

Digital Travel Experiences through Information and Communication Technology: Perspectives of Travelers in Destination Hubs

Emy Antonette Santos Traifalgar

School of Business Administration, Zamboanga Peninsula Polytechnic State University, Zamboanga City 7000, Philippines
annearcillas@gmail.com

Abstract: Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has transformed the tourism industry by enabling more efficient, connected, and personalized travel experiences. This study explored the perspectives of travelers on how ICT shapes digital travel experiences in destination hubs. A qualitative interpretive descriptive design was employed involving purposively selected travelers who had utilized ICT services during their visits to destination hubs. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Six themes emerged: Convenience, Connectivity, Navigation, Transactions, Integration, and Accessibility. The findings revealed that ICT enhanced travel experiences by simplifying trip planning, improving communication, facilitating navigation, streamlining digital transactions, and supporting access to travel information. Participants likewise emphasized the need for integrated digital tourism services and improved technological accessibility to enhance travelers' experiences. The study highlights the important role of ICT in advancing smart tourism by pr

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1. INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become a driving force in transforming the tourism industry by reshaping how travelers plan, experience, and evaluate their journeys. The widespread use of smartphones, mobile applications, digital payment systems, online booking platforms, navigation tools, and real-time travel information has enabled more seamless and personalized travel experiences. These technological innovations have shifted tourism from traditional service delivery to digitally connected experiences that allow travelers to access information, make informed decisions, and interact with destination services more efficiently. As destinations continue to embrace digital transformation, ICT has become an essential component of creating convenient, responsive, and traveler-centered tourism environments.

Digital travel experiences have become increasingly important as travelers rely on technology throughout different stages of their journeys. From searching destination information and making reservations to navigating unfamiliar places and sharing travel experiences online, ICT supports travelers in making their trips more efficient and enjoyable. Previous studies have shown that digital technologies enhance travelers' access to information, improve service convenience, strengthen destination image, and influence travel decision-making (Ding & Wu, 2022; Zhang et al., 2023; Munir et al., 2025). These findings demonstrate that ICT has evolved beyond a communication tool and now serves as an important facilitator of digital tourism experiences.

The concept of smart tourism emphasizes the integration of ICT to improve tourism services, destination management, and traveler satisfaction. Smart tourism environments utilize digital infrastructure, internet connectivity, location-based services, and interactive technologies to support travelers before, during, and after their visits. Through ICT, travelers can access real-time transportation updates, digital maps, electronic payment systems, QR code services, and online customer support that enhance convenience and reduce travel uncertainties. Such technologies contribute to more efficient destination management while enabling travelers to experience greater flexibility, accessibility, and engagement throughout their journeys.



Recent studies have likewise highlighted that travelers' perceptions of destinations are increasingly influenced by the availability and quality of digital services. Tourism branding, destination accessibility, and service responsiveness are strengthened when digital technologies facilitate efficient communication and seamless travel experiences (Bangahan et al., 2025; Reamico et al., 2025; Pawłowska-Legwand et al., 2024). Moreover, positive travel experiences supported by technology contribute to travelers' satisfaction, confidence, and intentions to revisit destinations (Yang et al., 2020; Meliana et al., 2025). These studies suggest that ICT has become an important element in shaping contemporary travel experiences by connecting travelers with destination services and enhancing the overall tourism experience.

Despite the growing adoption of digital technologies in tourism, limited qualitative research has explored how travelers perceive the role of Information and Communication Technology in shaping their digital travel experiences within destination hubs. Existing studies have primarily examined security systems, destination safety, operational efficiency, and traveler behavior, while giving less attention to ICT as a facilitator of digital travel experiences. Understanding travelers' perspectives on ICT can provide valuable insights into how digital technologies influence convenience, accessibility, engagement, and overall travel experiences. Such insights may guide tourism stakeholders, destination managers, and policymakers in strengthening ICT-enabled tourism services and advancing smart destination initiatives that respond to the evolving needs of modern travelers.

2. METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative interpretive descriptive design to explore the perspectives of travelers on how Information and Communication Technology (ICT) shapes digital travel experiences in destination hubs. Interpretive description seeks to generate meaningful insights from participants' perspectives and is appropriate for understanding practical phenomena in real-world settings (Thorne, 2025). This design enabled the study to capture travelers' perceptions of ICT-enabled services and their influence on digital travel experiences.

