

E-Book for Promoting Buddhist Tourism in Thailand

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Abstract

The purposes of this research were 1) to explore a set of knowledge and develop e-book to promote Buddhist tourism in Thailand, and 2) to evaluate Thai tourists' satisfaction with the use of electronic books. The study began by exploring a set of knowledge and appropriate processes in developing e-book that would affect tourists' travel interest. Subsequently, the satisfaction of 424 Thai tourists who were willing to test the e-book was surveyed via questionnaires in Google form. The obtained data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation). Results showed that the evaluation outcome of e-book acceptance based on TAM concept is very interesting as most of the evaluation scores are very good (4.21-5.00 because the class interval is set at 0.8) and consistent with our assumptions, that is, the content on the e-book including text and images and all information positively affects user's interest in using it as a source of knowledge for traveling as the item "Interest in using this e-book as a source of information about tourist destinations" received the highest score ($\bar{X} = 4.32$, S.D. = 0.48). Next is the presentation form, content structure and information layout in the item "Presentation of public relations media on the e-book has an effect on interest in Buddhist tourism." received a very high score from volunteers ($\bar{X} = 4.28$, S.D. = 0.45). It indicates that all public relations media including images of important Buddhist landmark, architecture, messages about Buddhist culture, etc., has an positive impact on the volunteers' interest in Buddhist tourism.

Keywords: Buddhist Tourism, Thailand, E-Book, TAM

Introduction

As digital technology and computers have advanced, social media has played an essential role in connecting data networks in a variety of dimensions. An example of this is the impact on the tourism and service industries, where [1] Facebook is used to provide information about tourist attractions, restaurants, and entertainment options. [2] This is due to its unique ability to provide up-to-date data and a multimedia system that helps users with information to choose their destination. [3] Electronic books (e-books) are also used as information media for target groups that like to use communication technology extensively, as these e-books can present information that is divided into categories or chapters. For example, Thai tourism e-book titled "The Charm of Wat Pho" for Chinese learners, which helps to improve the skills and knowledge of learners based on information that is perfectly divided into chapters. [4] There are also features that record consumer opinions and suggestions on operational improvements, i.e., efficiency,

quality, etc. This will not be difficult for developers who want to improve, change, or manage their operation or performance so that it is always modern and new. [5]

Information and communication technology (ICT), as well as creative communication strategies, have been widely used in many sectors, particularly the tourism and service industries, to improve tourism experiences and strengthen the competitive advantage of each destination. Sustainability, circular economy, the quality of life, and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) should be taken into account when developing the information system. The developed innovation must address the usefulness and ease of use for users to accept and use it. [6] [7] The development of creative media for disseminating information, public relations, and management methods must prioritize user ease.

Thailand has recognized that community tourism not only promotes economic growth, which provides people with more income, but also solves poverty problems [8], leading to the widespread use of cash and cryptocurrencies [9]. In terms of society, in developing countries, employment rates are increasing and individual skills in the service sector are improving, e.g., cooks, waiters, etc. There is also more interaction between individuals and the community, as well as more environmental development, which improves people's quality of life [10]. When tourism is promoted, there are more opportunities for people to participate in the service industry, which helps to strengthen community self-reliance [11]. There is the use of modern technology for online management and more employment, such as laundry services through the use of modern machinery, etc. As tourists and locals spend their money in the supply chain, such as restaurants, hotels, transportation, souvenirs, etc., electronic payments (e-payments) have become more widespread in the community [12], leading to an increase in working capital [13] and continued economic growth that meets the Sustainable Development Goals [14] [15].

