word of mouth, repeat customers, social media promotion and online reviews. These responses suggest that the market penetration of small tourism transportation enterprises is a function of not only formal advertising but also the experiences and relationships established through prior service encounters. Satisfied customers, therefore, can be an important channel from where the business can get visibility and new clients. This pattern is also evident in another small service-business context. Narsico and Narsico (2023) found that service quality and rapport with customers contributed to customer satisfaction and subsequent referrals, suggesting that positive service experiences can extend market reach through relationship-based customer acquisition. Recent studies on tourism SMEs also reveal that digital marketing could increase the market reach of smaller businesses by offering more channels for customers to engage, communicate, and participate in the market (Sharma & Sharma, 2024).

This result is consistent with the importance of networks and relationships in improving the position of small tourism enterprises (Tinsley & Lynch, 2007). These relationship-based mechanisms are even more extended by digital platforms, which enable customers' experiences and recommendations to go beyond immediate personal networks (OECD, 2020). Therefore, for small operators with limited promotional resources, relationships can be considered as market resources, which can convert customer satisfaction and trust into referrals, repeat business, word of mouth and digital visibility.

Theme 8. Community-Embedded Advantage

Respondents reported that being connected to the community was a great source of support and benefit to their transportation businesses. Referrals, recommendations, local information, discounts, help with festivals and events and access to tourism possibilities came from relationships with local tourism establishments, residents, businesses and other tourism stakeholders. Community connections also increased credibility, as operators could resolve customer issues and offer more authentic local experiences. The answers reveal the potential of small operators to mobilize not only resources directly controlled by the business but also resources through their local relations.

This finding is consistent with social capital concept that relationships, trust and networks facilitate access to information and resources (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). This corroborates also the research that shows that networking among small tourism businesses can support business activity and destination development (Tinsley & Lynch, 2007). Thus, community embeddedness is a relational resource that augments the capacities of the individual operator, giving small transportation businesses access to local knowledge, credibility, referrals, partnerships and opportunities that exist in the wider community. Recent research on small tourism businesses has also shown that being

embedded in the community allows access to local resources and support through close social ties and mutual interdependence with the communities where these businesses are located (Wang et al., 2025).

Theme 9. Capability-Building Support

Respondents stated that they require training and capacity building assistance to enhance their capacity to operate and grow their businesses. Responses included training in customer service, tourism operations, digital marketing, customer relations and other business related areas' and seminars and workshops for tourism operators. These needs indicate that respondents believe that business sustainability is dependent not only on financial or physical resources, but also on the continuous development of the knowledge and skills required to deal with the changing conditions of customers and markets. Training, skills, education and awareness are interlinked challenges that micro and small enterprises in tourism destinations face, similar to the recent evidence, thus emphasizing the significance of capability development for their resilience and sustainable development (Chand & Gana, 2024).

This finding is consistent with OECD (2020) which highlights capability development and digitalization as key concerns for tourism businesses, particularly smaller ones that may lack resources to develop such capabilities independently. So, training and capacity building could be a way to strengthen institutional capabilities. Small transport operators can improve customer service, marketing, tourism knowledge and business management. The finding suggests that institutional support is more sustainable when it is based on what the operators can do, and not only when it provides resources.

Theme 10. Resource and Financial Support

The respondents noted that access to financial and material resources was an important condition for the survival and improvement of their transportation businesses. Their responses included low interest loans, assistance with financing, grants, tax incentives, insurance support, cooperative assistance and opportunities for vehicle upgrading or modernization. These needs are indicative of the resource constraints that are typical of small operators, especially where large investment is needed to maintain or improve vehicles. Thus, resource and financial support appears as an external means that operators can use to improve the physical and financial capacity of their businesses. Studies on small tourism enterprises have also revealed that access to finance can influence their ability to develop and continue operations, and the regulatory and institutional environment can affect their ability to access and utilize these resources efficiently (Sharma et al., 2023).

From the resource perspective, the competitive operation ability of an enterprise is dependent to a certain degree on the enterprise's access to resources that support and strengthen its capabilities (Barney, 1991). Financial assistance can allow small transportation operators to purchase vehicles, maintenance, insurance and other operating needs that might otherwise be difficult to finance independently. The findings suggest that external resource support may improve the internal operational capacity of small enterprises, providing the material basis for the maintenance of service quality and the pursuit of business development.

