CHAPTER EIGHT

THE SOCIO-COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE OF TOURISM HOMEPAGES AND WEB-MEDIATED TOURISM ADVERTORIALS

8.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher presents the socio-cognitive perspective of the findings gathered from the questionnaire disseminated to tourist respondents. The socio-cognitive perspective needs to be examined because genres may incorporate interests and values of a particular social group and reinforce social rules and relations between writers and readers. This perspective is more directed at the social aspects of communities and less focused on text forms. Therefore, to understand the meanings of a text it is necessary to understand the relationships between the participants of the social event of which the text or genre is part (Bazerman, 2004; Miller, 1984, 1994).

The responses of the tourist respondents are considered socio-cognitive because they provide information on audience reception and insights (Bhatia, 2004: 161) of the tourism homepages and online advertorials. Other than being asked what their preferences for an effective informative and persuasive tourism website, they were also asked to evaluate and provide their opinions on the respective tourism websites and advertorials found in these websites that are analysed in the study. In other words, the tourist respondents’ responses not only provide information of the social aspect in the effective creation of the web-mediated genre, but also provide pertinent information from the socio-cognitive perspective in the interpretation, evaluation and improvement of the genre.
The social and socio-cognitive perspective data gathered from the questionnaire will be analysed to answer the fourth research question: What are the communicative features of the Malaysian tourism homepages and online tourism advertorials that attract potential tourists to and in the country?

Although the approach to the study is mainly qualitative, the findings from the questionnaire are presented in a quantitative manner using frequency counts and percentages to report on the options in the questionnaire which were selected by the respondents. The results of the findings from the questionnaire are then tabulated and analysed. A summary of the results and interpretation of the findings based on the data are also included in this chapter.

8.1 Findings and Discussion

The findings from the data collected from the questionnaire are presented, analysed and discussed in this section of the thesis. They are presented according to the four domains of the questionnaire.

8.1.1 Questionnaire – potential tourists (i.e. foreign & local tourists)

Knowledge of audience characteristics helps a writer to use appropriate and effective communicative strategies to influence the reader, especially in the case of persuasive genres where various kinds of appeals are chosen depending upon the analysis of audience characteristics (Bhatia, 1999: 28). Thus, this study has employed a questionnaire as a tool to find out the communicative strategies that can effectively
influence the audiences’ preferences and acceptance of Malaysian online tourism advertorials.

In order to find out the views on the generic moves and multimodal preferences of official Malaysian online tourism advertorials, a questionnaire (Appendix G) was disseminated to foreign and local tourists. The responses of a total of sixty respondents, who consist of thirty foreign and thirty local tourists, were obtained. A detailed quantitative findings of the tourists’ responses was tabulated on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and can be viewed in Appendix O.

There are thirty questions altogether in the questionnaire, with space for further relevant comments at the end of the questionnaire. These questions were classified into four domains:

Part A: Demographic Information
This part attempted to find out the types of tourists that read online tourism advertorials.

Part B: Travel-Planning Experiences
The second part of the questionnaire attempted to find out how the tourists plan their vacation and the various means of obtaining tourism information.

Part C: Online Experiences
The third part of the questionnaire attempted to find out the potential tourists’ online experiences and preferences in order to get more information on the places that they intend to visit. These included their preferences and frequency of online usage in gathering more information about a place or country, and the preferred website contents
or information that they would like to obtain online. This section of the questionnaire also attempted to find out the multimodal elements that attracted tourists to visit the country and its places of interest.

**Part D: Online Experiences of Malaysian Tourism Websites**

Part D of the questionnaire attempted to obtain the tourists’ opinion of the official tourism websites of Malaysia and its states.

**8.1.1.1 Part A: Demographic Information**

This subsection reports on the demographic information of the sixty respondents of the questionnaire. It is important to know the demographics of the tourism website visitors, who are also prospective tourists, in order to cater to their needs by ensuring that the information presented in the websites are relevant for the audience. The communicative purposes of the tourism websites will also be achieved with knowledge on the audience’s or potential tourist’s demographics.

The first part of the questionnaire attempted to find out the types of tourists that read online tourism advertorials. It consists of six questions which mainly required respondents to tick the appropriate boxes of information that are relevant to them, except for questions 3, 4, 5 and 6 which required the respondents to provide extra or more specific information when they had ticked the ‘Others’ option.
Table 8.1

Gender of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 1)

As mentioned in Chapter Four, the target number of respondents for this questionnaire was thirty foreign and thirty local tourists. As tabulated in Table 8.1, out of the total number of sixty respondents, twenty are males (M) and forty are females (F). The local tourist respondents comprised of seven males and twenty-three females; whereas the foreign tourist respondents comprised of thirteen males and seventeen females. However, the gender of the tourists will not be considered as a variable in the present study.

Table 8.2

Age-Groups of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 20 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 30 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 - 40 years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 – 50 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 – 60 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 60 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 2)

The age-groups of the respondents are shown in Table 8.2. The majority (38.3%) of the respondents are from the range of 31 to 40 years of age, which is closely followed by the age group of 21 to 30 years old at 30.0%. Tourist respondents from the 41 to 50
years of age are the thirds largest group (20.0%) in the study; followed by teenagers (below 20 years old) at 6.7%; 51 – 60 years old (3.3%); and 1.7% for the above 60 years of age group.

The bulk of the foreign and local tourist respondents in this study are those between the ages of 21 and 50 years old. Based on the present study, this finding can loosely translate to the age group of tourists who have travelled to and around Malaysia. A possible reason for this is that people from these ages are generally those of a working age or who have started working. Thus, they would be those who can afford to travel for leisure as they are earning an income. These people may also be travelling for business purposes as compared to people from the younger and older age groups as they may be either not working yet or have retired from work. However, more research on the age groups of tourists to Malaysia with a larger corpus need to be conducted before this can be conclusive.

The third question in this part of the questionnaire was to identify if the tourist-respondent is a local tourist or foreign tourist; and their state of origin if they are Malaysian tourists, or their country of origin if they are foreign tourists.
Table 6.3

Nationality of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>Country / State of Origin</th>
<th>No. of Tourists</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local (Malaysian)</td>
<td>Kedah</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negeri Sembilan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Penang</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sarawak</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Selangor</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Terengganu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>50.02</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brunei</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>China</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>France</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>50.01</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 3 & 6)

Table 8.3 shows the state of origin of the Malaysian tourist-respondents, and nationalities of the foreign tourist-respondents. In order to be accounted for in the study, the respondent has to have travelled out of his state of origin to be considered a local tourist, or has travelled to and visited Malaysia to be considered a foreign tourist. The foreign tourists who responded to the questionnaire are from thirteen countries.
The nationalities of the foreign tourists are American, Australian, British, Bruneian, Chinese (from China), Colombian, French, German, Indonesian, Singaporean, South Korean, Sudanese and Yemeni.

Table 8.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Academic Qualification (or equivalent)</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPM / O-Level</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STPM / A-Level</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD degree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 5)

Question 5 of the questionnaire tried to find out the respondents’ highest level of academic qualification. The tourists who responded to the questionnaire comprised of those who hold at least an O-Level/SPM certificate or its equivalent. The levels of academic qualification can be divided into three groups – the SPM and STPM / O and A-Levels; the Diploma and Bachelor degree levels; and Master’s and PhD degree levels. These three categories relate to the close or common age groups of the certificate or degree holders.

