

Sustainable Cities and Communities: Effectiveness of Social Media in Promoting Recreational Business Districts to Tourists in Bonifacio Global City

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Article Details:

Received: 4 May 2026

Revised: 12 May 2026

Accepted: 21 May 2026

Published: 31 May 2026

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Recommended Citation:

Cosme, L.J. E., Alberca, S. L., Dumat-ol, EM. N., Villaflor, A. V., Gaspar, SA. V. (2026). Sustainable Cities and Communities: Effectiveness of Social Media in Promoting Recreational Business Districts to Tourists in Bonifacio Global City. The International Review of Multidisciplinary Research. 1 (6), 645-652.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20552621>

Index Terms:

social media, sustainable cities, recreational business districts, Bonifacio Global City, tourism promotion, urban development

Abstract. This study examines the effectiveness of social media in promoting recreational business districts (RBDs) in Bonifacio Global City (BGC), Taguig, within the framework of sustainable cities and communities. Using a qualitative approach, data were gathered through interviews with local and foreign tourists to assess how platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram influence awareness, decision-making, and perceptions of sustainability. Findings reveal that social media significantly shapes tourist behavior, with short videos, reels, and live streams serving as persuasive formats. User-generated content and influencer endorsements emerged as highly credible, often outweighing traditional advertisements in building trust and relatability. Tourists also valued transparency, particularly when businesses highlighted eco-friendly practices, certifications, and community-driven initiatives. Social media was further recognized as a sustainable alternative to printed promotions, aligning with green initiatives in BGC. However, participants raised concerns about overcrowding due to aggressive online promotion, emphasizing the need for balanced urban planning and responsible marketing. Despite these challenges, the overall impact of social media was viewed positively, reinforcing BGC's reputation as a vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive urban hub. In conclusion, social media plays a vital role not only in promoting tourism but also in advancing sustainability. Through strategic use, platforms can foster cultural appreciation, environmental awareness, and economic growth, enhancing the resilience and livability of cities like Bonifacio Global City.

Introduction

Social media platforms have become essential tools in online marketing as they help businesses achieve their goals, such as increasing sales, improving their brands, and remaining connected with consumers. Some critical characteristics of social media include interactivity, accessibility, transparency, user empowerment, and real-time engagement. The likes of Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have proven useful for effective product promotions due to their user-generated contents, influencer marketing, and consistent communication, which help positively affect consumer behavior and purchasing decisions (Migkos et al., 2025).

The emergence of community-based websites has motivated businesses to create virtual brand communities by allowing consumers to communicate through common experiences and interests. Social Media Marketing (SMM) improves the relationship between companies and consumers by encouraging engagement and participation irrespective of geographic locations. Such online communities operate similar to real-world communities by building social relationships and creating support among participants.

Consistent with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 11, which calls for the development of sustainable cities and communities, social media has been innovative in enabling urban sustainability and tourism promotion (Sharifi et al., 2024). For instance, sustainable efforts in cities such as Sydney include green

infrastructure, recycling programs, and pedestrian-oriented developments. Likewise, in the Philippines, Taguig City—especially Bonifacio Global City (BGC)—has been a leading example of urban sustainability. BGC is nicknamed "A City with a Soul" due to its unique integration of green landscapes, public artworks, business districts, and recreational areas within a walkable 15-minute community.

Recreational business districts such as BGC contribute to physical, mental, and social wellbeing as they provide opportunities for leisure, interaction, and cultural events. Besides, digital marketing and social media play an essential role in shaping consumer attitudes, destination selection, and engagement with tourism information (Mohammed et al., 2020). With careful advertising strategies, marketers can effectively target tourists for increased engagement and promotion of recreation business districts online.

However, there are limitations to harnessing social media for sustainable urban development, including misinformation, over-commercialization, poor coordination among stakeholders, and adverse consequences associated with social media addiction (Amirthalingam & Khera, 2024). Furthermore, most studies have concentrated on developed nations; therefore, minimal research is available on using social media for sustainability in rapidly urbanized regions such as BGC.