Theme 11. Supportive Tourism and Regulatory Environment

Moreover, the respondents underlined the significance of a supportive external environment for the functioning and participation of small transportation enterprises in the tourism industry. They reacted by developing roads and tourist facilities, upgrading tourism marketing, simplifying licensing and franchising procedures and giving more recognition and support to local operators by the government. These issues go beyond support to individual businesses and point to wider factors that influence their ability to deliver services and tap into tourism opportunities. Therefore, an enabling environment of tourism and regulation is an important external condition for small enterprise participation and development. Furthermore, recent evidence from Indonesia suggests that the effectiveness of government policy and the extent to which public support addresses the conditions affecting the participation and growth of small and medium tourism

enterprises in tourism markets are factors influencing their development (Andriansyah et al., 2024).

This finding extends the previous themes by showing that the operators' own capabilities and resources are insufficient to develop enterprises. This also depends on the institutional setting in which such capabilities are employed. The OECD (2020) further stresses the importance of policy, infrastructure, digital transformation and enabling business environment to support tourism enterprises. Thus, the structural conditions that allow small operators to participate more effectively in the tourism economy may make institutional support more effective, if it combines capability development and resource assistance.

Development of Emergent Themes from Participants' Responses

Table 1 presents the development of the 11 emergent themes from the recurring patterns identified in the participants' responses. It shows the progression from recurring response patterns to the emergent themes, their essential meanings, illustrative participant statements in the original vernacular with English translations, and the corresponding analytical insights. This presentation provides a transparent link between the participants' narratives and the thematic interpretations derived from the data.

Table 1 shows the systematic development of the 11 emergent themes derived from participants' responses. The first column is a list of response patterns that occur repeatedly in the narratives. The second column is the list of themes that emerged from these repeated patterns. The third column is the gist or the core meaning of each theme. The fourth column gives sample participant statements in the original Cebuano/Bisaya and their English translations so the interpretations are very much grounded in the words of the participants. The fifth column presents some of the analytical insights that derived from the interpretation of these patterns and statements.

In sum, the table indicates the gradual systematization of the individual experiences and perspectives of the transportation van drivers and owners into wider fields of significance . . The themes show that the competitiveness of small tourism transportation enterprises is constructed by service, relational, operational, community, and institutional dimensions which are interconnected, in line with recent research that points out that tourism SMEs are able to pursue competitiveness and high-quality development by utilizing unique resources, capabilities and value-creating strengths despite scale constraints (Shi & Xiao, 2024). Table 1 therefore represents the empirical basis for the later synthesis and conceptual interpretation of the study results.

Synthesis of Emergent Themes into Core Themes

Table 2 presents the higher-order synthesis of the qualitative findings by tracing how representative participant responses and recurring patterns are organized through the 11 emergent themes and subsequently consolidated into five core themes. The table provides a transparent analytical progression from participant accounts to broader conceptual categories, establishing the basis for examining the relationships among the core themes and for the subsequent development of the study's framework.

Table 1. Development of Emergent Themes from Participats' Responses

Recurring Participant Response Patterns	Emergent Theme	Essence of the Theme	Illustrative Participant Statements	Analytical Insight
Safety; reliability; punctuality; vehicle condition and maintenance; experienced drivers; insurance coverage	1. Reliable and Safe Service	Customers expect transportation services that provide dependable and safe mobility throughout the journey.	"Importante kaayo ang pagka-on-time ug tukmang oras sa serbisyo." English: "Punctuality and timely transportation service are very important." "Giprioridad sa customer ang kaluwasan ug eksperyensadong drayber." English: "Customers prioritize safety and experienced drivers."	Safety and reliability constitute the basic service assurance upon which customer confidence in small transportation operators is built.
Cleanliness; comfortable vehicles; sufficient travel space; air-conditioning; hassle-free arrangements; convenience	2. Comfortable and Convenient Mobility	Customers value not only reaching their destination but also experiencing a comfortable, convenient, and hassle-free journey.	"Giprioridad sa customer ang kaharuhay, aircon, ug igo nga espasyo sa biyahe." English: "Customers prioritize comfort, air-conditioning, and sufficient travel space." "Gusto sa customer ang walay hasol nga transportasyon." English: "Customers prefer hassle-free transportation arrangements."	Comfort and convenience extend transportation value beyond functional mobility to the quality and ease of the travel experience.
Professionalism; honesty; transparent pricing; courteous behavior; responsive communication; trust; good relationship with the driver	3. Trust-Based Service Relationships	Customers develop confidence through professional, honest, transparent, and respectful interactions with operators.	"Gipabilhan sa mga customer ang kondisyon sa sakyanan, propesyonalismo, pagkamatinud-anon, ug transparent nga presyo." English: "Customers value vehicle condition, professionalism, honesty, and transparent pricing." "Ang pagsalig sa customer mao ang labing importante." English: "Customer trust is the most important factor."	Trust functions as a relational resource through which direct operator–customer interactions strengthen confidence, credibility, and continuing relationships.
Listening to customer preferences; individualized assistance; adjustment to age, interests, and budget; customized itineraries; accommodation of	4. Personalized Customer Care	Operators create value by adapting their services to the individual circumstances, preferences, and needs of customers.	"Morekomenda og destinasyon base sa edad, interes, ug budget sa customer." English: "Recommends destinations based on customer age, interests, and budget." "Naghatag og personalisadong tabang ug lokal nga rekomen-	Personalization converts the small scale and direct customer contact of local operators into a customer-centered competitive capability.

