

Micro, Small, Medium Enterprises' Level of Awareness of Negosyo Center Services

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Abstract

This study explores the micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) level of awareness of the Negosyo Center services. Specifically, this study What is the participants' level of awareness of Negosyo Center services in terms of: Business advisory; Business registration assistance; Production; Product development; Trade and promotion; Financing facilitation; and Investment promotion, as a whole and when grouped according to business classification. The research is grounded in the Information Processing Theory by Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968), which helps explain how organizations absorb, interpret, and act on information. A total of 337 registered MSMEs participated in the study. Using a descriptive research design, the researcher-developed survey instrument was used for data gathering, which was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2024–2025. Results revealed that MSMEs are more likely to respond positively to services that are clearly communicated and show immediate relevance to their needs. The study also found significant differences in awareness based on business classification. These findings underscore the importance of targeted outreach and strategic communication tailored to specific business types. Ultimately, the study offers practical insights for improving service delivery and strengthening local support systems for MSMEs.

Keywords: MSMEs, Negosyo Center services, level of awareness, business classifications

Introduction

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) play a crucial role in driving global economic growth, job creation, and modernization (Gala, 2023). As of 2024, they represent 90% of businesses worldwide, account for over 70% of global employment, and contribute about 50% to global GDP (United Nations, 2024). Despite this vital role, MSMEs often remain vulnerable to economic shocks, pandemics, and conflict-related disruptions (UN, 2023).

In the Philippines, the government has taken steps to support MSMEs through Republic Act No. 10644, or the Go Negosyo Act, signed in 2014. A key component of this law is the creation of Negosyo Centers, managed by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), which now number over 1,380 across the country. These centers are meant to provide essential services such as business registration, advisory support, product development, financing assistance, and more (DTI, 2023). However, despite these efforts, awareness and utilization of Negosyo Center services remain low. Studies by Villegas et al. (2020) and Garambas et al. (2023) both found that many micro-entrepreneurs are unaware of the Go Negosyo Act and the support services available to them. This lack of awareness often prevents entrepreneurs from accessing valuable resources that could help grow their businesses. Moreover, operational challenges—such as limited resources and the need for more customized programs—continue to hinder the effectiveness of these centers (Montecañas, 2020; Garibay, 2024).

For instance, in a city in Northern Negros, over 2,500 MSMEs are registered, employing more than 7,600 individuals. Yet, there is no available data on their awareness or use of Negosyo Center services. As Garibay (2024) points out, this absence of local data is common and reflects the limited research on the actual impact of these services. Without understanding which programs are reaching MSMEs and which are falling short, it's hard to make meaningful improvements.

This study responds to that gap by examining MSMEs' awareness of Negosyo Center services. By identifying which areas are well known and which need better outreach, the research aims to help tailor more effective, inclusive interventions that truly support local entrepreneurs. To address these gaps, this study explored the MSMEs awareness of the Negosyo Center services. By identifying which services are working and which need attention, the study hoped to support more responsive and effective interventions that better meet the needs of local MSMEs.

Literature Review

This chapter reviews both local and international literature relevant to the study, focusing on MSMEs and their role in the economy. Globally, MSMEs make up about 90% of businesses, contribute significantly to employment, and

account for half of global GDP (UN, 2024), underscoring their importance in economic growth and inclusive development. However, MSMEs face ongoing challenges such as limited access to financing, infrastructure gaps, and stiff competition. Naradda Gamage et al. (2020) emphasized the need for MSMEs to adopt strategic approaches to survive in a globalized market. Definitions of MSMEs vary by country, usually based on size, revenue, and workforce. In the Philippines, the DTI classifies MSMEs by asset size and employee count (DTI, 2022). Despite government programs designed to help, awareness and utilization remain low—especially among micro-enterprises. Studies by Villegas et al. (2020) and Garambas et al. (2023) both confirm that many Filipino micro-business owners are unaware of support programs like the Go Negosyo Act and Negosyo Center services, resulting in underutilization of these resources. *Negosyo Center Services*. Negosyo Centers, set up by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) under the Go Negosyo Act, serve as one-stop shops for business support across the country. Their main goal is to make it easier for entrepreneurs to start and grow their businesses by offering access to services that promote trade, create jobs, and attract investment.

