

MSMEs as Catalysts for Growth: Analyzing their Contribution to Food Tour Development and Local Economic Sustainability

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Abstract. This study used a descriptive correlational approach to determine MSMEs' competitiveness and contributions to food tour development in Iloilo City. The study's respondents were entrepreneurs who managed and/or owned micro, small, and medium-sized businesses in Iloilo City, engaged in the food industry, and were either part of or considered part of the tourist circuit. A modified survey instrument addressed the study's concerns and was the primary data source. A validity score of 4.64 and a reliability Cronbach alpha of 0.980 indicates that the instrument is valid and very reliable. Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used for statistical treatment. Key findings indicate that food-related MSMEs in Iloilo City are moderately competitive in their capacity to compete, connect, and change. A modest contribution to the growth of food tours through job creation and product offering but a low contribution to total monthly sales. A positive direct relationship was found between business competitiveness and contribution to food tour development. Entrepreneurial age and educational level have been shown to influence how much enterprises contribute to food tour development. The findings of this study may be applied to the growth and management of MSMEs in Iloilo City, making them more competitive agents of food tour development. Any organization that wants to be competitive should strategically form good partnerships to get amazing outcomes. Using positioning and uniqueness to catch visitors' attention, food-related MSMEs may leverage tourists who value food in their travel reasons. Appreciating local food resources and paying close attention to how they are presented and promoted to the public would likely attract tourists and increase tourism earnings.

Keywords: MSME; Food tour; Local economy; Iloilo City; Philippines.

1.0 Introduction

Micro, small, and medium-sized companies (MSMEs) play a critical role in creating a sustainable society by generating equitable income, creating jobs, innovating, and growing, making them a key contributor to the global economy. Because of their successes and as a vital factor in overall economic growth, most nations' strategic efforts already include expanding MSMEs' effect. MSMEs account for 99.5% of all businesses in the Philippines, employing 62.7% of the workforce and providing 35.7% of the country's economic profit (Department of Trade and Industry, 2020). MSMEs play an important role in achieving inclusive development and reducing poverty because they boost competitiveness and promote rural and global value chain expansion. According to the 2020 Philippine MSME Statistics report, the hotel and food sectors are ranked second among the country's industries.

The food sector, conventionally as a low-tech industry, is characterized by many MSMEs. Additionally, it has very modest levels of innovation and has not been correlated with significant levels of R&D (Quinn et al. 2014). Population growth, evolving consumer tastes, shifting legislative developments, food scandals, increasing globalization of production and consumption, and rising raw material costs all contribute to an exceptionally tough macroenvironment for the food industry. However, Food MSMEs are adaptable and quick to respond to market trends, offering customers unique goods and selling features. Declining consumer confidence in traditional food channels because of a myriad of food scares has provided opportunities for MSMEs that are doyens in nature and can fulfill consumer interest in and awareness of localness, traceability, health, and provenance of food products and environmental and ethical concerns (Birch et al., 2018).

Food is an important element of a region's culture, and travelers want authentic and genuine experiences when they visit another nation. Food tours pave the way for residents and visitors to sample local cuisine, making it an important motivator for travel. It is characterized as visiting main and secondary food producers, food festivals, restaurants, and specialized sites for room rates, food tasting, and or experiencing the characteristics of specialized food production (Hall & Mitchell, 2001, cited in Purnomo, 2016). Food MSMEs contribute to the local culture and food production. To establish and become a food tourism destination, a location needs assistance from food businesses in the form of restaurants or food and beverage producers, typically run by MSMEs, that reflect the local culture and character (Purnomo, 2016). Food preparation's embeddedness in home-grown society and the long-term expansion of small food producers have obvious consequences for rural economic development. The development of food and beverage tourism in the community provides a chance to boost local food production. It promotes rural development, the growth of agricultural towns and villages, and the local hawkers' centers as a symbol of the area's food market (Bessi'ere, 1998, quoted in Purnomo, 2016). Food Tours are established and organized in various places because of the availability of food MSMEs, allowing tourists to visit and sample local cuisine.

Take, for instance, the City of Love - Iloilo City, best known to many people for its La Paz Batchoy. However, this city is more than that as it is a wealth of gastronomic surprises (Villareal, 2022). The local government's recent designation of Iloilo City and the province of Iloilo as "The Food Haven of the Philippines" is a suitable tribute to the city's gastronomy, boosting tourism. The Department of Tourism and the corporate sector strongly support this initiative to become a known gastronomy hotspot (Daily Guardian, 2022). Many Filipinos across the country and food enthusiasts from all over the world like and recognize Ilonggo cuisine. Anyone who has had the heart-warming La Paz Batchoy and Molo soup, the refreshing tastes of Laswa and Chicken Binakol, or a morsel of rich Ibos and crisp Biscocho is bound to be enamored and have a longing wherever they go (Villareal, 2022). Businesses, primarily MSMEs, participate in these offers. Several food MSMEs participated in the food crawl led by Chef Rafael "Tibong" Jardeleza, Jr. (Weekend Balita, 2019).

Local development aims to improve the capabilities of a defined area so that there is progress in its economy and the well-being of its people. Intangible assets are fast becoming the basis for regional economic competitiveness through tourism strategies (Hall, 2012). To utilize food tourism as an economic development factor, it is imperative to encourage visitors to stop, spend, and stay longer. Retaining visitor spending, developing linkages with a multitude of regional stakeholders, and advancing intellectual capital are necessary if food tourism is to be incorporated within broader regional development endeavors. Within the framework of regional development, the tourism concept of food tours is expected to advance the potential of local food and local human resources (Hall & Troughton, 1998, as cited in Purnomo, 2016).

Food tours or gastronomy tourism are still in their early phases of development across the globe. Food tourism is gaining international traction as a substantial niche market within the tourism and hospitality industries (Cankul & Demir, 2018; Ellis et al., 2018; Okumus et al., 2018). Following broad globalization and McDonaldization, locations prioritize culinary tourism to protect regional and local identity, adding to its major economic advantages (Chen & Huang, 2019; Ellis et al., 2018; Okumus et al., 2018). The literature on gastronomy tourism has increased dramatically over the last several decades, but research on food tours and their contribution to forming culinary experiences is limited (Vlachou & Savvinopoulou, 2022). There may be evidence of food tours in Iloilo City but food MSMEs' competitiveness and their contribution to the city's food tour growth have not been

recognized. This research investigated the competitiveness of food MSMEs and how they contribute to food tour development in Iloilo City.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This investigation was especially quantitative and involved systematically analyzing phenomena using measurable data and statistical, mathematical, or computer processes. The research design for this study was descriptive-correlational. According to McCombes (2022), descriptive research seeks to correctly and methodically characterize a population, circumstance, or phenomenon. In contrast, correlational research design explores correlations between variables without the researcher altering or changing them. Correlational research seeks to identify relationships and similarities among variables (Sassower, 2017).

2.2 Research Locale

This study focused mainly on MSMEs located in Iloilo City, particularly those involved in the food and beverage business and who have been part of or have the potential to be part of the tourism circuit. The respondents were business owners whose enterprise is involved in food and beverage service within the identified food tourism zone of Iloilo City. Business owners whose enterprises have operated since 2019 were considered.

2.3 Research Respondents

Purposive sampling was employed to choose a random number of respondents for this investigation. The primary respondents in this study were entrepreneurs aged 18 and up who manage and/or own micro, small, and medium-sized businesses in Iloilo City that are involved in the food industry and are or have the potential to be part of the tourist circuit. If the owner/entrepreneur could not answer the research instrument, an authorized representative was designated via an agency consent form. Authorized representatives were either the designated manager, co-partner, or co-owner of the owner entrepreneur who had extensive knowledge of the business's activities. The respondents were selected based on their location to ensure that the DTI-listed enterprise would also fall into the identified tourism zones in Iloilo City or the seven identified districts of the city. Non-DTI-registered enterprises from identified food tourism zones in Iloilo City were also included through physical mapping.