Recurring Participant Response Patterns	Emergent Theme	Essence of the Theme	Illustrative Participant Statements	Analytical Insight
special or last-minute requests			dasyon." English: "Provides personalized assistance [and] recommends local attractions and restaurants."	
Knowledge of destinations, restaurants, culture, traditions, festivals, routes, traffic conditions, hidden places, and other locally grounded information	5. Local Knowledge as Experiential Value	Local knowledge enables operators to enrich transportation by helping customers understand, navigate, and experience the destination.	"Nagaambit og impormasyon bahin sa lokal nga kasaysayan, kultura, ug atraksyon." English: "Shares information about local history, culture, and attractions." "Nagpaila sa mga tago nga destinasyon nga nailhan sa mga lokal." English: "Introduces hidden destinations known mostly by local residents."	Local knowledge is an experiential resource that extends the operator's role beyond transportation and contributes additional tourism value.
Flexible schedules; customized arrangements; adjustable pricing; quick decision-making; accommodation of last-minute requests; prompt response to concerns	6. Operational Flexibility and Responsiveness	Small operators can modify arrangements quickly in response to changing customer needs and operating circumstances.	"Naggamit og paspas nga pagdesisyon ug flexible nga arrangement." English: "Uses quick decision-making and flexible arrangements." "Mo-accommodate sa last-minute requests sa customer." English: "Accommodates last-minute customer requests."	Flexibility and responsiveness represent adaptive capabilities through which small operators can partly offset disadvantages associated with limited scale.
Referrals; word of mouth; repeat customers; social media; online reviews; customer relationships	7. Relationship-Based Market Reach	Operators extend their market reach largely through relationships and positive customer experiences that generate referrals, repeat business, and digital visibility.	"Nagsalig sa customer referrals ug word-of-mouth marketing." English: "Relies on customer referrals and word-of-mouth marketing." "Gigamit ang social media ug online reviews aron makadani og customer." English: "Uses social media and online reviews to attract clients."	Customer relationships can become market resources by converting satisfactory service experiences into referrals, repeat patronage, word of mouth, and online visibility.
Relationships with tourism establishments; community referrals; local information; partnerships;	8. Community-Embedded Advantage	Operators gain resources and opportunities through relationships embedded	"Ang pagsalig sa komunidad nagpalig-on sa kredibilidad sa negosyo." English: "Community trust strengthens business credibility." "Ang koneksyon sa komunidad naghatag og lokal nga kahibalo ug kredibilidad." English:	Community embeddedness functions as social capital, extending the resources available to an individual operator through local knowledge,

Recurring Participant Response Patterns	Emergent Theme	Essence of the Theme	Illustrative Participant Statements	Analytical Insight
credibility; community assistance and tourism opportunities		within local communities and tourism networks.	"Community connections provide local knowledge, referrals, credibility, and access to tourism opportunities."	credibility, referrals, and partnerships.
Training; seminars; workshops; customer-service development; tourism operations; digital marketing; customer relations; business skills	9. Capability-Building Support	Operators perceive continuing training and capability development as necessary for improving service and strengthening their businesses.	"Nagsugyot og padayon nga training sa customer service ug turismo." English: "Recommends continuous training in customer service and tourism operations." "Nagsugyot og libre nga workshops para sa tourism operators." English: "Recommends free workshops for tourism operators."	Institutional support can strengthen competitiveness by developing the knowledge and capabilities of operators rather than merely supplying material resources.
Low-interest loans; financing; grants; financial assistance; tax incentives; insurance; cooperatives; vehicle upgrading and modernization	10. Resource and Financial Support	Operators require access to financial and material resources to maintain, improve, and expand their transportation businesses.	"Nangayo og mas sayon nga access sa low-interest loans." English: "Requests easier access to low-interest loans." "Nagsugyot og grant programs para sa pagpaayo sa sakyanan." English: "Recommends grant programs for vehicle upgrades."	External financial and material support can strengthen the internal operating capacity of small enterprises and enable investment in service quality and business development.
Better roads and tourism facilities; tourism promotion; simpler permits and franchising; recognition of local operators; enabling government policies	11. Supportive Tourism and Regulatory Environment	Small operators require an enabling external environment that allows them to participate effectively and sustainably in the tourism economy.	"Nagsuporta sa pagpaayo sa dalan ug imprastruktura." English: "Supports infrastructure and road improvement projects." "Nanginahanglan og mas maayong imprastruktura, training, ug low-interest loans." English: "Needs better infrastructure, faster permit and franchising processes, training programs, capacity-building seminars, and access to low-interest loans and financial assistance."	Competitiveness depends not only on firm-level resources and capabilities but also on infrastructure, regulation, promotion, and other institutional conditions surrounding the enterprise.

