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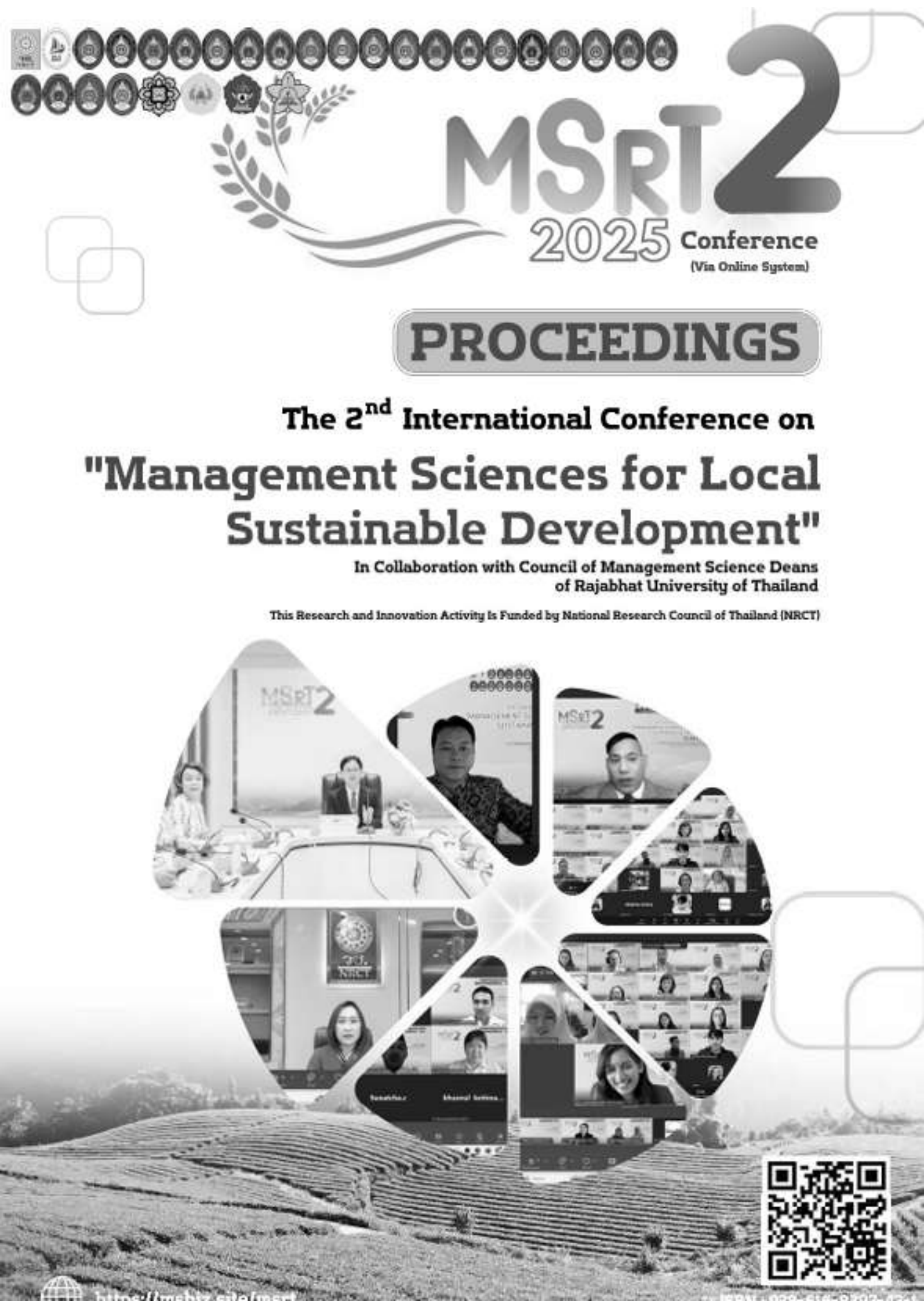
PROCEEDINGS

The 2nd International Conference on "Management Sciences for Local Sustainable Development"

In Collaboration with Council of Management Science Deans
of Rajabhat University of Thailand

This Research and Innovation Activity Is Funded by National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT)





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23 July 2025 (Via Online System)

หอสมุดแห่งชาติ

ถนนสามเสน ตูสิต กรุงเทพฯ 10300

โทรศัพท์ : 02-2809846

โทรสาร : 02-2809846

วันที่อนุมัติ 4 สิงหาคม 2568

National Library of Thailand Cataloging in Publication Data

The 2nd International Academic Conference "Management Sciences for Local Sustainable Development "In Collaboration with the Council of Management Science Deans of Rajabhat University of Thailand 23 July 2025 (Via Online System).-- Yala : Faculty of Management Sciences, Yala Rajabhat University, 2025.

