Social Media Travel Influencers: Strategic Insights and Impact on Domestic Travel Decision Making by Thai Millennials

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ชื่อวิทยานิพนธ์ อินฟลูเอนเซอร์สายท่องเที่ยว: กลยุทธ์เชิงลึกและอิทธิพลที่มีต่อการตัดสินใจ
เดินทางท่องเที่ยวในประเทศของคนไทยกลุ่มมิลเลเนียล

ผู้เขียน นางสาวสุธาสินี ณ นคร

สาขาวิชา การจัดการการบริการและการท่องเที่ยว (หลักสูตรนานาชาติ)

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บทคัดย่อ

ความก้าวหน้าของเทคโนโลยีทำให้เกิดรูปแบบการสื่อสารแบบใหม่ในธุรกิจ
ต่าง ๆ รวมทั้งการท่องเที่ยว ปัจจุบันผู้คนใช้โซเชียลมีเดียเพื่อแบ่งปันข้อมูลและความคิดเห็นกัน
อย่างแพร่หลาย โดยเฉพาะกลุ่มคนมิลเลเนียล ผู้คนกลุ่มนี้ให้ความสนใจกับโฆษณาแบบดั้งเดิม
น้อยลงอย่างเห็นได้ชัด เนื่องจากการตลาดที่ใช้อินฟลูเอนเซอร์หรือผู้นำทางความคิดในการโฆษณา
สินค้าหรือบริการมีประสิทธิผลมากกว่าการตลาดแบบดั้งเดิม อีกทั้งยังมีอิทธิพลต่อการตัดสินใจ
เดินทางท่องเที่ยว ดังนั้นการศึกษาครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ (1) วิเคราะห์ความสำคัญของอินฟลูเอน
เซอร์สายท่องเที่ยวและคุณลักษณะเฉพาะ เช่น ความน่าเชื่อถือ คุณภาพของเนื้อหา และการเปิดเผย
โฆษณาที่มีผลต่อการตัดสินใจเดินทางท่องเที่ยวของคนไทยกลุ่มมิลเลเนียล (2) สำรวจการ
ปฏิสัมพันธ์โต้ตอบของอินฟลูเอนเซอร์กับผู้ติดตามและหลักการจัดการเนื้อหาของโพสต์ที่ไม่มี
โฆษณาแฝง (3) ศึกษาขั้นตอนและกลยุทธ์ที่อินฟลูเอนเซอร์ใช้ในการจัดการเนื้อหาของโพสต์ที่มี
สปอนเซอร์ร่วมด้วย

กลุ่มเป้าหมายของงานวิจัยครั้งนี้ประกอบด้วย กลุ่มแรก คือ คนไทยกลุ่มมิลเลน
เนียล ผู้ซึ่งเกิดระหว่างปี 2524 ถึง 2543 และกลุ่มที่สอง คือ อินฟลูเอนเซอร์สายท่องเที่ยว การศึกษา
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จากคนไทยกลุ่มมิลเลเนียลและการสัมภาษณ์ชนิดกึ่งโครงสร้างเพื่อเก็บข้อมูลเชิงลึกจากอินฟลู
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ของผู้ให้สัมภาษณ์มีทั้งหมด 21 คน

ผลการศึกษา พบว่า ร้อยละ 80.2 ของคนไทยกลุ่มมิลเลเนียลมีแนวโน้มที่จะใช้
ข้อมูลจากความคิดเห็นหรือการรีวิวของอินฟลูเอนเซอร์หรือบล็อกเกอร์สายท่องเที่ยว เป็น
แหล่งข้อมูลเบื้องต้นในการการค้นหาแหล่งท่องเที่ยว อย่างไรก็ตาม กลุ่มคนที่มีอิทธิพลมากที่สุดต่อ
การตัดสินใจเดินทางท่องเที่ยวของคนกลุ่มมิลเลเนียล คือ ครอบครัวและเพื่อน อีกทั้งโซเชียลมีเดีย
ที่คนไทยกลุ่มมิลเลเนียลนิยมใช้มากที่สุดสองอันดับแรก ได้แก่ เฟสบุ๊กและยูทูบ สำหรับทัศนคติ
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แตกต่างระหว่างเพศ อายุ และระดับการศึกษาของคนกลุ่มมิลเลนเนียล ผู้ตอบแบบสอบถามส่วน
ใหญ่มีทัศนคติเชิงบวกกับอินฟลูเอนเซอร์สายท่องเที่ยว เนื่องจากพวกเขารับรู้ถึงความน่าเชื่อถือใน
การนำเสนอคอนเทนท์ของอินฟลูเอนเซอร์ นอกจากนี้ การศึกษายังพบอีกว่า ผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม
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ทักษะการสื่อสารที่ดี

       การศึกษาครั้งนี้เสนอแนะให้อินฟลูเอนเซอร์สายท่องเที่ยวควรแสดงความโปร่งใส
และความจริงใจต่อผู้ติดตาม ซึ่งเป็นสิ่งสำคัญที่กระตุ้นให้คนกลุ่มมิลเลนเนียลตัดสินใจกดติดตาม
เพจของอินฟลูเอนเซอร์ นอกจากนี้ เนื่องจากอินฟลูเอนเซอร์แต่ละคนมีเอกลักษณ์เฉพาะตัว ดังนั้น
นักการตลาดควรศึกษาและเข้าใจคุณลักษณะเฉพาะของอินฟลูเอนเซอร์เพื่อให้สินค้าหรือบริการ
ตอบโจทย์กลุ่มเป้าหมายได้อย่างถูกต้อง และนักการตลาดควรให้อิสระแก่ผู้สร้างคอนเทนท์ในการ
ผลิตเนื้อหา เพื่อให้พวกเขาสามารถแสดงศักยภาพความคิดสร้างสรรค์ได้อย่างเต็มที่

คำสำคัญ: การตัดสินใจเดินทางท่องเที่ยว การบอกต่อผ่านสื่อออนไลน์ มิลเลนเนียล
        อินฟลูเอนเซอร์โซเชียลมีเดียสายท่องเที่ยว ความน่าเชื่อถือ ประเทศไทย

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ABSTRACT

The prevalence of advanced technology has brought a new dynamic form of communication in several business sectors, including travel industry. People, especially millennials or Gen Y, increasingly utilize social platforms as an idea-sharing space. This generation apparently continues to lose interest in traditional advertising as influencer marketing is considered more effective for endorsement and can influence travel decision making. Therefore, this study's purposes are (1) to analyze the importance of Thai SMTIs' and their characteristics, such as source credibility, quality of content, and advertising disclosure on Thai millennials' travel decision-making process, (2) to explore the Thai SMTIs' interaction with their followers and organization of their organic content, and (3) to investigate the practices and strategies of Thai SMTIs in organizing their sponsored content and interaction with sponsors.

The target population of this research consists of two groups: the first group was Thai millennials (birth year 1981-2000) and the second group was Thai social media travel influencers. Quantitative approach was applied by developing questionnaire survey to gather information from the side of Thai millennials. Qualitative approach was applied by conducting semi-structured interviews to investigate in-depth information on the side of Thai SMTIs. The actual sample size for Thai tourist participated was 436 respondents and 21 Thai SMTIs were interviewed.

The findings indicate that Thai millennials tend to rely on the comments or reviews from social media travel influencers/bloggers (80.2%) as the primary information source; nevertheless, the most influential person when it came to travel decision making, unsurprisingly, was family and friends. The most popular platforms that this generation uses are Facebook and YouTube. Thai millennials' attitudes on Thai SMTIs, regardless of gender, age or level of education, are found to be positive as these endorsers are perceived as credible and reliable. The respondents place significantly high level of positive engagement in content that is useful and

interesting to them even when the content includes sponsorship. The second set of data derived from interviews found that the tactics that SMTIs utilize when creating a sponsored post include posting time, number of product photos, tie-in strategy, useful and interesting content, and avoiding explicit advertising words. The product or service they presented should be relevant to their identity. Most of the participants also remarked the important characteristics of SMTIs which consist of passion on travel, authenticity, photography skills, and communication skills.

