

Tourist Perception of Mobile Applications for Exploring Cultural Destinations in Negros Occidental, Philippines

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Abstract

Mobile technology has significantly influenced how tourists plan and experience travel. Smartphones allow travellers to search for destinations, navigate locations, and access tourism information instantly. This study examines the perception of travellers regarding the use of mobile applications when exploring cultural destinations in Negros Occidental. A descriptive survey design was used involving 60 respondents who have experience using mobile devices for travel planning. The results show that most respondents frequently rely on mobile applications when planning trips. The most preferred features identified include destination information, navigation maps, and suggested travel itineraries. The findings indicate that tourism mobile applications can help travellers easily access cultural tourism information while improving overall travel planning. The study highlights the potential role of digital tourism platforms in promoting cultural destinations within the province.

Keywords: mobile applications, tourism, cultural tourism, Negros Occidental, travel planning

Introduction

The rapid advancement of mobile technology has fundamentally transformed the tourism industry, particularly in how travelers access information and plan their journeys. Smartphones have become indispensable tools for modern travelers, enabling them to search for destinations, book accommodations, navigate routes, and access reviews instantly. These capabilities have significantly reduced reliance on traditional travel agencies and printed guides, shifting tourism practices toward digital platforms.

Mobile applications designed for tourism offer a wide range of functionalities, including itinerary planning, navigation systems, booking services, and access to cultural and historical information. These applications provide convenience by organizing travel-related data into a single, accessible platform. As a result, tourists are able to make informed decisions quickly and efficiently, enhancing their overall travel experience.

Cultural tourism, which focuses on exploring heritage sites, traditions, and local identities, plays a crucial role in promoting regional development. In the Philippines, Negros Occidental is recognized for its rich cultural heritage, including historical landmarks, festivals, ancestral houses, and natural attractions. Despite this, tourism information about these destinations is often fragmented across multiple sources such as social media, blogs, and websites. This lack of centralized information creates challenges for travelers who seek comprehensive and reliable details when planning their visits.

The increasing dependence on digital technology in tourism highlights the need for accessible and centralized information platforms. Many travelers rely on multiple online sources, which can result in

fragmented, inconsistent, and sometimes unreliable information. This creates difficulties in planning trips, particularly when exploring cultural destinations that require contextual understanding and accurate background information.

In local settings such as Negros Occidental, where cultural attractions are geographically distributed and vary in accessibility, the presence of a unified digital platform becomes even more important. Mobile applications can address this issue by consolidating tourism-related data into a single interface, allowing travelers to efficiently access information, navigate destinations, and organize their activities. Understanding how travelers perceive these applications is essential in evaluating their effectiveness and potential for wider adoption.

While previous studies have examined the role of mobile applications in tourism, limited attention has been given to traveler perceptions within local and provincial contexts. Most existing research focuses on urban or international destinations, leaving a gap in understanding how mobile applications are utilized in regions like Negros Occidental. Addressing this gap is important in developing tourism technologies that are contextually relevant and responsive to local needs.

Thus, this study aims to examine the perception of travelers regarding the use of mobile applications in exploring cultural destinations in Negros Occidental. Specifically, it seeks to determine the frequency of mobile application use in travel planning and identify the features that travelers find most useful. The findings of this study are expected to provide insights that can guide the development of more effective and user-centered tourism applications in regional contexts.

Literature Review

Mobile applications have become an essential component of modern tourism, significantly influencing how travelers search for information, plan trips, and experience destinations. According to Mohamed Hamouda (2022), mobile tourism applications enhance user experience by offering instant access to travel-related information such as maps, accommodations, and attractions. The study emphasizes that convenience and accessibility are key factors driving the adoption of mobile applications in tourism. These applications reduce the effort required to gather travel information and allow users to make faster and more informed decisions.