Participants and Sampling

The study involved 18 travelers who had recently visited airports, seaports, transport terminals, or other destination hubs in the Philippines. Participants were selected using criterion-based purposive sampling, ensuring that each participant possessed firsthand experience using Information and Communication Technology during their travels (Palinkas et al., 2015). The inclusion criteria required participants to (1) be at least 18 years old, (2) have traveled through a destination hub within the past twelve months, (3) have used ICT services such as mobile travel applications, online booking platforms, digital payment systems, navigation applications, or travel information websites during their trip, and (4) voluntarily agree to participate in the study.

Instrument

A researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide served as the primary data collection instrument. The interview questions were aligned with the research objective and reviewed by experts in tourism management and qualitative research to establish content validity. A pilot interview was also conducted to refine the wording, sequence, and clarity of the interview questions prior to the actual data collection.

Table 1. Interview Guide Questions

Research Objective	Interview Question
To explore the perspectives of travelers on how Information and Communication Technology shapes digital travel experiences in destination hubs.	How do you perceive the role of Information and Communication Technology in shaping your travel experiences in destination hubs? What aspects of Information and Communication Technology have contributed most to your travel experiences in destination hubs? What recommendations would you suggest to improve the use of Information and Communication Technology in enhancing digital travel experiences in destination hubs?

Data Gathering Procedure

After securing the necessary permissions, participants were invited to participate voluntarily in the study. Individual interviews were conducted either face-to-face or through virtual communication platforms based on participants' availability. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent. Observational notes were likewise documented to supplement the interview data and facilitate data interpretation.

Data Analysis

The interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis following the procedures outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021). The analysis involved familiarization with the data, systematic coding, identification of meaningful patterns, refinement of themes, and interpretation of the findings in relation to the research objective. The identified themes were supported by representative participant quotations to enhance the credibility of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical principles in qualitative research. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before data collection. Participants were assured that their identities would remain anonymous through the use of pseudonyms, and all interview recordings and transcripts were treated with strict confidentiality. The collected data were used solely for academic purposes and securely stored throughout the research process.

3. Results

Research Objective. To explore the perspectives of travelers on how Information and Communication Technology shapes digital travel experiences in destination hubs.

Interview Question 1. How do you perceive the role of Information and Communication Technology in shaping your travel experiences in destination hubs?

Theme 1. Convenience

Nine participants perceived Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as an essential component of modern travel because it simplified various travel-related activities. They explained that digital platforms enabled them to access travel information, make reservations, navigate unfamiliar destinations, and obtain travel updates with greater ease. These conveniences reduced travel uncertainties and made their journeys more organized and efficient.

"Using travel applications makes everything easier because I can book, check schedules, and find directions in one place." (Participant 5)

"ICT helps me prepare before traveling, so I feel more organized throughout the trip." (Participant 11)

The findings indicate that travelers regarded ICT as an important facilitator of convenient and well-managed travel experiences.

Theme 2. Connectivity

Nine participants highlighted the importance of continuous digital connectivity during their travels. Reliable internet access enabled them to communicate with family and friends, access online travel services, receive real-time travel updates, and remain connected throughout their journeys.

"Having internet access makes me feel connected wherever I travel." (Participant 3)

"I rely on my phone for maps and travel updates, so connectivity is very important." (Participant 9)

These responses demonstrate that digital connectivity has become a fundamental element of contemporary travel experiences.

Interview Question 2. What aspects of Information and Communication Technology have contributed most to your travel experiences in destination hubs?

Theme 1. Navigation

Ten participants identified digital navigation tools as one of the most valuable ICT services during travel. Mobile maps, GPS applications, and location-based services helped them locate transportation terminals, tourist attractions, accommodations, and other essential destinations more efficiently.

"Digital maps help me avoid getting lost, especially when visiting new places." (Participant 2)

"Navigation apps save time because they show the fastest routes." (Participant 8)

The findings suggest that ICT-supported navigation enhanced travelers' mobility and improved their overall travel experiences.

Theme 2. Transactions

Eight participants explained that ICT made travel transactions more efficient through online booking systems, electronic payment platforms, and digital ticketing services. These technologies reduced waiting time and provided greater convenience during different stages of their travel.

"Online booking allows me to arrange my trip before arriving at the destination." (Participant 6)

"Digital payments make traveling more convenient because I don't always need to carry cash." (Participant 14)

The participants perceived digital transaction systems as valuable ICT services that streamlined travel-related activities.

Interview Question 3. What recommendations would you suggest to improve the use of Information and Communication Technology in enhancing digital travel experiences in destination hubs?

Theme 1. Integration

11 participants recommended improving the integration of digital travel services by connecting transportation, accommodation, tourism information, and payment systems into a more unified platform. They believed that integrated ICT services would make travel planning and destination access more efficient.

