

## **ABSTRACT**

This research was the first attempt to empirically evaluate visitors' experience and the effectiveness of an Internet virtual tour of a place to meet the goals of interpretive presentation. It aimed to determine whether an interpretive Web site could induce flow experience, what are the factors that contribute to flow experience, and the consequences of flow experience. An interpretive Web site depicting a specific geographical place was evaluated with guidelines derived from the literature on interpretation and Web site design. A flow model, which characterized the interdependencies between factors in Web site development, visitors' individual differences, flow experience, learning about a place, and changes of attitude and behavior, was proposed and tested with the structural equation modeling method.

It was found that an interpretive Web site could provide flow experience. In the context of human-computer interactions on a Web site, flow experience was characterized by time distortion, enjoyment, and telepresence.

This research concluded that flow experience with a Web site influenced a number of important outcomes that are typically expected by Web site developers or program interpreters. First, when people are in a state of flow they tend to report that they learn more about the place presented in the Web site. Second, the report of increased learning about a place leads to changes of attitude and behavior, including taking positive and responsible actions.

There were adequate evidences to conclude that that the interrelationships among factors in a Web site's development were closely related to people's flow experience. Of these factors, attractiveness of a Web site was found to be the most important factor in affecting flow experience. Other factors that directly and indirectly contribute to flow experience include interactivity and ease of use. Their effects on flow experience were moderate. Speed was found to play an important role in affecting people's evaluation of the content and the design of a Web site.

Keywords: flow, optimal experience, interpretation, place, nature tourism, Web site, human-computer interaction