

Making It Safer to ‘Wander’



‘Wanderer’ creator: Christine hopes to make shoppers feel safer in public. SAFE travelling has become a top concern that demands solutions in a world ravaged by the Covid-19 pandemic. For Christine Choo Wan Teng, the solution is in the form of an application (app) designed to offer a safer shopping experience for the public. Named “Wanderer”, the app – which she created with her father, Alvin Choo – recently won the third prize at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) App Challenge 2021.

They were the only Malaysian team to emerge among the top five at the virtual challenge, which drew 170 participants from 13 Apec member economies. The app developed by the father-daughter duo aims to encourage people to travel again by providing features such as a visitation timer, barcode tickets and an online merchandise store which enables users to shop for gifts without queuing up at a physical shop.

“We knew many people have travel anxiety. So, we asked ourselves, ‘Why don’t we create an app that can provide information on how overcrowded an area is to the users? Wouldn’t the users feel safer if they know there are not many people in the area?’” she shared in a press release. The inspiration came to them after midway through developing their app, they realised the need to shelve their first idea. “We almost went ahead with a commonly-used idea – a simple marketplace app that allows users to buy tickets.

There are many apps that provide such features,” the Bachelor of Information Technology (Hons) in Internet Technology student at the Tunku Abdul Rahman University College (TAR UC) Penang branch campus said.

In developing the app, Christine recalls being initially anxious about using programming language for coding. “It wasn’t something I had learnt before but I took up the challenge. I studied the fundamentals and was able to grasp the language,” she said, adding that she has her lecturers to thank for her achievement.

“I am thankful to have lecturers who taught me well. They helped me to strengthen my computer science knowledge, and encouraged me to think out of the box and apply what I had learnt,” she said. “Understanding coding has definitely changed how I view the world. What used to be impossible to me now seems possible!” she added.

Moving forward, Christine said she and her father will further refine the app to assist merchants in increasing their sales. “For the contest submission, we focused more on functionality and had little time for UI/UX design. “We will work on improving the overall interface design to make it user-friendly. Then, we will approach a few merchants for a test run,” she said.

Held from May 14 to June 5, the fifth edition of the Apec App Challenge tasked software developers and designers from across the region with building new mobile and web tools that could help spur the revival of the tourism sector and promote a safe travel environment.



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