Table 2. Synthesis of Emergent Themes into Core Themes

Representative Raw Responses	Recurring Patterns	Emergent Themes	Core Theme
Selected responses supporting Themes 1–3	Safety, reliability, comfort, convenience, trust, professionalism	1. Reliable and Safe Service; 2. Comfortable and Convenient Mobility; 3. Trust-Based Service Relationships	1. Service Quality and Customer Assurance
Selected responses supporting Themes 4–5	Personalization, individualized attention, local knowledge, cultural and destination guidance	4. Personalized Customer Care; 5. Local Knowledge as Experiential Value	2. Personalized and Experiential Value
Selected responses supporting Themes 6–7	Flexibility, responsiveness, referrals, repeat customers, social media and networks	6. Operational Flexibility and Responsiveness; 7. Relationship-Based Market Reach	3. Adaptive and Market Capabilities
Selected responses supporting Theme 8	Community trust, partnerships, local knowledge, referrals and credibility	8. Community-Embedded Advantage	4. Community-Embedded Resources
Selected responses supporting Themes 9–11	Training, financing, infrastructure, tourism promotion and regulatory support	9. Capability-Building Support; 10. Resource and Financial Support; 11. Supportive Tourism and Regulatory Environment	5. Institutional and Enabling Support

Table 2 shows the process of moving from participant experiences to conceptual meanings by abstracting findings. The first column retains the original vernacular of the selected participant responses with their English translations, thus maintaining the empirical basis of the analysis. The second column identifies the recurring patterns in responses and the third column groups the emergent themes established earlier according to conceptual similarities. The fourth column is the highest level of synthesis in the table, combining the 11 emergent themes into five core themes.

The first core theme, Service Quality and Customer Assurance, combines reliable and safe service, comfortable and convenient mobility and trust-based service relationships, which indicates that customers' experiences are based on functional service quality and confidence in the service provider. Personalized and Experiential Value refers to personalized customer care and local knowledge, reflecting how small operators add value by customizing services to individual needs and enriching the travel experience via locally grounded knowledge. Adaptive and Market Capabilities highlights the possibility for small operators to adapt to evolving customer needs and stay in the market through relationships, referrals and other methods, linking operational flexibility with relationship based market reach.

The other major themes move the analysis beyond direct customer service. Community-Embedded Resources explains how relationships within the community can provide trust, credibility, local knowledge, referrals, partnerships, and access to opportunities. Institutional and Enabling Support encompasses capability-building, financial and resource support and the wider tourism and regulatory environment. Thus, the sustainability of small tourism transport enterprises is also affected by factors and resources outside the individual enterprise. This reading is consistent with recent OECD evidence on the competitiveness of micro and small tourism enterprises being dependent on a broader enabling environment that includes access to finance, skills and knowledge, technology and digitalization, networks and clustering, innovation opportunities and enabling business conditions (OECD, 2025). These five core themes together comprise a higher order synthesis of the participants' experiences and provide the conceptual basis for the framework proposed here. This can then be used to demonstrate and clarify the way in which these core themes can relate and possibly reinforce each other.

Small Tourism Transportation Competitiveness Framework (STTCF)

The conceptual foundation of the Small Tourism Transportation Competitiveness Framework (STTCF) presented in Figure 1 is the consolidation of the 11 emergent themes into five core themes. The framework consists of the mutually interrelated dimensions of the competitiveness of small tourism transportation enterprises, namely, Service Quality and Customer Assurance, Personalized and Experiential Value, Adaptive and Market Capabilities, Community-Embedded Resources and Institutional and Enabling Support. The framework uses bi-directional relationships rather than a linear sequence to reflect the reciprocal and mutually reinforcing nature of these dimensions. This perspective of interconnectedness resonates with recent academic literature on tourism SMEs that argues enterprise development is influenced by the interplay of multiple internal and external factors rather than isolated capabilities (Thomas et al., 2025). Thus, the framework provides a conceptual picture about the relationship between the enterprise level capabilities, customer-oriented value, community resources and external support in the operating environment of small tourism transportation businesses.