2.4 Research Instrument

An adopted and modified survey questionnaire was used as the research instrument and main data source. Part 1 gathered the entrepreneurs' personal variables and business enterprise-related variables. Parts 2 and 3 included survey questions adopted and modified from the SME Competitiveness Outlook of the International Trade Center (2015) and the Youth Employment Program of the International Labor Organization (2022). Experts of MSMEs and food tour development were asked to validate the instrument. Construct validity revealed that no item in the instrument needed revision and was seen as "essential" to measure what needed to be measured. A Goods and Scates content-criterion instrument was used, and a validity score of 4.64 was obtained. This indicates that the instrument is valid and measures what is intended to be measured. After validation, reliability testing was conducted on 30 respondents from within food business enterprises covered by this study but who were not actual respondents using Cronbach's alpha test. The statistical reliability test revealed a very reliable instrument for this study, with Cronbach's alpha at 0.980.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

The Ethics Committee of the University's Research Graduate School Office reviewed the study's ethics before its conduct. The survey questionnaire was validated and reliability tested after the Ethics Committee approved the study's conduct. After determining the survey questionnaire's validity and reliability, the researcher obtained the authorized informed consent form from the respondents to get their voluntary participation. Respondents provided consent before receiving the survey form. The respondents completed the questionnaire or the researcher read it to them, and the responses were recorded in the surveys. Respondents filled out the survey based on the information requested. All data collected were recorded and kept confidential.

2.6 Statistical Treatment and Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used for statistical treatment. Data collected for profiling the entrepreneurs and their corresponding enterprises were analyzed using frequency and percentage distribution. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to determine the competitiveness level of the enterprises and the extent of their contribution to food tour development. Mann-Whitney U test for two independent samples and Kruskal-Wallis test for three or more independent samples were used to determine significant differences in the level of competitiveness of MSMEs and the extent of contribution to food tour development between and among identified variables. Spearman's rho was used to determine the relationship between the MSMEs' level of competitiveness and the extent of contribution to the food tour development. Simple and multiple regression analyses were done to determine if the level of competitiveness predicts MSMEs' contribution to food tour development and to determine the significance of profile variables as predictors of MSMEs' contribution to food tour development.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

This study followed ethical research practices. Respondents were given an informed consent form to confirm voluntary participation. The informed consent form provides detailed information on the study, including its goal, description, possible benefits, confidentiality, publishing, participation, and informed consent. The researcher explained informed permission to all prospective respondents to address concerns about data privacy and how the instrument would be responded to, processed, and managed. A respondent may withdraw at any moment without giving a reason to the researcher. If a respondent withdraws before data collection is completed, the data submitted will be returned to them or shredded. Furthermore, suppose an elderly respondent wishes to have a younger or more educated member of their family or business. In that case, they may be able to sit while the instrument is discussed and answered. The research tools had no identifying indicators about the respondents; therefore, their identities were kept confidential. All data gathered were recorded and treated with utmost confidentiality. Data was safe and appropriately secured. The findings of this study should be disseminated through authorized and recognized research journals, as well as research colloquia and presentations, taking into account the respondents' personal and sensitive data, and should not be released without the respondents' full consent.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Entrepreneurs' Profile

Table 1 shows that half of the entrepreneurs, or 50%, are under 42 years old, showing that Generation Z (26 years old and younger) and Millennials (27 - 42 years old) are the key drivers of Iloilo City's enterprises. According to Bai et al. (2022), entrepreneurs aged 20 to 35 made up the top 100 firms. Individually, younger individuals are more eager to learn new things, see opportunities, and capitalize on them, all of which are essential characteristics of an entrepreneur. As such, they are closer to and more receptive to development frontiers, increasing their chances of becoming entrepreneurs. Furthermore, female entrepreneurs account for 54.29% of all study respondents (see Table 1). Entrepreneurs of both genders succeed throughout the world. Normative images of entrepreneurship are dominated by masculinity, and some research indicates that women-owned enterprises remain smaller than men-owned businesses (Davis & Shaver, 2012), reflecting a gender gap in entrepreneurship. However, this survey suggests that female entrepreneurs dominate the business climate in Iloilo City.

Table 1. Profile of the entrepreneurs

Variables	f	%
A. As a whole	70	100
B. Age		
Below 42 years old	35	50.00
43 - 58 years old	25	35.71
Above 58 years old	10	14.29
C. Sex		
Male	32	45.71
Female	38	54.29
D. Educational Attainment		
At most high school graduate	15	21.43
At least college undergraduate	55	78.57

Table 1 also shows that 78.57% of those polled have a college diploma or above. The gross enrollment rate in Philippine higher education was 35% in 2021 and 4.1 million in 2022 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2022),

consistent with the Filipino tradition of ensuring children receive a better or higher-quality education. This might explain why more than half, 78.57%, of the respondents are college students. Education is one of the most extensively researched entrepreneurial variables, and it is believed to be associated with knowledge, skills, problem-solving ability, discipline, motivation, and self-confidence, all of which can influence and enable an entrepreneur to deal with problems and thus become more successful. A favorable environment for young people to start enterprises is developed through education. According to Forbes (2005), entrepreneurs with more education and experience seek, collect, and analyze information about available development opportunities.

3.2 Enterprises' Profile

Table 2 shows that DTI-registered businesses with business permits account for 77.14% of total respondents in Iloilo City, whereas only 16 out of 70 are unregistered businesses without business permits. Furthermore, sole proprietors own 60 out of 70 respondents, or 85.71%. Firm enterprises are primarily registered with the DTI since it is important to register a sole proprietorship firm with the DTI to give it a legal entity and the ability to use its business name. Out of the total of 70 persons polled, 54 are DTI registered. This is also owing to the Iloilo City government's implementation of business registration requirements. This suggests that with the government easing the burden on business owners by giving online options for getting the essential business permits to function correctly, ambitious entrepreneurs have found it easier to operate with legal registration (Villafuerte, 2017). On the other hand, 16 enterprises have not registered with the DTI and lack business authorization. Although establishing a business with the DTI is essential to provide it with a legal identity and the opportunity to use a unique business name, vendors who operate "intermittently or irregularly" and those selling handcrafted things as a hobby are exempt from registration (Mercado, 2020). The basic requirement is that all businesses that sell frequently, regardless of size, register with the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR). According to the BIR individuals with annual incomes less than PhP250,000 are exempt from income tax (Mercado, 2020). This might explain why the 16 respondents have failed to register with the DTI.

Table 2. Profile of the enterprises

Variables	f	%
A. As a whole	70	100
B. Business Registration Status		
Registered with DTI	54	77.14
Not registered with DTI	16	22.86
C. Business Permit Status		
Yes	54	77.14
No	16	22.86
D. Number of Employees		
Below 10 employees	44	62.86
10 or more employees	26	37.14
E. Type of Ownership		
Sole Proprietor	60	85.71
Either One person, partnership, or corporation	10	14.29
F. Type of Food Establishment		
Fine and Casual / Family Dining	23	32.86
Fast Casual and fast food	22	31.43
Food Truck / Cart / Stand	14	20.00
Café/Coffee house and Buffet	11	15.71
G. Enterprise Location		
Arevalo	10	14.29
Jaro	10	14.29
La Puz	10	14.29
La Paz	10	14.29
City Proper	10	14.28
Molo	10	14.28
Mandurriao	10	14.28
H. Number of Years in Operation		
Less than 5 years	25	35.71
5 - 10 years	16	22.86
More than 10 years	29	41.43
I. Number of Branches		
One Branch Only	54	77.14
More than one branch	16	22.86

Furthermore, 62.86% of respondents are from micro-enterprises. 44 of the 70 businesses examined have fewer than 10 workers. Catalano (2023), in his paper, stated that a microenterprise, also known as a microbusiness, employs few people and often runs with fewer than ten. Although only 62.86%, it is consistent with the Philippine Statistics Authority's list of microenterprises and its conclusion that corporations in the Philippines are mostly microenterprises. The predominance of microenterprises suggests that there are entrepreneurs in Iloilo City who may seek finance to develop their businesses. Furthermore, it would imply that Iloilo City entrepreneurs prefer simplicity and low start-up costs in a revenue-generating organization.