Business Advisory services. Business advisory services are widely recognized as crucial for MSME growth, but several studies highlight gaps in their reach and effectiveness. Dano-Luna et al. (2018) note that low awareness and participation limit their impact, and suggest pairing these services with training and mentorship to increase engagement. Diaz (2022) emphasizes the need for localized, practical support—especially for micro enterprises—and calls for a focus on digital skills, financial literacy, and crisis planning. Similarly, PIDS (2018) stresses that a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work; services need to be tailored to the diverse needs of MSMEs and delivered consistently across regions. Mbowe (2024) adds that strategic guidance and mentorship are especially valuable in helping MSMEs grow and compete in challenging or resource-limited environments.

Business Registration Assistance. Santos and Cruz (2019) highlight that many micro-entrepreneurs stay informal mainly because they don't fully understand the benefits of registering their businesses, and they often find the process complicated. The DTI (2023) notes progress in digitalizing registration systems, making them faster and more accessible, but stresses that efforts must continue to reach underserved areas and ensure MSMEs receive the support and information they need to formalize.

Production services. Negosyo Centers provide key support services like business registration, advisory, and production assistance to help MSMEs grow (Raquiza, 2021). Garibay (2024) found that access to shared machinery and production training through these centers significantly improves productivity and competitiveness, especially for micro-manufacturers. However, the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada (2018) highlights that many MSMEs still face challenges such as limited access to capital and infrastructure, which hinder their ability to scale and fully benefit from production services.

Product Development. Wang et al. (2022) emphasized that for small businesses, offering a variety of products is not just a strategy for growth but a crucial move for survival and long-term stability. By diversifying their product offerings, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) can reach different customer segments and avoid over-reliance on a single source of income. This not only enhances resilience but also positions these businesses to better navigate market changes and uncertainties. Building on this, Tawinga (2024) reinforced the importance of structured product development support, particularly within the framework of the Department of Trade and Industry's (DTI) One Town, One Product (OTOP) program. Focusing on micro and small enterprises in Laguna Province, the study found that although many businesses succeeded in maintaining operations and diversifying their products, they continued to face significant challenges in advancing their product development efforts. These findings underscore the need for more focused and effective support mechanisms to help MSMEs become truly competitive and sustainable in the long term.

Trade and Promotion. Jalali (2024) found that while government trade promotion programs may not always lead to immediate international expansion for MSMEs, they play a crucial role in building long-term strategic capabilities and preparing businesses for global competition. Similarly, Darma and Suherman (2021) emphasized that initiatives like trade fairs, export promotion, and marketing support significantly boost the visibility and market access of MSMEs, helping them grow locally and internationally.

Financing Facilitation. Dela Peña and Ramos (2023) highlighted that many MSMEs continue to face major challenges in accessing government financing programs, not necessarily due to a lack of availability, but because of complex application processes and limited awareness. Their study emphasized that for financing to truly support MSME growth, efforts must go beyond providing funds they must also include better communication, streamlined procedures, and targeted outreach. Similarly, Lopez and Herrera (2022) pointed out that financing barriers often stem from a disconnect between what MSMEs need and how support is delivered. They stressed the importance of designing financial programs that are user-friendly and accessible, especially for smaller enterprises with limited financial knowledge or resources. Both studies underline the need for more inclusive and responsive financing facilitation that genuinely meets MSMEs where they are.

Investment Promotion. Garcia and Santos (2022) emphasized that many MSMEs miss out on investment promotion programs not because the services don't exist, but because they're poorly communicated especially in rural areas. They found that government incentives and training are often underutilized due to weak dissemination strategies, leaving entrepreneurs unaware of opportunities that could help their businesses grow. Similarly, Reyes and de Guzman (2020) pointed out that outreach efforts frequently fail to reach marginalized and remote communities, limiting the effectiveness of these initiatives. Both studies stress the need for clearer, more targeted communication and outreach to ensure that MSMEs across all regions can access and benefit from investment promotion efforts.