E-book is an invention at a time when technology is being used to foster innovations in order to enhance wisdom and knowledge. It is also used as a communication tool to promote tourism and serves as an information center for cultural, archeological, and historical attractions, as well as places of rest and recreation [16]. The components of e-book help readers to see various images through modern technology so that readers can thoroughly understand the desired tourist attractions. E-book has a mechanism that provides readers with fun and entertainment [17], which has a positive impact on destination selection. A clear proof of this is that tourists always look for delicious restaurants or a famous restaurant recommended by others [18]. Information and content based on knowledge management, new and modern information systems, the use of new technologies in the form of geographic information systems (GIS), image management, providing details about tourist attractions by presenting them in the form of infographics, and the use of cartoon images to design the communication of culture and tourist routes - all this leads to more creative options for tourists to get to their desired destination faster [19]. From using TAM to design travel guide e-books and testing them, it appears that users are impressed and recognize their benefits to tourism. [20] [21] The multimedia system helps them travel on their own by providing itinerary information and helping to make travel decisions faster, e.g., deciding on a trip, planning and preparing, determining an itinerary, choosing accommodations and recreational activities, selecting learning resources to enhance the experience, or planning budget and expenses. These e-books are useful for both destination selection and itinerary planning because they provide information on the destination's convenience, safety, solutions, and tourism-related local laws. The following information is taken from a prior research on the use of e-books to promote tourism and tourist destination selection.

E-books play an important role in destination selection. Important content that e-book developers should consider in order to promote tourism includes access to travel guides, information about the itinerary in terms of transportation, topography, geography, and important places at that destination, such as an ancient mosque, museum, library, public park, check-in point, and places that tourists like to visit. All this information makes it easier for tourists to decide where to go and what to do [22]. If tourists can connect tourism route shown in e-books with an e-pen, they can calculate the distance and duration of the trip to the desired destination. This can really provide convenience and save costs as tourists do not need to purchase printed travel guides, some can travel independently without hiring a local tour guide, some can choose affordable transportation and lodging [23], some can choose restaurants as they like, and some can look for important locations such as pharmacies and other landmarks. There is an outstanding study that shows another advantage of e-books for tourism, namely the content presented in the form of tables, graphs and images of important landmarks and check-in points, which are constantly adapted in a new and modern way through light, color, sound, and motion pictures based on the evolution of modern information systems. Furthermore, some e-books provide users with the ability to customize the content based on their experience and save it as personal information. This shows that the current electronic system within TAM framework is very important for travel.

There is no denying that tourism route and the community/society map of a particular area are important for travel decisions. In the past, the use of printed maps was very popular, but the problem is that the font cannot be enlarged and erased after writing with a pen, making the maps confusing and unclear. However, since digital systems have been used to design interactive maps, they have become increasingly popular. Research results show that interactive maps are beneficial in selecting lodging, restaurants, photo sites, pharmacies, recreation sites, gas stations, police stations, guards, and disaster relief unit [24]. Currently, some e-books have interactive maps that tourists can use to explore destinations and tourist attractions, as well as to plan the itinerary, as this interaction improves the itinerary planning process. Another example revealed by the research results is that content developed by multimedia systems consisting of videos, images, light, color, and sound, which can be installed on many devices such as iPads or smartphones, by connecting with external sources of information through the Internet, has a great impact on tourists, giving them a deeper understanding of the culture, traditions, beliefs, practices, history, art, music, performances, etc [25] [26]. E-books on travel guides are competitive because the company or developer receives advertising fees from sponsors such as travel agencies, restaurants, hotels, souvenir shops, airlines, car rental companies, taxi companies, and tour guide associations. As a result, the content of these e-books is constantly being improved. So that tourists can be sure that this content is always up to date and contains every detail of the destination, including information about accommodations and restaurants, which is typically conveyed in tour guide jargon. [27] This also includes unfavorable behaviors during the stay at the destination, such as expressions, "do's and don't's", which can be changed over time.

This study began in 15 major cities because they not only have outstanding and well-known temples and meditation centers, but also basic infrastructure, various types of accommodations, many restaurants, gas stations, hospitals, private medical clinics, and pharmacies.

Objectives

- 1) To explore a set of knowledge and develop e-book to promote Buddhist tourism in Thailand.

- 2) To evaluate Thai tourists' satisfaction with the use of electronic books.

Research methodology

The study entitled “E-Book for Promoting Buddhist Tourism in Thailand” employed a research and development method aiming to develop electronic that presented information about Buddhist tourist attractions in 15 major cities of Thailand. The study began by exploring a set of knowledge and appropriate processes in developing e-book that would affect tourists’ travel interest. Subsequently, the satisfaction of 424 Thai tourists who were willing to test the e-book was surveyed via questionnaires in Google form. The obtained data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation). The research steps are as follows:

Step 1: Exploring a set of knowledge and processes in developing an e-book began with a literature review on Buddhist tourist attractions in 15 major cities, including their identity and distinctive features. In addition, there was an investigation into the guidelines for developing interesting content for e-book that could influence visitors' attitudes and encourage them to travel. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was used to study issues of technological approaches and processes for developing quality and efficient electronic.