392 p.

1. Community development -- Research. I. Title.

307.14

ISBN 978-616-8297-42-1

Management and Coordination

Miss Sukrita Raksudjarit

Mr. Romsee Taemasa

Volume: 1 (2025)

Page: 392 pages

Price: -

Published by:

Office of Faculty of Management Science Yala Rajabhat University,
Sateng, Muang, Yala Thailand Telephone 07 329 9630



The 2nd International Academic Conference

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President 's Message

The 2nd International Academic Conference under the theme "Management Sciences for Local Sustainable Development" serves as an important platform for exchanging knowledge and academic experiences at both national and international levels. The main objective is to promote research that can be practically applied for tangible and sustainable local development. In addition, the conference aims to establish academic collaboration networks, expand the body of knowledge, and encourage the application of research outcomes for the benefit of communities and society as a whole.

This conference has been made possible through strong collaboration from both domestic and international partners, including the National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT), 23 Rajabhat Universities across the country, and four international universities: International Islamic University Malaysia (Malaysia), Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh (Indonesia), Pakuan University (Indonesia), and Syliah Kuala University (Indonesia).

A total of 26 academic papers has been accepted for presentation, comprising 15 papers from Thailand and 11 papers from international researchers representing five countries: the United States, China, Taiwan, Indonesia, and Malaysia. These papers cover four main academic fields: Business Administration, Economics and Finance, Accounting, and Communication Arts.

As the President of the Council of Deans of Faculties of Management Sciences in Rajabhat Universities nationwide, I sincerely hope that this conference will be a significant driving force in applying research-based knowledge to foster development and enhance education in the field of management sciences. By integrating academic perspectives with sustainable local development, we aim to empower people in communities with lifelong learning skills.

Best Regards,

(Assistant Professor Dr. Phana Dullayaphut)

The President of Council of Management Science Deans
of Rajabhat University of Thailand (MSRT)



The 2nd International Academic Conference

"Management sciences for Local Sustainable Development"

In Collaboration with Council of Management Science Deans of Rajabhat University of Thailand

23 July 2025 (Via Online System)

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The 2nd International Academic Conference

"Management sciences for Local Sustainable Development"

In Collaboration with Council of Management Science Deans

of Rajabhat University of Thailand

July 23th 2025 (Via Online System)

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Introduction

The Council of Management Science Deans of Rajabhat Universities of Thailand was established with a strong vision and mission to drive the advancement and strength of the Faculties of Management Science in all 38 Rajabhat Universities nationwide. Its operations are aligned with the 20-Year Strategic Plan of Rajabhat Universities for Local Development. The Council aims to promote education and knowledge in management sciences through academic integration with sustainable local development, empowering communities with lifelong learning capabilities and propelling Thailand's progress on the global stage.

The Council also serves as a central hub for academic and professional collaboration at both the national and international levels. It aspires to foster entrepreneurship and social innovation by promoting the exchange of knowledge, culture, and information, as well as sharing experiences based on best practices tailored to the strengths and priorities of each region. This enhances the quality of education and research in the field of management science, pushing it to higher levels of excellence.

Moreover, the Council emphasizes the integration of teaching, learning, and research activities of both students and faculty with the actual needs of local communities. It strongly supports the production of high-quality research and academic work that enriches the curriculum across various disciplines, including business administration, accounting, economics, finance, tourism, logistics, and communication. It also encourages innovation and academic creativity among students and staff, ensuring they are well-prepared to meet the demands of the modern world effectively.