The level of academic qualification with the highest number of respondents at 28.3% is the Master’s (23.3%) and PhD (5.0%) degrees, followed by 16.7% respondents with a Diploma (15%) and Bachelor’s degree (1.7%). 13.2% of the respondents hold an
SPM/O-Level (8.3%) and STPM/A-Level (5.0%) certificate or their equivalent. This finding relates to the ages of the tourists and their capability to travel. It is presumed that those who hold a Master’s and/or Doctorate degrees will hold a senior position at the workplace, and those who have obtained the Diploma and/or Bachelor’s degrees would have started their career and earning an income. A general assumption is that respondents with a higher level of academic qualification will normally earn more than a person with a lower academic qualification. Hence, it is more likely that a person who has an occupation will have the ability and more opportunity to travel, compared to a person who is still schooling or have just obtained his/her SPM and STPM or O and A-Levels. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that there are exceptions to this assumption.

8.1.1.2 Part B: Travel-Planning Experiences

Part B of the questionnaire which consists of four questions attempted to find out how tourists plan their vacation. The responses to those questions which are analysed and reported below reveal the potential tourists’ travel planning experiences and the various means of obtaining tourism information.

The first question in this part aimed to find out the validity of the respondents for the study. As shown in Table 8.5 on the next page, all the tourists have previously travelled out of state and/or country. Only when the respondents stated that they had travelled out of state and/or country in the past, hence indicating that they were tourists in/to Malaysia, were their responses taken into consideration for the present study. Their confirmation of having had the experience of travelling to a different state and/or country will add to the reliability and validity of their responses as tourists.
The responses to the questions and their options in the questionnaire will be regarded as practically significant if the findings are more than 50%. This figure will indicate that the factor or feature that has obtained an outcome of 50% and above will be significant in having an effect on the issue being investigated.

Question 8 of the questionnaire attempted to find out the respondents’ methods of selecting a destination to visit. For this question, respondents could tick as many options as they deem relevant. The findings as shown in Table 8.6 on the next page reveals that the common practice in deciding a travel destination is through the recommendations from friends/family (76.7%). This seems to be the most popular method of selection because their friends/family would have first-hand experience in visiting the place, and would not have recommended it if they did not think that it was worth visiting. The second manner of selection is through one’s reading about the destination from a printed media (71.7%). The mode of selecting a place to tour is via the electronic media which includes the radio, television and Internet that had broadcasted or published a destination is the third most popular (66.7%). The method that is least popular is recommendations from tour agents or consultants (10%). The respondents do not fully trust travel consultants and feel that the tour agents will not give an objective opinion of a tour destination because they perceive that the tour agents’ ultimate goal is to just to sell them a tour package.

Table 8.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 7)
Table 8.6
Methods of Selecting Destinations to Tour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method of Selection</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations from friends/family</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read about it from printed media</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>71.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heard/Viewed from electronic media</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>66.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations from tour consultants</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 8)

Other comments and forms of selecting a destination to visit or tour by the respondents include the following:

(a) Personal interest. (7F)

(b) Don’t really trust travel consultants (marketing). Depends on (i) situation & interest – travelling alone or group (mutual agreement or individual taste), I’ll visit Nepal. E.g. Himalayan outback countryside; (ii) budget; (iii) timing; (iv) distance. (25M)

(c) Studies. (13M)

(d) Near family/friends. (11F)

(e) I go to where friends and relatives live. (12F)

(f) Recommended by my university. (14F)

(g) Fell in love the image/idea of the place from various impressions from early on, during childhood etc. Fascinated with cultural heritage of the place, or maybe from movies/books I’ve read. (17M)

(h) Own preference. (22M)

(i) Family-oriented places. (28M)

(j) Own choice. (29M)
(k) Blogs, Profile of Friends on Facebook, Search engines. (30M)

(l) Go along with family (family members’ selection). (25F)

(m) Study tours. (27F)

(n) Trips organised by the university. (30F)

(Note: The number and alphabet in parenthesis denote the tourist as listed in Appendix O.)

Table 8.7

Sources of Information on Selected Destination to Tour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People who have visited the destinations</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>68.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printed media</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Internet</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>85.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic media</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour agencies/companies</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 9)

The next question of the questionnaire tried to gather information on the sources of information that the respondents rely on after they have decided on the destination to tour or visit. The findings show that the Internet is the main source of information that 85.0% tourist respondents refer to for tourism information (Table 8.7). The percentage of respondents seeking information regarding a destination from other sources of information was much lower at 68.3% from people who have previously visited the place; 58.3% from the printed media; and 30.0% from electronic media, other than the Internet, such as the radio and television. The lower percentage of potential tourists
seeking information from the printed media and electronic media other than the Internet is due to the absence of feedback in such one-way media.

Only 23.2% of the tourist respondents would gather tourism information from tour agencies or companies. This low figure is supported by feedback from the tourist respondents who revealed that they have more confidence in the information obtained from official tourism websites, rather than information given by tourist agents or companies whose ultimate intention is to sell them a tour package and make a profit.

The only respondent (1.7%) who ticked the ‘Others’ option stated that she would watch travel documentaries, such as by Ian Wright a travel documentary reporter, to attain information about a destination. However, this manner of obtaining information is rather coincidental than intentional.

Table 8.8 presents findings on the types of information that the tourist respondents would like to gather concerning a destination or country that they intend to visit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Information</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Places of interest</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local events</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local cuisine</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local people</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 10)
90% of the respondents would like information on the places of interest in the country or state. The second most important information that the tourists want is the local cuisine (76.7%); followed by local events (73.3%); information on the local weather (70.0%) and local people (60.0%); and information on the nature distinctive to the country (41.7%). There were eighteen respondents (30.0%) who wanted other kinds of information other than the six categories that were provided. They included local facilities such as public transportation, lodging and security. The following are the other specific information that the tourists require:

(a) Security, cost. (1M)
(b) Good shopping spot and what are the things that are worth buying there. (2M)
(c) Currency, visa requirements, health certificate requirements, language. transport facilities, tipping policy, drinking water. (10M)
(d) Affordable hotels / mode of transport. (11M)
(e) Costs/expenses. (7F)
(f) Adventure tourism available and price range. (13M)
(g) Shopping. (9F)
(h) Children friendly facilities. (10F)
(i) Sports I can practice and those I can see as a fan. (12F)
(j) Practical stuff like lodging, transport, various expenses (17M)
(k) The language that their people speak. (18M)
(l) Travelling cost, food, transportations, accommodations. (20M)
(m) Exchange rates/currency, hotel rates and transportation, especially if going for backpack or do-it-yourself (DIY). (25M)
(n) Types of amenities available and accessibility (hotels, restaurants, transportation, safety issues). (21F)
(o) Hotels & lodging. (27M)
(p) Halal food [for Muslims], accommodation. (28M)
(q) Prices, necessities (that aren’t available). (30M)
8.1.1.3 Part C: Online Experiences

The third part of this questionnaire attempted to find out the tourists’ online experiences and preferences in order to get more information on the places that they intend to visit. This subsection reports on the tourists’ preferences and frequency of online usage in finding out more about a place or country, and the preferred contents or information that they would like to obtain online. This subsection also reports on the multimodal elements that tourists are attracted to, which may captivate them to visit the country and its places of interest.