Step 2: Developing an e-book, in which its processes consist of the following 6 stages:

(1) **Data collection:** This stage was conducted within the framework of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which included ease of use, safety, and usefulness in different dimensions related to tourism. The information used to develop the e-book would not only be an efficient and user-friendly software, but also be installed on all computers and smartphones. Data were collected from Buddhist tourist attractions in 15 major cities that could promote tourism, focusing on their background, connection to society, naturalness, presence of prominent teachers, architecture of buildings and structures, ancient sites, and unique inventions. The collection began with information on 30 tourist temples and meditation centers from documents, books, journals, publications, and e-books. This information was organized into 9 lists. Then, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with abbots or administrators of temples and meditation centers as part of the field research.

(2) **Planning:** At this stage, it was determined which activity should start first, namely the fundamental of the topic, main points, minor points, outline, etc. All this should be systematically connected, especially with the help of technological mechanisms for managing and integrating prepared information. This planning stage aimed at the design of digital areas used for the development of creative media in order to operate efficiently.

(3) **Designing:** This stage began after obtaining information from 15 major cities, beginning with determining the blueprint (structure of the areas), taking into account the details of each main point and minor point based on the balance between areas and content, as well as the characteristics of the information (text, images, diagrams) gathered from 15 major cities. The design incorporated the findings of qualitative research, a literature review, and suggestions from technology specialists and experts in Buddhist tourism. This design must be compatible with the personalities of the target group, such as tourists interested in temples and meditation. The recipients or electronic users were referred to as this target group. The symbols, signs, and types of communication channels, such as video clips and multimedia systems, were also specified.

(4) **Content:** Important points in the electronic were created based on suggestions acquired from qualitative research, particularly from technology experts and Buddhist tourist experts, as well as primary sources. The emphasis was on learning new things, the excitement leading to continuous research, and the motivation to experience the real places. Therefore, 3-dimensional images were used with text explanations and audio sound.

(5) **Usage:** The developed electronic focused on the ease of use, usefulness, impression as well as providing knowledge and immediate details after retrieval from this electronic. This is because it is secure from viruses and other attacks that may occur in online technology.

(6) **Testing:** After the development of this electronic, it was tested. The evaluation form included a 5-point rating scale and open-ended questions for feedback.

Step 3: After the test revealed that the developed electronic had a proper operating mechanism, installation and distribution were carried out. It was put in the electronics of relevant entities for distribution and publicizing via social media. The areas for filling out the questionnaire and offering feedback for improvements were defined. This was an inspection that resulted in modernization improvements.

Step 4: Measurement and evaluation for creativity and improvement, with a focus on usefulness and responding to the needs of the users. At this step, Google Form was used to collect data from 424 volunteers who tested the electronic. The obtained data were analyzed by frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The evaluation was conducted to find out how electronic users accepted the developed media based on Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), as well as their level of satisfaction.

Results

The data were collected from temples and meditation centers in 15 major cities in order to obtain knowledge to develop e-book. This included focus group discussion with experts in Buddhism, experts in information technology and digital, experts in modern strategic communication. The findings revealed that the distinctiveness of Buddhist tourist attractions, such as sacred statues, architecture, paintings, environment, and practices, do not differ significantly. The scenery is peaceful, beautiful, clean, and shady, and the areas are spacious and easy to move around. There is enough service and food. People can expand their knowledge and develop their minds. Data collected during this stage included photographs and animations. In-depth interviews were also conducted with key informants and tourists. The obtained data were examined and synthesized into a data set. Subsequently, the e-book was developed using the Canva program in conjunction with other supplementary programs to make it modern, easy to use, convenient, beneficial, and in line with the technology acceptance model (TAM). The e-book was tested and edited to ensure that it worked properly. A link to the e-book was then sent to 424 volunteers for testing.

The information gathered from 424 volunteers was analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The results were used to determine how users accepted the developed e-book based on TAM, whether the content and information system met the needs of users, whether users benefited and learned new things from the e-book, and how satisfied they were with the e-book.

