

Exploring the Tourism Promotion Practices of Muntinlupa City

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ABSTRACT

This study dwells with the investigation of the strategies that Muntinlupa City possesses to promote its cultural heritage and proposes a promotion plan to overcome the identified challenges. A significant research gap exists in understanding the relationship between digital cultural heritage promotion and its impact on travel decisions, site engagement, and long-term preservation efforts. The objectives of this study are to identify the strategies that Muntinlupa City utilizes to promote its cultural heritage and provide the city with a plan they can use to improve or enhance their cultural heritage promotion. A qualitative case study approach was employed to examine the marketing strategies used for promoting the cultural heritage of Muntinlupa City. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with two employees from the Tourism, Culture, and the Arts Department (TCAD), selected via purposive sampling. Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes and insights. The interview findings highlighted key challenges and opportunities in Muntinlupa City's cultural heritage promotion, leading to the identification of core themes. Under the theme of "Traditional Promotion Practices," the city effectively utilizes print materials and event-based promotions to engage diverse audiences. The theme of "Social Media Promotion Challenges" revealed difficulties in maintaining a consistent online presence due to limited manpower and resource constraints. Lastly, the theme of "Website Management Issues" emphasized the lack of control over the city's official website, hindering effective digital outreach. These insights provide a foundation for developing strategic recommendations to enhance cultural heritage promotion. This highlights the need for a strategic enhancement plan to optimize Muntinlupa City's cultural heritage promotion, addressing limitations in digital marketing and resource allocation to foster sustainable cultural tourism.

Keywords: *Promotion, Cultural Heritage, Challenges, Strategies, Promotion Plan*

INTRODUCTION

In a recent article from *The Philippine Star* (February 2024), cultural advocates voiced concern over the alarming neglect of local heritage landmarks due to increasing urban development and digital detachment among the youth. Muntinlupa City, despite its wealth of historical sites and cultural assets, is not immune to these challenges. Once known for landmarks such as *Jamboree Lake*—the smallest natural lake in the country—and the *Research Institute for Tropical Medicine*, the city now struggles to keep these culturally significant places alive in public consciousness.

As urbanization and technological advancement continue to reshape the cityscape, there is a growing need to balance progress with preservation. *Digital promotion*—the use of digital tools and platforms to highlight heritage—has emerged as a viable solution. Yet, the transition to digital has been neither smooth nor inclusive. Teenagers, while digitally savvy, often lack connection to or awareness of the city's cultural roots. Meanwhile, the local government faces difficulties in crafting engaging and

sustainable digital heritage campaigns. This disconnect reveals a critical gap: *the absence of a unified, communityresponsive digital promotion strategy that ensures cultural sustainability.*

The current state of research explores various themes surrounding digital heritage management. For instance, Li et al. (2023) emphasized how urbanization brings both opportunities and threats to heritage sites, while Udoinwang and Akpan (2023) explored the role of digital technologies in reshaping identity and preserving traditions. However, there is limited literature focused specifically on *localized strategies for digital cultural promotion* in Philippine cities like Muntinlupa. There is also a gap in understanding how local governments can tailor their strategies to better engage digitally-native populations, particularly youth.

This research, therefore, addresses that gap by focusing on the strategies of the Tourism, Culture, and the Arts Department (TCAD) of Muntinlupa City. It explores both the strengths and the challenges of current promotional efforts, seeking to generate recommendations that bridge traditional values with modern methods. In doing so, the study hopes to offer a replicable model for other localities facing similar issues.

Conceptual Framework/Theoretical Framework

This study employs Salvador Munoz-Vinas' 'A Theory of Cultural Heritage' as its foundational theoretical framework, recognizing the inherent diversity in interpretations of cultural heritage and its dynamic nature, evolving in response to socio-cultural, technological, and political shifts. To operationalize this framework, key concepts from Munoz-Vinas, such as the 'diverse interpretations of cultural heritage,' are translated into measurable variables. For instance, 'diverse interpretations' will be assessed by examining the varying perceptions of [specific heritage element] among [specific stakeholder groups], operationalized through [specific measurement method]. Similarly, the 'dynamic nature of heritage' will be explored by analyzing the 'rate of change in heritage practices,' quantified through [specific method]. Based on Munoz-Vinas' theory, which posits that external factors like tourism development influence these interpretations and the evolution of heritage, this study hypothesizes that [specific relationship, e.g., 'increased tourism development will lead to a significant decrease in the local community's perception of authenticity regarding [specific heritage element]']. A visual representation of this framework will illustrate the connections between Munoz-Vinas' concepts, the identified variables, and the hypothesized relationships, providing a clear and logical structure for the research.

