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Research Strategy for Studying User's Acceptance of Tourism-Related ITs: User's Acceptance of AR-VR Technological-Combo App

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to guide future researchers on research strategy for studying user's acceptance of tourism-related Information Technologies (ITs). In a study on user's acceptance of the technological-combination of virtual reality and augmented reality application in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Melaka, the author proposes 11 steps of research strategy which begin with developing the research framework (Step 1), proposing the research hypotheses (Step 2), determining research design (Step 3), designing sampling processes (Step 4), designing questionnaire (Step 5), conducting face validity (Step 6), developing the prototypes (Step 7), conducting pilot testing (Step 8), collecting data (Step 9), analyzing data (Step 10), as well as providing conclusion (Step 11).

INTRODUCTION

Tourism has been characterized by massive innovativeness (Hjalager, 2010), in such a way that the sector has evolved in numerous ways due to the direct and permanent impacts from the development and advancement of information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Buhalis and Law, 2008). As such, study on user's acceptance of tourism-related ITs has been a central focus of tourism researchers as user's acceptance determines the potential of the ITs, and further ensures the successful introduction and implementation of the ITs.

Melaka, one of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites located at the Southern region of Malaysia is globally well-known, attributable to its rich historical and cultural heritage. However, the recent downturn of the tourism performance in Melaka and weaknesses of traditional promotional tools used in tourism marketing raised an alarming signal to the state government and local tourism players on the need of effective tourism marketing practices in Melaka. As such, this study proposes and develops the "iMelaka 360 Website" (the virtual reality, VR portion) and "iMelaka 360 AR App" (the augmented reality, AR portion). The aim of this paper is to provide guidance for future researchers on research strategy for studying user's acceptance of tourism-related ITs based on the research strategy used in the "iMelaka 360 Project".

BACKGROUND

Traditional promotional tools, which commonly used in tourism marketing, have received criticisms in the tourism studies owing to their limitations. Similarly, the use of traditional promotional tools in Melaka has been suspected to be one of the reasons that affect the state unable to sustain strong tourism growth in recent years. Various weaknesses have been identified on those conventional promotional tools, such as static images, out-dated information, inaccurate information and incomprehensive information. Table 1 discusses the weaknesses of the existing tourism information sources in Melaka with relevant evidences.

Table 1. Weaknesses of the existing tourism information sources in Melaka with relevant evidences

Weaknesses	Evidences
1. Static images	The small-sized 2D images of tourist attractions printed in the travel guide books published by the Tourism Promotion Division (Melaka Chief Minister's Department, 2013b) are unclear, unattractive and static in nature.
2. Out-dated information	The visiting information (opening hours and admission fees) of tourist attractions is different from those printed in tour guide books published by the Tourism Promotion Division (Melaka Chief Minister's Department, 2013b).
3. Inaccurate information	The temporary closing of the Stadthuys Museum Complex for conservation activities was not being notified in tour guide books published by the Tourism Promotion Division (Melaka Chief Minister's Department, 2013b).
4. Incomprehensive information	The tour guide books published by the Tourism Malaysia and the Ministry of Tourism (2013) are lacking of information about the date and venue of the upcoming events in Melaka. There is absence of contact information for tourists to clarify with the event organizers.

Source: Melaka Chief Minister's Department (2013b), Tourism Malaysia and the Ministry of Tourism (2013)

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