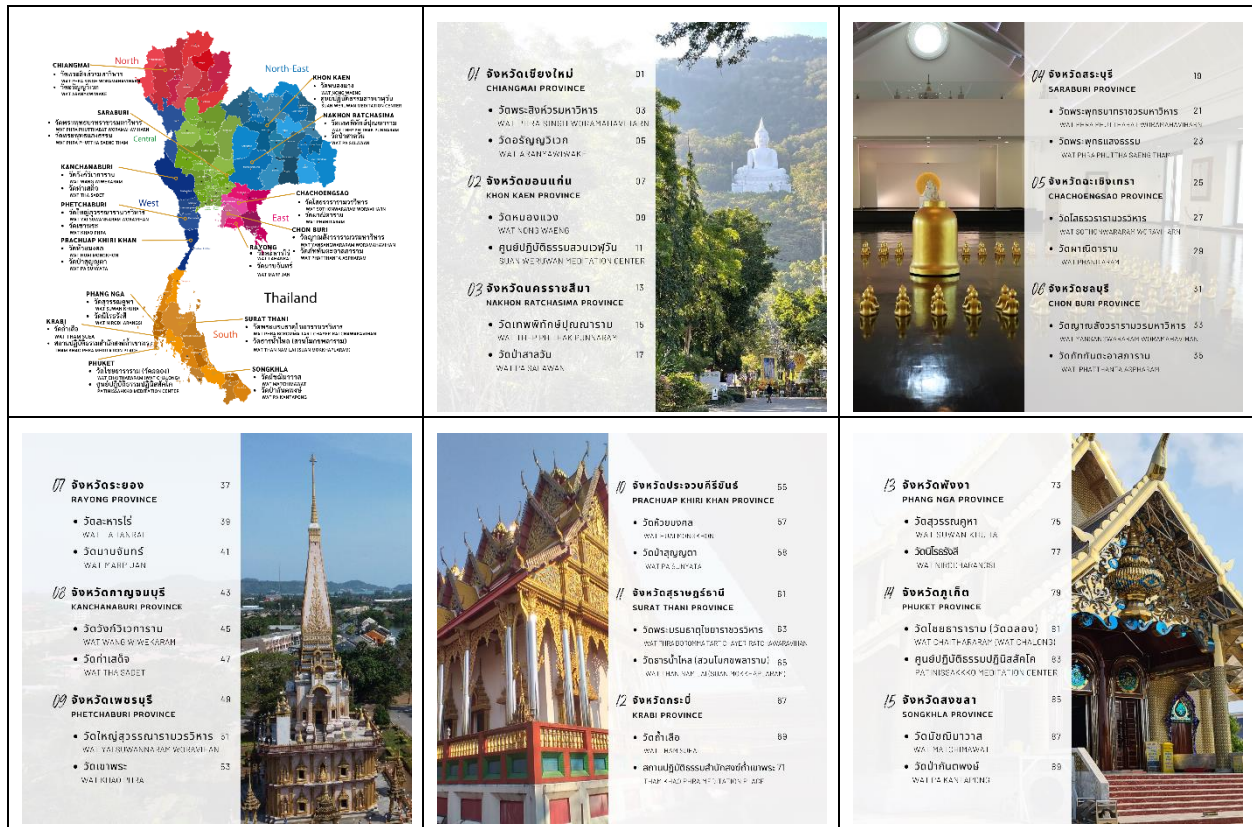


Figure 1 shows some of the images from the e-book.

The evaluation outcome of e-book acceptance based on TAM concept is very interesting as most of the evaluation scores are very good (4.21-5.00 because the class interval is set at 0.8) and consistent with our assumptions, that is, the content on the e-book including text and images and all information positively affects user’s interest in using it as a source of knowledge for traveling as the item “Interest in using this e-book as a source of information about tourist destinations” received the highest score ($\bar{X} = 4.32$, S.D. = 0.48). Next is the presentation form, content structure and information layout in the item “Presentation of public relations media on the e-book has an effect on interest in Buddhist tourism.” received a very high score from volunteers ($\bar{X} = 4.28$, S.D. = 0.45). It indicates that all public relations media including images of important Buddhist landmark, architecture, messages about Buddhist culture, etc., has an positive impact on the volunteers' interest in Buddhist tourism. This is in line with our aim of developing this e-book according to TAM approach which emphasizes maximum benefit, that is, the communication content as specified must be powerful to increase the audience’s interest and requirement to travel more in the future. It can also be confirmed with the results of the evaluation indicating that “The e-book provides useful information about tourist attractions, including location, history, important things or landmarks, activities, routes, facilities, services, and nearby tourist attractions”. Therefore, this tourism platform has identified physical characteristics, material characteristics, geographic characteristics, and important activities that well connect to the valuable religious services of Buddhism ($\bar{X} = 4.27$, S.D. = 0.52) which is consistent with details in each item we evaluated and found that all of them got the highest mean. The reliability of this evaluation result. When considering the mean and standard deviation, however, other key criteria of