Iloilo residents like nice company, ambiance, and meals (Justiniani & Cordova, 2015), which is quite similar to the main food outlet assessed in this study. According to Table 2, 32.86% of the surveyed businesses operate as fine and casual/family eating. The upscale and casual/family dining food establishments score best among studied respondents, indicating Ilonggos' preference for companionship when eating. Location selection is an economic decision that affects the environment in which economic activity happens, including costs and overall production efficiency (Rogalska, 2020). All of the businesses under consideration were in Iloilo City's urban region. This indicates that companies may prosper in the city. The region's capital, Iloilo City, is home to enterprises and is projected to play significant roles in commerce, trade, finance, recreation, education, and regional politics.

Additionally, Table 2 shows that 41.43% of businesses have been in Iloilo City for more than ten years, while 35.71% are relatively young and have been in business for less than five years. This would suggest that the businesses overcame obstacles to continue operating for longer than projected. Furthermore, from a theoretical perspective, the business units have performed longer operations and accumulated more experiences or learning curves, allowing them to manage a stronger firm and develop rapidly. This might be connected to the enterprise's branches. However, 77.14% of the firms questioned for this study have only one location. This implies that, although the majority of the businesses polled have been in operation for more than ten years, they are cautious about expanding their operations. According to Brush, Ceru, and Blackburn (2009), some businesses do not want to develop, while others choose sluggish growth while being just as successful as those that grow quickly.

3.3 MSMEs Level of Competitiveness

Seen in Table 3 are the results of the level of competitiveness of the enterprise in terms of their capacity to compete, capacity to connect, and capacity to change. Overall, the study's MSMEs are moderately competitive in terms of their capacity to compete ($M = 3.15$, $SD = 0.40$), capacity to connect ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 0.44$), and capacity to adapt ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 0.51$). Café/Coffee Houses and Buffets, on the other hand, are highly competitive in terms of their capacity to compete ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.26$), connect ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.27$), and change ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.26$). Mandurriao district is highly competitive in terms of competition capacity ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 0.32$) and connectivity capacity ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.27$).

The belief that young people are uniquely capable of developing great ideas, whether in scientific inquiry, invention, or business, is widespread and lasting (Jones and Iredale 2014). This is evidenced by the study's findings, which show that people under 42 years old have the highest level of competitiveness in their ability to compete, connect, and change. It should also be mentioned that individuals with at least a college baccalaureate degree had the highest level of competitiveness in similar competitiveness indicators. These findings are similar to Majkova and Kljucnikov's (2017) study which discovered that young entrepreneurs had higher inventiveness, risk-taking ability, task-solving competence, and adaptability. Furthermore, the educational attainment of entrepreneurs, particularly tertiary education or at least college undergraduate level, is regarded to be more competitive, signaling an increasingly knowledge-driven corporate operation (OECD, 2012).

The study also reveals that male entrepreneurs have a higher level of competitiveness in terms of their capacity to compete, capacity to connect, and capacity to change relative to female entrepreneurs. While it is evident that males are quintessentially competitive (Moxon, 2015), there are still disputes on the gender gap in competitiveness (Lackner, 2021). Thus, the findings of this study, which show that female entrepreneurs have a moderate degree of competitiveness, suggest that female entrepreneurs are also eager to compete including entrepreneurial competitiveness, ability to connect, and capacity to adapt (Lackner, 2021).

Table 3. Level of competitiveness of the enterprise

Variables	Capacity to Compete			Capacity to Connect			Capacity to Change		
	M	VI	SD	M	VI	SD	M	VI	SD
A. As a whole	3.15	MC	0.40	3.16	MC	0.44	2.99	MC	0.51
B. Age									
Below 42 years old	3.27	MC	0.41	3.33	MC	0.42	3.19	MC	0.52
43 – 58 years old	3.02	MC	0.36	2.95	MC	0.37	2.77	MC	0.39
Above 58 years old	3.05	MC	0.37	3.09	MC	0.44	2.80	MC	0.51
C. Sex									
Male	3.21	MC	0.40	3.21	MC	0.47	3.07	MC	0.50
Female	3.10	MC	0.39	3.12	MC	0.40	2.91	MC	0.52
D. Educational Attainment									
At most high school graduate	2.95	MC	0.23	2.93	MC	0.17	2.70	MC	0.32
At least college undergraduate	3.21	MC	0.42	3.22	MC	0.47	3.06	MC	0.53
E. Business Registration Status									
Registered with DTI	3.24	MC	0.39	3.21	MC	0.47	3.07	MC	0.50
Not registered with DTI	2.86	MC	0.25	2.99	MC	0.25	2.70	MC	0.45
F. Business Permit Status									
Yes	3.23	MC	0.39	3.21	MC	0.47	3.09	MC	0.49
No	2.89	MC	0.29	2.98	MC	0.25	2.65	MC	0.44
G. Number of Employees									
Below 10 employees	3.01	MC	0.34	3.00	MC	0.37	2.80	MC	0.45
10 or more employees	3.40	MC	0.36	3.44	MC	0.40	3.30	MC	0.44
H. Type of Ownership									
Sole Proprietor	3.11	MC	0.40	3.08	MC	0.42	2.91	MC	0.51
One person/partnership/ Corp.	3.41	MC	0.24	3.61	MC	0.21	3.42	MC	0.29
I. Type of Food Establishment									
Fine & Casual / Family Dining	3.32	MC	0.36	3.31	MC	0.42	3.17	MC	0.42
Fast Casual and fast food	2.93	MC	0.36	2.91	MC	0.38	2.70	MC	0.44
Food Truck / Cart / Stand	2.91	MC	0.16	2.93	MC	0.20	2.66	MC	0.31
Café/Coffee house and Buffet	3.56	HC	0.26	3.63	HC	0.27	3.59	HC	0.26
J. Enterprise Location									
Arevalo	3.06	MC	0.20	3.01	MC	0.18	3.02	MC	0.29
Jaro	3.39	MC	0.46	3.38	MC	0.46	3.18	MC	0.71
La Puz	2.85	MC	0.27	2.99	MC	0.30	2.62	MC	0.20
La Paz	3.24	MC	0.33	3.20	MC	0.38	3.01	MC	0.56
City Proper	3.11	MC	0.37	3.01	MC	0.37	2.80	MC	0.43
Molo	2.92	MC	0.40	2.92	MC	0.59	2.82	MC	0.49
Mandurriao	3.50	HC	0.32	3.61	HC	0.27	3.46	MC	0.33
K. Number of Years in Operation									
Less than 5 years	3.13	MC	0.48	3.19	MC	0.53	3.09	MC	0.57
5 – 10 years	3.13	MC	0.38	3.23	MC	0.43	2.98	MC	0.54
More than 10 years	3.18	MC	0.33	3.10	MC	0.35	2.90	MC	0.44
L. Number of Branches									
One Branch Only	3.09	MC	0.39	3.11	MC	0.44	2.91	MC	0.50
More than one branch	3.38	MC	0.35	3.33	MC	0.40	3.23	MC	0.48

Note: Highly Competitive | HC (3.50 – 4.00); Moderately Competitive | MC (2.50 – 3.49); Slightly Competitive | SC (1.50 – 2.49); Less Likely Competitive | LLC (1.00 – 1.49)

To renew or apply for a permit, entrepreneurs must go through various steps, contact several authorities, and spend substantial time accessing public services (Garay-Nugroho, 2022). Furthermore, Garay-Nugroho (2022) stated that to provide a welcoming and healthy business climate, the Philippine government has changed to enhance the ease of doing business in the country by simplifying present government processes and procedures. With the ease of conducting business brought about by improved regulations, many firms have found it appealing to register their enterprises, as seen by the findings of this research. As a result, DTI-registered firms with business permission are shown to be more competitive than non-DTI-registered enterprises without permits. Businesses that have registered status may be able to enhance their operations and hence their competitiveness rating (Kumar & Kumar, 2020).