Figure 1. Small Tourism Transportation Competitiveness Framework (STTCF)

Interpretation of the Framework

Figure 1 presents the competitiveness of small tourism transportation enterprises as a system of interconnection and mutual reinforcement, not as a linear process. The five core themes are higher order dimensions that were synthesized from the participants' experiences. Service Quality and Customer Assurance underlines the basic importance of safety, reliability, comfort, convenience and trust. Building on this base is Personalized and Experiential Value, which shows how individualized care and local knowledge enhance the customer's tourism experience. Adaptive and Market Capabilities: Operators' capacity to respond flexibly to changing customer requirements and maintain presence in the market through relationships, referrals and other channels. Community-Embedded Resources are the value that can be derived from local relationships, partnerships, credibility, information, and community networks; and Institutional and Enabling Support includes training, financial resources, infrastructure, tourism promotion, and regulatory conditions that can strengthen and sustain small operators. These dimensions accord with the patterns developed from the participants' narratives in the results.

The bidirectional arrows show that the relationships between the core themes are reciprocal rather than causal or sequential. Service quality could enhance chances of personalized customer relationships and increased personalization could further enhance service quality perceptions. Adaptive capabilities may also enable operators to better leverage community resources and community relationships may provide information, referrals and opportunities that support adaptive and market capabilities. For example, relationships with local hotels, tourism establishments, and other community actors can provide operators with timely information about visitor needs, road conditions, or destination changes, allowing them to adjust their services and provide a more reliable and responsive customer experience. Institutional support can develop resources and capabilities across the enterprise, but the actual experiences and needs of small operators can guide the types of support needed. So, the cyclic arrangement must be understood as a simplified representation of inter-dependence and not as meaning that relationships exist only between adjacent components.

Service Quality and Customer Assurance

Service Quality and Customer Assurance is the fundamental service requirement for small tourism transportation operators to build customer confidence. Local transportation evidence further supports the importance of service quality in shaping customer experience. Adolfo et al. (2026) found a strong positive

relationship between boarding management practices and passenger experience (R = .871, R^2 = .759), indicating that the quality and organization of transportation service delivery can substantially shape passengers' evaluations of their experience. It highlights the emerging themes of Reliable and Safe Service, Comfortable and Convenient Mobility and Trust-Based Service Relationships. Customer value was related to the safety, reliability, timely, proper vehicle condition, comfort, convenience, professionalism, honesty, transparent pricing and respectful interaction. Recent tourism research also indicates that service quality contributes to tourists' perceived value and satisfaction, highlighting the significance of reliable and customer-oriented service conditions in determining the overall tourism experience (Sukaris, 2024).

This part is beyond the technical performance of transportation in the framework. It combines the journey's functional quality with the relational assurance of the operator. Thus, customers are confident not only because they are transported safely and comfortably but because they are dealing with someone they perceive as trustworthy and professional. This element provides a significant foundation for the development of the other forms of customer and competitive value.

Personalized and Experiential Value

Personalization & Experiential Value. It is a combination of Personalized Customer Care and Local Knowledge as Experiential Value. Participants said they customized services to the interests, circumstances, age, budget, itineraries and evolving needs of their clients. They also mentioned sharing knowledge about local destinations, food, culture, traditions, routes, festivals and less known places, some operators playing the role of informal tour guides.

This item is an indicator of how much value small operators can add beyond simply moving freight. Their direct contact with the customers and knowledge of the locality allows them to customize mobility and at the same time to enhance the destination experience. Personalized care and local knowledge then become unique resources whereby small operators can provide forms of value that may be difficult to achieve through standardized transportation services. Similarly, recent studies on micro and small enterprises based on tourism show that the interconnection of practices may improve the creation of value, such as the customization of customer experiences, the transfer of useful knowledge to customers, the creation of pleasant service environments, and the connection with tourism stakeholders (Barros-Arrieta et al., 2026).

Adaptive and Market Capabilities

Adaptive and Market Capabilities Operational Flexibility and Responsiveness Relationship-Based Market Reach. They mentioned flexible schedules, customizable itineraries, direct communication, quick decision-making, last minute requests, referrals, repeat customers, word of mouth, social media and online reviews. Further evidence in small tourism enterprises also shows that effective use of social media can improve marketing performance through customer attraction, engagement, retention and learning thus increasing market reach for resource constraint tourism businesses (Mbura et al., 2024).