This study recommends that SMTIs should exhibit transparency and authenticity which are the vital attributes when millennials decide to follow an influencer. Each influencer has their own uniqueness; therefore, the marketers should understand SMTIs' characteristics and make sure they fit the product or service. The marketers also should allow content creators to freely produce the content so that they can unveil their creativity as they want and enjoy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Description	Abbreviation
Analysis of Variance	ANOVA
Coronavirus Disease of 2019	COVID-19
Electronic Word of Mouth	eWOM
Index of Item – Objective Congruence	IOC
Institutional Review Board	IRB
Social Media Influencers	SMIs
Social Media Travel Influencers	SMTIs
Tourism Authority of Thailand	TAT
User-Generated Content	UGC
Word of Mouth	WOM

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Hospitality and tourism industry is counted an essential drive of Thailand's economy growth which has boosted great amount of revenues to the country for decades. In 2019, the arrivals of international tourists reached 38.12 million people, equivalent to more than half of Thailand's population, hence Thailand received approximately 1.91 trillion Baht in revenue (Tourism and Sports Ministry, 2019). Since people are nowadays living in the globalized world, the frequency of travel among people become more often than the previous times due to the advent of technology and the internet usage. With the fast-paced evolution of Web 2.0, social media have become more advanced which allow users to generate and share content whether travel, food, lifestyle, health, beauty or fashion. Social media tools have been dubbed Web 2.0 and become a core element of communication strategy in daily life (Glucksman, 2017). The power of sharing experiences and the rapid change the way people interact has brought a dynamic communication in several business areas, including tourism sector. More people utilize social platforms as an idea-sharing space, such as travel experience or lifestyle, exchanging opinions which are considered as an authentic source before making a decision. The rise of social media influencer is a good example of the prevalence of social media platforms, such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Pantip.com.

In the past few years, social media influencers (SMIs) who represent a new type of third-party endorser, (Freberg, Graham, McGaughey, & Freberg, 2011) have increasingly been popular in advertising strategy among young generation especially Millennials or Gen Y, the people born between 1981 and 2000 (DeVaney, 2015; Keeling, 2003) due to the new forms of digital practices. Millennials are now representing an economic force that create new purchasing trends as the products and services consumed by young adults are mostly through the internet (Ahn et al., 2019). In tourism context, the travel patterns of millennials are diverse since they are more open to different cultures (Ahn et al., 2019) and have more personalized lifestyle. This generational cohort find travel as one of the most crucial part of their lives (Cavagnaro, Staffieri, & Postma, 2018). SMIs are perceived as individuals who are able to influence audience attitudes

through social platforms and become opinion leaders by sharing their knowledge within a particular field, engaging with their followers or expressing their passion, travel and lifestyle (Audrezeta, Kerviler, & Moulard, 2020). For instance, cross-expertized influencer marketing has become an effective strategy to promote brands or products where the area of influencers may not directly align with the brand's target audience (Tellscore, 2019). Financial businesses collaborate with a travel influencer to present complex products or services to their potential followers to expand and attract its customers with building credibility in the niche market (Tellscore, 2019).

The evolution of Web 2.0 technology has contributed to a new form of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) which is counted the important source of information that further empower both providers and receivers (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008). Moreover, people are more likely to positively perceive and react the message from trusted source and authentic content like they receive the recommendations from friends or family. Referring to a recent survey by IZEA Worldwide Inc. (2019), 63% of social media users informed that they find the contents generated by the influencers to be more fascinating than scripted advertising composed by the marketing professionals. SMIs are viewed as an opinion leader in travel-related field. In case of tourism context, although tourists have experiences on travelling, some travelers still depend their decision-making on other experiences to sort out the quality of products and services (Litvin et al., 2008).

In Thailand, the number of audiences spending their time on social platforms is interestingly significant. We Are Social and Hootsuite (2020), a socially-led global agency and the global leader in social media management, revealed the "Global Digital 2020" report which resulted that the users aged between 18-24 and 25-34 spend more time watching content online than any other age group. The social media platform Facebook ranked first among Thai users reaching around 50 million in 2020 (Statista, 2020) and YouTube ranked second with competitive number of users compared to Facebook (Figure 1.1). Hence, Thai users are likely to consume video posts which have the highest engagement among them.

Figure 1.1 Penetration of social networks in Thailand 2020

Penetration of Social Media Network in Thailand 2020

Network	Percentage
Facebook	94%
YouTube	94%
Line	85%
Facebook Messenger	75%
Instagram	65%
TikTok	55%
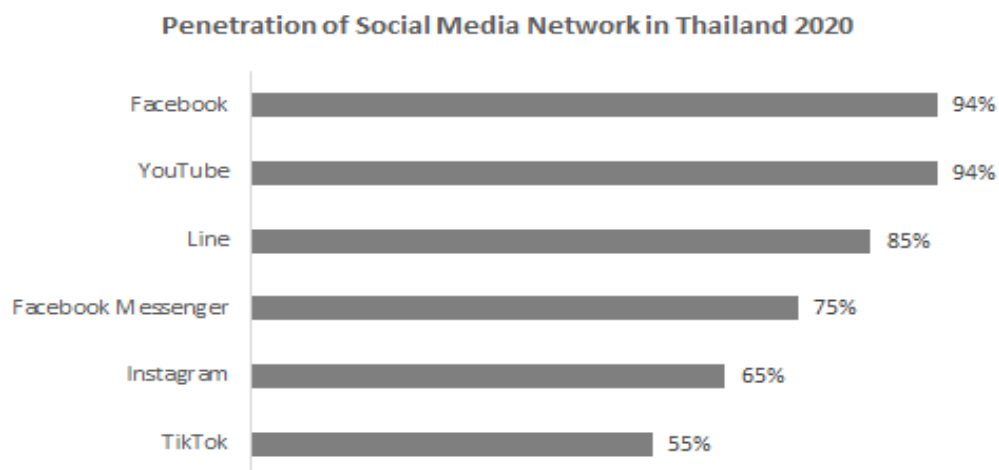
Source: Statista (2020)

The Tourism Authority of Thailand has been promoting inbound travel by launching several campaigns through digital medias as the rapid economic slowdown due to the widespread Covid-19 pandemic that severely hit every sector especially tourism industry. According to Digital Advertising Association of Thailand and Media Intelligence, the leading advertising agency, have evaluated that overall traditional advertising would decrease significantly to 20% in 2020 and the arrival of the pandemic has drastically slowed down digital advertising spending which now just +0.3% rate of growth, equivalent to 19,610 million baht compared to 2018 and 2019 with rate of growth at +36% and +16% respectively (Digital Advertising Association Thailand, 2020). On the contrary, influencer marketing is highly growing up to 30%, equivalent to 1,800-2,000 million baht in 2020 as shown in Figure 1.2 (Chankisen, 2020).

Figure 1.1 Total spending of digital advertising 2020
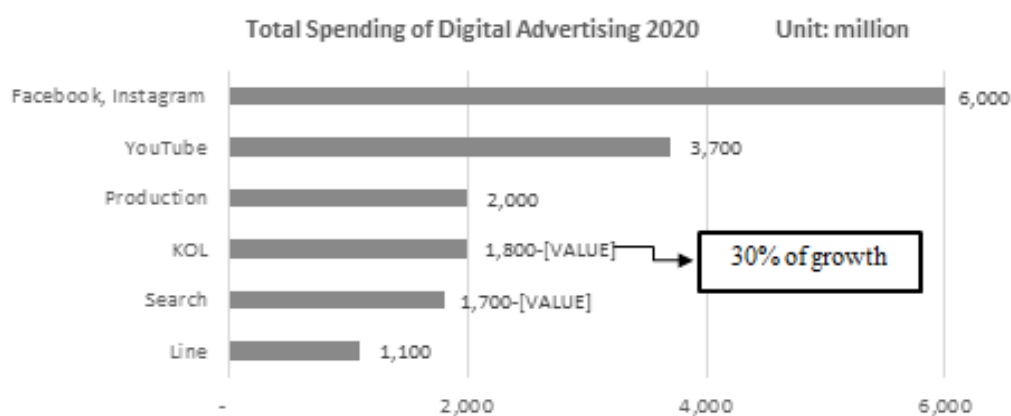
Source: Chankisen (2020)