A single person/partnership/corporation that typically employs ten or more individuals is proven more competitive in its ability to compete, connect, and change. Employee commitment to a firm is critical to its success (Mathur, 2015), providing a vital source of long-term competitive advantage. Furthermore, a one-

person/partnership/corporation firm ownership implies more resources accessible to the enterprise (Yang and Meyer, 2019). It is not surprising that additional resources and workers lead to increased competition. Additionally, although all types of food establishments are found to have a moderate level of competitiveness, café/coffee house and buffet type of establishments have the highest level of competitiveness among other types. This high degree of rivalry is most likely due to the expansion of cafes/coffee shops. Furthermore, while the coffee market varies, it is claimed to be very competitive due to its large number of customers and providers (Momin, 2022).

Regardless of location, a commercial enterprise's competition is generally moderate. Mandurriao, one of Iloilo City's district boroughs, has experienced substantial growth due to partnerships with several major commercial developers. As a result, numerous businessmen indicated an interest in investing in this region, which might explain why enterprises in Mandurriao have become more competitive. Based on this study's findings businesses in the Mandurriao district borough have a high level of competitiveness and interactivity. Competition is unavoidable given the Mandurriao district borough's ongoing expansion and corporate efforts. Furthermore, these enhancements reduce connectivity issues, providing more opportunities and possibilities for business owners to connect. Finally, firms that have been in operation for more than ten years and have several branches are more competitive than those that have been in operation for ten years or less and have just one branch. From a theoretical standpoint, the business unit that has been in operation for a longer period will have more experiences or learning curves, allowing the business to operate a stronger and so develop quicker.

3.4 MSMEs' Extent of Contribution

Table 4 shows results that overall, the enterprises surveyed in this study have a moderate contribution to food tour development in terms of job creation ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 0.48$) and product offering ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.49$), but a low contribution in terms of gross monthly sales ($M = 2.36$, $SD = 0.59$). The low level of contribution to food tour development, particularly in gross monthly sales, may be attributed to the effects of the pandemic, which caused a sharp drop in economic sustainability activities, particularly tourism-related activities (Medeira et al., 2020), although enterprises were able to contribute moderately to job creation and product offerings. The findings would be consistent with what Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport (2021) describes as the various good consequences of tourist sector expansion, such as job creation and economic advantages such as product offerings.

Entrepreneurs under the age of 42 make the greatest contributions to employment creation, product offerings, and gross monthly sales. According to Balas Rant et al. (2021), young entrepreneurs provide job chances for themselves and the other young people they hire. Young entrepreneurs also help build new skills and experiences that promote youngsters' creativity and resilience. In contrast, the literature generally indicates that entrepreneurship is a male-dominated field (Muntean & Ozkazanc-Pan, 2015), implying that gender is a highly confounding variable that moderates entrepreneurship behavior and intention (Guzman & Kacperczyk, 2019), including aspects of contribution to a specific aspect of business development. This is obvious in the study's findings, which show that male entrepreneurs contribute more than females. According to Hyams-Ssekasi et al. (2019), there is a difference in the company creation process experience between males and females, which may explain the findings of this study, where the level of involvement in food tour development varies.

The study's findings about educational attainment reveal that entrepreneurs who are at least college undergraduates contribute more to food tour development than those who are at most high school graduates. It might be because the Commission on Higher Education mandated "Technopreneurship 101" in science, technology, engineering, agricultural, and math subjects. Additionally, the formation and exposure to an entrepreneurial attitude and principles of entrepreneurship promote company creation and, eventually, contribute to the growth of economic activities such as culinary tours.

Enterprises with DTI registration and business permits contribute much more than those without as they have much more marketing and financial prospects (Puspaningrum, 2020). However, the findings of this study show that business entities contribute very little to gross monthly sales. This can be ascribed to the consequences of the epidemic. Sonobe et al. (2021) reported in their Asian Development Bank study that shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic began, many governments began extending financial and other forms of support to micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises because they are more vulnerable to negative shocks to their supply chain, labor supply,

and final demand for goods and services than larger firms. However, the intensity of the pandemic's influence varies greatly depending on the activities and features. It is also clear from the results based on the variable number of workers that businesses with less than ten employees contribute little to job creation and gross monthly sales. Similarly, sole proprietorship businesses contribute very little to gross monthly sales.

Table 4. Extent of enterprises' contribution to food tour development

Variables	Job Creation			Product Offering			Gross Monthly Sales		
	M	VI	SD	M	VI	SD	M	VI	SD
A. As a whole	2.63	ME	0.48	3.07	ME	0.49	2.36	LE	0.59
B. Age									
Below 42 years old	2.77	ME	0.52	3.25	ME	.050	2.98	ME	0.45
43 – 58 years old	2.47	LE	0.41	2.85	ME	0.35	2.63	ME	0.34
Above 58 years old	2.52	ME	0.35	2.98	ME	0.54	2.69	ME	0.39
C. Sex									
Male	2.66	ME	0.43	3.07	ME	0.49	2.82	ME	0.42
Female	2.60	ME	0.51	3.06	ME	0.49	2.81	ME	0.45
D. Educational Attainment									
At most high school graduate	2.43	LE	0.42	2.81	ME	0.31	2.58	ME	0.32
At least college undergraduate	2.68	ME	0.48	3.14	ME	0.51	2.88	ME	0.44
E. Business Registration Status									
Registered with DTI	2.71	ME	0.42	3.15	ME	0.44	2.36	LE	0.61
Not registered with DTI	2.34	LE	0.54	2.77	ME	0.55	2.38	LE	0.52
F. Business Permit Status									
Yes	2.71	ME	0.42	3.15	ME	0.44	2.41	LE	0.63
No	2.31	LE	0.53	2.79	ME	0.56	2.19	LE	0.36
G. Number of Employees									
Below 10 employees	2.47	LE	0.45	2.89	ME	0.45	2.19	LE	0.54
10 or more employees	3.00	ME	0.39	3.36	ME	0.42	2.65	ME	0.55
H. Type of Ownership									
Sole Proprietor	2.57	ME	0.49	3.00	ME	0.49	2.32	LE	0.59
One person/partnership/ Corp.	2.95	ME	0.18	3.45	ME	0.28	2.60	ME	0.52
I. Type of Food Establishment									
Fine & Casual / Family Dining	2.80	ME	0.41	3.26	ME	0.42	2.42	LE	0.71
Fast Casual and fast food	2.51	ME	0.49	2.80	ME	0.43	2.29	LE	0.57
Food Truck / Cart / Stand	2.29	LE	0.36	2.81	ME	0.35	2.19	LE	0.39
Café/Coffee house and Buffet	2.93	ME	0.41	3.53	HE	0.36	2.61	ME	0.53
J. Enterprise Location									
Arevalo	2.71	ME	0.45	2.99	ME	0.22	2.43	LE	0.76
Jaro	2.76	ME	0.66	3.30	ME	0.57	2.70	ME	0.71
La Puz	2.25	ME	0.29	2.81	ME	0.42	2.17	LE	0.36
La Paz	2.66	ME	0.48	3.11	ME	0.54	2.37	LE	0.51
City Proper	2.37	LE	0.31	2.89	ME	0.37	1.97	LE	0.37
Molo	2.62	ME	0.43	2.89	ME	0.53	2.20	LE	0.59
Mandurriao	3.03	ME	0.24	3.49	ME	0.39	2.70	ME	0.43
K. Number of Years in Operation									
Less than 5 years	2.74	ME	0.60	3.07	ME	0.52	2.37	LE	0.66
5 – 10 years	2.52	ME	0.44	3.13	ME	0.53	2.29	LE	0.57
More than 10 years	2.58	ME	0.35	3.04	ME	0.45	2.39	LE	0.55
L. Number of Branches									
One Branch Only	2.55	ME	0.45	3.00	ME	0.49	2.30	LE	0.57
More than one branch	2.90	ME	0.48	3.31	ME	0.40	2.56	ME	0.63

Note: High Extent of Contribution | HE (3.50 – 4.00); Moderated Extent of Contribution | ME (2.50 – 3.49); Low Extent of Contribution | LE (1.50 – 2.49); Very Low Extent of Contribution | VL (1.00 – 1.49)

Based on the kind of food institution, café/coffee houses and buffets have considerably greater values regarding employment generation, product offers, and gross monthly sales. Notably, Iloilo City has experienced an increase in coffee shops as it develops. Implications include possible assistance for coffee shops to communicate with consumers using various marketing methods required to continue business operations, contribute to new job creation, and ensure economic sustainability (Adeleke, 2019). Nonetheless, different food enterprises contribute significantly to employment generation and product offers. However, the poor contribution to gross monthly sales can be attributed to the pandemic's impacts.