The Council prioritizes the practical application of research to maximize its impact by integrating research with other university missions under the strategy of "Research and Innovation for Local Development." It strives to develop faculty members into professional innovators and equip students with innovation competencies. This is achieved through building strong collaborative networks with government agencies, the private sector, and civil society—leading to sustainable local and societal development at the international level.



The 2nd International Academic Conference

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International academic conferences are thus a vital mechanism for promoting the presentation of research and academic excellence. These events provide a platform for lecturers, researchers, scholars, interested individuals, and graduate students—both from within and outside the university system—to showcase their potential, share their knowledge, and spark further research creativity. This exchange lays a robust foundation for research that can truly address regional and national challenges.

On this occasion, the Council of Management Science Deans of Rajabhat Universities of Thailand, in collaboration with its network of domestic and international universities, will host the 2nd International Academic Conference under the theme "Management Sciences for Local Sustainable Development" on July 23, 2025, in an online format. This significant platform will bring together researchers, scholars, and participants from Thailand and abroad to exchange ideas and experiences in management sciences. Leading universities from Malaysia and Indonesia will serve as co-hosts and contribute to the comprehensive exchange of academic knowledge at this impactful event.

Implementation Committee

July, 2025

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Tracing Digital Politeness in Ecotourism: A Scoping Review on Gaps, Ethical Dilemmas, and Future Communication Pathways in Malaysia

*Arina Johari and Siti Yuliandi Ahmad

Kulliyah of Sustainable Tourism and Contemporary Languages,
International Islamic University Malaysia

*Corresponding author, e-mail: arinajr@iium.edu.my

Abstract

The rapid adoption of digital technologies in Malaysia's tourism sector has transformed the delivery of ecotourism experiences. Tools such as mobile applications, virtual guides, and artificial intelligence systems are now widely used to engage visitors. However, this digital shift often prioritises efficiency and automation over culturally respectful communication. In ecotourism settings where local interaction, environmental awareness, and cultural sensitivity are essential, the neglect of ethical communication poses a significant challenge. This study explores how digital politeness and communication ethics are addressed in the Malaysian ecotourism context. This study conducted a scoping review of fifteen scholarly articles published between 2015 and 2024, employing the Arksey and O'Malley (2005) framework and the PRISMA ScR checklist to examine patterns, gaps, and practices related to digital communication in tourism. The review reveals a dominant focus on system functionality and user convenience, with limited integration of local politeness norms and ethical values. Tools such as chatbots and mobile platforms often fail to reflect the communicative traditions of Malaysian communities. The study concludes that digital politeness must be repositioned as a core principle in tourism technology. It recommends the development of culturally grounded communication frameworks, stakeholder engagement in design processes, and the inclusion of ethical training in tourism education. These steps are essential for building respectful and sustainable ecotourism experiences in Malaysia.

Keywords: Digital politeness, ecotourism, ethical communication, scoping review, and sustainable communication

Introduction

Digitalisation has radically transformed the global tourism industry, reshaping how tourists plan, experience, and evaluate their travel. In Malaysia, the adoption of digital platforms; ranging from mobile apps and AI chatbots to smart signage and virtual tourism portals – has accelerated, particularly in response

to the demands of post-pandemic recovery and the growing emphasis on sustainability (Abidin, Z., Harahab, N., Muhaimin, A. W., Fattah, M., & Isnawati, H., 2024; Khamnaeva, N. I., Perkhonov, V. V., & Bashleeva, N. P., 2022; Gan, S. W., Inversini, A., & Rega, I., 2018;). Ecotourism, often hailed as a model of responsible travel, increasingly integrates these technologies to promote environmental stewardship, local community participation, and cultural heritage preservation (K. Shanmugam, M. E. Rana and Z. Y. Kong, 2024; Islam, M. S., 2023; Ismail, A., Kadir, S. A. S. A., Aziz, A. A., Mokshin, M., & Lokman, A. M., 2016).