Research Objectives/Statement of the Problem

Muntinlupa City, like many urban centers, possesses a rich tapestry of cultural heritage. Understanding the strategies employed to promote this heritage is crucial for ensuring its preservation and transmission to future generations. This study seeks to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of stakeholders in Muntinlupa City concerning the promotion of their cultural heritage. Specifically, this research asks:

1. What are the strategies employed by Muntinlupa City to promote its cultural heritage?
2. What recommendations can be created based on the identified challenges?

Scope and Delimitation

This qualitative case study explores the effectiveness of the promotion strategies employed by the Tourism, Culture, and the Arts Department (TCAD) in Muntinlupa City to enhance cultural heritage awareness among its local citizens. The purpose of this research, stemming from the need to understand how cultural heritage promotion is enacted within a specific urban context, focuses on the lived experiences and perspectives of TCAD officers directly involved in the promotion department. The geographical scope of this study is limited to Muntinlupa City, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the local context. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews, a method chosen to capture the nuanced perspectives of participants and to allow for flexibility in exploring emerging themes related to promotion strategy effectiveness. The research design, a case study, will allow for a rich and detailed examination of TCAD's promotion practices and their impact on cultural heritage awareness.

Delimitation

The data collection focused on TCAD's officers employed directly in the marketing department. The study investigated how effective the promotion strategies of TCAD were and identified the areas for improvement to create a framework that can be utilized by the said municipalities and others.

Significance of the Study

Other Local Government. The research findings provided valuable insights to help inform future policy decisions and guide the development of effective strategies for promoting the city's cultural heritage.

Tourism Industry. Local businesses, hotels, restaurants, and tour operators will be able to use the research to create targeted marketing campaigns, aiming to attract more tourists to the area.

Cultural Institutions. Museums, historical sites, and cultural organizations could utilize the research to strengthen their digital presence and engage with a broader audience. Muntinlupa City Government. The findings will supply essential data to the city government, allowing them to assess the effectiveness of their current digital strategies and pinpoint areas for improvement. This information will help them refine digital marketing campaigns, target specific audiences more accurately, and maximize their online impact.

Muntinlupa City Tourism Department. The research will provide insights into the success of digital tourism promotion efforts, enabling the department to better understand how online content influences visitor interest and engagement. This knowledge will guide them in developing more targeted and engaging content for potential tourists.

Future Researchers. The research findings will add to the growing knowledge base on using digital technologies for cultural heritage preservation and promotion. This information will support further research and analysis, guiding future initiatives and strategies in other communities.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study aimed to explore the promotion practices and challenges faced in the digital promotion of cultural heritage in Muntinlupa City. To investigate this, the researchers employed a qualitative research design, which allowed for an in-depth understanding of the experiences and strategies used by key stakeholders. Data were collected primarily through semi-structured interviews and observations, enabling the researchers to gather both guided and open-ended responses. This approach provided rich insights into the specific strategies used for digital promotion and the obstacles encountered in the process. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method appropriate for identifying recurring patterns and themes in qualitative data.

Population and Sampling

The participants of this study were selected from the Tourism, Culture, and the Arts Department (TCAD) of Muntinlupa City. The researchers chose three key informants, all of whom are employees with direct involvement in cultural heritage promotion and digital marketing within the city. These individuals were selected due to their specific knowledge, experience, and active engagement in projects related to the digital promotion of cultural heritage. The decision to focus on a small, targeted group allowed for a deeper exploration of their insights and experiences.