Methodology

This chapter presents the research design, participants of the study, sampling techniques, research instrument, the test for validity and reliability of the instrument, data gathering procedures, data analysis procedures and ethical considerations. This study used a descriptive research design and gathered primary data through questionnaires distributed to registered MSMEs in the city. It aimed to measure the MSMEs' level of awareness of the Negosyo Center services. Additionally, the study examined how level of awareness varies when MSMEs were grouped based on their business classification. Descriptive research is a method used to systematically describe and analyze the characteristics of a specific group, phenomenon, or situation. It often relies on tools like surveys, interviews, and observations to collect data that reflect current conditions without manipulating variables. The goal is to provide a clear, accurate, and detailed picture of the research subject (Babbie, 2021; McCombes, 2019). This approach is especially useful when seeking to understand behaviors, perceptions, or trends within a defined population. This study involved 337 registered MSMEs selected from the top five business classifications with the highest number of MSMEs in the city where the study was conducted. These classifications, based on 2023 BPLO data, are as follows: Wholesale and Retail Trade, and Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles – 1,259 businesses; Accommodation and Food Services – 465 businesses; Other Service Activities – 220 businesses; Real Estate Activities – 89 businesses; and, Manufacturing – 76 businesses. From a total population of 2,589 registered businesses, the sample size of 337 was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula at a 5% margin of error. To ensure practical data collection and maintain proportional representation, a stratified random sampling technique was employed. Each business classification was proportionally represented in the sample according to its share of the total population. The distribution is as follows:

Table 1 Distribution of Participants as to Business Classification

Business classification	N	n	%
Wholesale and retail trading; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	1,259	208	61.72%
Accommodation and food services	465	73	21.66%
Other services businesses	220	35	10.39%
Real estate activities	89	12	3.56%
Manufacturing	76	9	2.67%
Total	2,589	337	100%

Research Instrument

The researcher-developed survey questionnaire underwent a thorough validation and reliability process to ensure accuracy and credibility. A panel of ten experts in public administration, governance, and research assessed the questionnaire for content validity using the Lawshe method. Nine out of ten experts rated all 36 items as essential, resulting in a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.80—well above the acceptable threshold of 0.642 for ten raters. This confirms that the tool had strong content validity for assessing MSME awareness of Negosyo Center services. To test reliability, the questionnaire was subjected to Cronbach's Alpha analysis, which is widely accepted in social research. The result was a high reliability score of .943, indicating strong internal consistency and dependable responses. The survey was pilot-tested and later formally administered to MSME owners in a city in Negros Occidental with approval from the Local Chief Executive. Trained enumerators conducted the data collection to ensure accuracy, and all responses were reviewed for completeness. The study achieved a 100% retrieval rate. Data were processed electronically, with assistance from a statistician and research adviser. Frequency and percentage counts were used to analyze respondent profiles, while mean and standard deviation measured MSME awareness levels using a 4-point scale.

Mean Range Scale	Interpretation	Verbal Description
3.50 – 4.00	very high	Aware of all Negosyo Center services
2.50 – 3.49	high	Aware of most of Negosyo Center services
1.50 – 2.49	low	Aware of some of Negosyo Center services
1.00 – 1.49	very low	Aware of few of Negosyo Center services

Kruskal Wallis Test was used to determine the significant difference in the level of MSMEs awareness of Negosyo Center services when participants are grouped according to business classifications. Because of presence of significant

difference in the level of awareness of participants when grouped according to business classification, Games-Howell post hoc test was used.

The researcher made sure to follow all ethical guidelines throughout the study. In line with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, participants' data was protected at every stage, and they had the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time. Only data relevant to the study's goals were collected, and once the research is complete, all records—digital or paper—will be securely destroyed. Every step of the process was carried out with respect for the participants and the broader community.

Results

MSMEs Level of Awareness of Negosyo Center Services in terms of Business Advisory

The results in Table 2 revealed varied levels of awareness among MSMEs regarding government-provided services. Assistance in business regulatory requirements to start and maintain a business registered the highest mean score of 2.96, ($SD=2.44$) falling under the *high awareness* category. This suggests that most MSMEs are familiar with and likely avail of this foundational service. In contrast, awareness of the Kapatid Mentor Me Program and the facilitation of access to Shared Service Facilities and equipment grants both scored 1.86 ($SD=0.97$), which fall under the *low awareness* category. The overall mean score across the three services was 2.22 ($SD=1.03$), indicating a generally *low level of awareness* of production development services among MSMEs. The highest level of awareness was recorded for assistance in business regulatory requirements ($M = 2.96$, $SD=2.44$), falling under the high awareness category. This result supports the observations of Daño-Luna et al. (2018) and Diaz (2022), who both noted that MSMEs are typically more familiar with foundational services that are essential for business registration and compliance. These services tend to be more visible and commonly discussed in early-stage business processes, which helps explain the higher awareness. In contrast, the significantly lower awareness of the Kapatid Mentor Me Program and the facilitation of access to Shared Service Facilities—both with mean scores of 1.86 ($SD=0.97$, $SD=0.78$) highlight a persistent gap in MSMEs' knowledge of more specialized development programs. Similarly, the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS, 2018) emphasized that uneven dissemination of information, especially in rural areas, continues to be a barrier to service utilization. This is further supported by Mbowe (2024), who argued that low awareness is not necessarily a reflection of disinterest or irrelevance, but often the result of poorly targeted communication and lack of localized engagement. The results of this study confirm that while basic regulatory services are reaching their intended audience, more advanced programs, despite their potential value remain underutilized due to low visibility and limited promotion at the local level.