Many marketers choose to collaborate with social media influencers rather than traditional advertising to promote products and services due to the popularity, openness and creativity of the influencers. In 2019, micro-influencer marketing has been popular among marketers as consumers now highly value authentic reviews and recommendations from friends or real users – apparently what micro-influencers do on social network platforms (Tellscore, 2019). Thai travelers now tend to search the destination information and plan a trip through online sources rather than inquire travel agencies directly. Furthermore, Gen Y who were born the year 1981-2000, depends heavily on user-generated content to obtain travel information before purchasing travel-related products (Xu & Pratt, 2018). A survey indicated that Thai people are likely to follow social media influencers who present or review contents about travel with 61.2%, food and beverage with 53.6%, fashion with 41%, health with 38.1%, and finance with 23% respectively (Prachachat, 2019). Previous scholars have been conducted to access how social media influence millennials' travelers pre-purchase behavior (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014) and the celebrity endorsement effect on young consumers (Chan, Leung Ng, & Luk, 2013). Although there is some research that explore the influence of social media influencers on tourism industry and the effects of travel blogs' content on intention to visit a destination (Cholprasertsuk, Lawanwisut, & Thongrin, 2020; Chen, Shang, & Li, 2014), most of the research conducted one method which mainly are quantitative approach and there is little research that applied mixed methods with sufficient participants. The practice and tactic of SMIs, particularly in tourism

context, has been minimally examined. This study can fill the gap by conducting both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to explore the impact of travel social media influencers (SMTIs) on travel decision-making process by millennials who are the economic workforce and tech-savvy, and to investigate the practices and strategies of SMTIs in organizing travel content (both sponsored and non-sponsored content), as well as the interaction with followers and sponsors.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The rapid change of the way people communicates from the previous traditional interaction to online interaction due to the emergence of Web 2.0 and social media has an impact on each other without actual presence. More active users spend longer time on social media channels reading texts, watching videos, or sharing posts. Millennials are the main active users who form the most significant user segment online (Trivedi & Sama, 2019). This cohorts apparently continue to lose interest in traditional advertising as the interactive relationship between social media influencers and consumers is more engaged and connected. It seems that using social media influencers as endorser who are perceived as more relatable and credible might be more effective than using traditional figures or celebrities. Scholar shows that influencer marketing has led to stronger engagement with audiences than traditional advertising methods, and trustworthy influencers (e.g., bloggers, activists, comedians, artists, and other social media users who view their followers as fans) make the positive attitudes toward the brand (Chu & Kamal, 2008).

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions of this study are:

1.3.1 How importance of Thai SMTIs on millennials' travel decision-making process?

1.3.2 How do social media travel influencers organize their content and interact with followers and sponsors?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research are:

1.4.1 To analyze the importance of Thai SMTIs and their characteristics, such as source credibility, quality of content, and advertising disclosure on Thai millennials' travel decision-making process.

1.4.2 To explore the Thai SMTIs' interaction with followers and organization of their organic content.

1.4.3 To investigate the practices and strategies of Thai SMTIs in organizing their sponsored content and interaction with sponsors.

1.5 Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Millennials' demographic characteristics, in terms of gender, age, income, education, and occupation, have an impact on attitudes towards influencer credibility.

Hypothesis 2: Millennials' demographic characteristics, in terms of gender, age, income, education, and occupation, have an impact on perceived quality of content created by social media travel influencer.

Hypothesis 3: Millennials' demographic characteristics, in terms of gender, age, income, education, and occupation, have an impact on attitudes towards advertising disclosure.

Hypothesis 4: Influencer credibility has an impact on travel decision-making process.

Hypothesis 5: Quality of content has an impact on travel decision-making process.

Hypothesis 6: Advertising disclosure has an impact on travel decision-making process.

1.6 Significance of the Study

           The prevalence of social media has brought the new dynamic communication which has been applied as an effective tool to promote tourism and hospitality industry. Social media also has led to the increasing of social media influencers who represent key opinion leaders in certain fields. The finding of the study will shed light on the endorser selection in terms of marketing implication which helps persuade and stimulate stronger travel intentions and what characteristics that influencers should have in order to attract target consumers. This study will indicate characteristics of SMTIs that significantly influence domestic travel decision making of millennials particularly focusing on online travel influencers and how much influencer marketing is effective when it was applied with travel industry. Furthermore, this study will benefit those who want to become a social media influencer because it will help them to understand how social media influencers organize their content and interaction with followers and what the strategies they use to collaborate with their sponsors and it will benefit not only tourism marketers and tourism authority, but also perceived destination image by consumers especially millennials or Gen Y who have been identified as a technologically savvy, being eager to pursue and high tendency on sharing their travel experiences.

1.7 Scope of the Study

        1.7.1 Scope of Research Area

           The study examined the importance of Thai SMTIs on influencing domestic travel decision making of Thai Millennials, and Thai Millennials' attitudes toward SMTIs. This study will also cover the practices and strategies that SMIs apply to organize their content and interaction with followers and sponsors. The effectiveness of influencer marketing on travel decision making by this so-called generation is discussed through the lens of SMTIs as well.

        1.7.2 Scope of Demography

           The main focus of this research is Thai Millennials born in the birth years ranging early 1980s to late 1990s or 2000 who have done at least one trip in 2019 and must follow at least one social media travel influencer on any social media platforms. For the social media travel influencers, researcher will focus on Thai SMTIs because the main target tourists of this study are Thai millennials. Since social media influencers are categorized into three types

based on the number of followers on their social media channels, researcher will choose to interview each of them in order to find if there are any differences.

1.7.3 Scope of Geography

This research will be conducted in Thailand. The questionnaires were distributed to Thai Millennials face-to-face approach and through social media platforms such as Facebook, Line, Messenger, Twitter, and Instagram. For social media travel influencers, the in-depth interview was conducted through phone interview and video communication using Google Meet.

1.7.4 Scope of Time

The questionnaires and in-depth interviews were conducted during September-October 2021.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

1.8.1 Travel Decision Making

Travel Decision making is recognized as multi-stage process. Before deciding to visit somewhere, travel desire is the initial phase of the process. After the travel need is recognized, tourists will find information on travel destinations, hotels, transportations and evaluate the alternatives before making the final decision (Moutinho, 1987; Björk & Jansson, 2008).

1.8.2 Electronic Word-of-Mouth

Electronic word-of-mouth can be defined as a form of Internet-based communication related to specific products or services between those people who perceived the sources as noncommercial messages, including the communication between producers and consumers (Litvin et al., 2008).

1.8.3 Millennials

There are discussions on the exact definition of millennials. Some scholars indicate that the so-called millennials were born between 1980s and 1990s (Dimock, 2019; Sweeney, 2006) while others describe millennials are people born in 1980 and 2000 (Stein, 2013; Siegel & Wang, 2018; Ahn, Lee, & Lee, 2019). Millennials are described as technologically savvy and connected, and effective at multitasking (Sweeney, 2006).

For the purpose of this research, millennials (Generation Y) are defined as those who were born in the years 1981 to 2000 and are considered as digital natives since the Internet and digital technologies rapidly evolved in this period which has been significantly advancing the new tools and online platforms for communication.

1.8.4 Social Media Influencer

Kay, Mulcahy, and Parkinson (2020) defined social media influencers (SMIs) as individuals who have a big number of followings on social media which attract those followers to be engaged and have ability to use this popularity for marketing to reach certain products or services. Influencer can be ordinary people who can affect others' attitudes and decisions and is perceived as key opinion leaders, individuals in a social networking who can have a great impact on other people's opinions and adoption.

1.8.5 Social Media Travel Influencer

Travel influencers are endorsers who have the ability to influence others' decision on travelling, visiting destinations to promote locations as well as specific businesses, and producing travel content posting on social media (Sid, 2020; Stoldt, Wellman, Ekdale & Tully, 2019). These influencers mostly have a passion to travel and share travel experiences on their own platforms to inspire their audiences who perceive these endorsers as reliable.

1.8.6 Source Credibility

Source credibility is the extent to which audience perceive a communicator's positive characteristics as a reliable source (Ohanian, 1990). The source credibility dimensions in terms of online context are attractiveness, trustworthiness and competence which was proposed by Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018). Attractiveness refers to the physical attractiveness of a communicator. Trustworthiness refers to the audiences' perception that consider speakers as sincere or truthful. Competence refers to communicator perceived ability in specific knowledge, experience, and skill.

1.9 Conceptual Framework

H1: Millennials' demographic characteristics, in terms of gender, age, income, education, and occupation, have an impact on attitudes towards influencer credibility.

H2: Millennials' demographic characteristics, in terms of gender, age, income, education, and occupation, have an impact on quality of content created by social media travel influencer.

H3: Millennials' demographic characteristics, in terms of gender, age, income, education, and occupation, have an impact on attitudes towards advertising disclosure.

H4: Influencer credibility has an impact on travel decision-making process.

H5: Quality of content has an impact on travel decision-making process.

H6: Advertising disclosure has an impact on travel decision-making process.