However, the focus on technological efficiency in tourism tends to overshadow deeper issues of human interaction and communication values. In the context of ecotourism, where interactions between tourists, guides, hosts, and local communities are central to the experience (Noraini Ruslan et. al., 2023; Salleh, S. Z., & Bushroa, A. R.; 2022); there is a growing concern that digital tools may unintentionally erode the values of empathy, respect, and contextual sensitivity that underpin sustainable travel (Kassim, E. S., Rahim, R. A., Said, N. A., Jailani, S. F. A. K., Hairuddin, H., Munir, R., & Latif, Z. A., 2023; Qamruzzaman, Md., 2023; Rashid, I. M., Adanan, A., Zaini, M. R., Roni, M., & Faisal, S. I., 2023). While much attention has been given to the development of digital infrastructures (Wang, R., Wu, C., Wang, X., Xu, F., & Yuan, Q., 2023), relatively little research has focused on how these tools mediate or transform interpersonal communication in ecotourism spaces, particularly in terms of politeness, cultural appropriateness, and ethical considerations (Arimbawa, I. N., Hendrayanti, N. P. N., & Heriawan, I. G. T., 2024; Chen, X., & Yang, H., 2024). This gap is particularly striking in the Malaysian context, where communication is deeply rooted in the cultural norms of *kesantunan* (politeness), which shape social harmony and hospitality.

This academic endeavor is driven by the imperative to bridge this knowledge gap, ensuring that the advancement of digital tourism technologies in Malaysia is accompanied by a robust understanding and integration of culturally sensitive and polite communication practices. While existing literature extensively explores the burgeoning landscape of digital infrastructures and their impact on various facets of tourism, with numerous studies detailing technological advancements, user adoption rates, and economic implications, there remains a notable lacuna concerning the socio-cultural dimensions of digital interactions. Specifically, research has largely overlooked how these digital tools either facilitate or hinder the expression of politeness and adherence to ethical communication norms within ecotourism contexts. This gap is particularly pronounced when considering the culturally rich environment of Malaysia, where traditional *'kesantunan'* deeply influences interpersonal communication, yet its digital manifestations in ecotourism remain underexplored. This academic endeavor is thus driven by the imperative to bridge this knowledge gap, ensuring that the advancement of digital tourism technologies in Malaysia is accompanied by a robust understanding and integration of culturally sensitive and polite communication practices. This review uniquely addresses this specific void by focusing on digital politeness and ethical communication in

Malaysian ecotourism, offering novel insights particularly pertinent given the deep cultural roots of 'kesantunan' in the region.

This scoping review aims to map and trace the emerging landscape of digital politeness and ethical communication in Malaysian ecotourism. By analysing 15 interdisciplinary studies, this study aims to uncover the extent to which politeness is considered in the design and deployment of digital tourism tools; identify the conceptual and practical gaps in current literature; and propose future directions for culturally grounded, ethically responsible communication frameworks. This effort not only responds to the increasing demand for ethical digital engagement in tourism but also positions Malaysia as a key site for developing locally resonant models of digital communication in ecotourism.

Methodology

This scoping review adopts the methodological frame work developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005), incorporating the PRISMA-ScR (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Extension for Scoping Reviews) checklist to ensure transparency and rigour. The review was designed to map the breadth of scholarly engagement with digital politeness and ethical communication in the context of ecotourism in Malaysia. A systematic literature search was conducted across databases including Scopus, Web of Science, GoogleScholar, and MyJurnal, covering publications from 2015 to 2024. Keywords and Boolean strings such as "digital politeness," "ethical communication," "ecotourism," "Malaysia," "smart tourism," and "AI in tourism" were used to identify relevant sources. Additional articles were sourced through manual reference tracking and expert consultation.

Articles were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: (i) relevance to tourism or ecotourism in the Malaysian context, (ii) focus on digital communication platforms, tools, or AI technologies, (iii) mention of ethical or culturally sensitive communication practices, and (iv) peerreviewed status. Exclusion criteria included papers with no clear link to communication or those focusing solely on environmental or economic dimensions of ecotourism without a communicative component.

Data Extraction and Analysis

A total of 15 articles were included in the final analysis. Data extraction was carried out using a structured coding sheet that captured key elements such as study objectives, methods, theoretical frameworks, communication strategies, ethical dimensions, and relevance to digital or ecotourism practices. Thematic synthesis was employed to identify recurring patterns, conceptual gaps, and methodological trends across the literature.