Table 2 MSMEs Level of Awareness of Negosyo Center Services in terms of Business Advisory Services

Services	<i>M</i>	Interpretation	<i>SD</i>
Assistance in business regulatory requirements to start and maintain the business	2.96	High awareness	2.44
Kapatid Mentor Me Program	1.86	Low awareness	0.97
Facilitates access to Shared Service Facilities and equipment grants	1.86	Low awareness	0.78
Overall	2.22	Low awareness	1.03

Note: 3.50 – 4.00 (Very High Awareness), 2.50 – 3.49 (High Awareness), 1.50 – 2.49 (Low Awareness), 1.00 – 1.49 (Very Low Awareness)

MSMEs Level of Awareness of Negosyo Center Services in terms of Business Registration Assistance Services

Table 3 presents the MSMEs' level of awareness regarding Negosyo Center services related to business registration assistance. Among the six services listed, business name registration ($M = 3.91$, $SD=0.33$) and BIR registration for taxation purposes ($M = 3.62$, $SD=.77$) received a very high awareness rating, indicating that most MSMEs are well-informed about these foundational processes. Meanwhile, services such as Barangay Micro Business Enterprise (BMBE) registration ($M = 2.70$, $SD=1.00$), DTI service center certification ($M = 3.03$, $SD=1.19$), and customer complaints assistance ($M = 3.03$, $SD=1.25$) were rated with high awareness. Notably, IP registration inquiry and assistance recorded a low awareness level ($M = 2.38$, $SD=1.13$), suggesting that many MSMEs are less familiar with this more specialized support service. The overall mean score for business registration assistance is 3.11, which falls under the high awareness category. These results suggest that MSMEs are generally aware of the basic requirements needed to legally establish and operate their businesses, such as business name and BIR registration. However, the lower awareness score for IP registration inquiry and assistance stands out. Given its importance in protecting business innovations and branding, this gap implies a need for more targeted outreach and education on intellectual

property support. The relatively high standard deviations for DTI service center certification ($SD = 1.19$), customer complaints assistance ($SD = 1.25$), and IP registration ($SD = 1.13$) also highlight varying levels of awareness among respondents, suggesting inconsistencies in how information about these services is being communicated or accessed. This interpretation aligns with findings from Santos and Cruz (2019), who emphasized that while foundational registration services are widely known, more technical or optional services often go unnoticed. Similarly, Lopez, Reyes, and Garcia (2021) noted that MSMEs tend to focus on compliance-based requirements, with limited understanding of services that go beyond initial registration. These observations are consistent with the Department of Trade and Industry's ([DTI], 2023) own recognition that while core services are widely utilized, more specialized assistance remains underused due to limited promotion and uneven access to information.

Table 3 MSMEs Level of Awareness of Negosyo Center Services in terms of Business Registration Assistance

Services	M	Interpretation	SD
Business name registration	3.91	Very high awareness	.33
Barangay Micro Business Enterprise (BMBE) registration.	2.70	High awareness	1.00
DTI service center certification	3.03	High awareness	1.19
IP Registration Inquiry and Assistance	2.38	Low awareness	1.13
Customer Complaints Assistance	3.03	High awareness	1.25
BIR Registration for taxation purposes.	3.62	Very high awareness	.77
	3.11	High awareness	.67
Total			

Note: 3.50 – 4.00 (Very High Awareness), 2.50 – 3.49 (High Awareness), 1.50 – 2.49 (Low Awareness), 1.00 – 1.49 (Very Low Awareness)