This element is the capacity of small operators to adapt their services and to survive in the market. they are smaller so they are more agile and responsive Happy customers can lead to referrals, repeat business and online presence in their relationships. Therefore, the capacity to adapt and the capacity to reach the market are the capacities that small enterprises use in an effort to respond to the needs of customers and to compete, even when they have less resources than larger operators. Recent evidence from tourism SMEs further indicates the ability of organizational flexibility to help in building business resilience by allowing smaller enterprises to adjust to changing conditions and respond more effectively to environmental and market challenges (Hninn et al., 2025).

Community-Embedded Resources

Community-Embedded Resources was developed from participants' descriptions of how their community ties helped them in their business endeavors. They discussed referrals from residents, tourism establishments, local businesses and other tourism stakeholders, sharing of useful information, recommendation of ser-

vices and sometimes even opening of opportunities for partnerships and other tourism activities. For small operators, these connections can be especially valuable, as they can provide forms of support that may be hard to come by otherwise. Similar results were found in studies of small tourism enterprises where linkages to tourism actors, local communities, authorities and customers helped businesses to exchange information, work with others and respond to changes in their operating environment (Saufi et al., 2023).

This element acknowledges that the resources available to a small enterprise are not confined to those directly owned or controlled by the small enterprise. Operators can tap into knowledge, build trust, identify opportunities and access complementary services that exist within their local networks thanks to their community connections. Thus, community embeddedness allows small transportation businesses to increase the effective resource base and link individual operations with the broader tourism ecosystem.

Institutional and Enabling Support

Institutional and Enabling Support (Capability-Building Support, Resource and Financial Support and Supportive Tourism and Regulatory Environment) Participants said they needed training and workshops, financing and low-interest loans, grants and other financial assistance, better infrastructure, tourism promotion, and more supportive regulatory and permit processes.

This component is the external conditions that can expand or limit the capacities of the small operators. Recent empirical evidence from tourism micro, small and medium enterprises also suggests that both financial and non-financial government support can enhance enterprise's performance by expanding the resources and capabilities available to smaller tourism businesses (Munasingha et al., 2025). Training may improve the operators' capacities, financial and material assistance can boost their resources and supportive infrastructure, while tourism policies, promotion and regulatory processes may establish an enabling environment for the effective utilization of those capacities. Institutional support is therefore not separate from enterprise competitiveness, but part of the wider environment in which the other four dimensions operate.

Integrative Dynamics of the Framework

The five core themes of the STTCF suggest that, in general, the competitiveness of small tourism transport enterprises is not a function of one capability or condition. It is not, but is created through the interaction of service quality and customer assurance, personalized and experiential value, adaptive and market capabilities, community embedded resources and institutional and enabling support. Each one offers something different but the value becomes more evident when they are supporting each other in the day-to-day operations of small tourism transport businesses. This is consistent with recent studies in the tourism and hospitality literature which suggest that a combination of innovation, entrepreneurship, knowledge sharing, digital transformation, networking and an enabling external environment can lead to competitive advantage (Sharma et al., 2024).

The bidirectional relationships refer to the reciprocal and mutually constitutive nature of these dimensions. The circle is a simplified way of representing the interdependence of these dimensions, not a fixed order. Hence, the framework provides a holistic view of the use of internal capabilities, customer relationship, community resources and external support that small tourism transport operators utilize to sustain and improve their competitiveness in the travel and tours industry. At the same time, some recent studies on small tourism enterprises show that social capital can help enterprises to obtain external resources and cooperation opportunities. The effective utilization of available resources can facilitate the adaptation and development of enterprises when faced with limited resources (Li & Wang, 2025).

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the experiences and perspectives of 20 transportation van drivers and owners within the travel and tours industry and should therefore be understood within the context in which the findings were generated. The use of an open-ended qualitative questionnaire provided participants with the opportunity to describe their experiences in

their own words, although it did not allow real-time probing or clarification of their responses. Moreover, the Small Tourism Transportation Competitiveness Framework (STTCF) was developed through thematic synthesis and represents an interpretive explanation of the relationships emerging from the participants' experiences rather than a statistically validated model. These limitations provide opportunities for future studies to further examine and refine the findings and the proposed framework in other tourism transportation settings.

Future Research Directions

Future research could expand on this study's findings by applying the Small Tourism Transportation Competitiveness Framework (STTCF) to different groups of tourism transportation operators and in different geographic or destination contexts to see how the five core themes may vary or be similar across contexts. Further qualitative studies utilizing in-depth interviews may offer more in-depth insights into the relationships among service quality and customer assurance, personalized and experiential value, adaptive and market capabilities, community-embedded resources and institutional and enabling support. Quantitative or mixed method studies may then operationalize these core themes and empirically examine their relationships, providing opportunities to validate, refine or extend the proposed framework and strengthen its applicability to the wider small tourism transportation sector.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to explore how small tourism transport operators, in the form of van drivers and owners in the travel and tours industry, use strategies to remain competitive. The findings showed that competition is not only about providing transportation per se, but also about the interaction of service quality, personalized customer care, local knowledge, operational flexibility, customer and community relationships and access to institutional support. The 11 emergent themes were then synthesized into five core themes namely, Service Quality and Customer Assurance, Personalized and Experiential Value, Adaptive and Market Capabilities, Community-Embedded Resources, and Institutional and Enabling Support, which resulted in the formulation of the Small Tourism Transportation Competitiveness Framework (STTCF).