8.1.1.3.1 Preferences & Frequency of Online Usage

The five questions in the first subsection of Part C of the questionnaire intended to find out the tourists’ experiences, preferences and frequency of online usage in order to gather tourism information on destinations.

All of the respondents, irrespective of nationality, are aware that they can obtain tourism information about a destination that they intend to visit from the Internet as presented in Table 8.9 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge of Information about Destinations in the Internet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tourists</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 11)
However, not all of them (96.7%) have surfed the Internet personally to gather information about the destination that they intended to visit (Table 8.10).

### Table 8.10

Gathering of Information about Destinations from the Internet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>96.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This finding correlates with the findings presented earlier in Table 8.2 which show that the people who surf the Internet to gather information from tourism websites are mostly those between the ages of 21 and 50 years old. A possible reason among others is that people in the 21 to 50 years age groups are more likely to have been exposed to the use of computer technology and the Internet as a source of information for their studies or work, and thus may be more comfortable with gathering information even for leisure from the new media. The younger generation may also be more computer savvy as they are likely to be more familiar with the use of the new technology and media from a young age. However, people from the older age group will be interested to use this new technology and utilise the Internet as a source of information if they have experienced the benefits, ease and speed of gaining information via the Internet, or have acquired the competence of using the Internet to do so. This is reflected in the findings where 66.7% (two out of three) of the respondents above 50 years old have stated that they had previously gathered tourism information about destinations that they visited from the Internet. Another reason is that there were only three respondents who were above 50
years old, and this number is rather small to represent their age groups of people who prefer to gather tourism information from the Internet.

Table 8.11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>96.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislike</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 13)

Table 8.11 shows that almost all of the respondents (96.7%) like to obtain tourism information from the Internet. Most of them have even justified their liking for online tourism information. The reasons given by these tourists for their preference to online tourism information are listed in Appendix P. The thirty-two justifications given by the respondents can be broadly categorised into the following five reasons:

(a) There are a lot of relevant and valid information on tourism in the Internet.

(b) It is easy, convenient and fast to obtain online tourism information.

(c) Reviews from past tourists are available in the Internet.

(d) The online tourism information includes many colourful pictures that vividly describe the destinations.

(e) This new media affords capabilities for interactive communication and facilities for making reservations via the Internet.

On the other hand, the two respondents (3.3%) who did not like to obtain tourism information from the Internet gave the following reasons for their dislike:

(a) Do not own a computer. Even at an Internet cafe, need help to get what I want. Time-consuming when need to pay by the hour (to use the computer). (28M)
(b) Some things are not true in the Internet. Seeing is believing. (26F)

The reasons given by the local tourist respondent is that she did not own a computer, and therefore did not have easy access to such online information. This does not mean that she was not able to get adequate or useful information from tourism websites. As for the foreign tourist respondent, he had a negative preconceived idea about the information on such websites as he may have thought that the function of tourism websites is only to promote and sell, rather than to disseminate information.

Table 8.12

Activity of Online Tourism Information Gathering

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>85.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 14)

As can be seen from Table 8.12 above, 85% of the respondents would surf the Internet for information on places to visit even before they have made their decision to visit a destination. 18.3% of the respondents would obtain more information about the destination after they have decided to visit the country or states. Two respondents stated that they would surf the Internet both before and after they have made their selection of country of state to visit. This finding clearly shows that the tourism websites can be a means of distribution of information as well as promoting a destination. Therefore, it is important that tourism websites, especially those that are maintained by official entities and governments are appropriately maintained so as to provide accurate, attractive and reliable information, which can also be utilised as a channel to promote a country and its attractions.
Table 8.13

Frequency of Online Tourism Information Gathering

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 15)

The table above shows the respondents’ frequency of gathering tourism information from the Internet. They would either surf the Internet themselves or ask someone else to do so to obtain the online information for them. More than half of the respondents (55.5%) revealed that they frequently gather online information about a destination and its attractions. 33.3% would occasionally obtain tourism information from the Internet, while 1.7% of the respondents would seldom do so. The data also reveals that none of the respondents have never tried to obtain tourism information from the Internet by themselves or asked someone to do so. This finding shows that although respondents who were not fond of surfing the internet to gather information for some reason or other, they would still get assistance from someone else to obtain tourism information for them. This further clearly shows the importance of the Internet as a source of information.

8.1.1.3.2 Preferred Contents of Online Information

The next eight questions, in the second subsection of Part C, of the questionnaire focused on the online tourism information contents that are preferred by tourists.
Potential tourists surf the Internet in order to obtain various information regarding a
destination that they intend to visit. Some of the information and contents that they
would like to gather from online tourism websites include written descriptions, pictures
and videos on places of interest, festivals, local events/cuisine, etc; reviews by past
tourists; feedback and frequently asked questions; and information on facilities and
climate.

Table 8.14 summarises the findings of the first question in this sub-section of the
questionnaire, which concerns the types of information that the tourist respondents of
the present study expect to see in an online tourism website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Information</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptions</strong> about places of interest/festivals &amp; local events/cuisine, etc</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pictures</strong> of places of interest/festivals &amp; local events/cuisine, etc</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>95.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Videos</strong> on places of interest/festivals &amp; local events/cuisine, etc</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviews / ratings by past tourists</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback to questions</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local facilities</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>81.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical information</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 16)

The type of online tourism information that the tourist respondents would expect most is
pictures of places of interest/activities/festivals and local events/cuisine, etc. Fifty-
seven of the respondents (95.0%) have indicated that they expect to see pictures of the places of interest/activities/festivals or local cuisine in online tourism websites. This high expectation proves the importance of visuals in attracting potential tourists to the destination or to take part in the activities/events as illustrated in the webpages. The pictures will enable the prospective tourists to visualise the place that they will get to experience when they visit the destination or take part in the activity/event, etc.

Descriptions on the places of interest, festivals and local events, cuisine, etc are another type of information that the tourist respondents (93.3%) highly expect to obtain from online tourism websites. These two types of information are ranked very high in the tourists’ expectations because prospective tourists would like to read about those descriptions of places of interest, festivals and local events/cuisine, and also view those descriptions in other non-linear, more concrete forms such as photographs that depict those descriptions.

The percentages of information on the local facilities (81.7%), reviews and ratings by past tourists (76.7%), and geographical information of the target destination (75.0%) are also quite high. Such information would also contribute to the potential tourists’ choice of destination to visit. This is because in selecting a potential destination to visit, information on the convenience and suitability in terms of the infrastructure facilities and the local public transportation are needed. Tourists would prefer to select a place that offers at least some basic convenience of the aforementioned, especially if they have to spend a sum of money to visit the place. This is reflected in 81.7% (forty-nine) of the respondents who require information on the local facilities of a destination.
As revealed in the findings from the questionnaire, 76.7% of the respondents, with more than half (twenty-four) of this figure (forty-six) comprising of foreign tourists, would expect to read reviews from past tourists. This is because the price of visiting a foreign country is higher than visiting a local destination. Furthermore, the reviews and ratings by past tourists will further confirm their selection and make them feel more assured that they have made a correct choice or decision.