the TAM framework are that the e-book must be user-friendly and easy to get around and must be secured from viruses and other computer threats. The result of these criteria in the item “The e-book is easy to use.” ($\bar{x} = 4.22$, S.D. = 0.45) “The e-book is convenient to use” ($\bar{x} = 4.24$, S.D. = 0.47). The results indicate that the participants gave given their approval for its ease of use, convenience, and safety. In addition, when analyzing other evaluation items in TAM framework, it was found that both the mean and standard deviation patterns are not very different. For example, most of the respondents gave evaluation score between level 4 and level 5 and can be seen from standard deviation between 0.45-0.52, which is lower than the assigned class interval 0.80. Therefore, it can be said that the developed e-book is accepted in its quality according to the TAM framework when evaluated by trial participants. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Mean, Standard Deviation, and Opinion level of volunteers towards Acceptance of e- books according to Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

e-books	\bar{x}	S.D.	Score
1. provides useful information about tourist attractions, including location, history, important things or landmarks, activities, routes, facilities, services, and nearby tourist attractions	4.27	0.52	highest
2. easy to use	4.22	0.45	highest
3. convenient to use	4.24	0.47	highest
4. presentation of all elements for public relations on the e-book is appropriate	4.28	0.45	highest
5. interested in using this e-book as a tool for searching information about tourist attractions	4.32	0.48	highest

Discussion

It is generally known that the key principle for creative media development is Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) which emphasizes ease of use and safety from virus threats [28] and/or computer hacking. TAM framework also emphasizes that all content including images, tables, text and charts, all of which is called ‘information’ must benefit the user at the optimal level. [29] That is, it must meet the aim of searching and must be accepted and used on a regular basis, [30] and importantly, it is recommended among network of peers or friends. It is clear that the evaluation outcome from users relating “Ease of use”, “Convenience of use” [31], and ‘benefits’ in many dimensions related to tourism which is the main content of this e-book were accepted. [32] For example, the contents presented on the e-book are accepted by the voluntary users as it facilitates and supports tourism. That is, the users accepted that the e-book gives useful information about tourist destinations including location, history, important things or places, activities, routes, facilities, services and nearby tourist attractions at the highest level which is consistent with the principles of tourism promotion that emphasizes not only more access to the destinations, but also to valuable things for learning, studying and photo taking at recommended sites for souvenirs, and most

importantly, tourism facilities and services such as restrooms, restaurants, parking lots, gas stations, etc. are available.

This e-book is aimed to be used as public relations media to promote Buddhist tourism. Therefore, when being evaluated by voluntary users, it is clear that the content presentation on the e-book has an effect on the interest in Buddhist tourism at an appropriate level. In addition, it also indicates that the information presented on this e-book has an effect on willingness to use it for searching information about tourist attractions. Also, the voluntary users are interested in recommend this e-book to their families and friends to visit this e-book and they have the most positive attitude towards the e-book. It indicates that the development of this creative media for tourism received high evaluation results and was accepted by tourists according to the set goals [33].

Conclusion

Important findings of this research confirm that e-book development based on TAM concept and framework for communicating with target groups to promote their interest in Buddhist tourism were accepted by the participants in term of its benefit, and ease of use. Users also accepted that they are interested in using this e-book as a tool for searching information about tourist attractions and the presentation of all elements for public relations on the e-book is appropriate. In addition, images and content of other tourism aspects also got the highest evaluation scores. It can be concluded that this e-book prototype can be used as a tool for promoting Buddhist tourism.

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