Figure 1.3 Conceptual framework
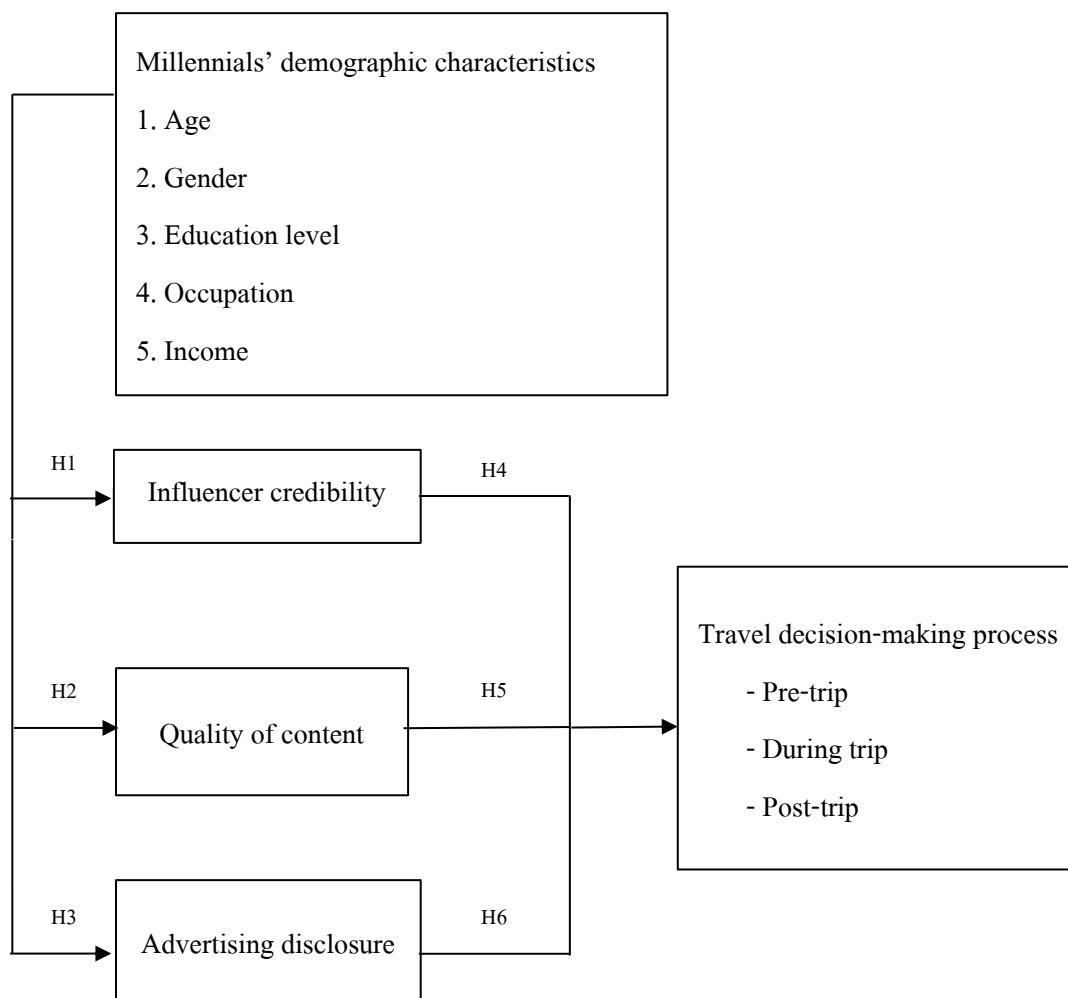
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Travel Decision Making

2.2 Social Media

        2.2.1 Definition of Social Media

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2.8 The Effectiveness of Influencer Marketing

2.1 Travel Decision Making

        Decision-making is recognized as a multi-stage process. Before deciding to visit somewhere, tourists need information on travel destinations, hotels, transportations to ensure that they make the best possible travel decision. For example, if tourists are visiting an area for the first time, it is reasonable that they might ask others who are more experienced or more knowledgeable in a specific place or do travel information search before making travel selection. This is a learning process by searching through the information environment. An individual may realize some causes that cannot be carried out such as owing to conflicting schedules of company or unavailable transport tickets, resulting in either the person changes those parts or cancel the trip (Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002). Making a travel choice does not only involve a single decision, it also consists of several sub-decisions that tourists need to consider before going on a trip; why they travel, where to go, when to do, what to do while on vacation, how to

get to the chosen destination (Björk & Jansson, 2008). There are various theories and models that describe the decision-making process (Engle, Kollat, & Blackwell, 1968; Björk & Jansson, 2008; Jeng & Fesenmaier, 2002; Moutinho, 1987). The traditional model of consumer decision making developed by Engle, Kollat, and Blackwell (1968) is widely accepted which describes how decisions are made when choosing among a list of alternatives available. The first stage starts from problem recognition when an individual has travel needs, then searching travel information for further references, evaluating the alternatives to make the final purchase decision, purchasing the travel-related products and services, including booking in advance, and the final stage is post purchase which indicates an individual's satisfaction whether sharing positive or negative experiences (Figure 2.1).

Jeng and Fesenmaier (2002) proposed the travel planning model suggesting that a trip decision comprises of a number of decision facets with the characteristics of multidimensionality, sequentiality, and contingency. First, a tourist often seeks for multiple travel needs and benefits to reach their satisfaction. The travel decision-making process involves various decisions, such as destinations, mode of transportation, accommodations, tourism activities, length of stay, travel partners, places to dine, etc. This perspective indicates that travel planning conveys many subdimensions which play an important role because a destination conveys many attributes, such as cleanliness, safety, activities, quality of restaurants and accommodations, friendliness of local people, infrastructures, etc. Second, travelers generally develop decision heuristics that support the trade-off process between satisfying travel needs and reduced effort needed to make a decision. Each sub-decision is prioritized by the decision maker, breaking the complex ones into different categories and it is considered as a hierarchical and sequential process when the elements are evaluated after information integration (Crompton, 1992). Third, travel decision making is a contingent process as some decisions made in the initial process may be fixed prior to the trip whereas other decisions made after initial planning and less important are changeable and temporal due to circumstances. For example, travel destinations and travel partners may be considered to be made in the earliest stage as it is the most crucial decision before other ones are made such as accommodations, attractions, restaurants, duration, etc.

Figure 2.1 Consumer decision-making process

Problem recognition		Information search		Evaluation of		Purchase decision		Post purchase
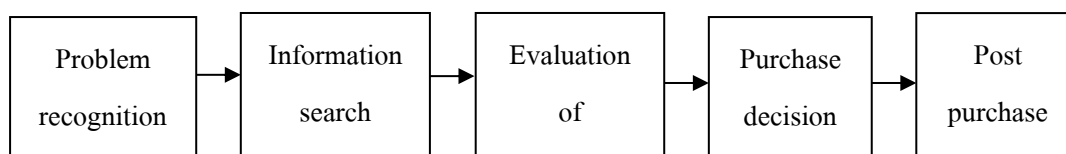
Source: Engle et al. (1968)

Moutinho (1987) suggested a more expanded conceptual framework of tourism decision. He maintained that destination choice was a compulsory decision among a group of other sub-decisions that comes after travel needs had been aroused and information has been consulted. To take actions on travel, there are a number of factors that influence tourist behaviors; how people perceive a destination as a destination choice, the convenience of transportation, travel motivations that affect their travel decision, how demographic variables affect those decisions and travel behavior. In addition to travel desires or needs, marketing stimuli, social factors, characteristics of the destinations and other external factors were considered as influences on the destination choice. Before having any travel needs or specific purpose of trip, people may obtain and accumulate information on potential destinations and build impression of some destinations (Moutinho, 1987).

Dwityas and Briandana (2017) describes the model adapted from Travel Decision Making Model of Methieson and Wall (1982) of social media uses in tourism decision making that it can be divided into three phases: pre-trip, during trip, and post-trip phases.

● **Pre-Trip Phase** or before the travel is the phase when someone desires to travel and collect information, considering and evaluating the basis of tourism image and activities. Some products such as flight tickets, room reservation is included in this phase as it should be completed before the traveling when travel decision occurs in this phase.

● **During Trip Phase** or when travelers are on the trip experiences. Travelers might share their experience through social media with others. This phase includes purchasing products and services during the trip, such as transportation, accommodation, food, souvenirs, and clothes.

● **Post-trip Phase** or when travelers returned from traveling, in other words, they accomplished the trip. It is the phase of evaluation from their experience whether it

reaches their satisfaction which affects the travel decision making in the future. Also, travelers might give feedback to the travel applications, tourism-provider agencies or websites where other users can assess which lead to future travel decision making.

2.2 Social Media

2.2.1 Definition of social media

Social Media is a platform of the internet-based applications that evolved from Web 2.0, and that allow users to create and publicly share online content (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The advances of the Internet have emerged new digital technologies and tools that have been dubbed Web 2.0, especially channels like wikis, blogs, social network sites like Facebook, Myspace and LinkedIn, photo and video sharing sites like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. The great expansion of social media, particularly in the hospitality and tourism industry, such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, or Pantip.com has led to an increased number of tourists producing content through these community platforms, sharing photos, reviews, or videos online.