Geographical information of the destination, which includes the natural features, weather conditions, is also required by forty-five or 75.0% of the respondents. This information will allow them to prepare the essential personal necessities, such as suitable clothing, shoes, etc, when they visit the place or take part in the activities/events.

The other three types of information that were categorised in the question that seeks to find out tourists’ expectation of the kinds of information that they hope to obtain from tourism websites did not receive very high responses. Less than 50% of the respondents picked out these three options.

The first of these three options is feedback to questions, where twenty-nine or 48.3% of the respondents expect this type of information. Although the findings did not reveal that feedback to enquiries posed by potential tourists is very important, this channel to acquire specific information that are not provided in the websites is still required by almost half of the tourists. This can be catered for in a frequently-asked-question (FAQ) and enquiries platforms, as well as providing the contact information for prospective tourists to seek further information. Different tourists will have their individual questions concerning a tourist destination or activity. Many of the tourism
websites analysed in the present study in fact provide this platform to answer tourists’ queries, as have been revealed in the findings of the tourism website genre in Chapter Six.

The findings from the tourist questionnaire shows that videos depicting places of interest/festivals & local events/cuisine, etc are not as highly expected as the abovementioned types of information. It ranks seventh on the types of information that the respondents expect to see in an online tourism website, with only twenty-six out of the sixty or 43.3% of them indicating their anticipation for this option. This discovery implies that not all forms of multimodal communications are highly preferred. This finding corresponds with the findings of questions 17, and 18 to 22 of the questionnaire which concerns the multimodal varieties of communication, as will be reported and discussed later in this chapter.

An option to state any other types of expected information not listed in this question was also available for the respondents. Eleven or 18.3% of the respondents provided other types of information that they expect a tourism website to contain. The features are listed below:

(a) Information and bookings of hotel accommodation. (1F)
(b) Business opportunities. (7M)
(c) Estimated costs/expenses. (7F)
(d) Language spoken, visa requirements if any, currency & current exchange rate. (15M)
(e) Sport teams to see. (12F)
(f) Local people’s habits. (14F)
(g) Special warnings when need be. For instance if I want to go to south Africa or Brazil, which are dangerous countries, I would like to know which places are too dangerous to go to. (15F)
(h) Expenses. (27M)

(i) Historical values. (28M)

(j) Frequently Asked Question (FAQ), important numbers/contact details, basic legal and customary ‘laws’ to follow. (30M)

(k) Sequence of Information that is expected from an online tourism website – 1. Pictures of the places/festivals/cuisine, etc; 2. Description about ...; 3. Videos on ...; 4. Geographical information. (29F)

The kinds of tourism information that are presented on the Internet have the ability to influence and persuade online readers and potential tourists to visit a destination. The different types of information also create different degrees of persuasion on the tourists. This inference is demonstrated by the findings on the types of online tourism information that has influenced the tourists’ decision to visit a destination, as presented in Table 8.15 below.

Table 8.15
Types of Online Tourism Information that has Influenced the Decision to Visit a Destination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Information</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptions</strong> about places of interest/festivals &amp; local events/cuisine, etc</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44</td>
<td><strong>73.3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pictures</strong> of places of interest/festivals &amp; local events/cuisine, etc</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>52</td>
<td><strong>86.7</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Videos</strong> on places of interest/festivals &amp; local events/cuisine, etc</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td><strong>30.0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviews / ratings by past tourists</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>35</td>
<td><strong>58.3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local facilities</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
<td><strong>60.0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical information</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td><strong>40.0</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td><strong>11.7</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 17)
Another benefit of including pictures of places of interest, events, cuisine, etc is that they can greatly persuade the prospective customer to experience the places and activities as portrayed in those visuals. This is reflected in the findings where fifty-two out of sixty of the tourist respondents stated that pictures are the main type of online tourism information that has influenced their decision to visit a destination. 86.7% of them believe that after looking at the pictures uploaded onto the tourism websites, they will be attracted to those places and activities, and be convinced to experience them. This type of multimodal discourse is preferred to textual descriptions because as the saying goes, “pictures paint a thousand words”. Moreover, pictures can give a more accurate description since they are visual representations of those destination, activities, etc.

Written descriptions about the places of interest, local events, cuisine, etc is the next type of tourism information that has played a role in affecting the tourists’ choice of destination to explore. It accounted for 73.3% of the respondents. Through textual descriptions, potential tourists will be able to obtain more details pertaining to the places and activities that are being described. These details may be important for them to plan their visits and make preparations for the trip.

Having adequate knowledge on the local facilities is also necessary in deciding a holiday destination for 60.0% of the respondents. The thirty-six respondents regard this information as essential in assessing the suitability of the destination as a place for them to tour. Tourists have their own requirements and desires; hence, their expectations may be different, according to their personalities and accustomed habits. Receiving information on the local facilities, such as transportation, lodging, communication, food, etc offered will enable them to estimate the convenience that they will expect of the
destination. This information will enable them to make a sensible choice of their tour destination.

Evaluations by past tourists in the form of reviews also play a part in influencing the respondents’ decision on the choice of destinations to visit. In relation to reviews and/or ratings as mentioned in the discussion on the types of information that potential tourists would expect to be included in the tourism websites above, 58.3% of the tourist respondents were influenced to visit the destination or country after reading the reviews on the tourism websites, with more than half of these respondents comprising of foreign tourists. The thirty-five respondents read the reviews by tourists who have experienced touring the destination which they intend to visit before making the decision to visit the place because they believe that the past tourists’ reviews will give an unbiased evaluation of the destination under consideration. Although most websites will likely include mostly if not all positive reviews, these will nevertheless be regarded as additional information for the potential tourists in their deliberation of that place as a holiday destination. This further shows the influential ability of reviews and ratings by past tourists in persuading potential tourists to visit a destination or country.

Geographical information includes the location, physical attributes, climate, population and natural resources of the country. This type of information is regarded as having an influence on twenty-four or 40.0% of the respondents’ decision in their selection of a tour destination. Just as textual descriptions, the geographical information of a country or place can provide further information on the attractions of a destination. Take for instance the information on the highest point in Malaysia which is Mount Kinabalu (4,095 meters), located in the state of Sabah. The height of Mount Kinabalu could be an attraction to mountaineering enthusiasts. Likewise, the population composition of a
multi-racial Malaysia, creating a whole new culture that leads to a great combination of arts, belief and tradition of the Malaysian population, contributes to the country’s tourist attractions. Knowledge on these types of information will therefore help the potential tourists to understand the destination better and be influenced to come and visit the country.

Videos are another kind of non-textual, multimodal form of communication. They can be placed in a tourism website to attract prospective tourists to visit a destination. However, the findings from the questionnaire do not show a high significance in persuading the tourist respondents to visit a destination, with only 30.0% of them having been influenced by online tourism videos in visiting a destination. This finding concurs with the finding of question 16 regarding tourists’ expectation of videos in the online tourism websites. This implies that videos on tourist destinations do not have a very significant impact on the tourists’ selection of a destination to visit.