MSMEs Level of Awareness of Negosyo Center Services in terms of Production

Table 4 reveals that MSMEs have very low awareness of the Negosyo Center's production-related services, with an overall mean score of just 1.35. The awareness levels across individual services are consistently low, ranging from 1.34 to 1.36, and the slight variation in scores ($SD = 0.62$ – 0.63) suggests that this lack of awareness is widespread, regardless of the MSMEs' profiles. This means most business owners are simply not familiar with these offerings. The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada (2018) similarly noted that without inclusive and localized outreach, essential business development services—especially technical ones like production support—often go unnoticed. The low awareness seen in this study likely stems from communication gaps. If MSMEs don't know these services exist, they can't take advantage of them—particularly in rural or resource-limited areas where access to formal information is more challenging. This highlights the need for more targeted, consistent efforts to inform and engage MSMEs about production support services. These findings are supported by Raquiza (2021), who notes that despite the growing number of MSME support initiatives in the Philippines, there remains a disconnect between policy intent and on-the-ground implementation particularly in promoting less visible or technical services. Likewise, Garibay (2024) emphasizes that limited awareness of government support programs often stems from fragmented communication efforts and the lack of tailored messaging that resonates with MSMEs' actual needs. To improve engagement, outreach strategies should be tailored to specific sectors, with technical concepts translated into simpler, more relatable language. Including real-life success stories in promotional materials can also help demonstrate the practical value of these services. Moreover, repeated exposure across multiple channels—especially during critical business stages such as startup, scaling, or product development—can improve retention and recall of information. As Raquiza (2021) emphasized, sustained and context-sensitive communication efforts are essential in ensuring that government programs align with MSMEs and lead to meaningful participation.

Table 4 MSMEs Level of Awareness of Negosyo Center Services in terms of Production

Services	M	Interpretation	SD
Production area lay-out consultancy	1.35	Very low awareness	.62
Production process	1.35	Very low awareness	.62
Management consultancy	1.36	Very Low awareness	.63
Production Information	1.35	Very Low awareness	.62
SSF Machinery and Equipment	1.35	Very Low awareness	.62
Raw Materials procurement	1.34	Very Low awareness	.62
Overall	1.35	Very Low awareness	.62

Note: 3.50 – 4.00 (Very High Awareness), 2.50 – 3.49 (High Awareness), 1.50 – 2.49 (Low Awareness), 1.00 – 1.49 (Very Low Awareness)

MSMEs Level of Awareness of Negosyo Center Services in terms of Product Development

Table 5 shows that MSMEs have a generally low awareness of the product development services offered by Negosyo Centers. Labelling design development scored a mean of 1.91, followed by product catalogue and profiling at 1.88, and both product development clinic and prototype development at 1.84. With an overall mean of 1.88 and a standard

deviation of 0.82, the data clearly point to a consistent lack of awareness across all product development-related services. Despite the potential of these services to improve product quality, marketability, and branding especially for micro and small enterprises, many business owners simply don't know they exist. This low awareness could be due to weak outreach, generic promotions, or poor integration into local MSME support efforts. As a result, crucial services remain underutilized at the very stage where visibility is key. Similarly, Tawingan (2024) found that even when product development support is technically available such as through the OTOP Program, it often goes unnoticed or unused due to a lack of visibility and practical access. Like the respondents in this study, many entrepreneurs miss out on valuable services simply because no one clearly told them they were there.

Table 5 MSMEs Level of Awareness of Negosyo Center Services in terms of Product Development

Services	M	Interpretation	SD
Labelling Designs development	1.91	Low awareness	.86
Product catalogue and profiling	1.88	Low awareness	.87
Product development clinic	1.84	Low awareness	.84
Prototype development	1.84	Low awareness	.88
Overall	1.88	Low awareness	.82

Note: 3.50 – 4.00 (Very High Awareness), 2.50 – 3.49 (High Awareness), 1.50 – 2.49 (Low Awareness), 1.00 – 1.49 (Very Low Awareness)

MSMEs' Level of Awareness of Negosyo Center Services in Terms of Trade and Promotion

The findings in Table 6 indicate that MSMEs have a generally low level of awareness regarding trade and promotion services offered by Negosyo Centers ($M = 2.00$). This suggests that many entrepreneurs are not fully informed about the extent of marketing and promotional support available to them through government initiatives. Trade fair participation and product marketing support stood out with higher awareness levels, scoring 2.73 and 2.51 respectively, and standard deviations of 1.04 and 1.00. These show that these services are more recognizable and likely perceived as relevant or beneficial by MSMEs. On the other hand, all other trade-related services such as the MSME Summit, Franchise Philippine Expo, Market Matching, Selling/Trade Missions, Study Missions/Benchmarking, and Buying Missions scored low to very low awareness with mean values ranging from 1.74 to 1.92. This result confirms Darma and Suherman's (2021) findings, which emphasize that market access programs are only effective when MSMEs understand and recognize their relevance. Many MSMEs fail to take advantage of available trade support services because the benefits are not clearly communicated or are perceived as inaccessible. Navani (2022) observed that promotional services are often underutilized due to misalignment between the way services are presented and the communication preferences of small enterprises.