The findings also show that location contributes moderately to employment creation and product offers. However, except for businesses located in Jaro and Mandurriao, gross monthly sales are minimal. This is hardly surprising given that Jaro and Mandurriao are commercial regions (USAID, 2014). The concentration of businesses in the Jaro district and the acceleration of development in the area are likely to be responsible for the moderate increase in gross monthly sales, which coincided with an increase in food consumption from nearby food enterprises. Furthermore, Megaworld's Iloilo Business Park in Mandurriao, which includes the Iloilo Convention Center, caters to major national and international gatherings, exhibits, events, and entertainment, transforming the area into a thriving new central business district in Iloilo City (USAID, 2014).

The findings of this study on the level of contribution to job creation are consistent with the International Labor Conference Report of the International Labour Office (2015), which notes that young small businesses contribute significantly to employment. The findings of this study support Nathan et al.'s (2015) findings that firms with more branches to run are more likely to contribute to social capital since they have accumulated experience over time.

3.5 Differences in MSMEs' Level of Competitiveness

Table 5 shows that p-values for age ($p = 0.009$) and educational attainment ($p = 0.015$) are less than the specified alpha of 0.05 when examining the entrepreneurs' profile factors impacting MSMEs' degree of competitiveness. Furthermore, the p-value of the variable sex is 0.142, which is greater than the set alpha. The study's findings show a significant difference in the competitiveness level of firms when entrepreneurs are categorized by age ($U = 9.493$, $p = 0.009$). Table 5 data show a statistically significant difference in educational attainment ($U = 583.000$, $p = 0.015$). Meanwhile, when the identical data in Table 5 is classified by sex, it is not statistically significant ($U = 483.500$, $p = 0.142$).

Table 5. Differences in MSMEs' level of competitiveness in terms of the entrepreneurs' profile

Variable	Groupings	U-value / H-value	p-value
Age	Below 42 years old	9.493	0.009**
	43 - 58 years old		
	Above 58 years old		
Sex	Male	483.5	0.142
	Female		
Educational Attainment	At most high school graduate	583.0	0.015**
	At least college undergraduate		

** $p < 0.05$ is significant

The analysis shown in Table 6 reveals statistically significant differences in the level of competitiveness for those categories 43 - 58 years old when compared to those below 42 years old with $p = 0.009$, but not significant when compared to those above 58 years old or when paired those above 58 years old with those below 42 years old with $p = 1.000$ and $p = 0.247$, respectively. Age is the most obvious and observable element (Scheibe et al., 2021), significantly influencing behavior. Accordingly, young entrepreneurs are more likely to be excited and eager to test their skills than older entrepreneurs, reflecting a more competitive mentality, which the findings of this study support. However, age does not just affect an individual's competitiveness. Lévesque and Minniti (2006) found that being older is strongly related to having more experience, which has previously been highlighted as beneficial to entrepreneurs and their competitiveness.

Table 6. Post Hoc analysis of MSMEs' level of competitiveness when entrepreneurs are grouped according to age

Variable	Age (I)	Age (J)	z	p-value
Age	43 - 58 years old	Below 42 years old	15.72	0.009**
		Above 58 years old	-3.050	1.000
	Above 58 years old	Below 42 years old	12.67	0.247

** $p < 0.05$ is significant

Education, on the other hand, equips people with the skills and knowledge they need to accomplish their professions more effectively, perhaps leading to higher productivity and efficiency. The findings of this study indicate that the more one's educational attainment, the greater one's competitiveness. This is congruent with the findings of Krstic et al. (2020), who examined higher education as a determinant of an economy's competitiveness and long-term growth. They have said that improving credentials and talents is vital to increasing output and

competitiveness, implying that an entrepreneur's education and academic success significantly influence competitiveness.

The findings of this study reveal that male and female entrepreneurs compete equally. This contradicts the findings of other authors who have shown that males are more likely to participate in competitions or perform better in competitive circumstances than girls (Comeig et al., 2016; Saccardo et al., 2017). The outcomes of this study would imply that female entrepreneurs were given the same benefits and opportunities to compete in the context of the numerous criteria as male entrepreneurs.

Table 7. Differences in MSMEs' level of competitiveness in terms of enterprises' profile

Variable	U-value/H-value	p-value
Business Registration Status	200.0	0.001**
Business Permit Status	186.0	0.001**
Number of Employees	940.0	0.000**
Type of Ownership	491.0	0.001**
Type of Food Establishment	32.53	0.000**
Enterprise Location	21.47	0.002**
Number of Years in Operation	0.027	0.987
Number of Branches	614.5	0.011**

p < 0.05 is significant**

Table 7 shows that p-values for business registration status ($p = 0.001$), business permit status ($p = 0.001$), number of employees ($p < 0.001$), type of ownership ($p = 0.001$), type of food establishment ($p < 0.001$), enterprise location ($p = 0.002$), and number of branches ($p = 0.011$) are all less than the set alpha ($p = 0.05$). The variable number of years in operations has a higher p-value (0.987) than the set alpha. The study found significant differences in competitiveness among MSMEs based on business registration status ($U = 200.0$, $p = 0.001$), business permit status ($U = 186.0$, $p = 0.001$), employee count ($U = 940.0$, $p < 0.001$), ownership type ($U = 491.0$, $p = 0.001$), food establishment type ($U = 32.539$, $p < 0.001$), enterprise location ($U = 18.4621.472$, $p = 0.002$), and number of branches ($U = 614.5$, $p = 0.011$). The results also show no significant difference in MSMEs' competitiveness when classified by years in operation ($U = 0.0.27$, $p = 0.987$).

La Porta and Shleifer (2008) found that significant variations in firm performance are not universal and that unregistered enterprises outperformed registered enterprises from the start. Unregistered enterprises are thought to have poorer subsequent firm performance than registered enterprises during start-up. This is consistent with the findings of the current study, which show a substantial difference in competitiveness when grouped by company registration status and business permit status. The current analysis demonstrates that DTI-registered firms with business permits are much more competitive than those that are not registered or do not have business permits. This would suggest that business registration processes enhance the business climate toward increased corporate competitiveness.

De Brito and de Oliveira (2016) believe that human capital is crucial to organizational competitiveness relative to staff numbers. According to Shafeek (2016), human capital is an asset that adds value to a company's effectiveness and efficiency, enabling it to surpass competitors. Competent human resources boost an organization's competitiveness. Furthermore, firm size, defined as the number of employees, number of branches, and type of ownership, is more essential than previously thought (Kyung & Yoo, 2016). Large organizations have an advantage over smaller businesses owing to economies of scale. According to Thanh et al. (2021), firm size influences a company's competitiveness, with larger sizes associated with higher competitiveness. Such findings are consistent with the current study's findings, which show that the level of competitiveness of MSMEs varies significantly depending on the number of employees, type of ownership, and number of branches, with larger firms having more employees and branches managed and owned by a single person/partnership/corporation having a higher level of competitiveness.

Table 8 indicates that food truck/cart/stand enterprises are more competitive than fine and casual/family dining, café/coffee house, and buffet restaurants ($p = 0.004$ and $p < 0.001$, respectively), but not quick casual or fast-food establishments ($p = 1.000$). Fast casual and fast-food outlets outperformed fine and casual/family eating facilities

($p = 0.004$) and café/coffee house and buffet operations ($p < 0.001$). There was no significant difference ($p = 0.410$) between fine and casual/family dining establishments, café/coffee houses, and buffet restaurants.