This study addresses this knowledge gap by investigating how local and foreign tourists view the role of social media in advancing sustainable and inclusive practices in Bonifacio Global City. Additionally, the study examines how social media campaigns influence consumer awareness, behavior, and engagement in recreational business districts.

Research Questions

The study aims to assess the effectiveness of social media in promoting recreational business districts in Bonifacio Global City in alignment with the Sustainable Cities and Communities goal. Specifically, this qualitative study will seek answers to the following:

1. To what extent does social media arouse the interest and awareness of tourists about the recreational business districts in Bonifacio Global City?
2. What social media platform attributes have the greatest effectiveness in promoting recreational business districts?
3. How do tourists view the integration of social media platforms in the promotion of recreational activities and establishments in Bonifacio Global City?
4. What action plan should be taken concerning using social media platforms to promote the sustainable recreational business sector in Bonifacio Global City?

Assumptions of the Study

This study is anchored on the assumption that social media plays an important role in influencing tourists' awareness, interest, and decision-making regarding recreational business districts in Bonifacio Global City (BGC). It is also assumed that platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram effectively promote tourism through user-generated content, reviews, and influencer endorsements. Furthermore, the study assumes that social media serves as a sustainable promotional tool that lessens the use of printed advertisements while supporting tourism and urban development. Lastly, the researchers assume that the participants provide honest and reliable responses based on their personal experiences and perceptions.

Methodology

Research Design

This study uses a thematic qualitative research design with a secondary focus on sustainable cities and communities. This design was constructed to collect data on the researchers' and tourists' identities, development of identity, consent, and thoughts on promotions of recreational business districts through social media, while also being able to analyze the effectiveness of social media in promoting recreational business districts.

Sampling Technique

This study utilizes a thematic sampling technique. In research investigations, thematic sampling is done to choose a certain set of people or units for examination. Thematic analysis is a popular method for systematically analyzing qualitative data, such as interviews and focus group transcripts (Ahmed et al., 2025).

Participants of the Study

The participants of this study consist of local and foreign tourists. These participants were chosen because they are highly active on social media and frequently engage with urban recreational spaces, making them ideal for examining the effectiveness of social media in promoting recreational business districts. To ensure manageability and precision in data collection, the researchers will limit the study to 30 participants. This sample size allows for in-depth analysis while maintaining a practical scope for the research. The participants will be selected, targeting individuals familiar with or who have visited the Bonifacio High Street or similar recreational business districts in Taguig. The researchers will approach them and ask for their consent to answer our interview guidelines. This approach ensures that the data collected is relevant and directly tied to the study's objectives. Their feedback will be instrumental in understanding the role of digital platforms in promoting sustainable urban development and community engagement.

Research Locale

This study will be conducted in Bonifacio Global City, Taguig. The city will be situated in specific recreational business districts that also practice sustainability. A few businesses will be analyzed to determine whether their promotion through social media platforms reaches one of the target audiences, which are the tourists.

Research Instrument

The researchers developed a questionnaire that is composed of four parts. Part I answers the question of the awareness of tourists about recreational business districts in Taguig. Part II is about the attributes of the social media platform, which is a factor if promotions are effective. Part III is about the tourists' perception of recreational business districts; it discusses in what ways social media can enhance their support. And last is Part IV, to understand the relation of social media platforms in sustainable communities and cities. All data collected will be familiarized, coded, generalized, and reviewed thematically to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights relevant to the study's objectives. This qualitative approach will enable the researchers to capture a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of social media in promoting recreational business districts in BGC.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data-gathering procedure for this study will follow a face-to-face interview to ensure the collection of accurate and relevant information. Initially, the researchers will secure the necessary opinions from participants to recruit, ensuring that ethical considerations are met. A questionnaire will be developed to assess participants' perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes toward the role of social media in promoting recreational business districts with a secondary focus on sustainability. Participants will be selected, targeting 15 local and foreign tourists (for a total of 30), who have familiarity with or awareness of recreational business districts in BGC. First, each participant will be briefed on the study's objectives, procedures, and ethical considerations, after which they will confirm their voluntary participation. The questionnaires will be administered via secure interview guidelines.