Other types of information that can influence the tourists’ decision to visit a destination include the following:

(a) Business Opportunities. (7M)

(b) Costs/expenses. (7F)

(c) Cost of living and related cost, such as travel, & accommodation. (15M)

(d) Children’s activities available and facilities. (10F)

(e) Historical or famous places, i.e. the one that has a story behind it. (29F)

One of the respondents (29M) explained that, he/she was never influenced by any of the online information in deciding a tour destination. This respondent probably does not
trust online tourist information due to past experiences and regard them as mere advertising. However, this view is not significantly represented.

The purpose of questions 18 to 22 of the questionnaire was to find out the significance of non-textual, multimodal forms of communication in tourism websites. The first two questions that deal with the impact of pictures on tourists. As can be seen in Table 8.16 below, all the tourist respondents affirmed that they expect to find some form of visual related to a destination in tourism websites. This further confirms the importance of pictures in promoting a tourist destination, which is why all the tourism websites analysed in the study contain high modality pictures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectations</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 18)

In terms of the respondents’ preferences of the types of pictures pertaining to a destination on the tourism website, 91.7% of them stated that they favoured pictures that are representative of the places of interest/festivals & local events/cuisine, etc – as explained by Respondent 25M, picture that are “real/true/factual representation, not made up”. A genuine illustration of the destinations means that what they see on the website can be witnessed when they arrive at the destinations. This will eliminate the anxiety of false promotion, and instead make the website more reliable and dependable. In doing so, future tourists will be more confident in the informative contents of the

Table 8.16

Expectations of Pictures related to a Destination in the Internet
tourism website and consequently have more faith in the services and information published on the website.

Table 8.17

Preferred Types of Pictures related to a Destination in the Internet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Pictures</th>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colourful</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative of the places of interest/festivals &amp; local events/cuisine, etc</td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 19)

Based on the findings as illustrated in the table above, 46.7% of the respondents also prefer pictures that are colourful. This finding corroborates with Kress and van Leeuwen’s (1996, 2006) and Machin’s (2007) study on the salient features of visuals.

Other preferred types of pictures elaborated by eleven of the respondents are listed below. These preferences do not relate to the quality of pictures, but more on the diversity and assortment of pictures, such as:

(a) Variety (1M)

(b) Realistic representation of what you’re searching for – don’t like to be disappointed if you are going to invest you hard earn money – you would want the experience to be as memorable (good memories – not bad one). (4M)

(c) Real life photos by travellers, not brochure types. (8F)

(d) Something that would interest me. It depends on what kind of thing actually. (13M)

(e) Recent pictures. (10F)

(f) Lovely but honest. Close to the streets or culture/real people as possible. Being in advertising, I know that pictures can sometimes be deceiving. (17M)

(g) Attractive & Real/true/factual representation, not made up. (25M)

(h) (Pictures depicting) People, culture, etc. (22F)
(i) (Pictures depicting) Things unique to the country not found elsewhere. (30M)

(j) (Pictures depicting) The local people. (26M)

(k) (Pictures depicting) History (of the destination). (27F)

Question 20 of the questionnaire attempted to investigate the tourists’ preferences of the audio feature in tourism websites. As revealed in the findings of question 16 and 17, the finding here further validates and strengthens the fact that respondents do not rank the audio feature as very important in its inclusion in the online tourism websites. Only 40.0% of the respondents gave the affirmative, while the majority (60.0%) preferred not to have any audio features in the tourism websites.

Table 8.18
Preferences of Audio Feature in Online Tourism Websites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferences</th>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 20)

Some of these thirty-six respondents were rather adamant about not having any audio features in the websites, and have provided their comments on this feature as “none” and “absolutely none”, such as listed under the discussion on other types of audio features in the online tourism websites of question 21 below.

The types of audio features that the respondents have identified to be accepted in the tourism websites can be found in Table 8.19 on the next page as well as the list of other
types of audio features not itemised but suggested by the respondents are listed below the table.

Table 8.19

Types of Audio Features Preferred in Online Tourism Websites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Audio Feature</th>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National anthem</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local language</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light music</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.A. *</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N.A. – Not available
(No. 21)

The findings of question 21 do not show any major significance in any of the types of audio feature preferred, with all the options attaining less than 50.0% respondents. Even the option, ‘Light music’, with the highest percentage of 48.3% respondents, does not substantially reflect the respondents’ fondness for the audio feature. The responses and reactions given by the respondents for the “Others” option received the following comments:

(a) Music/audio that represents the destination/country, e.g. folk music (without singing). (1M)
(b) Absolutely none. (3F)
(c) No preference. (4F)
(d) None. (6M)
(e) None. (8F)
(f) Typical music. (13M)
(g) Sounds related to local cultural events, musical instruments. (15M)
(h) Traditional music. (10F)
(i) Folklore music from the country. (15F)

(j) Local or cultural music would be interesting. NO ‘HOTEL LOUNGE’ Music please. (17M)

(k) The country’s music. (17F)

(l) The songs of the people from that country – traditional and current pop culture. (21M)

(m) None. (22M)

(n) The country's music. (19F)

(o) Traditional/cultural songs. Narration of the destination. (25M)

(p) Music that is indigenous to the country/destination. (21F)

(q) Catchy music that suits the graphics, and also to entice the traveller – music should be appropriate… very important. (22F)

(r) None. (29M)

(s) If I’m lazy to read, text-to-audio. (30M)

(t) Prefer without audio; but if you insist, light music reflecting the local taste/tunes. (24F)

(u) Traditional songs. (29F)

As mentioned in the earlier chapters and proven in the next two chapters, the existence of multimodal features can be a benefit in promoting a place as a tourist destination. Prospective tourists who surf tourism websites on the Internet may be persuaded to visit a destination or country with the inclusion of the varied multimodal forms of communication. Question 22 aims to investigate the impact of the different multimodal forms of communication, as well as validate the findings on those multimodal elements discussed earlier. The elements of online tourism website that have an effect on the tourist respondents, in descending order of attraction, are pictures (93.3%), layout (63.3%), textual information (61.7%), videos (33.3%), and audio sounds/music (15.0%).
Table 8.20

Elements of Online Tourism Websites that Attract

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Foreign</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textual information</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videos</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio sounds / Music</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 22)

It is evident from this finding that visuals or pictures have the highest capability of attracting potential tourist’s attention, with 93.3% of them who opted for this element. The use of visuals adds variation to the monotony of an only written description. This also corresponds with Cook’s (1992) view on the equal importance of both linguistic and non-linguistic semiotic resources, such as visual images, sound, and others, in contributing to communicative purposes. Bhatia, Flowerdew and Jones (2008) further assert that there is a common belief now that written information is not necessarily the most important form used for the construction and interpretations of meaning, and that multimodality plays equal importance in its construction and interpretation.