"It would be better if all travel information and services were available in one application." (Participant 7)

"Different transport services should be connected through one digital platform." (Participant 12)

These responses indicate that integrated ICT services could provide a more seamless digital travel experience.

Theme 2. Accessibility

Seven participants emphasized the need to improve digital accessibility by expanding internet connectivity, providing free Wi-Fi in destination hubs, and ensuring that digital travel services are easy to use for travelers with different levels of technological experience.

"Free internet in terminals and tourist areas would help many travelers." (Participant 1)

"Travel applications should be simpler so everyone can use them easily." (Participant 10)

The findings suggest that improving digital accessibility would enhance travelers' ability to fully benefit from ICT-enabled tourism services.

4. Discussion

The findings revealed that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become an essential facilitator of digital travel experiences by improving travelers' convenience and connectivity throughout their journeys. Participants perceived ICT as an important resource for accessing travel information, organizing itineraries, communicating with others, and obtaining real-time updates while traveling. These findings are consistent with Munir et al. (2025), who emphasized that digital infrastructure and technological services contribute significantly to improving tourism accessibility and supporting sustainable tourism development. Similarly, Bangahan et al. (2025) reported that digital communication enhances destination visibility and strengthens travelers' engagement with tourism services. These findings also support Buhalis and Law (2008) and Gretzel et al. (2015), who described ICT as a key driver of smart tourism by improving information accessibility, connectivity, and traveler experiences.

The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that ICT not only facilitates access to travel information but also enhances travelers' sense of convenience and continuous connectivity throughout their travel experiences.

The study further found that digital navigation and electronic transaction systems were among the most valuable ICT services supporting travelers in destination hubs. Participants highlighted that navigation applications, digital maps, online booking platforms, and electronic payment systems simplified travel planning, reduced uncertainty, and enabled more efficient mobility. These findings support Adrial et al. (2026), who explained that transportation accessibility and public facilities significantly influence tourism experiences and destination accessibility. Likewise, Zhang et al. (2023) argued that technologies providing timely information and efficient services improve travelers' confidence and encourage smoother travel experiences. Likewise, Buhalis and Amaranggana (2014) emphasized that personalized ICT services enhance travelers' convenience and satisfaction throughout different stages of the travel journey. The present findings suggest that ICT has become an integral component of modern travel by enabling travelers to navigate unfamiliar destinations and complete essential travel transactions with greater efficiency.

Another important finding emphasized the need for greater integration and accessibility of ICT-enabled tourism services. Participants recommended connecting transportation services, accommodation systems, tourism information, and digital payment platforms into unified digital environments while expanding internet connectivity and improving access to user-friendly digital services. This finding aligns with Pawłowska-Legwand et al. (2024), who emphasized that digital transformation and destination marketing strategies should prioritize accessible and integrated visitor services to improve tourism experiences. Similarly, Reamico et al. (2025) highlighted that effective tourism initiatives increasingly depend on responsive digital services that address travelers' evolving needs and expectations. This finding further supports Gretzel et al. (2015), who proposed that smart tourism ecosystems rely on integrated digital platforms to deliver seamless and connected travel experiences. Moreover, Venkatesh et al. (2012) explained that travelers are more likely to adopt ICT services that are perceived as useful, accessible, and easy to navigate. The findings therefore indicate that the effectiveness of ICT in tourism depends not only on the availability of digital technologies but also on how seamlessly these technologies are integrated into travelers' overall journey.

Overall, the study demonstrates that Information and Communication Technology plays a vital role in shaping digital travel experiences by improving convenience, strengthening connectivity, facilitating navigation, streamlining travel transactions, and supporting integrated tourism services. These findings highlight the importance of investing in digital infrastructure and smart tourism initiatives that enhance travelers' experiences while promoting more efficient, accessible, and sustainable destination management.

5. Conclusion

This study explored the perspectives of travelers on how Information and Communication Technology (ICT) shapes digital travel experiences in destination hubs. The findings revealed that ICT enhances travelers' experiences by improving convenience, strengthening connectivity, facilitating navigation, streamlining digital transactions, and supporting integrated travel services. Participants likewise emphasized the need to enhance digital accessibility and integrate ICT platforms to provide more seamless, efficient, and user-friendly travel experiences.

Overall, the study underscores the growing importance of ICT in advancing smart tourism and improving travelers' experiences in destination hubs. Strengthening digital infrastructure, expanding accessible ICT services, and integrating technology-driven tourism systems can contribute to more convenient, connected, and sustainable travel experiences that address the evolving needs of modern travelers.

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