The framework suggests that the competitiveness of small tourism transportation enterprises is better understood through the interaction of these dimensions than through any single resource or capability. For the operators in this study, small scale and local embeddedness need not be viewed only as limitations. When combined with dependable service, personalized customer experiences, flexibility, local knowledge, community relationships, and appropriate external support, these characteristics can become sources of competitive value. The STTCF therefore provides a grounded explanation of how small tourism transportation enterprises can draw on the resources, relationships, and capabilities available within their operating environment to sustain and strengthen their competitiveness. For LGUs and tourism boards, the findings suggest that support for small tourism transportation enterprises can extend beyond financial assistance to include capability-building programs, improved access to tourism information and promotion, stronger linkages with local tourism establishments, and more responsive regulatory and permitting processes. Such support can help operators strengthen the service, market, and community-based capabilities that already contribute to their competitiveness.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to sincerely thank the transportation van drivers and owners who were kind enough to share their experiences and views for this study. Their views laid the basis of understanding the realities, challenges and sources of competitiveness of small tourism transportation enterprises. I also thank all those who contributed one way or another to the completion of this research.

References

Adolfo, K. E., Acedo, O. F. A., Alicaway, M. M., Anoya, G. G., Aratia, K. A., Flores, N. R. M. P., Narsico, L. O., & Narsico, P. G. (2026). Commuter boarding management practices and its effects on passenger experi-

ence at Cebu South Bus Terminal, Philippines. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research, 7*(5), 2174–2187. https://doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.07.05.24

Andriansyah, A., Satispi, E., & Samudra, A. A. A. (2024). Government policy towards small and medium tourism enterprises in Indonesia: Proposal for development and increasing regional revenue. *Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development, 8*(8), 6865. https://doi.org/10.24294/jipd.v8i8.6865

Aryasih, P. A., Ruhati, D., Puja, I. B. P., Darmiati, M., Widiana, I. W., & Mahendra, P. F. K. (2024). Investigation of tourist satisfaction with the public transporation in Bali. *Jurnal Kepariwisataan Indonesia: Jurnal Penelitian dan Pengembangan Kepariwisataan Indonesia, 18*(1), 117–140. https://doi.org/10.47608/jki.v18i12024.117-140

Azman, I., Jean, L. X., Hall, C. M., & Prayag, G. (2024). Tourism and public transport. In C. M. Hall (Ed.), *The Wiley Blackwell companion to tourism*. Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119753797.ch22

Barney, J. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management, 17*(1), 99–120. https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639101700108

Barros-Arrieta, D., Rayburn, S. W., & Giraldo, M. (2026). Value facilitation practices in micro and small enterprises: Empirical evidence from the tourism industry. *Journal of Services Marketing, 40*(6), 788–807. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-04-2025-0263

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 18*(3), 328–352. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238

Chand, L.-F., & Gana, J.-E. (2024). A systematic review of challenges faced by micro and small enterprises in tourism destinations: Producing solutions through resilience building and sustainable development. *Tourism Planning & Development, 22*(3), 301–323. https://doi.org/10.1080/21568316.2024.2307970

German, J. D., Redi, A. A. N. P., Prasetyo, Y. T., Persada, S. F., Ong, A. K. S., Young, M. N., Nadlifatin, R., & Chuenyindee, T. (2024). Service quality and customer satisfaction analysis among motorcycle taxi transportation in the Philippines through SERVQUAL dimensions and social exchange theory. *Case Studies on Transport Policy, 15*, 101139. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cstp.2023.101139

Hninn, P. P., Choong, Y.-O., & Seow, A. N. (2025). Navigating challenges: How flexibility, digital transformation, and value creation drive resilience in tourism SMEs. *Advances in Hospitality and Tourism Research, 13*(4), 478–498. https://doi.org/10.30519/ahtr.1537391

Lei, S. S. I., Wang, D., Fong, L. H. N., & Ye, S. (2024). Recipe for perceived personalization in hotels. *Tourism Management, 100*, 104818. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2023.104818

Li, Y., & Wang, X. (2025). Social capital, resource bricolage and micro-innovation strategies for rural tourism small enterprises: A longitudinal case study. *Tourism Management Perspectives, 58*, 101395. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2025.101395