The layout and interface of a tourism website is also important in drawing the attention of the tourist respondents, as divulged by 63.3% of the respondents. A tourism website, or any website for that matter, should be presented in a systematic layout that is easy for obtaining varied information. The ease of finding information is related to how the information is arranged within the website. If the prospective tourist finds it difficult to obtain certain information from a website due to the haphazard and disorganised layout, he/she will abandon his/her search from that website and thus will not be exposed to the
persuasive contents of the tourism website, regardless of how informative it may be. Consequently, this prospective tourist will not be persuaded to tour the destination or country. The following are some comments from the respondents that support this argument:

(a) Available links related to information or website. (1M)
(b) The web design. (3F)
(c) No pop ups. (10F)
(d) User friendly. (17F)
(e) Easy to use, clear layout, fast loading sites always preferred. Fancy slow-loading Flash animations are a waste of time and test one's patience. (18F)
(g) Ease of navigating through the website and no “broken links”. (21F)
(h) Interactive, Comprehensive & Detailed info, provide useful links. (25M)
(i) Above all, user friendly and fast (some are very slow to load etc). (22F)

Textual information is written descriptions that include articles, reports, reviews and critiques. 61.7% of the respondents believe that they may be attracted to the kind of textual information found in the tourism websites. Although this finding did not produce a higher result of attraction as compared to the earlier two non-textual data discussed above, written information is not meant to be ignored. This is because specific details can only be efficiently written in the textual form. Some types of information are also not able to be conveyed precisely via a non-written mode of communication. Therefore, the textual mode of information is still indispensable.

Videos are a dynamic mode of multimodal communication. It is similar to visuals in that videos are a collection of actions or moving pictures with an inclusion of the audio element. They may attract online surfers to a tourism website. However, this element is
not as well received as visuals, with only 33.3\% of the respondents asserting that they will be attracted to this type of communication.

The finding for the audio element from this question reconfirms the earlier findings regarding tourist respondents’ lack of interest for this form of multimodal communication. Only 15.0\% of the respondents disclosed that they will be attracted to such an element. Some of the respondents find audio sounds too distracting especially when they want to read the textual descriptions simultaneously and view the visuals when the audio element is activated.

Nine (15.0\%) of the respondents provided other elements that attract them to a tourism website. These elements are related to the website layout and link and have been listed above.

Due to the ease of obtaining relevant tourism information and the exciting multimodal features that are available in the tourism websites, all of the tourist respondents responded that they will in future surf the online tourism websites to gather information when selecting a holiday destination, as well as in preparation for their travels. This is illustrated in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preferences</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 23)
8.1.1.4 Part D: Online Experiences of Malaysian Tourism Websites

This subsection reports on the findings from Part D of the questionnaire which attempted to obtain the tourists’ opinion of the official tourism websites of Malaysia and its states. These official tourism websites are managed by the Ministry of Tourism and the respective state tourism boards.

Table 8.22

Experiences of Viewing the Official Tourism Websites of Malaysia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 24)

As can be seen in the table above, forty-five or 75.0% of the respondents have actually viewed at least one of the official tourism websites of Malaysia. As mentioned in the section 8.1.1.3.1 whilst discussing the findings of question 12, although 96.7% of the respondents have previously gathered information from tourism websites, some of them may not have gathered such information for the official tourism websites that are managed by the Ministry of Tourism of the respective state tourism boards. 25.0% of the respondents may have gathered such information from non-official websites. There are numerous websites on the Internet that provide tourism information, including those that are maintained by individuals, tour agencies, corporations, associations, and the like. However, the official tourism websites that are maintained by the government are believed to be more reliable and valid in terms of the information that is disseminated. Hence, the range of websites in this study is only the official tourism websites that are managed by the Malaysian Ministry of Tourism and its affiliated state tourism boards.
The following table (Table 8.23) and chart (Figure 8.1) on the subsequent page show the distribution of the states in Malaysia that the sixty tourist respondents have visited. Most, if not all, of the respondents have visited more than one state in Malaysia.

### Table 8.23

**Malaysian States and Capital Visited by the Tourist Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Destination</th>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perlis</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedah</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penang / Pulau Pinang</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>47</td>
<td>78.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perak</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>56.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selangor</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>71.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td>57</td>
<td>95.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negeri Sembilan</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malacca / Melaka</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johor</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahang</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terengganu</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelantan</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabah</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarawak</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 25)
Table 8.24 on the next page reveals the descending order of total visits made by the respondents in the study. This, however, does not reflect or indicate the official statistics on the tourist arrivals for each state. The sequence is merely based on the responses by the sixty questionnaire respondents of this study.
Table 8.24
Total Visits by the Entire Tourist Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Destination</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>95.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penang / Pulau Pinang</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>78.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malacca / Melaka</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selangor</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>71.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perak</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>56.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terengganu</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedah</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johor</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negeri Sembilan</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahang</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelantan</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarawak</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perlis</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabah</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings on the total visits made by the two groups of respondents in the study as tabulated above also generated slightly different results for the two groups of tourists, with similar first four destinations. This can be observed in the ensuing table on the next page. Nevertheless, both local (96.7%) and foreign (93.3%) tourists have recorded the most visits to the capital city of Kuala Lumpur, followed by Penang (93.3% and 63.3% for the respective two groups of tourists).
Table 8.25
Malaysian States and Capital Visited by the Local and Foreign Tourist Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/ Destination</th>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>96.7</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penang / Pulau Pinang</td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>Penang / Pulau Pinang</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selangor</td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>Malacca / Melaka</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malacca / Melaka</td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>Selangor</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perak</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>Terengganu</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negeri Sembilan</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>Johor</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedah</td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>Perak</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahang</td>
<td></td>
<td>21</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>Kedah</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terengganu</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>Kelantan</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johor</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>Negeri Sembilan</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelantan</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>Pahang</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarawak</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>Sabah</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perlis</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>Sarawak</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabah</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>Perlis</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This slight difference in the visits made by the two groups of tourists to other states in Malaysia reveals the different desires and expectations of the respective tourists. A domestic tourist from Peninsular Malaysia who wants to take a holiday at a beach setting may opt to visit Batu Feringghi in Penang, Pangkor Island in Perak, or Port Dickson in Negeri Sembilan. On the other hand, a foreign tourist who wants to have a similar holiday setting, might choose Redang Island or Perhentian Island in Terengganu, or Sipadan Island in Sabah as a holiday destination. This could be related to the cost, infrastructure and convenience involved. The local tourist may choose to spend less by
touring the beach destinations within Peninsular Malaysia, as opposed to the foreign tourist who may choose to visit the destinations either in East Malaysia or the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia because there is not much difference in terms of the travelling costs to the two regions of Malaysia. Moreover, it is undeniable that tourists who are travelling with young children will preferably spend their holidays somewhere nearby and participate in less adventurous activities like enjoying a day at the seaside in Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan; as compared to a foreign traveller who is travelling from afar with his/her peers and are eager to take part in more adventurous activities like deep sea snorkelling in Pulau Sipadan, Sabah.

Since the objective of all online tourism websites is to promote the destination(s) and cater to all tourists, irrespective of domestic or foreign, these website should take into consideration the needs of all tourists when determining the contents of the tourism website.

**Table 8.26**

Relevance and Adequacy of Online Tourism Information on Malaysia and its States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevance &amp; Adequacy</th>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>65.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.A. *</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N.A. – Not available (No. 26)

Table 8.26 above shows the opinions of the two groups of tourist respondents on the relevance and adequacy of online tourism information on Malaysia. The respondents
were asked if they obtained relevant and sufficient information regarding the Malaysian states and destinations that they have visited by surfing the Internet. 65.0% of them affirmed that they managed to get relevant and sufficient tourism information on Malaysia from the Internet, while 25.0% refuted this; and no response was provided by 10.0% of the respondents.