Ethical Considerations

For the ethical considerations, prior to the commencement of the study, participants will be provided with a detailed briefing and comprehensive information regarding the study's purpose. Through face-to-face interviews, the respondents shall willingly decide to take part in the study. To guarantee anonymity, secrecy, and the avoidance of potential harm, all information will be held and handled with the utmost confidentiality by not disclosing the names and identities of the research participants under RA 10173, generally known as the Data Privacy Act.

Results and Discussion

The research presented in this study was the local and foreign tourists' perceptions of the effectiveness of social media in promoting recreational business districts at Bonifacio Global City, with the integration of sustainable cities and communities. The interview data were analyzed by using a thematic analysis research design. It examines how well the suggested procedure works with different research approaches, such as positivism, constructivism, grounded theory, and interpretive phenomenology, and it argues for their use. The study highlights the advantages of both deductive and

inductive coding techniques (Naeem et al., 2023). Although two out of the thirty participants declined to participate in the interview, the findings are described as follows:

Local and Foreign Tourists' Social Media Awareness

After analyzing the data from the interviews, the researchers found several tourists' perceptions on the effectiveness of social media in promoting recreational business districts at Bonifacio Global City. Some relate to the benefits, while others are related to the limitations of relating to the sustainable communities within Bonifacio Global City. The themes and analysis of the codes gained from the qualitative data from the in-depth interview were described as follows.

Theme	Description	Example Quotes
Awareness through social media	Participants first learned about BGC mostly through social media platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, ads, and friends' posts.	"I first learned about BGC through social media." / "Through TikTok and Facebook."
Recognizing RBDs through social circles	Participants learned about recreational business districts through their families/relatives, and friends.	"Through social media platforms shared by different content creators and even friends."
Impact of Visual Content	Videos, reels, and live streams are the most effective formats for grabbing attention and encouraging visits.	"Videos catch my attention the most." / "Reels are persuasive."
Preference for TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram	TikTok's short videos, Facebook's wide reach, and Instagram reels are viewed as the best platforms for promoting BGC activities.	"Facebook helps connect with more people." "Tiktok, because many people are often using this more that makes it trendy and entertaining to others which attracts people."
Credibility of User- Generated Content	User reviews and ratings are considered more trustworthy than official advertisements.	"User experiences are more credible." / "Reviews from people who visited are more believable."
Influencer Collaborations Build Trust	Influencer endorsements make BGC more appealing, especially when the influencer is relatable to the viewer.	"If my favorite influencer enjoys it, I would too." / "Influencers make BGC seem attractive."
Contribution to Sustainable Tourism	Social media helps promote sustainable tourism by engaging more people without using traditional flyers or ads.	"Social media helps BGC stay at a destination without using papers." / "It engages more people easily."
Needs for Transparency	Showing eco-friendly practices and sustainability certifications is seen as important for trust and informed decision-making.	"Transparency about green initiatives is very important." / "I want businesses to flaunt eco-friendly practices."
Minimal Concerns about Social Media Impact	Few participants expressed their worries; most see social media promotion as positive for BGC tourism.	"I have no concerns." / "Social media helps tourists discover new places"
Influence of Live Video/Streaming	Participants indicate that live videos/streaming influence their decisions to visit BGC.	"Live videos/streaming, build trust and demonstrate authenticity by interacting with your followers in real time." / "Live videos and creating reels are the best way to attract customers to visiting BGC." "Since there are many competing businesses in the area, I suggest improving their social media interaction by being more engaging and community-driven." / "Maybe they should make it more entertaining and trendier so that others can relate or engage more to it."
Judgment about Specific Improvements for Social Media Promotions in Recreational Spots	Posting more entertaining and trendy engagements can get their interest.	
The Cause of social media in Overcrowding BGC	Concerns about foot traffic within the place to travel throughout.	"I'm concerned that social media promotions focus too much on

Impact of social media in Sustainable Tourism Promotion to Businesses	Assessments of businesses that promote eco-friendly ways to help.	drawing big crowds, which can lead to overcrowding.” “Businesses in BGC can promote sustainable tourism by using social media to highlight eco-friendly practices, like waste reduction, green architecture, or community-driven events.”
Transparency about Sustainability Practices	Participants recognize the importance of sustainable practices within BGC to care about the environment	“Transparency about sustainability practices is very important in social media promotions. When businesses openly share eco-certifications, green initiatives, or behind-the-scenes efforts, it builds trust and credibility.” / “It’s important because it shows how business care about the environment.”