The user-generated content (UGC) is applied in various forms that are created by users and it is publicly accessible, making social media become fundamentally a huge platform of content exchange (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Furthermore, social networking platforms allow users to choose whether they prefer to make content available throughout the webs where all can access, only their friends, or specific individuals (Munar & Jacobsen, 2014). Due to the fast development of Web 2.0, which all users can create their own content via online platforms, those perceived as an opinion leader tend to influence the viewers' decision. Influencing is not a new phenomenon. According to Buttle (1998), "Word-of-mouth communication has been acknowledged for many years as a major influence on what people know, feel and do". For example, although tourists have experiences on travelling, some travelers still depend their decision-making on other experiences to sort out the quality of products and services (Litvin et al., 2008). The evolution of WOM is eWOM or electronic word-of-mouth which allows reviewers, who are perceived as a guru in their expertise and add comments on social networking sites consistently, become the travel opinion leaders among followers (Litvin et al., 2008). The top social media channels that are most popular among users are Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter. In Thailand, the most popular social media platforms that most

people are likely to use to do information search, specifically in travel and tourism, are Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Pantip.com.

Facebook is a social networking site that allow users to create posts whether in the forms of letters, photos, and videos on their own account or other account if they are allowed to. The features of like, comment, and share is the indicators of the posts' popularity. It is the practice of social sharing of experiences, enabling users to interact with others who share the similar interests. In 2021, there are 280 billion monthly active users on Facebook and 1.80 billion for daily active users (Mohsin, 2021a). Facebook plays an important role in many aspects of tourism, such as information search, tourism promotion, tourism marketing, and decision-making process which may not lead to a direct change of travel behaviors, but it notably influences attitudes and values that could affect their future perceptions in the longer term (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).

YouTube is a video-sharing site that enables users to upload, share, download, and watch videos with over billions of contents viewed every day. YouTube has over 2 billion active users each month and is the second-most popular social network after Facebook (YouTube, 2021). In tourism aspects, YouTube is one of the effective marketing tools in promoting tourism attractions and activities as it can stimulate sensory, motivating tourists to visit the destinations. Kim, Choe, and Lee (2017) studies the effectiveness of using video clip posted on YouTube to promote food tourism and found that making a video content is more effective and generating the positive outcomes such as the high level of visit intention in Hong Kong for food tourism.

Instagram, a photo and video-sharing mobile-based app officially launched in 2010 with currently more than 1 billion active users (Mohsin, 2021b), is now one of the potential social networks that has 88% of users outside the U.S. and most of the users are young people aged under 35, Generation Y or millennials. Many people use Instagram as the information search when it comes to travel by putting names of the destinations after #hashtag, watching billions of photos and videos available public. Instagram has been effectively evolving from photo- to video-sharing, especially for Instagram Story and the new feature, Reel, inviting users to record and edit 15-second videos with some editing tools such as audio, timer, speed, and

AR effects. The Instagram features serve as another powerful marketing tool for businesses and tourist destinations.

Twitter is another free social networking site, enabling people to communicate through limited messages per post or tweet, being restricted the texts of up to 140 characters. Twitter has more than 187 million daily active users and the largest generation that use this platform is millennials. In tourism context, #hashtag feature is useful as a marketing and communication tool. It can provide mechanism to communicate with young people who may not be interested in marketing message in other forms of media (Hay, 2010). A study of the role of Twitter in tourism recovery in tsunami-hit areas in Japan found that the official tweeted information was effective for promotion of ordinary tourism and attractions of volunteer tourist; however, it depends on the type of tourism (Fukui & Ohe, 2019).

Pantip.com is a community sharing web board in Thailand established since 1996 which is evolving to be a provider of information or a source of knowledge (Leesa-Nguansuk, 2016). It is one of the most popular local websites as users can create their own board and share the information or discussion with other users in a variety of topic, including complaints of products and services. Many Thai people look for information such as product reviews, travel destination, entertainments, financial issues, cooking recipes, etc. A study demonstrates that Pantip.com is the most influential website on travel decision making among Thai tourists as there are approximately 450 million pages views per month and 4.2 million users per day in 2016 (Thanasopon, Sumret, Buranapanitkij, & Netisopakul, 2017).

2.2.2 Social Media and Travel Decision Making

The evolving forms of communication and the ability to access the Internet make information accessible. In all stages of traveler's decision making, social media platforms act as a primary source of information which is the key elements throughout the process. Information is extremely essential in the tourism industry, especially millennials who spend a large amount of their time on social media in order to gather information and purchase products (e.g., flight tickets, accommodation, transportation).

The travel decision-making process through social media was developed in a semi-circular process (Figure 2.2) which demonstrates the stages from pre-trip to post-trip

including the step of identification of problem search, alternative evaluation, decision making and evaluation after travel (Dwityas and Briandana, 2017).

Figure 2.2 Social media in travel decision-making process
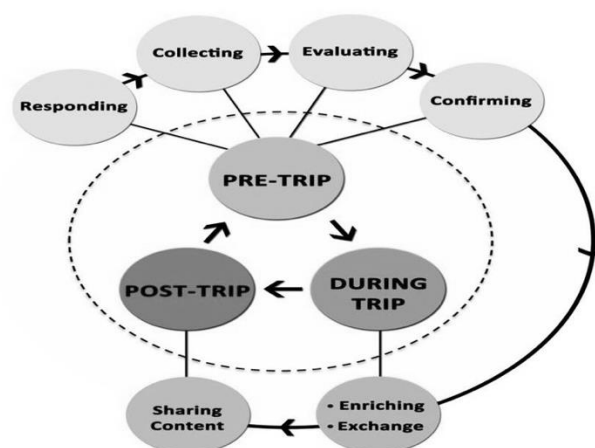
Source: Dwityas & Briandana (2017)

In the first stage of the process, tourists perceive the travel needs or desires, responding to social media content about travel activities by reading reviews, watching travel videos, or looking at pictures through online. After responding to the needs, travelers collect the information such as interested destinations, types of hotels, dining restaurants, and transportations in different ways; for example, asking friends/relatives, searching on social media, visiting travel agencies' websites or reading travel books. The next stage is alternative evaluation. In this phase, travelers evaluate the gathered information from various sites to reach the preference of travel destinations, activities, and products that will be consumed. After alternative evaluation, tourists move to the stage of confirming the information that has been collected and evaluated, a stage of decision-making. Previous booking and purchasing online for travel flights, accommodations are done in this stage. When the pre-trip stage is completed, the next stage is the during-trip stage where tourists start the journey and explore travel experiences. At this stage, tourists are enriching additional information about tourism-related products and exchange the experience with others through social media platforms. For instance, they might upload photos or videos, describe the destinations and receive feedback in real time. The last stage of the post trip is sharing content. After tourists return from travelling, they tend to share information or write feedback through a

variety of social media platforms or travels' review sites such as TripAdvisor, Expedia, or Booking.com. or share their travel experiences on their personal account on social media platforms. Kang and Schuett (2013) found that in the post travel, perceived enjoyment (e.g., from digital influencers) increases the use of social media which directly influences the actual travel-experienced sharing behavior.

2.3 Millennials and Travel Decision Making

Millennials or Generation Y who were born in the years early 1980s to late 1990s or 2000 (DeVaney, 2015; Keeling, 2003; Visit Scotland, 2017; Stein, 2013; Siegel & Wang, 2018), Some scholars suggest the older millennial generation were born in 1981-1989 and the younger millennial generation were those who were born in 1990-1999 (Ahn, et at., 2019). On the other hand, Pew Research Center suggest that people born between 1981 and 1996 are considered Millennials. Hence, this study focuses on a millennial born between 1981-2000. This generational cohort segment is considered as digital natives since Internet and digital technologies rapidly evolved in this period which has been significantly advancing the new tools and online platforms for communication. This cohort has become one of the largest and most influential young population who represent an important economic force (Ahn et al., 2019). The characteristics of millennials are significantly different compared to the older generation as they were born and grew up before the Internet is widely used until the digital explosion on the Internet when large amount of data is in their hand. Sweeney (2006) pointed out that millennials are more selective as there are more choices for them to choose. People in this generation easily accept diversity (e.g., of race, lifestyle and custom) more than the older generations who were born before the year 1980 (Ahn et al., 2019). They are also more personalized and customized to meet their needs and interests since social media keeps them up to date regarding trends and things are changing over time. Generally speaking, millennials are described as technologically savvy and connected, and effective at multitasking; therefore, they tend to be flexible, open to change yet impatient at the same time (Sweeney, 2006; Young & Hinesly, 2012).