Similarly, Sofia Dias and Vitor Afonso (2021) found that mobile applications positively influence tourist experiences by improving access to information and facilitating better decision-making. Their research highlights that travelers who use mobile applications tend to experience higher levels of satisfaction due to improved planning and navigation capabilities. This suggests that digital tools not only support logistical aspects of travel but also enhance the overall quality of tourist experiences.

The adoption of mobile applications is strongly influenced by perceived usefulness and ease of use. Tzu-Sheng Kuo et al. (2019) identified these factors as key determinants of user intention to adopt tourism applications. Applications that are user-friendly, reliable, and informative are more likely to be utilized by travelers. When users perceive that a mobile application simplifies their travel process, they are more likely to trust and rely on the technology. This highlights the importance of designing applications that prioritize usability and functionality.

Furthermore, Goh Wei-Han Tan et al. (2017) emphasized the role of mobile applications in integrating multiple services into a single platform. These include booking systems, travel guides, and personalized recommendations, which enhance user convenience and improve the overall travel experience. The integration of these services reduces the need for multiple platforms, allowing users to manage their travel plans more efficiently.

Interactive technologies also contribute to improving tourism applications. Fadilah Izzati Anuar (2013) explored the use of augmented reality in tourism, demonstrating how such technologies can enhance user engagement by providing immersive and informative content. In cultural tourism, augmented reality can present historical narratives and contextual information in an engaging manner, making visits to heritage sites

more meaningful.

In addition, digital technologies have been recognized for their role in promoting sustainable tourism. Bahrani and Muhammad Afkar (2023) found that mobile-based systems can improve tourist experiences while supporting sustainability initiatives by encouraging responsible tourism practices. Mobile applications can provide information about eco-friendly destinations, local guidelines, and sustainable travel options, thereby influencing traveler behavior.

Despite the growing number of studies on mobile tourism applications, there remains a gap in research focusing on local cultural tourism contexts. Most studies are conducted in international or urban settings, with limited attention given to provincial areas such as Negros Occidental. This lack of localized research limits the understanding of how mobile applications function in different environments, particularly in regions with varying levels of technological infrastructure.

Researchers consistently highlight that mobile applications improve accessibility and convenience in tourism; however, differences exist in how these technologies influence user experience. While some studies emphasize functional benefits such as navigation and booking efficiency, others focus on experiential aspects, including engagement and cultural understanding. This indicates that mobile applications serve both practical and experiential roles in tourism, making them essential tools for modern travelers.

Moreover, most existing studies are conducted in developed or urban tourism environments, where digital infrastructure is highly established. In contrast, less attention has been given to provincial or developing tourism contexts. This suggests that the effectiveness of mobile applications may vary depending on geographical and socio-economic factors. In areas with limited infrastructure, mobile applications may play a more significant role in bridging information gaps.

Mobile applications in tourism continue to evolve as digital technologies advance, offering increasingly sophisticated features that enhance user engagement and experience. Beyond basic functionalities such as navigation and booking, modern tourism applications are incorporating personalized recommendations, real-time updates, and user-generated content. These features contribute to a more dynamic and interactive travel experience, allowing users to tailor their journeys according to their preferences.

In addition, the integration of mobile applications with emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and location-based services has further improved their effectiveness. These technologies enable applications to provide context-aware information, helping travelers make timely decisions during their trips. This is particularly important in cultural tourism, where access to accurate and relevant information enhances the understanding and appreciation of heritage sites.

Furthermore, the role of mobile applications in supporting local tourism development cannot be overlooked. In regions like Negros Occidental, where tourism resources are diverse but often dispersed, mobile platforms can serve as centralized systems that promote accessibility and visibility. By consolidating information about cultural attractions, mobile applications can contribute to increased tourist engagement and support the sustainability of local tourism initiatives.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to examine traveler perceptions of mobile applications used in exploring cultural destinations. The descriptive approach was appropriate as it enables the systematic description of patterns, behaviors, and perceptions within a specific population without manipulating variables.