The last four questions of the questionnaire attempted to investigate the respondents’ opinions on the official tourism websites of Malaysia - the capital and the thirteen states of Malaysia. As tabulated in the following table, 50.0% of the respondents confirmed that they have viewed the official Malaysian tourism website (http://www.tourism.gov.my), which is managed by Tourism Malaysia or the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB), the government agency in charge of promoting tourism in Malaysia. Although most of the tourists have surfed the Internet for tourism information on Malaysia, 46.7% of the respondents stated that they have not viewed the abovementioned website. Two of the foreign respondents did not provide a response to this question. These findings have been tabulated in Table 8.27 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.A. *</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N.A. – Not available (No. 27)

This finding implies that a person may obtain tourism information from any of the numerous websites that deal with tourism on the Internet. However, part of the aim of
this study is to come up with a guideline to produce appropriate and sufficiently informative official tourism websites to cater to the needs of prospective tourists, which can consequently enhance the tourism industry and boost the economy of a country.

Potential tourists surf the Internet in order to obtain various information regarding a destination that they intend to visit. However, most of them would rather obtain such information from official tourism websites that are published by the governmental tourism departments or official tourism boards of a country. This is because many potential tourists feel that they can obtain relevant and valid information from such official websites compared to websites that are managed by non-official individuals or private non-governmental organisations. The feedback from the tourist respondents have also revealed that they trust information obtained from official tourism websites, rather than information given by tourist agents or companies whose ultimate aim is to sell them a tour package.

Table 8.28 on the next page lists the findings of the respondents’ experience of viewing the official tourism websites of Kuala Lumpur and the thirteen states of Malaysia, in descending order. These official state tourism websites are managed by the respective state tourism promotion boards.
The official capital and all the state tourism websites have been viewed by at least two local tourist respondents. However, the foreign tourist respondents have not viewed five of the official state tourism websites of Perlis, Perak, Negeri Sembilan, Kedah and Johor, although they may have visited those states before. The findings from the foreign tourist respondents more or less correspond with the official statistics on the most visited states in Malaysia for the years 2009 and 2010 provided by the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB), as shown in the table that follows.

Table 8.28
Official State Tourism Websites of Malaysia Viewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State Tourism Websites</th>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Penang / Pulau Pinang</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malacca / Melaka</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarawak</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>25.0</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.sarawaktourism.com">http://www.sarawaktourism.com</a></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Sabah</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahang</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.tourismpahang.com">http://www.tourismpahang.com</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terengganu</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perlis</td>
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<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.peraktourism.com">http://www.peraktourism.com</a></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelantan</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negeri Sembilan</td>
<td></td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedah</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johor</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.tourismjohor.com">http://www.tourismjohor.com</a></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 8.29
Comparison between States Visited by the Foreign Tourist Respondents and States’ Tourist Arrivals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tourism Websites Visited</th>
<th>Foreign Tourists</th>
<th>States</th>
<th>Tourist Arrivals for 2009</th>
<th>States</th>
<th>Tourist Arrivals for 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Penang / Pulau Pinang</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>15,737,306</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>12,632,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malacca / Melaka</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Pahang</td>
<td>9,652,909</td>
<td>Pahang</td>
<td>8,159,376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuala Lumpur</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Penang</td>
<td>5,960,329</td>
<td>Penang</td>
<td>5,990,864</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabah</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sabah</td>
<td>5,362,270</td>
<td>Malacca</td>
<td>3,888,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.sabahtourism.com">http://www.sabahtourism.com</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarawak</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sarawak</td>
<td>3,908,815</td>
<td>Sabah</td>
<td>3,640,772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahang</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kedah</td>
<td>3,846,529</td>
<td>Johor</td>
<td>3,618,932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.tourismpahang.com">http://www.tourismpahang.com</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarawak</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Malacca</td>
<td>3,759,515</td>
<td>Sarawak</td>
<td>3,336,499</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.sarawaktourism.com">http://www.sarawaktourism.com</a></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terengganu</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Johor</td>
<td>3,525,991</td>
<td>Kedah</td>
<td>2,751,556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelantan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Selangor</td>
<td>2,839,229</td>
<td>Selangor</td>
<td>2,590,423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perlis</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Perak</td>
<td>2,523,029</td>
<td>Perak</td>
<td>2,224,232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perak</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Negeri Sembilan</td>
<td>1,602,804</td>
<td>Negeri Sembilan</td>
<td>1,637,374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.peraktourism.com">http://www.peraktourism.com</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negeri Sembilan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Terengganu</td>
<td>1,219,127</td>
<td>Terengganu</td>
<td>1,249,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kedah</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Kelantan</td>
<td>847,343</td>
<td>Kelantan</td>
<td>828,681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Perlis</td>
<td>102,547</td>
<td>Perlis</td>
<td>78,769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.tourismjohor.com">http://www.tourismjohor.com</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 8.30 shows the tourist respondents’ overall fondness in terms of the overall appearance of the sixteen official Malaysian tourism websites.

**Table 8.30**

Attractiveness of the Official Malaysian Tourism Websites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.A. *</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* N.A. – Not available (No. 29)

58.5% of the respondents thought that in general, the official Malaysian tourism websites were attractive. On the other hand, 21.7% of them did not consider the websites as attractive. There were no responses from twelve or 20.0% of the respondents because they have not viewed any of the official tourism websites of Malaysia, although they may have viewed other unofficial websites that promote Malaysia and/or its states. Although the majority of the respondents have the opinion that the official Malaysian tourism websites are attractive, there is still a significant percentage of them who thought otherwise. This implies that the official Malaysian tourism websites can still improve on the overall appearance and contents of their websites in terms of the textual information, visuals, layout, etc.

Table 8.31 tabulates the features of online tourism websites regarding Malaysia that attract the tourist respondents of the study. The respondents who have viewed the official tourism websites of Malaysia were asked to determine the features that they thought were attractive. For the respondents who have yet to view those websites, they could also provide information on the features of other tourism websites that they liked.
This information provides specifics on what potential tourists search for in a tourism website and the features that are considered less attractive. These will enable the tourism promotional boards, advertisers and website creators to improve on those features that were less desirable. The features that are ranked highly attractive will also offer valuable information for the stakeholders to include those contents in their websites and concentrate on further strengthening them, as well as improving the other features that were deemed less attractive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Tourists</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Foreign</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write-ups</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reviews / Ratings</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relevant information</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures</td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videos</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layout of homepages</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language options</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(No. 30)

Just as the findings from the earlier questions in the questionnaire have indicated, visuals or pictures were the main feature that the respondents (61.7%) were attracted to. The second feature that the respondents (53.3%) look at is the descriptions or write-ups on the destination, its activities, etc. 48.3% of the tourist respondents would also be attracted to information that are relevant and needed for their selection of a tourist destination to visit, such as the local facilities available, weather, etc.
The other features such as reviews or ratings, layout of the website, and the availability of language options did not significantly attract the respondents, with only 16.7% of them focusing on these features respectively. The video feature is even less important to the tourist respondents with only 13.3% of them responding to this item. Three of the respondents provided other features and information that attracted them or were important for them. They are:

(a) Links (25M),
(b) Knowing more about the country and places which I never knew existed (13M), and
(c) Suggestions of activities to do (21F).