To ensure that participants were well-qualified to contribute to the study, the researchers established the following criteria:

1. Must be a current or former employee of TCAD.
2. Must have direct experience in digital marketing or online promotional work.
3. Must be involved in cultural heritage programs in Muntinlupa City.

The interview questions revolved around two central themes: Promotion Practices and Challenges. (See Appendix for the interview guide.)

Sampling Technique

The study employed a purposive sampling technique, which is a non-probability method used to select participants who possess relevant characteristics essential to the research objectives. This method was appropriate for the study as it allowed the researchers to gain insights from individuals who are most knowledgeable about the subject matter. By focusing on a select group of TCAD employees, the researchers ensured that the data collected would be both relevant and meaningful to understanding the promotion practices and challenges in Muntinlupa's cultural heritage promotion.

Research Instruments

The researchers conducted one-on-one interviews with the TCAD to gather in depth qualitative data about their perceptions and experiences related to promoting the city's culture. These interviews were semi-structured, meaning they had a set of core questions to guide the conversation, but they also allowed participants to elaborate on their thoughts and share their unique perspectives. This approach allowed the researchers to delve deeper into their opinions and understand the nuances of their feelings towards various promotional strategies.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering procedure followed a structured process to ensure accurate and ethical collection of data:

1. The researchers sought permission from the TCAD and relevant academic authorities to conduct interviews.
2. Participants were contacted individually, and the purpose of the study was explained to them.
3. Informed consent was obtained, including consent to record the interviews.
4. One-on-one, in-person interviews were conducted with each participant. These interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate transcription and analysis.
5. Observations of digital promotional materials and platforms used by TCAD were also conducted to supplement interview data.
6. All collected data were stored securely and handled with confidentiality.

Instrumentation

The main instrument used in this study was a semi-structured interview guide. This guide contained open-ended questions designed to explore the participants' experiences and perspectives on the digital promotion of Muntinlupa's cultural heritage. The guide was divided into two sections: one focusing on existing promotional practices, and the other on challenges encountered during implementation. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility in the conversation while ensuring that the core research themes were covered. A total of 10 guiding questions were included, each aimed at drawing out detailed and meaningful responses from the participants. (Refer to Appendix A for the full questionnaire.)

Ethical Considerations

This study followed ethical guidelines to protect the rights and privacy of all participants:

1. Informed Consent: Participants were informed about the purpose, process, and voluntary nature of the study. Consent was obtained before conducting any interviews or recordings.
2. Confidentiality: All responses were kept confidential, and only the research team had access to the data.
3. Anonymity: Names and other identifying details of participants were not included in the analysis or reporting to ensure complete anonymity.
4. Data Privacy: All data were stored securely and managed in accordance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act 10173).

All data collected during interviews were kept secure by the 13-member research team. Only authorized researchers could access, handle, and analyze the data. Each researcher promised to keep the information private and not share it with anyone outside the research team. The data was managed with great care and stored securely, ensuring that all responses and personal insights remained confidential.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social media platforms are a necessary means of reaching a broad and diverse public. Informants reported that social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok are used regularly to make announcements, promote traditional music, and record events. This suggests that social media is not just a tool of communication—it is now a component of the city's cultural identity promotion plan. The interactive nature of the platforms allows for immediate audience feedback, inviting public engagement and the creation of a sense of cultural community. This is consistent with Aboudou et al. (2020), who posit that social media has become an integral component of contemporary promotional strategies, allowing for dynamic audience engagement, timely delivery, and broad visibility. The department's focus on pre-scheduling content that shows an awareness of how timing and algorithms impact reach and engagement. This proactive strategy illustrates that the department considers social media not just a broadcast tool but an engagement-oriented platform.

However, social or online promotion requires a number requires a team. Content creation, caption writing, photography, editing, and posting are usually carried out by the same individual or by an extremely small team, the study says. This compromises both the quality and quantity of content. As one informant described, multitasking leads to delays in posting and reduces the likelihood of strategic, content planning. These findings suggest that without adequate staffs, the benefits of social media cannot be optimized. In practice, the department is caught between high digital expectations and low operational capacity. This condition suggests larger issues raised under-resourced public sector communication teams, where strategic goals often outstrip the human resources required to execute them effectively.