Table No. 1. Thematic Analyses

The theme and code were gained from gathering data as listed in Table 4.1.1. were summarized specifically to know the local and foreign tourists' perceptions about the sustainable cities and communities with integration in social media, promoting recreational business districts in Bonifacio Global City (BGC). It was found that various social media platforms are effective in promoting recreational activities within Bonifacio Global City (BGC) participants' answers were mostly through live videos/streaming, Instagram Reels, and TikTok videos.

According to Laradi et al. (2024), whenever social media marketing platforms are used properly for online promotion, they offer businesses many advantages, but the two most important ones are raising customer satisfaction and enhancing their reputation. Businesses that decide to incorporate social media marketing into their strategy gain access to a type of online marketing that uses media channels and web applications to create direct communication with the public.

In terms of content and format engagement, Facebook mostly shares live streams, photos, videos, etc. According to Khanom (2023), Facebook's immense user base, broad variety of targeting options, and capacity to cultivate relationships with clients make it a powerful social media marketing tool. It is an influential platform for increasing brand awareness, customer engagement, and traffic because of its high user engagement, affordability, and commitment to community interaction.

While Instagram is also under Meta, it has similar promotions/options to what Facebook has. It has an outstanding tool for engagement and brand building because of its capacity to engage users through influencer partnerships and visual storytelling, as well as its extensive analytics and advertising choices (Mishnick & Wise, 2024). For TikTok users, finding their special algorithm by watching through many videos, which puts content discovery ahead of follower counts, its user-friendly interface, and its popularity among younger and adult audiences make it a powerful tool for social media promotion. This facilitates expanding one's audience and leveraging the potential of viral content (Zhou, 2024).

Local and foreign tourists often engage with these three social media platforms in order to find a reliable source to go to a place where they want to have entertainment, leisure, business, and many more. Reviewing those places can help them plan a productive phase of their travel with themselves or with other relatives/friends.

Tourists' Awareness in Social Media About Recreational Business Districts in Bonifacio Global City (BGC)

While gathering data through face-to-face interviews, most participants learned about recreational business districts through social media, and a few of them answered that they knew about it from family or friends. The type of social media platform that most effectively grabs their attention is viewing TikTok videos, Instagram Reels, and Facebook video reviews. They find these a reliable source to give, for the reason that user-generated content also influences them. As a result, their perceptions about social media significance affect their interest in visiting Bonifacio Global City (BGC). Participants mentioned that social media promotions support their decision-making travelling, and Bonifacio Global City (BGC) is one of the cities that piqued their interests for the reason of the entertainment they perceive.

According to Lim (2020), visitors favor Bonifacio Global City (BGC) because of its varied attractions, lively lifestyle, and state-of-the-art infrastructure. It's a popular destination for both business and leisure travelers, a thriving center with a mix of commercial spaces, upscale residential areas, and a vibrant entertainment scene.

Effectiveness of Social Media Promoting Recreational Business Districts

Three social media platforms are mostly mentioned as being recognized as an effective way to promote recreational business districts. These platforms are TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram. Social media's innovative and creative methods of communication, information sharing, and transmission have played a significant role in the tourism industry's transformation. These platforms are being used by an increasing number of tourism-related organizations to interact with travelers and sway their purchasing decisions. Hotels, travel agencies, recreational business districts, and other hospitality businesses are actively using social media platforms to exchange ideas, recommendations, and information to gain a competitive edge (Hussain et al., 2024).