A total of 60 respondents participated in the study. Respondents were selected using convenience sampling, which is suitable for exploratory research where participants are chosen based on accessibility and relevance. The inclusion criteria required that respondents must be at least 18 years old, have experience using a smartphone, and have used mobile applications for travel-related activities. These criteria ensured that the participants were capable of providing meaningful and reliable responses.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire divided into four parts. The first part gathered demographic information, the second measured perceptions using a 5-point Likert scale, the third identified preferred application features, and the fourth collected additional insights through open-ended responses. The use of a Likert scale allowed respondents to express varying levels of agreement, providing more nuanced data.

To ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was evaluated by three experts in the fields of information technology and research in terms of clarity, relevance, and appropriateness. Reliability testing was conducted through a pilot study involving 10 respondents, yielding a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.85, which indicates good internal consistency.

Data collection was conducted online using Google Forms. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and were assured that their responses would remain confidential and used solely for academic purposes. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically frequency and percentage distribution, to summarize and interpret the responses.

The use of convenience sampling, although limited in terms of generalizability, is appropriate for this study as it allows the researcher to gather initial insights from participants who are readily available and meet the required criteria. This approach is commonly used in exploratory research where the objective is to identify patterns and trends rather than establish causal relationships.

Moreover, the use of descriptive statistics aligns with the objectives of the study, as it focuses on summarizing respondent perceptions rather than testing hypotheses. The analysis provides a clear representation of how frequently mobile applications are used and which features are most valued by travelers. This information is essential in understanding user behavior and guiding the development of more effective tourism applications.

Ethical Considerations

The respondents voluntarily participated in the study and were informed about its purpose. All responses were treated with confidentiality and used solely for academic purposes.

Results:

Table 1. Frequency of Mobile Application Use for Travel Planning

Usage Frequency	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Frequently	43	72%
Sometimes	12	20%
Rarely	5	8%
Total	60	100%

The results show that most respondents frequently use mobile applications when planning trips.

Table 2. Preferred Features in Tourism Mobile Applications

Feature	Percentage
Destination information	85%
Maps and navigation	80%
Suggested itineraries	68%
Cultural or historical information	63%
Online booking	55%

The data presented in Tables 1 and 2 indicate that mobile applications are widely utilized by travelers for planning and organizing trips. The high percentage of frequent users suggests that mobile platforms have become essential tools in modern tourism. Additionally, the preference for features such as destination information and navigation highlights the importance of accessibility and real-time functionality in enhancing travel experiences.

Discussion

The results indicate that the majority of respondents frequently use mobile applications when planning their trips. This suggests that mobile platforms have become essential tools in modern travel, reflecting a shift toward digital dependency among travelers. The widespread use of mobile applications highlights the importance of digital solutions in simplifying travel planning and improving accessibility to information.

The most preferred features identified include destination information, maps and navigation, and suggested itineraries. These features provide practical benefits by helping travelers explore unfamiliar locations and organize their activities efficiently. The high preference for navigation tools highlights the importance of real-time functionality in tourism applications, particularly in areas where travelers may not be familiar with the environment.

These findings are consistent with previous studies, particularly those of Sofia Dias and Vitor Afonso (2021), which emphasize the role of mobile applications in improving tourist satisfaction. Similarly, the importance of usability aligns with the findings of Tzu-Sheng Kuo et al. (2019), who identified ease of use as a key factor influencing technology adoption. This reinforces the idea that mobile applications must be designed with user-friendly interfaces to ensure widespread acceptance.

Another important finding is the respondents' interest in cultural and historical information. This suggests that travelers seek not only functional features but also meaningful content that enhances their understanding of destinations. Mobile applications can therefore serve as tools for cultural education and heritage promotion, providing users with contextual knowledge that enriches their travel experiences.

