TOURISTS SATISFACTION TOWARDS SMART TOURISM SERVICES IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Smart tourism projects are already underway across the globe including Tourism Malaysia. In 2018, Tourism Malaysia has launched the Malaysia Smart Tourism 4.0 initiative to take the industry to the next level by capitalizing on the new opportunities of the digital age. Despite the increase in the number of studies on customer satisfaction towards smart tourism services, only a limited number of studies were carried out in Malaysia. Therefore, this research proposes to obtain a better overview of this issue from a Malaysian perspective. The main objective of this study is to analyse the relationship between smart tourism technology attributes, tourist service satisfaction levels and to assess the relationship between the levels of tourist service satisfaction and the intention to use new technology. This study was also carried out to examine the moderating effect of trust on the relationship between smart tourism technology. This study will use a structural equation method to find the relationship between the smart tourism technology attributes of trust, service satisfaction, and the intention to use. This study employs a quantitative method of analysis with a questionnaire that were distributed to Malaysian tourists online. The sample size was selected based on the sample size table used by Krejcie & Morgan (1970). The study expects to find that smart tourism technology attributes are significantly associated with service satisfaction levels, and this it will have a positive effect on the intention to use. Meanwhile, the trust factor will be positively associated with service satisfaction.

KEYWORDS: Intention to use, Smart tourism services, Smart tourism technology, Trust, Malaysia tourists

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

This paper aims to analyse the relationship between smart tourism technology attributes with tourist service satisfaction levels and to assess the relationship between tourist service satisfaction and intention to use the new technology. To fill in potential research gaps, a trust factor is added as moderator.

Through the years, the tourism sector has been evolving moving from traditional tourism to smart tourism which capitalizes on new technology to offer tourists more travel options and unprecedented freedom to roam where they will. Buhalis and Amaranggana (2015) defined smart tourism as the act of tourism agents utilising advanced technologies and practices to boost resource management and sustainability, while increasing the businesses overall competitiveness.

Um and Chung (2019) described smart tourism as a strategy to rejuvenate tourism in South Korea. It is an era of rapid technological innovation that offers access to tourist-related data. Smart tourism projects are already underway across the globe including Tourism Malaysia. In 2018, the Malaysian Minister of Tourism and Culture launched the Malaysia Smart Tourism 4.0 initiative. The initiative aims to move the industry forward through the use of technology. Tourism will be more accessible and pleasurable for all, thanks to the interconnected services and improved coordination between the government and local organisations. Yet, Malaysia has fewer studies that tackle the issue of smart tourism and its technological

attributes because the technology is still in the early stages of development, and domestic tourism is still looking to find its own rhythm to thrive especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

METHODOLOGY

In this research paper, the population refers to domestic tourists in Malaysia from 2019 until the present day. The population for this research should be derived using non-probability sampling; therefore, researchers used convenience sampling to come up with the sample size of 382 respondents (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). A questionnaire that has been prepared will be measured using a seven-point Likert scale to avoid a central tendency. The questionnaires will be distributed through online means to minimise personal contact due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The link to questionnaires will be shared over social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. A structural equation modeling technique will be used to analyse data collected from targeted respondents.

FINDINGS

This study expects to find that smart tourism technology attributes are significantly associated with service satisfaction, and that it has a positive effect on revisit intentions. Meanwhile with regard to the trust factor the study expects to find that it is positively associated with tourist service satisfaction.

ORIGINALITY

The present study makes an important contribution to the current literature on smart tourism services specifically and the tourism sector in general by proposing to link smart tourism technology to travel experience satisfaction and the intention to use technology. The proposed model has never been tested in the relevant available literature and could be used to provide a foundation for the use of technology and the advent of smart tourism.

CONCLUSION AND CONTRIBUTION

First, the result of this study will provide meaningful insights into smart tourism for tourism-related companies and governments. As the government of Malaysia aims to raise the tourism sector to a whole new level by leveraging new digital technologies, this researcher believes that the output of this research will be beneficial in achieving that goal. In addition, this researcher assumes that this research will be able to provide feedback on what tourists experience when visiting domestic tourist attractions and this will tell tourism industry players how to achieve high satisfaction levels among tourists aided by smart tourism technology. The outcomes of this research will help with the issue of tourist satisfaction specifically in regard to smart tourism technology. Last but not least, this research will help industry players meet the expectations of tourists during their visit.

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