Table 2.1 Definitions and characteristics of millennials

Author's name	Birth year of millennials	Characteristics
DeVaney, 2015	1980-2000	Millennials are described as "digital natives". They are entitled, value work-life balance, impatient, multitasking, and team-oriented.
Keeling, 2003	1982-2003	Millennial is characterized as being protected by both their parents and society as they are becoming the largest workforce. They are optimistic, confident, team players, and ethnically diverse.
Stein, 2013	1980-2000	Millennials worldwide are more similar to one another thanks to globalization and social media. They have high self-esteem, optimistic, less civic engagement. They embrace the system, are pragmatic idealist, and life hackers.
Dimock, 2019	1981-1996	Millennials came in the era of the Internet explosion, and they entered the workforce facing the economic recession. They are seen to be the most racially and ethnically diverse adult generation.
Ahn et al., 2019	1981-2000	The millennial generation is more open to different cultures and foreign languages. They are hailed as digital natives. Generally, they are assertive, easily accept diversity, optimistic, and confident.
Khan, Fatma, Kumar, & Amoroso, 2021	1980-2000	This cohort has the most discretionary income offered to them. They are more likely to become loyal consumers if a brand engages them.

Table 2.1 (Continued)

Author's name	Birth year of millennials	Characteristics
Visit Scotland, 2017	Early 1980s to late 1990s' or early 2000s	Millennials were born during the period when computer were reaching mainstream. They are more connected, tech-savvy, and demanding than previous cohorts.
Hendriyani & Chan, 2018	1980-2000	The millennial generation is more connected and embrace digital technology in their daily life. They have higher self-esteem, assertiveness, and confidence
Siegel & Wang, 2018	1982-2000	Millennial is considered a digital native who is technologically savvy. They are more self-focused than other previous generations and social media serves as the way to show off their personal experience.
Sweeney, 2006	1984-1994	Millennials are "natives" in the new digital world who are more selective as there are more choices for them, preferring learning by doing. They are customized, multitasking, and impatient

Millennials tend to give the meaning to travel and prefer to gain more tourism experience, visit new destinations to acquire new knowledge, meet other (local) people, and to be in contact with nature (Cavagnaro et al., 2018). Young travelers have the ability to search information that is directly related to knowledge of new technologies. The young adults show diverse travel patterns, seek for more both domestic and international travel experience, spend more time on searching travel information on social media, and prefer to purchase travel products and services through online platforms (Ahn et al., 2019). When planning a trip, this generation is more likely to do travel research through social media or search engines before selecting ideal destinations in order to get authentic experience. Apart from family and friends'

recommendations or travel photos posted by relatives, the user-generated content (UGC) can have a great impact on the destination selection (i.e., independent traveler reviews on TripAdvisor or Booking.com) especially when for their first-time visit. Contents presented by professional travel bloggers or social media influencers who benefit from credibility in their community are also considered as an important source of travel information for the initial phase of travel planning process (Maria-Irina & Istudor, 2019). Furthermore, the results of Cholprasertsuk, Lawanwisut and Thongrin (2020)'s study regarding the influence of SMIs on tourists' behavior and travel motivation revealed that 92.3% of participants have been influenced by SMIs on travel decision making. In addition to exceptional experience, price is another important factor that affects travel decision making of the millennials. Before making a decision, the so-called millennials are likely to seek the opinions of other people who have experienced in specific destination or service, reducing the risk of making mistakes (Barton, Haywood, Jhunjhunwala, & Bhatia, 2013), rather than similar information from travel companies or travel websites (Maria-Irina & Istudor, 2019). Furthermore, the advancement of technology makes people lives much easier and decisions are likely to be made much quicker as well when it comes to plan a trip since the decline in the use of printed maps which is the result of the expanding adoption of GPS systems (Xiang, Magnini, & Fesenmaier, 2015), leading users to the right destinations with little chance of getting lost. Many unknown destinations are now being-known due to the rapid growing Internet-based platforms, attracting a number of travelers to visit a specific place.

In addition to information search, evaluation of alternatives, and travel final selection, millennials tend to share travel experiences on social media during and after a trip which makes them an active participant in social media. Young travelers allocate a greater share of their travel budget to accommodation, food, and shopping (Ahn et al., 2019). During the trip, many, especially Gen Y, has been creating and sharing content on social media as everyday routine (Du, Leichty, Santos, & Park, 2020). In Xi'an city of China, the 15-sec video of a young female dancer in Tang costume dancing like a roly-poly toy was shared on a short-form video platform TikTok, one of the most popular social media platforms among Chinese millennials, which suddenly went viral and attracted thousands of tourists to visit the destination. The similar videos were re-created and repost on TikTok by the tourists, becoming the cultural highlight of Xi'an (Du et al., 2020). The proportion of over 60 percent of millennial travelers see tourism

experience as a crucial part of their lives (Barton et al., 2013). It is not only about visiting a destination, but it means discovering new experiences and cultures. Cavagnaro et al. (2018) study indicated that the four components of travel meaning to the millennial generation are personal development, interpersonal exchange, entertainment, and relaxation.

However, since the rise of SMTIs has become one of the important information sources in tourism industry, the relationship that travel influencers create between them and their potential followers to expose the travel experiences and authentic opinions in a way that people can engage with and share the similar experiences of a destination or activity with the influencers thus lead to changes in tourists' behavior. The availability of information about destinations on social media presented by other users, particularly travel-related bloggers, is linked to tourists' travel motivation. In recent years, many travel marketers chose to cooperate with these endorsers more and more as the influencer marketing is proven to be more effective and become solid alternatives to direct tourists' decision when it comes to destination choice (Cholprasertsuk et al., 2020). The majority of marketers believe that influencer marketing offers the higher Return on Investment (ROI) even more than the traditional marketing tools such as email marketing, social ads, and SEM (Ying, 2020) as this new branch of marketing can improve destination's image and serve as a destination branding strategy (Glover, 2009). In fact, nearly three quarters of young generations in the U.S. follow influencers on social media (Locke, 2019) and people spend more time on consuming content from these social endorsers. This, thus, mean influencer marketing can influence tourists' travel decision making where tourists would choose to follow those who are reliable, attractive, and relevant to them.

Demographics and Travel Decision Making

The perceived credibility shows that endorsers have positive and significant effects on consumer's consumption (Ohanian, 1990). The younger generation is more likely to be attracted by social influencers who play an important role in marketing as a key opinion leader than the older generation who are more reliable on their own beliefs and experiences. The impact of para-social interaction, imaginary relationship with media performers starts from spending time on media consumption until audiences think they know the performer well (Reinikainen, Munnukka, Maity, & Luoma-aho, 2020), is slightly more predominant to the younger generation when it comes to making purchase decisions (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). A

scholar using in-depth interview method to investigate if social media influence tourist's destination choice revealed that people aged of 21- 40 are considered to be influence by social media while individuals whose ages above 41, which are the majority of participants, are likely to be much less influenced by social media when it comes to destination decisions since they would rather perceive themselves as experienced travelers and internet observers (Tham, Mair, & Croy, 2019). Young adults spend longer time on social media; however, the thing is not only about the platforms but the people they follow (Tham et al., 2019). A study of social media influencer: the impact of gender on emerging adults indicated that both male and female are likely to be influenced by social influencers when males are drawn by influencers who promote technology and gaming products while females are mostly influenced by beauty influencers. The important factors in the impact of SMIs' posts are entertainment and informativeness (Lokithasan, Simon, Jasmin, & Othman, 2019). Sun, Leung, and Bai (2021) examined the role of followers' genders in event SMI marketing effectiveness which showed that women are influenced more directly by the attitude of the followed influencers than men. Male followers are more likely to be indirectly impacted as a result of their perception on social media posts. Han and Chen (2021) show that their attitudes towards SMTIs are positively associated with their intention to visit the endorsed destinations regardless of educational level and income.

Hypothesis 1: Millennials' demographic characteristics, in terms of gender, age, income, education, and occupation, have an impact on attitudes towards influencer credibility.

In general, men and women has been acknowledged in different perceived information process and decision making which means it would be assumed that cognitive gender differences affect information's searcher preferences (Kim, Lehto, & Morrison, 2007). Meyers-Levy (1988) argued that males are likely to depend on their own opinions and were more likely to be driven by overall message themes, making a decision more quickly than females who rely on several information sources prior to decision-making and more engaged in detailed elaboration of the content (Kim et al., 2007). Females relatively consume social media for entertainment and passing time while males use the social network sites for opportunities to identify with close friends or group members who act similarly and for learning (Barker, 2009). Also, perceived usefulness is found to be the main impact on male when consuming content (Assaker, 2019).