The findings of this study also have practical implications for tourism stakeholders and application developers. As mobile applications become increasingly integrated into travel experiences, there is a growing need to design platforms that prioritize usability, accessibility, and content relevance. Developers should focus on creating applications that are intuitive and responsive, ensuring that users can easily navigate features and access information in real time.

In addition, the inclusion of culturally relevant content within mobile applications can significantly enhance user engagement. Providing historical background, cultural narratives, and contextual information allows travelers to develop a deeper connection with the destinations they visit. This not only improves the

overall travel experience but also contributes to the preservation and promotion of local culture.

From a policy perspective, local government units and tourism agencies can leverage mobile applications as tools for destination marketing and information dissemination. By supporting the development of centralized digital platforms, these institutions can improve the accessibility of tourism resources and attract a wider audience. This is particularly important for regional destinations where digital visibility plays a key role in tourism growth.

Moreover, the increasing reliance on mobile applications reflects broader digital transformation trends within the tourism industry. Travelers are becoming more technologically oriented, and their expectations for accessible and real-time information continue to rise. This places greater responsibility on developers and stakeholders to continuously improve digital platforms to meet user demands.

The findings also suggest that mobile applications can contribute to sustainable tourism development. By providing information on responsible travel practices, local guidelines, and environmentally friendly options, mobile platforms can influence traveler behavior and promote sustainability. This highlights the potential of mobile technology not only as a convenience tool but also as a means of promoting responsible tourism.

Overall, the findings highlight that mobile applications play a dual role in tourism by providing both practical assistance and enriching travel experiences. Developers should focus on integrating usability, real-time functionality, and cultural content to improve user satisfaction.

These findings further suggest that mobile applications should not be limited to basic functionality but should incorporate interactive and culturally informative features. By doing so, tourism platforms can enhance both user experience and cultural appreciation. This highlights the potential of mobile technology as a tool not only for convenience but also for cultural promotion.

These findings highlight the growing role of mobile technology in transforming tourism experiences, particularly in regional contexts where access to centralized information is essential for effective and efficient travel planning.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study looked into how travelers perceive the use of mobile applications when exploring cultural destinations in Negros Occidental. Based on the results, it is clear that mobile applications are widely used and considered helpful by most respondents. Many travelers rely on these applications because they provide easy access to organized and up-to-date tourism information. The high level of usage suggests that mobile technology has become an important part of how people plan and experience their trips today.

The findings also show that mobile applications play a big role in improving travel experiences. Features such as maps and navigation, destination details, and suggested itineraries help travelers move around more easily and make better decisions during their trips. These tools are especially useful when visiting unfamiliar places. At the same time, the interest in cultural and historical information shows that travelers are not only focused on convenience but also on gaining a deeper understanding of the places they visit. This indicates a growing interest in more meaningful and enriching travel experiences.

The study highlights the need for mobile applications that go beyond basic functions. While practical features are important, there is also a need to include content that promotes cultural awareness and local identity. When applications provide both useful tools and engaging information, they become more valuable to users. In this way, mobile applications can support not only travel planning but also the appreciation of culture and heritage.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that tourism stakeholders, including local government units and tourism offices, consider developing mobile applications that focus on local cultural destinations. These platforms should provide reliable and updated information, easy-to-use navigation, and interactive features such as images, videos, and short descriptions of historical sites. Making information more accessible

can help attract more visitors and improve their overall experience. It can also support local tourism by making lesser-known destinations more visible.

There is also a need for better coordination between application developers and tourism authorities. Working together can help ensure that the content provided is accurate, relevant, and useful to travelers. Regular updates and improvements should be made so that the applications remain effective and responsive to user needs. As technology continues to evolve, keeping these platforms updated will be important in maintaining their usefulness.

For future research, it would be helpful to look into how satisfied users are with existing tourism applications and what factors influence their continued use. Researchers may also explore how these applications affect travel behavior and decision-making. In addition, future studies can examine how newer technologies, such as artificial intelligence and augmented reality, can be used to further improve tourism applications and create more engaging travel experiences.

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