Table 8. Post Hoc analysis of MSMEs' level of competitiveness when enterprises are grouped according to the type of food establishment

Variable	Age (I)	Age (J)	z	p-value
Type of Food Establishment	Food Truck / Cart / Stand	Fast Casual and Fast Food	2.886	1.000
		Fine and Casual / Family Dining	23.58	0.004**
		Café / Coffee house and Buffet	-37.18	0.000**
	Fast Casual and Fast Food	Fine and Casual / Family Dining	20.70	0.004**
		Café / Coffee house and Buffet	-34.29	0.000**
		Fine and Casual / Family Dining	-13.59	0.410

$p < 0.05$ is significant**

Food enterprises strive to distinguish themselves depending on their kind and cuisine. With Iloilo City's culinary industry expanding, restaurant competition has grown (Moreno & Tejada, 2015). This argument is seen in the wide range of culinary restaurants in Iloilo City. This would indicate that competition exists regardless of the type of food outlet. However, the survey found no significant variations in competition across food truck/cart/stand enterprises, quick casual and fast-food establishments, fine and casual/family dining institutions, café/coffee houses, and buffet establishments. Carpenter and Sweetland's (2022) findings from their research on food trucks refute the myth that they hurt businesses. According to their findings, food trucks are related to more restaurants, supporting the study's conclusion that there are no substantial differences in competition between food truck/cart/stand businesses and quick casual and fast-food locations. Similarly, the findings of this study, which found no significant differences in the level of competitiveness between fine and casual/family dining establishments, café/coffee houses, and buffet establishments, are supported by Dunman's (2020) findings, which found that food quality, service quality, and ambiance quality are more important in the competitiveness of food establishments than type.

Table 9. Post Hoc analysis of MSMEs' level of competitiveness when enterprises are grouped according to enterprise locations

Variable	Enterprise Location (I)	Enterprise Location (J)	z	p-value
Enterprise Location	La Paz	Molo	- 5.750	1.000
		City Proper	- 9.250	1.000
		Arevalo	16.45	1.000
		La Paz	- 17.85	1.000
		Jaro	25.000	0.126
		Mandurriao	- 35.95	0.002**
	Molo	City Proper	3.500	1.000
		Arevalo	10.70	1.000
		La Paz	12.10	1.000
		Jaro	19.25	0.722
		Mandurriao	- 30.20	0.019**
	City Proper	Arevalo	7.200	1.000
		La Paz	8.600	1.000
		Jaro	15.75	1.000
		Mandurriao	- 26.70	0.070
	Arevalo	La Paz	- 1.400	1.000
		Jaro	- 8.550	1.000
		Mandurriao	- 19.50	0.674
	La Paz	Jaro	7.150	1.000
		Mandurriao	- 18.10	0.980
	Jaro	Mandurriao	- 10.95	1.000

$p < 0.05$ is significant**

According to the pairwise comparisons in Table 9, where adjusted p-values are presented, there are statistically significant differences in the level of competitiveness between those in La Paz and Molo and those in Mandurriao ($p = 0.002$ and $p = 0.019$, respectively), but not when compared to other enterprise locations. This would imply that MSMEs in Mandurriao are far more competitive than those in La Paz and Molo. This is understandable given that Mandurriao has many business developments (USAID, 2014). Although Molo is also a commercial sector, Mandurriao is thriving as Iloilo City's new central business district, whereas La Paz is predominantly an industrial

and residential zone, with shipping businesses, oil depots, and a flour milling industry as its primary economic sources.

When all localities fight for resources, whether cities, municipalities, nations, or regions, experience shows that those who employ the marketing concept get the best results. The study's findings, which show that there is no significant difference in the level of competitiveness among MSMEs when compared to other enterprise locations, imply that businesses can compete regardless of where they are in Iloilo City, taking into account the expectations and demands of citizens, businesses, investors, tourists, visitors, and members of other target markets, as well as characteristics, and also offering neighboring competitive locations. This is possible, given Iloilo City's commitment to development and long-term expansion (Lena, 2023).

3.6 Differences in MSMEs' Extent of Contribution to Food Tour Development

Table 10. Differences in the MSMEs' extent of contribution to food tour development in terms of entrepreneurs' profile

Variable	Groupings	U-value / H-value	p-value
Age	Below 42 years old		
	43 – 58 years old	11.64	0.003**
	Above 58 years old		
Sex	Male	582.5	0.764
	Female		
Educational Attainment	At most high school graduate	581.5	0.016**
	At least college undergraduate		

p < 0.05 is significant**

Looking at the entrepreneurs' profile factors for MSMEs' contribution level to food tour growth, Table 10 shows that p-values for age ($p = 0.003$) and educational attainment ($p = 0.016$) are less than the specified alpha of 0.05. Furthermore, the p-value for the variable sex is 0.764, greater than the set alpha. This study's findings reveal substantial disparities in the level of contribution of firms to food tour development when entrepreneurs are classified by age ($U = 11.644$, $p = 0.003$). Meanwhile, educational attainment was statistically significant ($U = 581.500$, $p = 0.016$). Finally, when categorized by sex, it was not statistically significant ($U = 582.500$, $p = 0.764$).

Table 11. Post Hoc analysis of MSMEs' extent of contribution to food tour development when entrepreneurs are grouped according to age

Variable	Age (I)	Age (J)	z	p-value
Age	43 – 58 years old	Below 42 years old	17.474	0.003**
		Above 58 years old	-3.660	1.000
	Above 58 years old	Below 42 years old	13.814	0.058

p < 0.05 is significant**

From the pairwise comparisons in Table 11, where adjusted p-values are presented, analysis reveals statistically significant differences in the extent of contribution of the enterprises when entrepreneurs belong to those categories 43 – 58 years old when compared to those below 42 years old with $p = 0.003$, but not found significant when compared to above 58 years old and when paired those above 58 years old when compared to those below 42 years old with $p = 1.000$ and $p = 0.058$ respectively.

Entrepreneurs generate jobs for both themselves and others. Entrepreneurial activity may boost a country's economic performance by adding new commodities, technology, and manufacturing methods to the market while increasing overall productivity and competition (Kritikos, 2014). The prevalent and long-held belief that young people are uniquely capable of developing significant ideas in entrepreneurship (Jones et al., 2014) is widespread and long-standing. This is especially clear in this survey, as entrepreneurs under 42 contribute significantly more to food tour growth than older entrepreneurs, particularly those aged 43 to 58.

Many countries have incorporated entrepreneurial education into their basic, secondary, and university education curriculum. Prior research on the impact of education on entrepreneurial activities, such as MSMEs' contributions to food tour development, yielded conclusions that differed from the findings of this study. According to Jena (2020) and Mukhtar et al. (2021), entrepreneurship education enhances entrepreneurial attitudes, intentions, skills, or knowledge, which may result in a bigger contribution to job creation, economic growth, productivity and

production improvements, and innovation. However, Oosterbeek et al. (2010) argue that some educational programs have failed to foster entrepreneurial activities.

Several studies have identified significant similarities between male and female entrepreneurs, particularly in their firm's growth direction (Klapper & Parker, 2011), as well as differences in their company aims and activity patterns (Dilli & Westerhuis, 2018). It should also be noted that both contribute differentially to societal progress across industries and services (Hyams-Ssekasi et al., 2019; OECD, 2017). These discoveries, however, are not included in the current study's findings. According to Davis and Shaver (2012), research on entrepreneurs' growth goals, including how they contribute to societal development, has produced mixed results regarding empirical discrepancies between men and women. Menzies et al. (2004) found no statistically significant differences in stated growth aspirations between men and women in their study. The consequences of such a discovery might reduce the gender gap in entrepreneurial contributions to society's progress.