When it comes to age differences, older adults tend to trust their own views and less likely to seek further information in their decision-making and adoption process. On the other hand, younger adults who are more result-oriented are prone to obtain message content posted by others with the degree of credibility (Cheung, Xiao, & Liu, 2014; Assaker, 2019). Lou and Yuan (2019) found that the participants who had an average age of 33 recognized the informative and entertaining value of the influencer-generated posts along with their credibility and these positively affect trust in branded content created by SMIs. A survey indicates that 50% of the 25-64 aged subscribers of YouTube travel content are interested in a broader range such as official channels, travel reviews/tips, travel tours, and travel vlogs while younger travelers aged 18-24 tend to be more interested in travel vlog which gives authentic feeling, getting aspired to travel (Crowel, Gribben, & Loo, 2014).

Hypothesis 2: Millennials' demographic characteristics, in terms of gender, age, income, education, and occupation, have an impact on quality of content created by social media travel influencer.

In terms of influencer marketing, a study demonstrated young female's attitude toward destination and advertisement is slightly more positive and have a higher level of visit intention than male (Xu & Pratt, 2018). Males prefer straightforward advertisement that allow them to obtain information of the products and made aware of the benefits and drawbacks of the products (Lokithasan et al., 2019). Male is found to be more impulsive decision maker compared to woman's but both genders prefer high quality of services and well-organized travel plan (Choudhary & Walia, 2021). Colliander and Erlandson (2015) found that disclosing sponsorship negatively affect the attitudes of perceived credibility of blogs and the bloggers. The manipulative and commercial conversation is claimed to be devalued and it can decrease credibility after a third-party revelation of sponsorship. Conversely, the result of Xu and Pratt (2018) revealed that there was no significant difference in terms of attitude toward advertisement endorsed by SMIs on destination between male and female, but females had slightly more positive attitude toward advertisement and higher level of visit intention than male respondents. On the other hand, Birknerová, Frankovský, Zbihlejová, & Parová (2018) indicated that women perceived advertising more intensely and has a higher expectation of advertising than men. Kay et al. (2020) examined the effect of macro and micro influencers and their disclosure on advertising

sponsorship on consumer evaluation of product demonstrated that the disclosure of sponsorship leads to significantly higher levels of purchase intention, especially for younger adults who average age of 18-35 years old. Moreover, Weismueller, Harrigan, Wang, & Soutar (2020) found that the participants whose age between 18-34 perceived that disclosure of advertising indirectly influence their purchase intention. In fact, there is no significant difference between the levels of advertising recognition. In other words, the use of explicit advertising disclosure language did not enhance the use of implicit sponsorship disclosure language and no disclosure as consumer has recognized instantly the sponsored posts regardless of the presence of sponsorship disclosure and the ages of consumer (Lee & Kim, 2020).

Hypothesis 3: Millennials' demographic characteristics, in terms of gender, age, income, education, and occupation, have an impact on attitudes towards advertising disclosure.

2.4 Word of Mouth in Tourism

WOM was defined as the act of exchanging information in face-to-face communication about specific products or services between those people who perceived the sources as noncommercial messages (Arndt, 1967; Litvin et al., 2008). Litvin et al. (2008) conceptualized the WOM model, suggesting that the motivated contribution from the opinion leader, who expose themselves to mass media sources is the independent variable, and two types of mediating variables are the relationship between the originator and the listener, resulting in the outcomes of WOM (Figure 2.3). The favorable WOM increases purchase intention; on the other hand, unfavorable WOM gives the opposite consequence (Litvin et al., 2008). Moreover, Jalilvand (2016) revealed that WOM has greater significant influence than mass media on destination image, tourists' attitude on destination and, consequently, travel intention. Choi, Kim, and Lee (2018) studied the major determinant for Emirati patients to visit South Korea and found that more than half of the patients mentioned that word-of-mouth was the main source of information and the primary determinant for choosing the specific hospital and the country as a medical destination. WOM is widely recognized as a common tactic that people seek for other advice as part of their decision-making which can conclude that WOM, both positive and negative, has the potential to influence customer buying decision (Sparks & Browning, 2011).

Figure 2.3 A conceptual model of word-of-mouth
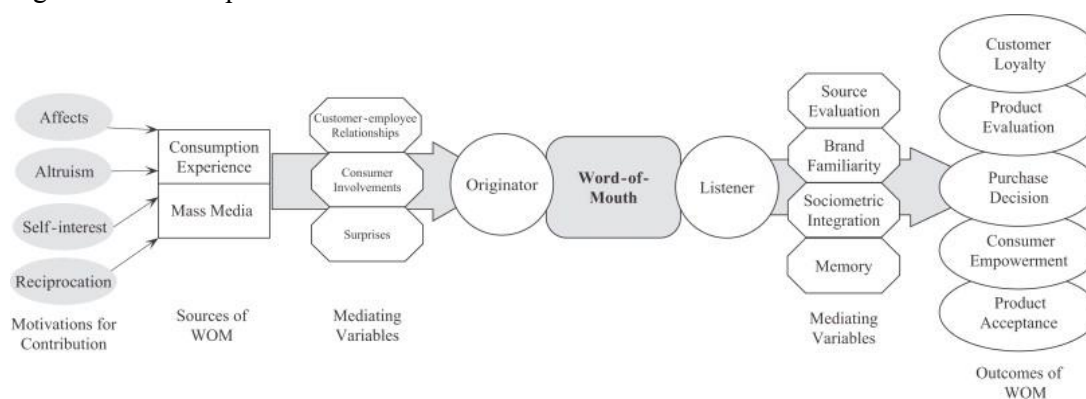
Source: Litvin et al. (2008)

Social media offer large opportunities to exchange information, opinion, experience, or products with others and word-of-mouth plays an important role in influencing consumer behavior. The higher the self-presence and the self-disclosure, the more people interact with each other and develop closer relationships even between strangers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The development of word-of-mouth from face-to-face into online which is so-called electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) has brought a significant impact on planning process, particularly in the tourism industry.

The emergence of electronic word-of-mouth became an essential strategy in marketing which has ability to reach large audiences within a short period of time (Abubakar & Ilkan, 2016) in order to generate more revenues, collaborating with social influencers, or opinion leaders, to promote the brands, products, or destinations. The important challenge for marketers in tourism industry is the rising importance of eWOM in influencing consumers' perceptions, intentions as well as choice of products in the concept of travel planning. The ubiquitous access to the Internet affects the changing travel planning behavior when many travelers now put off some decisions, they used to make prior to embarking the journey (e.g., restaurants or shopping centers) (Xiang et al., 2015). Abubakar et al. (2016) asserted that eWOM has a positive and significant impact on med-tourist's destination trust and travel intention for both male and female. The destination that is enhanced by opinion leaders and online reviewers who register their points of view about specific interest to the target audience can accelerate WOM about destination and as a consequence, form the destination image (Jalilvand, 2016). It can be said that the value of

electronic word-of-mouth and user-generated content obviously influence the audience's attitudes toward destinations and such communication is more influential than other sources because it is viewed as a reliable information and the spread of WOM travels much quicker on the social networks.

2.5 Social Media Influencers

Social media influencer represents a new-type of independent third-party endorser who shape audiences' attitudes and perceptions through social media such as blogs, tweets, and other social devices (Freberg et al., 2011). Unlike celebrities who are well-known via traditional media, Kay et al. (2020) define SMIs as individuals who have a big number of followings on social media which attract those followers to be engaged and have ability to use this popularity for marketing to reach certain products or services. Influencers define themselves as ordinary and approachable personalities which could make people feel similar or close to them as peers (Chapple & Cownie, 2017). Anyone can become a social media influencer if his/her opinion can affect individual decisions. A marketing agency explained that people tend to believe the information or content from influencers whom they admire or consider as an expert in specific knowledge (Hoos, 2019) such as healthy living, travel, lifestyle, fashion, food, or beauty. Many audiences are consistently motivated by an influencer who has authenticity and opinion leadership. Thus, those viewers who follow social media influencers are not limited because the content that they perceive from SMIs can be shared by these viewers which can result in the higher opportunity to reach new followers (Kay et al., 2020). The perceived content of a destination shared by video creator or travel influencers can shape destination image of a particular place. Du et al. (2020) had interviewed 12 participants who consume, produce, and share videos on TikTok and found that several participants are likely to visit the destinations after watching travel video on this social media platform which also impact the perceived image of a destinations.

There is discussion regarding classification of social media influencers. For example, Campbell and Farrell (2020) divided influencer into five distinct categories which are celebrity influencer, mega influencer, macro influencer, micro influencer, and nano influencer which is similar to AnyMind (2020), the influencer marketing platform, that categorizes

influencer into five levels which include Top-star, Macro, Micro, Nano, and End-user. It also shows the effectiveness of each type of influencers as well as the different strategy implemented (Figure 2.4). These classifications mostly are based on the number of followers.