Masiero, L., Hrankai, R., & Zoltan, J. (2023). The role of intermodal transport on urban tourist mobility in peripheral areas of Hong Kong. *Research in Transportation Business & Management, 47*, 100838. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rtbm.2022.100838

Mbura, O. K., Massawe, D. P., & Tumsifu, E. (2024). Leveraging social media information for small tourism enterprises: A digital marketing framework approach in Arusha Municipality, Tanzania. *University of Dar es Salaam Library Journal, 19*(2),

115–129. https://doi.org/10.4314/udslj.v19i2.9

Munasingha, P., Ranasinghe, R., Ranathunga, D., & Pattiyagedara, S. (2025). Government support for revitalizing performance of tourism MSMEs: A resource advantage theory perspective. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism and Entrepreneurship, 7*(1), 17–34. https://doi.org/10.35912/joste.v7i1.2568

Nahapiet, J., & Ghoshal, S. (1998). Social capital, intellectual capital, and the organizational advantage. *Academy of Management Review, 23*(2), 242–266. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1998.533225

Narsico, L. O., & Narsico, P. G. (2023). Customer preference shift: A laundry shop experience. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research, 4*(12), 4160–4167. https://doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.04.12.01

Novelli, M., Schmitz, B., & Spencer, T. (2006). Networks, clusters and innovation in tourism: A UK experience. *Tourism Management, 27*(6), 1141–1152. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2005.11.011

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2020). *OECD tourism trends and policies 2020*. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/6b47b985-en

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2025). *Enhancing the enabling environment for micro and small tourism enterprises in Greece* (OECD Tourism Papers No. 2025/09). OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/48b4382b-en

Saufi, A., Genadi, Y., Agusdin, A., & Scott, N. (2023). The small tourism enterprise operators' networking in dealing with the changing business environment. *International Journal of Social Science and Business, 7*(2). https://doi.org/10.23887/ijssb.v7i2.60161

Seow, A. N., Choong, Y. O., Low, M. P., Ismail, N. H., & Choong, C. K. (2024). Building tourism SMEs' business resilience through adaptive capability, supply chain collaboration and strategic human resource. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management, 32*(2), e12564. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5973.12564

Sharma, A., Messerli, H., & Lin, M. S. (2023). Land use regulations and small tourism enterprises. *Annals of Tourism Research, 100*, 103550. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2023.103550

Sharma, A., & Sharma, S. (2024). Adoption of digital marketing in tourism SMEs: A review and research agenda. *Management Research Review, 47*(7), 1077–1095. https://doi.org/10.1108/MRR-08-2021-0597

Sharma, G. D., Taheri, B., Cichon, D., Parihar, J. S., & Kharbanda, A. (2024). Using innovation and entrepreneurship for creating edge in service firms: A review research of tourism and hospitality industry. *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge, 9*(4), 100572. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jik.2024.100572

Shi, J., & Xiao, Y. (2024). Research on the pathways to high-quality development of tourism SMEs: A perspective of value assigned by quality, standards and brand. *Heliyon, 10*(23), e39772. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e39772

Sukaris, S. (2024). Increasing customer satisfaction through rural tourism's quality service, experience, and offered value. *Jurnal Minds: Manajemen Ide dan Inspirasi, 11*(1), 29–44. https://doi.org/10.24252/minds.v11i1.45305

Thomas, R., Page, S. J., & Shaw, G. (2025). The case for transforming SME research in tourism: Implications for policy, theory, evidence and impact. *Tourism Critiques: Practice and Theory, 6*(2), 271–300. https://doi.org/10.1108/TRC-07-2025-0033

Tinsley, R., & Lynch, P. A. (2007). Small business networking and tourism destination development: A comparative perspective. *The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, 8*(1).

https://doi.org/10.5367/000000007780007380

Velastegui-Hernández, R., Melo-Fiallos, D., Mayorga-Ases, M., Hernández-Del-Salto, S., Manobanda-Tenelema, E., & Garcia, M. V. (2024). Perceived quality of service in tourist transportation in the city of Baños de Agua Santa, Ecuador. *Sustainability, 16*(17), 7245. https://doi.org/10.3390/su16177245

Wang, Y., Wu, M.-Y., & Li, Q. (2025). Unpacking small tourism enterprises' role in community social responsibility: The dual pathways of community embeddedness. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 65*, 101350. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2025.101350

Zhang, H., Jiang, J., & Zhu, J. (2023). The perceived value of local knowledge tourism: Dimension identification and scale development. *Frontiers in Psychology, 14*, 1170651. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1170651