Analytical Framework

Thematic analysis was guided by the dual lens of digital communication ethics and politeness theory, especially the frameworks of Brown and Levinson (1987), and culturally grounded models of *kesantunan* (politeness) in the Malay context (Zahid, I and J, Arina, 2018). This allowed for a nuanced reading of how ethical communication is represented, operationalised, or neglected in current digital ecotourism research. The integration of PRISMA-ScR ensured a transparent flow of the review process, which is further supported by the inclusion of a PRISMA flow diagram and a summary analysis matrix provided in supplementary materials. Overall, this methodological approach enables a comprehensive mapping of interdisciplinary insights and provides a foundation for identifying gaps, proposing new directions, and contributing to culturally resonant and ethically robust communication practices in Malaysian ecotourism.

Findings

Demographic Profile of Reviewed Articles

Following the Arksey and O'Malley (2005) framework and the inclusion criteria outlined above, the scoping review analysed 15 peerreviewed articles published between 2016 and 2024, focusing on the intersection of digital communication, ethical considerations, and ecotourism practices, particularly within the Malaysian and Southeast Asian context as seen in Table 1

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Reviewed Articles

Aspect	Findings
Publication Years	Majority between 2022–2024 (11 articles), indicating a recent surge of interest post-COVID.
Geographical Focus	9 articles focused on Malaysia, 3 on Indonesia, 2 with comparative/ASEAN scope, 1 general/global.
Platform/Technology Focused	Mobile applications (6), AI/chatbots (3), digital marketing platforms (2), virtual tourism tools (2), smart signage (2).
Research Methodologies	Quantitative (6), Qualitative (5), Mixed-method (2), Bibliometric/Review (2).
Stakeholder Representation	Tourists (6), Tourism providers (4), Policy/academic stakeholders (3), Local communities (2)

A total of 11 out of 15 articles (73%) were published between 2022 and 2024, reflecting an emerging trend shaped by post-pandemic recovery and the acceleration of digital tourism infrastructure. Recent studies such as Kassim et al. (2023), Abidin et al. (2024), Shanmugam et al. (2024), and Chen & Yang (2024) indicate a shift in focus towards smart tools, AI, and ecological behaviour through digital platforms. Earlier

foundational works, such as Ismail et al. (2016) and Gan et al. (2018), primarily explored mobile applications and homestay technology integration, yet lacked critical engagement with communication ethics or local values.

The majority of studies (9 articles) are situated in Malaysia (e.g., Ismail et al., 2016; Gan et al., 2018; Kassim et al., 2023; Noraini Ruslan et al., 2023; Shanmugam et al., 2024; Rashid et al., 2023; Salleh & Bushroa, 2022; Qamruzzaman, 2023; Abidin et al., 2024), indicating Malaysia's strategic relevance as a regional leader in smart tourism discourse. However, few studies deeply interrogate local communicative values such as *kesantunan Melayu*. Three articles were set in Indonesia (e.g., Arimbawa et al., 2024; Islam, 2023; Abidin et al., 2024) while two adopted comparative ASEAN or regional perspectives (Khamnaeva et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023), and only one was global in scope (Altinay et al., 2024). This indicates limited intercultural comparisons and a missed opportunity to benchmark Malaysia's cultural digital engagement against other ecotourism destinations.

Mobile applications were the dominant technology examined in five articles (Ismail et al., 2016; Gan et al., 2018; Abidin et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023; Noraini Ruslan et al., 2023). These platforms are typically analysed in relation to user navigation, convenience, and accessibility, with little attention given to their cultural or ethical impact. AI and chatbot technologies appeared in three articles (Altinay et al., 2024; Shanmugam et al., 2024; Salleh & Bushroa, 2022), often assessed for automation and efficiency but rarely for politeness or human warmth. Virtual tourism and eco-digital media were explored in Chen & Yang (2024), Islam (2023), and Khamnaeva et al. (2022), focusing on behavioural change and smart content delivery. These studies, while technologically innovative, largely overlook the communicative nuances required for ethical digital engagement in sensitive ecotourism settings.

