ASEAN
AUSTRALIA
SMART CITIES
TRUST FUND
Asian Development Bank

Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

ADB

DIGITAL SOLUTIONS:

PROMOTING SAFE & INCLUSIVE TOURISM RECOVERY VIA VIRTUAL REALITY

ENHANCING URBAN TOURISM RESILIENCE WITH SMART AND IMMERSIVE DIGITAL SOLUTIONS

OPPORTUNITY

Many cities across Southeast Asia rely on tourism to generate jobs and revenue across all social layers of society. These cities have experienced an unexpected economic shock, with industries such as tourism effectively shutting down during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the whole tourism sector disrupted, cities and governments have an opportunity to rethink and rebuild a more sustainable and resilient tourism industry. Such action requires investment in emerging solutions to fuel an economic recovery.

Virtual reality (VR) can help accelerate efforts towards a sustainable and inclusive tourism bounce-back. The pandemic has been an accelerator for the advancement of cities' digital transformation. As such, VR has become a popular application for cities as a tool for the long road to recovery with the rising opportunity to promote tourist destinations in new virtual and engaging ways to ensure that popular tourist destinations remain competitive. In addition, VR has the potential to enhance city planning systems by increasing public engagement to better plan for the new normal, test new urban development models, and get public opinions on how to promote a safe and inclusive tourism recovery.

BENEFITS

* Promote tourist destinations with interactive storytelling engaging tourists when travel is still restricted;
* Offers new business framework to attract tourists, e.g., by gamifying the experience, allowing awards or tokens for tourists to get discounts on public transportation services or in shops;
* Build confidence among tourists on safe traveling measures on a domestic and international level by showing local COVID mitigation measures;
* Support social aspects of cities by organizing social events to promote local cultures and market local goods, thus linking e-commerce with entertainment.

PRECONDITIONS

* Cost of procuring VR software systems;
* Capacity and skillset to develop VR content and learning curve in developing and piloting content;
* Reliable data communication speed and digital maturity of targeted users;
* Collaboration with the private sector to bring in innovation and to scale content;
* Business plan to keep content and solutions running with the fast-changing digital evolution for long-term sustainability.

KEY TAKEAWAYS ON SMART TOURISM RECOVERY
From the ASEAN Australia Smart Cities Webinar Series Part 7: Promoting Smart Tourism Recovery via Virtual Reality

bit.ly/2MCQF3u

* Tourist destinations and cities are already using conventional destination marketing and booking solutions, but only a few are harvesting the benefits of using immersive digital solutions such as VR;
* VR cannot and is not intended to replace real-world travel experience but can complement the experience by adding layers of historical data, etc.;
* People make destinations; thus, cities and local communities will be ambassadors to invite tourists into their communities and promote local cultures, and market local goods;
* Cities and governments should focus on developing innovative funds to increase motivation from private investors to engage in public-private partnership investments in technology development, deployment, and workforce upskilling.

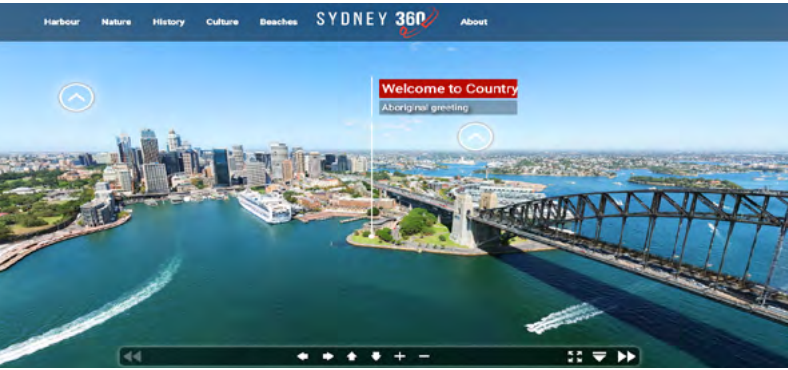SCAN CODE FOR DIGITAL VERSION

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USE CASES

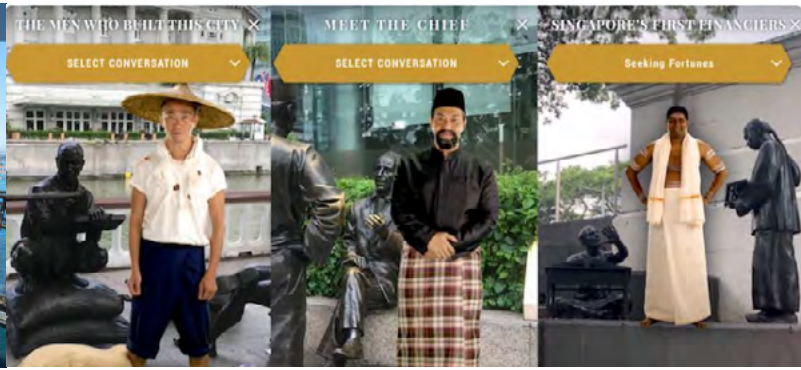Photo attribution: Sydney360.guide/Rapturous Media

Photo attribution: National Heritage Board (Singapore)

Bringing the Sydney experience in virtual 360 degrees

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AUSTRALIA

AGENCIES INVOLVED

- City of Sydney
- The Entertainment Media Group Pty Ltd

Sydney360 is an interactive, online guide that utilizes 360-degree photography to recreate a virtual tour of Sydney. It is an initiative supported by the City of Sydney and several tour operators and was conceived due to the disruption that the city's tourism industry faced because of the pandemic.

Filming for the guide was carried out by virtual reality specialists, resulting in a spectacular birds' eye view of the city. The platform was also developed with input from local tour guides, giving an authentic, local voice to the virtual experience. Content for Sydney360 is expected to expand to include other sectors hit by the pandemic, including restaurants and accommodations.

The guide is a useful tool in holiday planning and virtual travel and gives local tourism businesses a new marketing platform for local and domestic businesses. The guide can be accessed on any device for free.

Securing Singapore's post-pandemic tourism future via Augmented Reality (AR)

bit.ly/2NLWz37

SINGAPORE

AGENCIES INVOLVED

- Singapore Tourism Board

The city-state of Singapore is pushing for the digital transformation of its tourism sector with its Augmented Reality (AR) strategy to better position tourism businesses for recovery.

The Singapore Tourism Board (STB) strongly believes that AR is an accessible technology that can provide an interactive and personalized experience for tourists using their existing smart devices without expensive hardware investments as required by virtual reality (VR) systems. This allows AR content to be scaled within the tourism sector at a lower cost.

A few tourism-related agencies in Singapore are already adopting AR, such as the Singapore Zoo through their "Hello from the Wild Side" initiative and the National Heritage Board's self-guided trail guides, which uses audio, AR, and geolocation. STB also launched a Tourism Transformation Index, a self-diagnostic tool to help companies assess their strengths and opportunities and identify recommendations as they undertake their digital transformation.

ABOUT THE ASEAN AUSTRALIA SMART CITIES TRUST FUND

The ASEAN Australia Smart Cities Trust Fund (AASCTF) assists ASEAN cities in enhancing their planning systems, service delivery, and financial management by developing and testing appropriate digital solutions and systems. Digital solutions address vital cross-cutting themes such as social inclusiveness, gender equity & women's empowerment, climate change & environmental sustainability, and public-private partnerships. By working with cities, AASCTF facilitates their transformation to become more livable, resilient, and inclusive, while in the process identifying scalable best practices to be replicated across cities in Asia and the Pacific.

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