Table 12. Differences in the MSMEs' extent of contribution to food tour development in terms of enterprises' profile

Variable	U-value / H-value	p-value
Business Registration Status	233.5	0.005**
Business Permit Status	209.0	0.002**
Number of Employees	896.5	0.000**
Type of Ownership	461.5	0.007**
Type of Food Establishment	23.62	0.000**
Enterprise Location	18.46	0.005**
Number of Years in Operation	0.434	0.805
Number of Branches	596.5	0.021**

p < 0.05 is significant**

Table 12 shows that business registration status ($p = 0.005$), business permit status ($p = 0.002$), number of employees ($p < 0.001$), type of ownership ($p = 0.007$), type of food establishment ($p < 0.001$), enterprise location ($p = 0.005$), and number of branches ($p = 0.021$) have p-values less than the set alpha of 0.005. In contrast, the number of years in operation variable has a p-value of 0.805, higher than the set alpha. The study found significant differences in the extent of contribution of enterprises to food tour development when grouped according to business registration status ($U = 233.5$, $p = 0.005$), business permit status ($U = 209.0$, $p = 0.002$), number of employees ($U = 896.5$, $p < 0.001$), type of ownership ($U = 461.5$, $p = 0.007$), type of food establishment ($U = 23.622$, $p < 0.001$), enterprise location ($U = 18.466$, $p < 0.005$), and number of branches ($U = 596.5$, $p = 0.021$). The findings also show that there is no significant difference in MSMEs' contribution to food tour development when grouped by number of years in operation ($U = 0.434$, $p = 0.805$).

Cities are vital for business registration in decentralized economies like the Philippines. City-level company registration reform is one endeavor to attract business and generate jobs, particularly for MSMEs (Shrader, 2016). According to Williams and Kedir (2016), formal enterprises that start unregistered have significantly higher subsequent annual sales and employment growth rates than those that start registered, which contradicts the findings of this current study. However, it is crucial to remember that official figures on enterprise contributions are based on the total number of company enterprises registered. Furthermore, Branstetter et al. (2013) empirically analyzed company entrance regulation. They found it was connected with increased business formation and productivity, implying a stronger contribution to economic growth. Furthermore, Puspaningrum (2019) observed that business size, longevity, and legality all have a good and substantial influence on business growth, confirming increased economic development benefits.

The analysis shown in Table 13 reveals statistically significant differences in the level of competitiveness for food truck/cart/stand establishments when compared to fine and casual/family dining, café/coffee house, and buffet with $p = 0.004$ and $p = 0.001$, respectively, but not when compared to fast casual and fast-food establishments with $p = 1.000$. Furthermore, there were statistically significant variations in rivalry between quick casual and fast-food outlets, fine and casual/family eating venues ($p = 0.003$), and café/coffee house and buffet establishments ($p = 0.003$). Nonetheless, there was no significant difference ($p = 1.000$) between fine and casual/family eating places, café/coffee houses, and buffet venues.

Table 13. Post Hoc analysis of MSMEs' extent of contribution to food tour development when enterprises are grouped according to type of food establishment

Variable	Age (I)	Age (J)	z	p-value
Type of Food Establishment	Food Truck / Cart / Stand	Fast Casual and Fast Food	5.182	1.000
		Fine and Casual / Family Dining	23.44	0.004**
		Café / Coffee house and Buffet	-31.29	0.001**
	Fast Casual and Fast Food	Fine and Casual / Family Dining	18.26	0.003**
		Café / Coffee house and Buffet	-26.11	0.003**
	Fine and Casual / Family Dining	Café / Coffee house and Buffet	-7.850	1.000**

p < 0.05 is significant**

While customers have many options, organizations at all levels compete more than ever (Knollenberg et al., 2020), including contributions to development activities. In this situation, the study's findings show a considerable variation in the amount to which firms contribute to food tour development when categorized by kind of food institution. It is especially relevant when food truck/cart/stand enterprises combine fine and casual/family dining, café/coffee house, and buffet operations. The food truck phenomenon arose due to the pandemic's aftermath and economic downturn (Bartle, 2021). Consequently, Shin et al. (2020) and Isoni Auad et al. (2019) discovered that customers preferred food trucks because of their handy movable locations, food flavor, and value, resulting in increased sales and a bigger contribution to development.

This study also reveals a substantial difference in the contribution level when fast casual and fast-food outlets are compared to fine and casual/family eating venues, café/coffee houses, and buffet establishments. Many of the most heated discussions in the food and beverage business revolve around fast food and fast-casual outlets. The quickening speed of life in cities and the need for faster and cheaper meals have contributed to the expansion of these restaurants. As a result, the market expects a greater contribution to the development of the economy as fast-casual/fast-food restaurants proliferate.

Table 14. Post Hoc analysis of MSMEs' extent of contribution to food tour development when enterprises are grouped according to enterprises' locations

Variable	Enterprise Location (I)	Enterprise Location (J)	z	p-value
Enterprise Location	La Paz	Molo	- 10.65	1.000
		City Proper	- 7.700	1.000
		Arevalo	16.00	1.000
		La Paz	- 19.20	0.731
		Jaro	23.00	0.241
		Mandurriao	- 34.75	0.003**
	Molo	City Proper	2.950	1.000
		Arevalo	5.350	1.000
		La Paz	8.550	1.000
		Jaro	12.35	1.000
		Mandurriao	- 24.10	0.170
	City Proper	Arevalo	- 8.300	1.000
		La Paz	11.50	1.000
		Jaro	15.30	1.000
		Mandurriao	- 27.05	0.062
	Arevalo	La Paz	- 3.200	1.000
		Jaro	- 7.000	1.000
		Mandurriao	- 18.75	0.826
	La Paz	Jaro	3.800	1.000
		Mandurriao	- 15.55	1.000
	Jaro	Mandurriao	- 11.75	1.000

p < 0.05 is significant**

The post hoc analysis shown in Table 14 reveals statistically significant differences in the level of competitiveness for those located in La Paz when compared to those in Mandurriao (p = 0.003), but no significant differences when compared to other enterprise locations. Good site selections can substantially impact a company's long-term performance. While enterprise locations are increasingly recognized for their contribution to economic development (Defra, 2021), some suffer from geographical isolation (Tödtling & Trippel, 2005), low physical proximities between firms (Boschma, 2005), and limited choices in terms of available premises, employees, and

access to new knowledge (Phillipson et al., 2017; Sá et al., 2018). La Puz, a recently constructed neighborhood in Iloilo City, is largely an industrial and residential zone (USAID, 2014), far from Mandurriao, the city's new core business district, which is already thriving. The variance in how these two areas are used and classed in economic zones contributes to the variations in the degree of their contribution to food tour development.

3.7 Relationship of MSMEs' Level of Competitiveness and Extent of Contribution to Food Tour Development

Table 15. Relationship results between the level of competitiveness of the enterprises and the extent of contribution to food tour development

Variables	n	r	p-value
Level of Competitiveness and Extent of Contribution	70	0.831	0.000**

p < 0.05 is significant**

Table 15 shows that the p-value for the association between MSMEs' competitiveness and contribution to food tour development is < 0.001, lower than the established alpha of 0.05. The data show a significant relationship between enterprises' competitiveness and the amount they donate to the development of culinary tours, with a positive direct correlation, $r(70) = 0.831$, $p = 0.001$. Several studies have backed up the conclusions of this study. According to Alomari et al. (2019), enhanced competitiveness leads to more business contributions since competition promotes financial market growth, trade openness, labor market efficiency, and technological preparation. Furthermore, Virjan et al. (2023) believe that competitiveness promotes valuable contributions at the micro level, which has international implications through macroeconomic indicators, increased labor productivity, increased economic performance, raised living standards and economic and social wellbeing, education, competitive potential, and raising the Global Competitiveness index.

3.8 MSMEs' Level of Competitiveness as Predictor to the Extent of Contribution to Food Tour Development

A linear regression analysis was performed to see if competitiveness is a predictor of MSMEs' contribution to food tour development. Table 16 depicts a linear regression on the level of competitiveness that predicts the firms' contribution to food tour development. According to the study, the level of competitiveness has a positive linear relationship with the extent of firms' contribution to food tour development. It is statistically significant using the prediction equation MSMEs' Contribution to Food Tour Development = $0.194 + 0.85 \times \text{Level of Competitiveness}$.