Among the reviewed articles, 6 employed quantitative methods (Kassim et al., 2023; Abidin et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023; Qamruzzaman, 2023; Noraini Ruslan et al., 2023; Salleh & Bushroa, 2022), often measuring satisfaction, digital literacy, or behavioural intent. 5 used qualitative approaches (Gan et al., 2018; Chen & Yang, 2024; Arimbawa et al., 2024; Islam, 2023; Rashid et al., 2023), offering more narrative insights into stakeholder perceptions. Mixed-methods were used in Shanmugam et al. (2024) and Altinay et al. (2024), while review-based synthesis was seen in Khamnaeva et al. (2022) and Ismail et al. (2016). Despite this diversity, few articles deploy critical or interpretive methods that examine how communication technologies affect politeness, empathy, or cultural misalignment, leaving such considerations theoretically underdeveloped.

Tourists were the dominant stakeholder group in 6 articles (Chen & Yang, 2024; Kassim et al., 2023; Abidin et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023; Noraini Ruslan et al., 2023; Altinay et al., 2024), reflecting a consumercentric model of digital tourism where user satisfaction drives system design. Tourism providers featured in 4 articles (Arimbawa et al., 2024; Shanmugam et al., 2024; Ismail et al., 2016; Salleh & Bushroa,

2022), typically in relation to technological adoption but not communicative behaviour. Local communities were central in 3 studies (Gan et al., 2018; Islam, 2023; Rashid et al., 2023), yet their perspectives on digital politeness remain underrepresented. Finally, only 2 articles considered policy or academic perspectives (Qamruzzaman, 2023; Khamnaeva et al., 2022), leaving a significant gap in strategic or theoretical positioning of ethical digital communication.

Collectively, these demographic patterns reveal a digital tourism discourse that is technologically advanced but ethically superficial. The current focus is overwhelmingly on tourist satisfaction, system usability, and innovation metrics. In contrast, values such as empathy, contextual sensitivity, and cultural politeness especially in the Malaysian context of *kesantunan* (politeness) are sidelined or absent. This imbalance calls for a reorientation of future research to not only design efficient tools, but also to embed locally grounded, ethically robust communication frameworks that respect the relational nature of ecotourism.

Thematic Distribution of Reviewed Articles

The scoping review identified four key thematic areas across the 15 selected articles: (i) Technological Adoption and User Experience, (ii) Ethical and Responsible Communication, (iii) Environmental and SocioCultural Sustainability, and (iv) Smart Tourism and Post-Pandemic Innovation. Each theme reflects different priorities, assumptions, and blind spots in current digital ecotourism research. The following section presents a critical analysis of these themes.

Table 2: Thematic Distribution of Reviewed Articles

Theme	Number of Articles	Key Focus Areas
1. Technological Adoption and User Experience	5	Usability, satisfaction, digital literacy (e.g., mobile apps, smart platforms) – Wang et al. (2023), Ismail et al. (2016), Khamnaeva et al. (2022), Noraini Ruslan et al. (2023), and Salleh & Bushroa (2022)
2. Ethical and Responsible Communication	4	Cultural sensitivity, politeness strategies, ethical design of communication – Arimbawa et al. (2024), Chen & Yang (2024), Kassim et al. (2023), and Rashid et al. (2023)
3. Environmental and Sociocultural Sustainability	3	Digital mediation of eco-values, community engagement, cultural preservation – Islam (2023), Gan et al. (2018), and Qamruzzaman (2023)
4. Smart Tourism and Post-Pandemic Innovation	3	Role of digital tools in recovery, AI usage, marketing ethics – Abidin et al. (2024), Shanmugam et al. (2024), and Altinay et al. (2024)

According to Table 2, the first theme emerged as the most dominant, with 5 out of 15 articles focusing on the design, usability, and adoption of digital tools such as mobile applications, smart signage, and tourism platforms. These studies generally frame technology as a means to enhance user satisfaction, often relying on metrics such as navigation ease, information accessibility, and interface responsiveness.

However, this emphasis on functionality over form tends to neglect the communicative layer embedded in user interfaces. For example, while *Ismail et al. (2016)* and *Wang et al. (2023)* highlighted the role of mobile applications in simplifying tourism planning, they did not interrogate whether these tools accommodate local language norms, politeness strategies, or relational cues crucial in Malaysian ecotourism. The user is viewed as a passive consumer rather than a participant in culturally embedded communication. As such, politeness and ethical interaction are not systematised into design, reflecting a utilitarian model of digital tourism.