Some respondents even gave further comments concerning the Malaysian tourism websites and the online tourism advertorials. These constructive comments are helpful in improving Malaysian tourism websites as a whole, and in particular online tourism advertorials as a promotional genre so as to meet the acceptability standards of the clients and cater to the needs of prospective tourists.

The further observations given by the nineteen respondents (seven local tourists and twelve foreign tourists) are as follows:

(a) **Respondent from Canberra, Australia**: The photos could be bigger. (1F)
(b) **Respondent from Bavaria, Germany**: The Tourism Board of Malaysia has a lot to do, especially overseas. They are not doing a good job. (2F)
(c) **Respondent from Beijing, China**: There are really good ones and some not so good. For example, the Negeri Sembilan website is slow to load, and most people will be too impatient to wait and just move on. Moreover, the URL www.ns.gov.my is just not appropriate in my opinion since anybody who is not Malaysian will not know "ns" stands for Negeri Sembilan. (4F)
(d) **Respondent from Selangor, Malaysia**: I just came back from my Europe holidays 1 month ago and the tourism facilities was fantastic. No mistake on booking and everything was e-ticketing. Hope one day Malaysian have the mind set of doing what the European does [SIC]. (11M)
(e) **Respondent from Queensland, Australia**: Some sites are quite informative but some are not regularly updated. Poor response to questions posted / to phone calls. (9F)

(f) **Respondent from Adelaide, Australia**: I have seen many websites regarding travelling in Malaysia- often they are badly laid out far too busy and often are incomplete. They give the impression that they were hastily put together with a lack of professionalism (*Tourism Malaysia* is an exception) A common failing is poor English, poor grammar in particular. This reflects poorly upon the country. (10F)

(g) **Respondent from Inner Mongolia, China**: I hope the tourism places are more truly [described/represented] so that we can make decisions without any doubt. (14F)

(h) **Respondent from KL, Malaysia**: Needs to move away from clichés with key phrases like ‘multicultural’ or ‘diverse’ and actually mine deeper for truly unique things about our country.

For example, there is a small town (I think somewhere in Langkawi) where they make mini axes. Apparently the origin of these axes was, men would throw them into the skulls of guys who committed adultery with their wives. Or so I heard. Interesting facts & cultural tidbits (say, some trivia about the place Jimmy Choo or Zang Toi was born) might help add further interest.

Or feature a piece on the best fish ball noodle stall in Ipoh or Penang, or the history of the oldest coffee shop in Malacca. Stuff like that. If I were a tourist I would rather discover things like that than, say, elephants performing tricks.

Enough with the tired images of pristine beaches & pretty Iban girls – most of our beaches are not that fantastic anymore, btw. But then I have a biased & tainted outlook anyway, being a bloody local, so maybe I’m not the best judge. ☺ (17M)

(i) **Respondent from Penang, Malaysia**: Very well done. (18M)

(j) **Respondent from Kedah, Malaysia**: The websites are supposed to have a lot of information about the place. As a tourist, I wish to get prepared before travel and that is why I need to gain as many information as I can. I think in every website, there is supposed to have a “Note for Visitors’ column as some kind of acknowledgement/warning to tourists so that they know what to expect of the place.

Many tourism websites only provide information about the good things, which sometimes, there’s no good thing at all. Notes like “the tap water is not suitable for drinking, therefore you have to boil the water first before drinking” or “there will be a lot of monkeys, so watch your belongings while with them” sometime can be very helpful for the tourists. When the websites do not provide enough information about the place, it’s like the admin of the websites and travel agencies or perhaps hotel companies are in a conspiracy to con us, the tourists. (20M)

(k) **Respondent from Penang, Malaysia**: Not updated frequently. (22M)

(l) **Respondent from Singapore**: suggest more interactive components including music, video etc…for instance, the official Penang tourism
site has a lot of info but one has to read -- while some of the pix are also well taken, site would come more alive if its more interactive with music, pop up videos, etc. (22F)

(m) Respondent from Selangor, Malaysia: It will be nice to have famous or familiar faces like Ian Wright to promote the place ... just like in the Astro channel. – Celebrity Endorsement. (28M)

(n) Respondent from Selangor, Malaysia: Should be useful to both foreigners and local tourists (including those who originate from that state itself eg. a KLite discovering something new about KL from the website). Distances, bus routes (and other public transport), walking routes, places of interest on the way, a journey planner may be useful too. (30M)

(o) Respondent from California, USA: I think the Penang site is OK, but still can be improved on; the color scheme is overly colourful; and being a Penangite (and very proud of my Penang heritage) living overseas; I tend to want to showcase my home state to my non-Malaysian friends; but often I think that the official website does not show justice to the rich culture and heritage of Penang – I think Penang is truly a melting pot of Malaysia; and that fact is often neglected to be highlighted i.e. we [they] have a great blend of races and religion amongst Penangites in many expect, culture, food, language etc; but these are not highlighted. Instead, it’s often divided into Malay, Chinese, Indian etc (OK, there’s the Penanakan aspect that is a blended aspect, but also that’s not exactly highlighted) Probably this is not the scope of this research, but I think we can still make it a bit more appealing and exciting. (24F)

(p) Respondent from Inner Mongolia China: Introduce some local character[istics] (the custom, food, price and the people – whether they are hospitable or indifferent to the foreigners). (26F)

(q) Respondent from Qinghai, China: Give some detailed information of transportations, because as a stranger here, it is very important to know how to get to the places of interest. What’s more, the fee of travel to some places should be added. (27F)

(r) Respondent from Yemen: To get them more updated, and put more maps and sign directions to make it easy for foreigners to find his way there [to the tourist places]. (29F)

(s) Respondent from Yemen: Multi-language, video, maps (how to get there), costs, hotels, transport, food, facilities available, etc. [should be provided]. (30F)

8.2 Summary

This chapter has presented findings on the social preferences and socio-cognitive perspective of the web-mediated tourism genre and has provided answers to the forth
research question of this study. The findings and implications presented in this chapter show that there are certain communicative features and types of information that are preferred and required by prospective tourists from the Malaysian online tourism websites in general and the advertorials in particular. The information and advertorials provided in the official Malaysian tourism organisations’ websites have, on the whole, met the acceptability standards and needs of the tourism industry clients (i.e. current and potential tourists) in that they have generally attracted tourists to the country. There is, of course, still room for further improvement.

The findings in this chapter can be beneficial to NTOs in improving the types of information that they intend to communicate online to their website audiences, especially potential tourists. These can also serve as suitable information for NTOs to cater to potential tourists’ various needs since shaping an effective tourism homepage and the advertorial genre is mutually constructed by the NTO and its audience. In short, the findings from this chapter can assist tourism organisations and industry players in providing and enhancing the kind of information needed by tourists in order to attract even more prospective tourists to Malaysia via the country’s official tourism organisations’ websites on the Internet.