Table 6 MSMEs Level of Awareness of Negosyo Center Services in terms of Trade and Promotion

Services	M	Interpretation	SD
Participation to Trade Fairs - local/regional/national	2.73	High awareness	1.04
Product Marketing and Promotion Support	2.51	High awareness	1.00
Micro, Small, Medium Enterprise (MSME) Summit	1.92	Low awareness	0.97
Franchise Philippine Expo	1.77	Low awareness	0.88
Market matching	1.74	Very low awareness	0.79
Selling/Trade missions	1.79	Low awareness	0.81
Study Mission / Benchmarking	1.76	Low awareness	0.80
8. Buying Missions	1.77	Low awareness	0.81
Overall	2.00	Low awareness	.69

Note: 3.50 – 4.00 (Very High Awareness), 2.50 – 3.49 (High Awareness), 1.50 – 2.49 (Low Awareness), 1.00 – 1.49 (Very Low Awareness)

MSMEs Level of Awareness of Negosyo Center Services in terms of Financing Facilitation

The results in Table 7 show that MSMEs have low awareness of the financing facilitation services provided by Negosyo Centers. All three indicators—SBCorp loan assistance, microfinancing applications, and the Pangkabuhayan sa Pagbangon at Ginawa Program—scored below 2.10, with the overall mean at 1.99, indicating a consistent lack of familiarity with these financial support services. This lack of awareness is supported by Dela Peña and Ramos (2023), who found that MSMEs across the Philippines often remain unaware of financing programs due to poor communication strategies that fail to reach local entrepreneurs. Lopez and Herrera (2022) similarly observed that MSMEs tend to learn about financial programs informally, rather than through government sources, suggesting a disconnect between how services are promoted and how entrepreneurs actually access information. Together, these findings highlight the urgent need for more targeted, localized, and relatable outreach to ensure financing support reaches the businesses it's meant to serve.

Table 7 MSMEs Level of Awareness of Negosyo Center Services in terms of Financing Facilitation

Services	M	Interpretation	SD
Small Business Corporation (SBCorp) loans application assistance	2.06	Low awareness	0.85
Loans application to other Micro Financing Institutions	1.99	Low awareness	0.92
Pangkabuhayan sa Pagbangon at Ginhawa Program	1.92	Low awareness	0.91
Overall	1.99	Low awareness	0.82

Note: 3.50 – 4.00 (Very High Awareness), 2.50 – 3.49 (High Awareness), 1.50 – 2.49 (Low Awareness), 1.00 – 1.49 (Very Low Awareness)

MSMEs Level of Awareness of Negosyo Center Services in terms of Investment Promotion

Table 8 shows that MSMEs have a very low level of awareness (overall mean = 1.37) regarding the investment promotion services offered by Negosyo Centers. All six assessed services—including Investment Missions, Exhibits, Briefings, and Forums—scored below 1.50, falling into the "Very Low Awareness" category. The lowest awareness was seen in Investment Missions (M = 1.32), while the highest, still low, was Investment Forum/Conference (M = 1.43). This consistent lack of awareness highlights that investment promotion remains one of the least visible and least understood services among MSMEs. These services are designed to open doors for growth—connecting businesses to funding, partnerships, and expansion opportunities. However, the data suggest these programs are not effectively reaching grassroots entrepreneurs, either because they're not well integrated into local outreach or because their benefits aren't clearly communicated. Moreover, Siddiqui (2023) emphasized that access to such opportunities is often blocked by digital and logistical barriers. His research on government-led business programs revealed that many small enterprises struggle due to limited access to timely, simplified information, especially if they're not part of formal business networks or active on digital platforms. This underscores the importance of bridging the digital divide and offering on-the-ground outreach, so that crucial investment services don't go unnoticed by those who need them most. As Villanueva and dela Cruz (2021) similarly noted, even well meaning programs can miss their mark if they fail to make technical concepts relatable and accessible for micro and small business owners. Addressing these gaps in communication and access is essential to improving MSMEs' engagement with investment promotion services.

