

I-Rehlah. Mobile Application Design for Islamic Tourism in Selangor

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Abstract

Malaysia is a country that does not lag in providing Islamic tourism packages. Muslim tourists, especially from Middle Eastern countries, have begun to make Malaysia one of their tourist destinations, especially during the summer holidays. Nevertheless, there are still shortcomings in the availability of Islamic tourism applications. Most travel apps are general and unfocused. Based on the above statement, there is a need to develop a mobile application for Islamic tourism in the state of Selangor. As a result, a prototype has been developed. The development process has gone through several phases. Begin with the analysis, design, development as well as evaluation. The design involves the selection of information, the type of interaction and the presentation of the interface. These aspects are vital to ensure that it is attractive, informative and usable. The process involves experts in the tourism, academia, multimedia design and information technology fields. Their participation in all phases is needed to help researchers find the best formula to meet the objective of the product development. This article presents the method used in the design phase. It is the most crucial stage in development to set the direction, expedite the process and minimize the cost. There are challenges in developing the prototype. This product has the potential to be used by tourists from the middle east as it is bilingual with English and Arabic language. This application could promote Selangor and Malaysia generally as a tourism attraction. It would also help to boost the post-pandemic economy of both state and country.

Keywords: Islamic Tourism, Design Phase, Mobile Application, Prototype.

1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic tourism aims to target Muslim tourists. However, it can also be a universal attraction for others for several reasons. Among the reasons for the attraction of Islamic tourism to non-Muslim tourists are reasonable prices, safety and security, a family-friendly environment, cleanliness and so on. Crescent Rating (2015) states that the concept of Islamic tourism has been widely used with various names and connotations. However, the terms used have not yet

reached a universal definition. Among the names that have become commonplace are Halal Tourism, Shari'ah Tourism and Muslim-friendly Tourism (OIC & SESRIC, 2017). The main component in Halal Tourism is Halal Hotel, Transport, Restaurant, Package and Finance. All these components involve the source of foods and activities that should comply with the law of Islam. Malaysia is recognized as the first destination in the Global Muslim Travel Index version 2015. This is based on the availability of halal food, facilities and amenities for performing ibadah, Islamic-friendly hotel services and Malaysia's state of being free from all forms of threats and riots (OIC & SESRIC, 2017). Selangor, as a developed state, is not left behind as one of the tourist destinations for Arab Muslims. Based on the Tourist Arrival Statistics Report (LSKP) issued by Tourism Selangor, there was an increase in the number of Arab tourists from 160,615 in 2015 to 360,749 in 2017. The tourism sector contributes a large part to the economic growth of the state of Selangor. State governments under the SMART concept build a foundation towards smart government via smart and integrated technologies. Therefore, this initiative supports the aspirations of SMART Selangor to increase the state's tourism economic growth through the development of the i-Rehlah Prototype Application for Islamic Tourism.

The development of the mobile application platform requires expertise from Information Technology and Multimedia Design. It also requires a subject matter expert for its content. It has to go through several phases. The design phase is essential to make sure that the end product will meet the objective of the project. All should be developed according to plan. It can expedite the development process. There are three aspects of design in the development of this prototype. The first is Information Design, the second is Interaction Design and the third is Interface Design (Kristof & Satran, 1995). In information design, the content is selected based on requirements of Islamic Tourism and feedbacks from experts from industry and academia. The presentation of content is considered to make it more attractive by using multimedia elements. In terms of interface design, the look and feel of the interface with the presentation of layout, text and graphics are planned accordingly to suit the concept of Islamic Tourism. As for the interaction aspect, the type of interaction that included in the system is designed to facilitate user to find the information and navigate between pages in a structure. All these three aspects have been going through the analysis of requirements, design and development process. They are related and supporting each other.

Interface design is an important component in a mobile application. It is the first thing user will see, to decide whether to download the application or not; based on the visual representation and comments given by others. It should be attractive, clean and easy to the eyes. The visual elements on the interface can give a perception of the application. Every development of the user interface has to go through a proper design process. The design should consider the end-user as the target audience, the type of content or information that need to convey and the selection of interaction that suit the content delivery. Usability of an application refers to the presentation of interface design. It can give impact to the users with their experience. The visual elements should help to improve usability. The processing of every task should be responsive. These can be achieved according to the heuristic theory. Users will stick to the application when it is easy to use. (Yeung & Law, 2006).

The prototype was developed using In Vision App software. All information or content, interface and interaction design were added to the prototype to give the feeling of a real application. It has achieved good points during evaluation on the selection of content and presentation of interface. However, a few interactions are not able to be implemented due to the limitation of the software.

2. OBJECTIVE

i-Rehlah is developed to offer a comprehensive mobile application that can cater for the need of tourists from Arab countries to tour around Selangor. It uses the Islamic Tourism concept. Not only to promote Selangor as a destination but to show the beauty of Islam. The combination of information technology, multimedia and visual design create an aesthetic and usable mobile application. The selection of information and interaction with great presentation and easy to use interface determine the quality of the application.

3. NOVELTY & INVENTIVENESS

i-Rehlah is aimed to be used by tourists from the middle east who speak Arabic and English. It is a multi-language application with Arabic, English and Malay. Among other features available are it uses GPS to locate the user and to suggest the selected locations they can choose nearby. There is a section where users can interact with each other, to give reviews about the attractive location they have visited. The application can be integrated with the Smart Selangor system that will surely benefit the user with holistic information and services. The information or content are selected based on the requirements of Islamic Tourism. The experts from academia and industry are involved in the process of design and development. The Fuzzy Delphi method was implemented to gain data from the respondents.

4. PRACTICALITY & USEFULNESS

This mobile application could provide a user with all the assistance to tour around Selangor. As an Islamic tourism application, it provides the user with many attractions. The information about the mosque, halal food, recreation, shopping, health centre, education, major events and heritage. This application can play a role of a tours guide. All interesting places will be recommended as long as they abide by the law of Islam. The tourist will get actual information as all of the locations they want to visit by reading the reviews. The application will be available on Google Play once it is fully developed and has gone through user testing.

5. CONCLUSION

Islamic Tourism has a high potential to generate the economy for the state and nation. Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) has put an initiative to boost the tourism sector for post-pandemic. The Ministry has worked closely with the representative from four Western Asia international airlines to help promote Malaysia as a choice of tourism destination. They are Qatar Airways, Saudi Arabian Airlines, Air Arabia and Emirates Airlines. According to the Minister, YB Dato' Sri Hajah Nancy Syukri, Western Asia countries remain the main contributor to the tourism economy of Malaysia with 309, 224 tourists in 2019 with the tourism expenses reach RM10.214 billion. i-Rehlah could be a good offer for Arab tourist who wants to tour around Selangor. By having the application on their smartphone, it will be easier for them to visit a place, find information about halal food, perform their prayer, plan their travel and so on. A good application will surely help the tourist. It needs to be attractive and useable. The right process is required to meet the objective of the project. The Design Phase is essential to help expedite the development process. The combination of computer technology, multimedia and visual design could contribute to the production of attractive and usable mobile applications. This application could promote Selangor and Malaysia generally as a tourism attraction. It would also help to boost the economy of both state and country.