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For instance, *Chen & Yang (2024)* explore how digital media can evoke eco-empathy and ethical reflection in tourist behaviour, while *Arimbawa et al. (2024)* examine how local tour guides employ digital tools in ways that subtly retain cultural norms of respect and hospitality. However, the scope of these discussions remains limited often anecdotal or descriptive with few studies operationalising politeness theory (e.g. Brown & Levinson) or grounding findings in local models such as *kesantunan Melayu*. This highlights the need for a more systematic, theory-informed approach to digital communication in ecotourism.

Three studies examined the intersection of digital tourism, environmental consciousness, and socio-cultural preservation, often through the lens of smart tourism policy and eco-digital platforms. These articles are commendable for shifting the conversation from mere convenience to sustainability and inclusivity. For example, *Gani et al. (2018)* analysed how Malaysian homestays integrate digital tools to maintain local culture while appealing to modern travellers, and *Islam (2023)* provided a regional overview of how smart technologies can support both privacy and environmental integrity.

Nevertheless, while environmental values are emphasised, ethical communication remains implied rather than explicit. There is often an assumption that promoting ecological awareness automatically ensures respectful engagement, which may not hold true. The lack of explicit attention to interpersonal

respect, tone, digital decorum, and value framing reveals an analytical gap between environmental design and communicative practice.

While the fourth theme includes articles that examine emerging technologies such as AI, chatbots, and big data as mechanisms for tourism recovery and resilience in the wake of COVID-19. The studies show how innovation is leveraged to rebuild the tourism sector; *Albinay et al. (2024)*, for example, explores the role of ChatGPT in reshaping customer service experiences in tourism and hospitality.

While technologically progressive, these studies often adopt a solutionist logic; assuming that more automation equates to better service. Very little attention is given to the affective or ethical consequences of these technologies. Questions such as: "*Can AI replicate politeness?*", "*Do digital platforms erode or reinforce human warmth?*" or "*How do users interpret respect in automated responses?*" remain largely unasked. This reveals a critical blind spot in an otherwise innovation-driven agenda: the risk of cultural flattening and communication breakdown in the pursuit of smart tourism efficiency.

Across all four themes, there is an observable tension between technological advancement and communicative sensitivity. While the reviewed studies show considerable interest in improving digital infrastructure, few actively consider the ethical, cultural, or interpersonal dynamics that mediate the ecotourism experience. The most significant thematic gap is the absence of a unified framework that integrates digital design with politeness strategies, especially those rooted in local Malaysian or Southeast Asian traditions. This calls for future research to bridge technological functionality with ethical form, ensuring that digital politeness is not an afterthought but a foundational element of ecotourism innovation.

Discussion

The thematic findings of this scoping review highlight an important yet underexplored intersection between digital innovation and culturally grounded communication ethics in the Malaysian ecotourism context. While the reviewed literature reflects impressive progress in terms of technological adoption and infrastructure development, the ethical and politeness dimensions of digital communication remain marginal, fragmented, or treated superficially. This discussion section synthesises the implications of each theme and outlines the critical gaps that demand scholarly and practical attention.

A majority of studies (e.g., *Ismail et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2023; Noraini Ruslan et al., 2023*) centre their discussion on usability, accessibility, and digital infrastructure. While these aspects are essential for tourist satisfaction and operational efficiency, they reflect a technocentric lens that inadvertently sidelines the socio-cultural realities of digital interaction. In ecotourism, communication is not just transactional; it is relational and value-laden. The absence of politeness strategies, interpersonal warmth, or contextual cues in mobile and AI interfaces suggests that digital design is still rooted in Western paradigms of efficiency and neutrality, rather than local traditions of *kesantunan* or mutual respect.

Despite the increased integration of smart tools like AI chatbots and tourism bots (e.g., Altınay et al., 2024; Shanmugam et al., 2024), only a handful of articles (Chen & Yang, 2024; Arimbawa et al., 2024) engage directly with ethical or responsible communication frameworks. These studies point to the potential of digital platforms to mediate values like empathy, eco-guilt, or social connection but they stop short of proposing scalable models or cultural adaptations for system design.