Table 8 MSMEs Level of Awareness of Negosyo Center Services in terms of Investment Promotion

Services	M	Interpretation	SD
Investment Forum/ Conference	1.43	Very low awareness	.73
Investment Briefing	1.35	Very low awareness	.64
Business Matching	1.37	Very low awareness	.64
Investment Exhibit	1.33	Very low awareness	.64
Investment Mission	1.32	Very low awareness	.61
Investment Promotion-related services	1.42	Very low awareness	.66
Overall	1.37	Very low awareness	.61

Note: 3.50 – 4.00 (Very High Awareness), 2.50 – 3.49 (High Awareness), 1.50 – 2.49 (Low Awareness), 1.00 – 1.49 (Very Low Awareness)

MSMEs' Level of Awareness of Negosyo Center Services when Grouped according to Business Classification

Table 9 shows that MSMEs' awareness of Negosyo Center services varies by business classification. Food and Accommodation services had the highest awareness levels, followed by Other Services and Wholesale and Retail. In contrast, Real Estate and Manufacturing showed the lowest awareness, especially in areas like Investment Promotion and Trade Support. Business Registration Assistance stood out as the most recognized service across all sectors. These results suggest that MSMEs in customer-facing industries are more familiar with government services, likely due to their regular compliance requirements. Meanwhile, sectors like Real Estate and Manufacturing may be underserved or see services as irrelevant. This supports past findings (Villegas et al., 2020; Jalali, 2024) that stress the importance of targeted, sector-specific communication to improve awareness and service utilization.

Table 9 Level of Awareness When Grouped According to Business Classifications

Indicators	Wholesale and Retail			Food and Accommodation			Real Estate			Manufacturing			Other Services		
	M	int	SD	M	int	SD	M	int	SD	M	int	SD	M	int	SD
Business Advisory	2.16	low	0.73	2.47	low	1.77	1.94	low	0.34	1.94	low	0.55	2.3	low	0.57
Business Registration Assistance	3.18	high	0.67	3.14	high	0.57	1.99	low	0.46	3.52	very high	0.59	3.15	high	0.46
Production	1.31	very low	0.53	1.48	very low	0.8	1.08	very low	0.29	1.22	very low	0.44	1.47		0.75

Product Development	1.92	low	0.83	1.9	low	0.83	1.35	very low	0.31	1.63	low	1	1.78	low	0.8
Trade and Promotion	2.04	low	0.72	2.04	low	0.64	1.44	very low	0.67	1.63	low	0.72	1.93	low	0.66
Financing Facilitation	1.93	low	0.82	2.12	low	0.86	1.97	low	0.66	2.07	low	1.05	2.05	low	0.75
Investment Promotion	1.33	very low	0.55	1.49	very low	0.75	1.08	very low	0.29	1.22	very low	0.44	1.5	low	0.71

Note: 3.50 – 4.00 (Very High Awareness), 2.50 – 3.49 (High Awareness), 1.50 – 2.49 (Low Awareness), 1.00 - 1.49 (Very Low Awareness)

Pairwise Comparison for the Difference in the Level of Awareness when the MSMEs Are Grouped According to Business Classification

Table 10 reveals that MSMEs in the Real Estate sector have significantly lower awareness of Negosyo Center services compared to those in Wholesale and Retail, Food and Accommodation, and Other Services, with all adjusted p-values below 0.05. However, there were no significant differences among the non-real estate sectors, suggesting a more uniform awareness level in these industries. This highlights that Real Estate businesses may be less engaged or less targeted by current outreach strategies. Using Information Processing Theory, this may be due to insufficient exposure or lack of sector-specific communication that helps them retain and apply relevant information. These findings echo Reyes and de Guzman (2020) and Garibay (2024), both of whom emphasized the importance of tailored, industry-aligned messaging to improve MSME engagement with government services.