Table 16. Regression results for level of competitiveness as a predictor to extent of contribution of enterprises to food tour development

Organizational Performance	B	95% CI for B		SE B	β	R ²	ΔR ²
		LL	UL				
Model						0.691	0.686***
Constant	0.194***	-2.35	0.622	0.22			
Level of Competitiveness	0.846 *	0.709	0.983	0.07	0.831		

p < 0.05 is significant**

Recent research revealed similar findings. According to Amoros et al. (2012), entrepreneurship is crucial to a country's competitiveness and progress because entrepreneurs establish new businesses that create more jobs, increase competition, and may even boost productivity through innovation. Additionally, Bashir and Akhtar (2016) discovered a favorable relationship between innovative competing companies and economic growth, suggesting that creative competing enterprises may help enhance economic growth. Furthermore, Dhahri and Omri (2018) confirm the positive link between competitive companies and their contribution to the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development in their investigation of the relationship between competitive enterprises and the domains of sustainable development.

3.9 Entrepreneur Profile as a Predictor to MSMEs' Contribution to Food Tour Development

Multiple regression was conducted to estimate the contribution of firms to food tour development based on the entrepreneur's profile characteristics. Table 17 shows linearity, as determined by partial regression plots and a plot of studentized residuals versus expected values. The Durbin-Watson value of 1.946 indicated that residuals were independent. Visual inspection of a plot of studentized residuals vs unstandardized expected values revealed homoscedasticity. There was no indication of multicollinearity, as measured by tolerance values larger than 0.1. There were no studentized deleted residuals over ± 3 standard deviations, leverage values above 0.2, or Cook's distance above 1. A Q-Q plot demonstrated that the assumption of normality was met.

Table 17. Multiple regression results for entrepreneur profile as predictor to enterprise contribution to food tour development

Organizational Performance	B	95% CI for B		SE B	β	R^2	ΔR^2
		LL	UL				
Model						0.14	0.10***
Constant	2.623***	1.85	3.40	0.39			
Age	-0.153*	-0.04	-0.31	0.08	-0.26		
Sex	0.059	-0.15	0.27	0.10	0.07		
Educational Attainment	0.198*	-0.08	0.48	0.14	0.19		

p < 0.05 is significant**

The study found that the entrepreneur profile variables age and educational attainment predict MSMEs' contribution to food tour development. The investigation yielded a prediction equation: MSMEs' extent of contribution to food tour development = 2.62 - 0.153 age + 0.059 sex + 0.198 educational attainment. According to Cohen (1988), the multiple regression model statistically substantially predicted enterprise contribution to food tour development ($F(3,66) = 3.49$, $p = 0.021$), accounting for 14% of the variation in enterprise contribution with adjusted $R^2 = 9.8\%$, indicating a partial size impact.

Several research findings support this study's finding that an entrepreneur's age predicts enterprise contribution to food tour development. Age structure influences population dynamics, which include economic growth. The rate at which an age structure grows (or declines) is connected to a population's economic progress. According to Kritikos (2014), successful entrepreneurs may reenergize the economy by generating jobs, inventing new technologies, and increasing productivity. Furthermore, Brieger et al. (2021) show that an entrepreneur's age correlates positively with their desire to seek value creation, such as contributing to economic growth. This is supported further by Hechavarria et al. (2017), who show that different age patterns across an entrepreneur's lifespan are reflected in their economic and social goals, shedding light on when entrepreneurs prioritize social over economic objectives throughout their lives and across institutional conditions. According to current research, a business's educational level predicts its contribution to food tour development. According to Peters and Brijlal's (2011) research, an entrepreneur's level of education can predict their engagement in development activities. Furthermore, Bayar et al. (2022) demonstrate that both basic and higher education levels of entrepreneurial education have a positive impact on entrepreneurial activities such as job creation, economic growth, and gains in productivity, output, and creativity.

4.0 Conclusion

Iloilo City, often known as the City of Love, has quietly developed as a regional economic powerhouse. Iloilo's strategic position, rich cultural history, and forward-thinking leadership make it an attractive destination for businesses and investors. The city's strong infrastructure and presence of top-tier educational institutions position it well to capitalize on the rising economy, making it a perfect breeding ground for startups and innovation-driven enterprises. It should be noted that improved competition leads to increased production and higher-quality products and services, helping the company to gain a stronger market position. When this happens, and more businesses get better market positions, the market becomes more competitive, resulting in higher productivity growth. When policies that promote market competitiveness are in place, economic growth accelerates. Competition drives the economy. The government and its agencies support healthy competition and fight anti-competitive corporate activities to ensure that consumers have access to high-quality products and services and that firms may compete fairly within a set of laws. Competition improves society by directly promoting progress.

One advantage of Iloilo City is that whenever entrepreneurs want to invest or start a business, a procedure for business registration is made available to help facilitate the ease of doing business and encourage more investments that further boost job creation and propel economic growth and development. The local government unit's policies and activities ease the issue that MSMEs have on business legalization, propelling the expansion of entrepreneurs such as those participating in food tours. A location may utilize food to market itself and support local food companies. Iloilo City has seven district boroughs that are regarded as viable commercial areas. However, La Puz district should yet be developed to increase its competitiveness. Businesses that wish to stay competitive, particularly those in La Puz, must work with the right individuals, whether it is incoming suppliers, technology solutions, or other unique talent that is not core to the commercial activity. Creating positive, distinct impressions of destination cuisine through positioning and differentiation to catch tourists' attention enables the industry to leverage passengers who highly prioritize food in their travel reasons. Appreciating local food

resources and paying close attention to how they are presented and promoted to the public will almost certainly attract tourists and increase tourism revenue.

Furthermore, DOT R6 can bring together tourism-related businesses such as lodging, transportation, travel and tour operators, and tour guides. People in the sector should be educated on consistently promoting tourism activities within Iloilo City, the region, and the country to support the influx of visitors and trips to places that result in greater tourism earnings. In the context of food tour development, DOT R6 may inform tourism-related enterprises on which locations and cuisines demand the most attention, assisting MSMEs that produce these commodities flourish. Furthermore, the department might request ongoing assistance from travel and tour operators, agents, and tour guides about culinary tours. In collaboration with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), DOT R6 can provide a list of potential food-related establishments that can be included in food tours and incentives whenever food tour itineraries include enterprise locations that require the most marketing. The DOT may help tour guides improve their guiding abilities, specifically how to include food, cuisine, and gastronomy into their narrative about the sites on tour itineraries. The idea is that DOT, DTI, and LGUs may encourage MSMEs to exchange and collaborate to get important access to first-rate information and accelerate useful skills, further increasing competitiveness. Additionally, because these organizations are required by law to help MSMEs, a review of laws and regulations may be conducted to promote fair competition and boost MSMEs' potential to contribute to food tour development.

How visitors and customers interact with MSMEs and culinary tours should also be examined. Tourists' unique behavior contributes to the local ecology, which shapes the dining experience. The consequences of visitor and consumer behavior may reflect how MSMEs compete in the future, contributing to the growth of culinary tours in Iloilo City. As more destinations prioritize food tourism, there is a greater emphasis on culture and managing food tourists as cultural resource consumers. There is a need to concentrate more on the interaction component of food tourism, considering that food is both a tangible and intangible heritage created and consumed within geographical bounds. Multistakeholder participation is essential, as is scalability.

Food is widely used to promote rural development; therefore, the food tourism sector looks to be in a minor scope. However, an influx of tourists may result in excessive food consumption, putting pressure on local food supply systems. Alternatively, the impact may be predicted in the reverse direction. Local resource management should be planned and carried out in partnership with other stakeholders and the local government, including food heritage marketing, food supply and production, and associated human resources. Not only is production vital, but so is the consumption of cultural resources through culinary tourism, which is part of experiencing tourism's "otherness". Cuisine is deeply ingrained in the experience economy, and how place and related cuisine are chosen and experienced creates inherent worth.

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The authors reviewed and approved the final work.

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