There remains a lack of theoretical engagement with politeness theory, such as Brown and Levinson's framework, or culturally embedded constructs like *kesantunan Melayu*. As a result, even well-intended digital tools may fail to recognise the symbolic weight of greeting forms, honorifics, non-verbal expressions, or indirectness valued by local hosts and communities in Malaysia. This ethical and cultural erasure threatens the sustainability and relational quality of ecotourism experiences.

While tourists dominate as the primary stakeholder in most articles, local communities, tourism providers, and policy actors are considerably underrepresented. This skew in perspective aligns with a top-down, consumer-driven approach to digital ecotourism, where platforms are designed for tourists rather than with host communities. Such asymmetry can result in systems that appear efficient but are perceived as impersonal or disrespectful by local actors. For instance, community voices in Gan et al. (2018) and Islam (2023) reveal a desire for tools that preserve culture, hospitality, and identity; yet few systems allow for co-creation, localisation, or stakeholder customisation. This reveals a major ethical gap: the failure to integrate inclusive design processes that respect and reflect local communicative norms.

The dominance of quantitative and usability-driven methods (e.g., Kassim et al., 2023; Abidin et al., 2024) has led to a reliance on metrics that prioritise user satisfaction, adoption rates, or interface ratings, a technocentric lens that inadvertently sidelines the socio-cultural realities of digital interaction. In ecotourism, communication is not just transactional; it is relational and value-laden. The absence of politeness strategies, interpersonal warmth, or contextual cues in mobile and AI interfaces suggests that digital design is still rooted in Western paradigms of efficiency and neutrality, rather than local traditions of *kesantunan* or mutual respect.

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Towards a Culturally Grounded Digital Politeness Framework

The findings and analysis suggest an urgent need to reposition digital politeness as a foundational element of tourism communication; not a supplementary concern. For Malaysia, where communication is inherently relational and deeply embedded in cultural codes, any sustainable digital strategy must integrate:

- Politeness theory and local communication norms into interface design,
- Stakeholder inclusion and co-creation in platform development,
- Training modules for tourism professionals on digital communication ethics,
- Evaluation frameworks that measure not just usability, but interpersonal respect, cultural resonance, and ethical alignment.

Ultimately, digital transformation in ecotourism must be guided by empathetic, dialogic, and culturally anchored principles, ensuring that innovation is not achieved at the cost of identity, tradition, or relational trust.

Conclusion

This scoping review set out to trace how digital politeness is conceptualised, operationalised, or neglected within the context of Malaysian ecotourism. Through a systematic analysis of 15 peer-reviewed articles, the study revealed that while digital innovation in tourism is rapidly progressing; particularly through mobile applications, AI tools, and smart platforms - the ethical and relational aspects of communication remain marginal.

Across the literature, digital politeness is not yet established as a foundational design principle. Instead, it is treated inconsistently, often overshadowed by technical functionality and user efficiency. The

findings highlighted significant gaps in theory, practice, and stakeholder inclusion, particularly the underrepresentation of local communities, and the lack of culturally grounded politeness frameworks like *kesantunan Melayu* in digital tourism discourse.

The review also uncovered ethical dilemmas, such as the automation of service without empathy, or the risk of dehumanising communication in ecotourism interactions. Without deliberate attention to interpersonal respect, cultural appropriateness, and relational harmony, digital tourism tools may unintentionally disrupt the very values ecotourism aims to preserve.

In light of these findings, this study advocates for the repositioning of digital politeness as an ethical imperative in the design, deployment, and evaluation of tourism technologies. It calls for:

- Integration of local politeness norms into digital communication frameworks;
- Stakeholder co-creation in the development of tourism platforms;
- Ethical training in digital tourism education; and
- Future research that bridges technological design with intercultural communication theory.

Ultimately, tracing digital politeness is not merely an academic exercise; it is a critical step toward building respectful, inclusive, and culturally resonant ecotourism experiences in Malaysia and beyond. By embedding politeness as a core communicative value in digital systems, the tourism industry can move closer to its ideals of sustainability, mutual respect, and human dignity in a rapidly digitalised world.

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