Table 10 Pairwise Comparison for the Difference in the Level of Awareness when the MSMEs Are Grouped According to Business Classification

Sample 1		- Sample 2	Test Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistic	P-value
Real Estate	-	Wholesale and Retail	97.88	28.92	3.39	0.007*
Real Estate	-	Food and Accommodation	107.78	30.35	3.55	0.004*
Real Estate	-	Other Services	108.20	32.59	3.32	0.009*
Manufacturing	-	Wholesale and Retail	58.26	33.17	1.76	0.79
Manufacturing	-	Food and Accommodation	68.02	34.42	1.98	0.48
Manufacturing	-	Other Services	68.46	36.41	1.88	0.60
Wholesale and Retail	-	Food Accommodation	-9.76	13.25	-0.74	1.00
Wholesale and Retail	-	Other Services	-10.20	17.80	0.57	1.00
Food and Accommodation	-	Other Services	-0.44	20.03	-0.02	1.00

P≤.05 significance level

Discussion

The data reveals that MSMEs are most familiar with services that are simple, required by law, or heavily promoted—like business registration and BIR-related processes. However, awareness drops off when it comes to more specialized services like intellectual property registration, mentoring, and product development. These offerings often come with complex messaging and minimal promotion, which makes them harder for small businesses to absorb.

In terms of trade and promotion, only well-publicized activities like trade fairs and product marketing stand out. Other valuable services, such as MSME summits, market matching, and trade missions, are barely recognized. Financial and investment services also fly under the radar, mostly because the information is too technical and not explained in a way that connects with MSMEs.

What's striking is that even MSMEs with more capital don't show a significantly higher level of awareness. This points to a communication gap, not a capacity issue.

From the perspective of Information Processing Theory, this makes perfect sense. If the message isn't clear, relevant, or easy to relate to, it won't stick. For MSMEs to truly benefit from these services, the way information is communicated must be simple, structured, and directly meaningful to them.

Among the sectors, Real Estate stands out with significantly lower awareness of Negosyo Center services compared to Retail, Food, and Other Services. This could mean the messaging does not resonate with their needs, or that they're just not being reached effectively.

Meanwhile, awareness across Manufacturing, Retail, and Food sectors is fairly even probably due to more frequent interaction with government programs. Overall, only business type seems to impact awareness. Capital and staff size don't matter much.

Therefore, better, clearer, and more targeted communication especially tailored by sector is key to closing the awareness gap. MSMEs tend to respond best to services that are easy to understand and feel immediately useful. If

a service seems too technical or unrelated to their day-to-day needs, it often gets ignored—no matter how valuable it might be in the long run. This highlights the power of clear communication: how a service is explained often matters just as much as the service itself. Among various business characteristics, only the type of business significantly affects how aware MSMEs are of Negosyo Center services. Whether an MSME is in retail, food, services, manufacturing, or real estate plays a bigger role in awareness than their capital or staff size. In particular, Real Estate businesses show noticeably lower awareness compared to sectors like retail, food, and services—likely because the services feel less relevant or haven't been effectively promoted to them.

The takeaway is clear: better outreach starts with better messaging. Even the most well-designed programs will not make an impact if MSMEs do not understand or remember them. Tailoring communication to each sector, using simpler language, and sharing real success stories can make services more relatable and easier to engage with. Ultimately, raising awareness is not just about making services available; it is about making them make sense. If MSMEs cannot process or see the value in what is offered, they are less likely to take action. To close that gap, agencies need to rethink both the message and the method of delivery, especially for services that are technical or underused.

Conclusions

MSMEs consistently respond to services they clearly understand and perceive as immediately beneficial. When a service appears too technical or non-essential, it is often overlooked regardless of its potential long-term value. Clear and effective communication plays a crucial role. How a service is presented and explained strongly influences whether MSMEs choose to engage with it or ignore it.

Notably, there is a significant difference in the MSMEs level of awareness of Negosyo Center services when they are grouped by business classification. Among the different business profile variables- business capitalization, number of employees, and business classification, only the nature of an MSME's business significantly affects the awareness level towards Negosyo Center services. This indicates that the nature of an MSME's business whether it is in retail, food, services, manufacturing, or real estate plays a key role in how well they know about the services provided. This points to the importance of tailoring services and communication strategies based on the specific needs of different business sectors.

The study found that MSMEs in the Real Estate sector are less aware of Negosyo Center services compared to those in retail, food, and other service industries, suggesting a disconnect in outreach or perceived relevance. Meanwhile, other sectors like manufacturing show similar awareness levels.

It also shows that satisfaction driven by empathy, reliability, and assurance isn't enough if MSMEs aren't aware of or don't understand the services. The real challenge lies in how information is communicated. If it's not clear, relatable, and easy to remember, even the most useful services can go unnoticed.

To close this gap, Negosyo Centers should focus not just on offering services, but on simplifying their message, using real stories, and promoting repeatedly across various platforms to ensure better understanding and recall.

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