Limited availability of the official departmental website is also one of the main areas impacting their promotional activities. Social media is an instant and responsive media, while websites remain a center of gravity for well-structured information and a repository location of content in the long term. Informants confirmed that the website is not under the control of their department, limiting their responsiveness to update the materials or comment on the promotional campaigns. This lack of coherency between the department's content creators and platform administrators is an organizational weakness for the digital communication strategy. With cultural promotion, coherency from one site to another is crucial to preserve identity and messaging. Autonomy shortage limits the department's responsiveness and capability for timely, accurate, and contextual cultural information to the masses. This is also supported by Oryshchuk (2023) and Abeygunasekara & Sakeef (2021), who emphasize the significance of websites as permanent and accessible points of cultural information, particularly in the context of longterm preservation and large-scale audience appeal.

Aside from event promotion, social media usage also has a deeper function: cultural preservation. The materials posted—traditional music, local festivities, and heritagelated photos—function as a virtual archive that records cultural practices. This is a transformation of the function of promotional tools. They no longer just inform or promote but also document, preserve, and celebrate identity. This dual function is especially needed in an urban setting like Muntinlupa, where rapid modernization threatens to drown out cultural roots. Through the use of social media to feature local customs, the department acts to bridge the past and the present, engaging youth while keeping

traditional practices alive and in sight. This function cannot be fulfilled by traditional media, as it allows real-time documentation and easier accessibility.

Lastly, the findings indicate that while digital platforms are full of promise when it comes to cultural promotion, structural and institutional issues hamper their effectiveness. The lack of specialized personnel, weak control of the platforms, and fragmented coordination among departments are pointers to systemic defects that are more than a matter of individual effort. This is a pointer to the necessity of improved allocation of resources and digital governance within the organization. Strategic leveraging of social media is not a matter of simply having access to the platforms—there is also the need to have the capacity, authority, and internal alignment to leverage them strategically. Without these factors, the department's online presence continues to be disjointed, reactive, and limited in reach. Previous studies confirm this finding, citing the fact that digital communication must be supported by a strong internal infrastructure if it is to be sustainable and effective in the long term.

CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated Muntinlupa City's strategies for promoting its cultural heritage, revealing a successful blend of traditional and digital marketing. The city effectively uses events and print materials to engage diverse audiences and foster cultural exchange. However, the research identified significant challenges in the digital realm, stemming from limited resources and personnel dedicated to online promotion. This highlights the need for a more strategic and comprehensive digital marketing plan to fully leverage the potential of online platforms for promoting and preserving Muntinlupa's cultural heritage. A strengthened digital presence is crucial for reaching wider audiences, enhancing engagement, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of these efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Tourism, Culture, and Arts Department(TCAD): Develop a comprehensive digital marketing plan with specific objectives, target audiences, and measurable KPIs. This includes investing in staff training, website improvements, social media management, and targeted online campaigns. Strategic partnerships with local businesses and community groups should be prioritized to expand reach and engagement.

For the Muntinlupa City Government: Provide adequate funding and resources to support TCAD's cultural heritage promotion efforts, particularly for digital initiatives. Consider establishing a dedicated digital marketing team within TCAD.

For Other Local Governments: Adopt a blended approach to cultural heritage promotion, combining traditional and digital strategies tailored to local contexts. Community engagement is key to fostering local ownership and pride. Collaboration with local businesses and tourism operators can create sustainable tourism packages.

For the Tourism Industry: Develop tourism products highlighting Muntinlupa's cultural heritage, leveraging digital platforms for marketing. Collaborate with local artists and cultural organizations to create authentic and engaging experiences.

For Cultural Institutions: Enhance digital presence through interactive websites and social media. Develop accessible educational programs and activities, partnering with schools and community groups for wider reach.

For Future Researchers: Investigate the economic impact of cultural tourism in Muntinlupa. Compare the effectiveness of various digital marketing strategies for cultural heritage promotion. Conduct comparative studies with other cities to identify best practices. Explore the role of technology in preserving intangible cultural heritage.

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