Participants mentioned that three social media platforms are effective in promoting recreational business districts, which are TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram. These platforms mostly have video trends that can attract them to view this kind of content. They also shared that live video/streaming, reels, hashtags, and stories can build trust and authenticity with the audience.

Involvement of Social Media Concerning Sustainability

Social media emerges as a key factor in discussions of sustainability. A few local and foreign tourists demonstrated awareness of proper sustainable practices and expressed concerns about their implementation. One of the summarized perceptions is that social media promotions for tourism help reduce the use of papers and plastics; examples are flyers, brochures, pamphlets, and many more. According to Harrison (2024), the transition to digital flyers, which are more environmentally friendly than traditional printed flyers, is made possible in part by social media. Digital flyers, disseminated via websites, email, and social media, cut down on waste and the carbon footprint of printing and distribution. In terms of how social media can promote sustainability in Bonifacio Global City (BGC), an effective way to familiarize this part is to highlight eco-friendly practices, like waste reduction, green architecture, or community-driven events. This answer was based on the participants, who elaborated their viewpoints beyond this. It can also highlight maintaining the cleanliness of the place and show some steps on how to execute this practice.

Although sustainability is well known to some of the tourists, other tourists are unfamiliar with this term. That is why the researchers brief them first about the interview they are about to take and ask about the importance of transparency to them. The participants mentioned that it adds to their awareness in taking this kind of information. When businesses openly share eco-certifications, green initiatives, or behind-the-scenes efforts, it builds trust and credibility with tourists. It also represents that businesses care about the condition of the environment.

Following the participants' concerns about social media promotion, even though the way recreational businesses are effective, the main concern about this subject at Bonifacio Global City (BGC) is that their promotions can attract tourists, and this leads to overcrowding within the area. Because a few of them can be overwhelmed sometimes and can't have a protocol of crowd control within the place. In the Philippines, crowding is a serious issue at many well-known tourist and entertainment venues. In places like Boracay Island, where tourism has surged beyond capacity, this is especially evident. Rapid tourist growth, poor infrastructure, and occasionally poorly managed tourism development are some of the factors that contribute to overcrowding (Varga, 2020).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This qualitative study examined the efficacy of social media marketing in promoting RBDs in Bonifacio Global City (BGC), Taguig, particularly focusing on sustainability and community impacts. Thematic analysis was used in this research, wherein data collection was done using interviews from 30 tourists within the locality and abroad.

The results showed that social media sites, including TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram, played an integral role in raising the awareness and making decisions of tourists based on reels, videos, livestreaming, user-generated content, and influencer marketing. Peer reviews were regarded as more credible than regular advertisements by tourists. Social media also aided sustainable tourism by minimizing paper-based promotional materials and promoting knowledge of eco-friendly tourism and community projects.

Nevertheless, overcrowding issues because of extensive social media promotion were raised by the respondents. In general, social media was perceived as a useful means in promoting tourism, sustainability, environmental consciousness, and economic development in BGC.

Acknowledgement

The researchers express their sincere gratitude to everyone who supported and contributed to the completion of this thesis, which marks a significant milestone in their academic journey.

First and foremost, the researchers would like to thank God for His guidance throughout the conduct of this study and for the knowledge and wisdom gained during the research process. They also extend their heartfelt appreciation to Ms. Gaspar for her valuable advice and assistance in improving and enhancing the research paper. Special thanks are also given to their research professor, Ivan Bartolota, for his continuous support, guidance, and encouragement throughout the completion of this study. Through this experience, the researchers gained knowledge and skills that will be useful in their future endeavors.

The researchers are likewise grateful to their friends for the time, support, and encouragement they provided during the challenges encountered while conducting the study. Lastly, the researchers would like to express their deepest gratitude to their families for their unwavering support, financial assistance, motivation, and encouragement that inspired them to persevere and successfully complete this research study.

Funding

This research received no external funding from any public, commercial, or not-for-profit funding agency, and no organization provided financial support for the conduct of the study, authorship, or publication of this article.

Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this article.

Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study; all data used were obtained from previously published sources as cited in the reference list.

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Appendices

No Appendices