Figure 2.3 Categories of Influencers
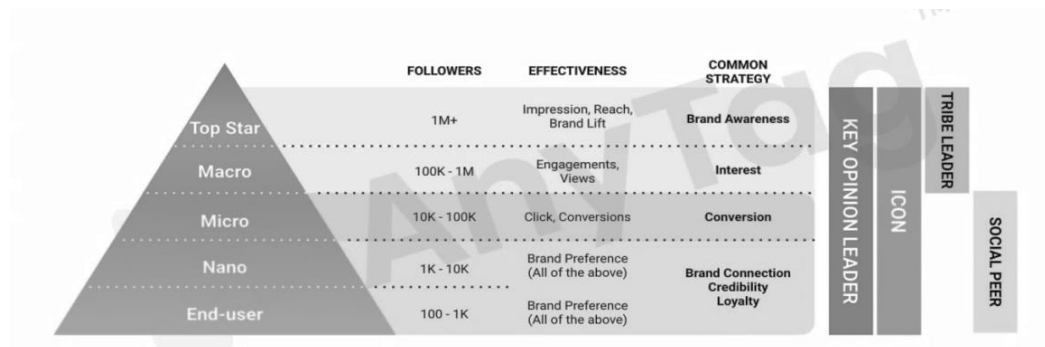
Source: AnyMind (2020)

Some suggest four levels of social media influencers; mega, macro, micro and nano (Influencermarketinghub, 2020; Butner, 2019) whereas others suggested three levels; mega, macro and micro (Porteous, 2018; Neil, 2018). The current study will focus on a three-level classification which are mega, macro and micro influencers since this study will focus only on Thai millennials (Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.4 Types of social media influencers
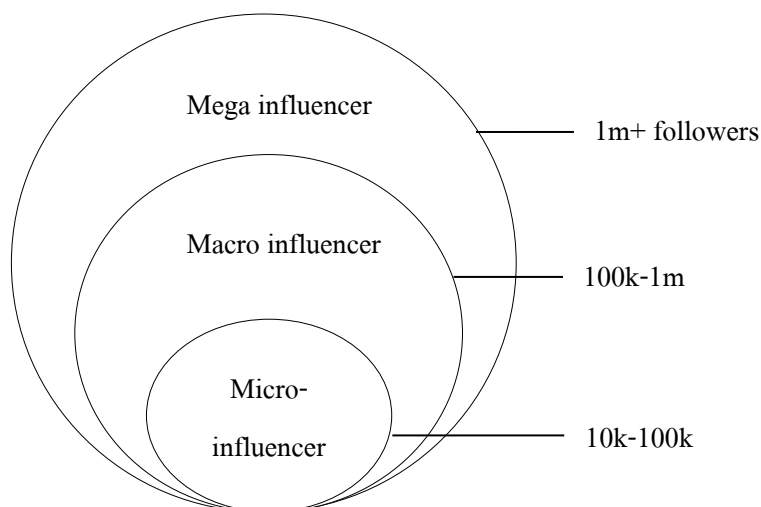
Source: Porteous (2018), Neil (2018), Campbell and Farrell (2020)

2.5.1 Mega Influencer

Mega influencer is any individual who has more than 1 million followers on at least one platform. These influencers include celebrities, public figures, artists or other people who became famous online by expressing their talent and opinion to audiences (Neil, 2018) and gaining credibility when those are perceived as an opinion leader. One example of Thai travel influencer is I Roam Alone, a normal person who loves to solo-travel, share her experiences on social media and later became one of the most famous female-solo travel blogger and influencer on Facebook with more than 3.8 million followers, attracting many brands associated with her work such as Sophera, TMB, Samsung etc. Her channel of followers keeps growing even though some of her videos are sponsored.

2.5.2 Macro Influencer

Macro influencers differ from mega influencers in terms of the number of followers and their post cost, with followers numbering between 100,000 and 1 million. Macro influencers achieve a stronger engagement compared to mega influencers as they are dominant in specific domains (e.g., travel, food, beauty) and they often inspire their viewers to be like them (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Macro influencers are considered to bring a higher awareness and create a huge social conversation which plays an important role in decision making (Tellscore, 2019).

2.5.3 Micro Influencer

Micro influencers are smaller macro influencers in both scale and scope. With the number of followers counts between 10,000 and 100,000, micro influencers mostly focus on niche audiences who can feel that they have closer relationships with the influencers, appealing individual interest in certain areas. Using micro influencers in promoting engagement is highly effective due to the ability to reach the target audience and high conversion (e.g., click, subscribe, sign up, download and purchase) (Tellscore, 2018). Many niche marketers usually employ micro influencers so that interaction with customers is more intertwined than mega or macro influencers (Isyanto, Sapitri, & Sinaga, 2020)

2.6 Social Media Travel Influencers

2.6.1 Definition

In the tourism industry, social media travel influencers (SMTIs) are endorsers who have the ability to influence others' decision on travelling, visiting destinations to promote locations as well as specific service sectors, and producing travel content (Sid, 2020; Stoldt et al., 2019). These influencers mostly have a passion to travel and share travel experiences on their social platform to inspire their audiences who perceive the content as reliable and interesting. Travel influencers are not only about sharing destinations and judging the quality of airlines, restaurants, hotels, but also ability to convey the contents which are able to touch audiences' interest which is another skill that travel influencers must acquire. Chris Burkard, for example, is a travel photographer who has 3.6 million followers on his Instagram account whose portrayed photos bring audiences closer to nature, showing the story-telling videos and photos in different angles and inspiring people to travel. The quality of message or content is also vital to the field as it represents influencer's authenticity and creativeness.

Figure 2.5 Chris Burkard's Instagram profile
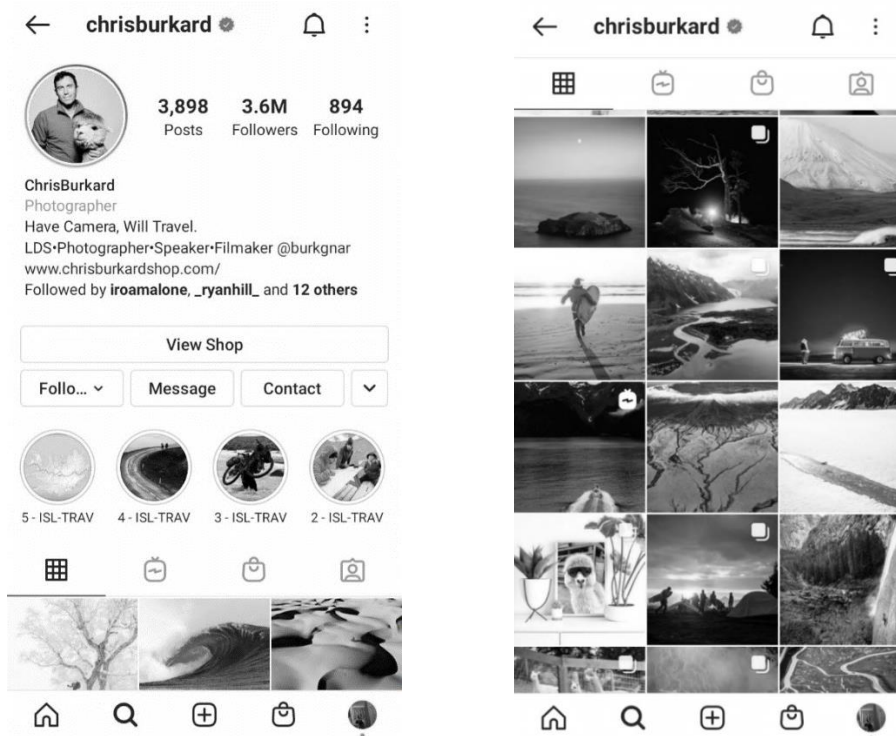
2.6.2 Influencer Credibility

The credibility is an important factor for communicators who can affect the receiver's acceptance of a message in its persuasiveness (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Source credibility is the extent to which audience perceive a communicator's positive characteristics as a reliable source (Ohanian, 1990). Hovland, Janis, & Kelly (1953) proposed two dimensions of source credibility which consist of expertise and trustworthiness. A high source in expertise appears to lead to positive attitudes toward the endorser and advertisement (Braunsberger, 1996). McGuire (1985) proposed a component of the source credibility: attractiveness, explaining that the effectiveness of a message depends on an individual's familiarity, likability, similarity, and attractiveness. Pornpitakpan (2004), who reviewed the empirical evidence of the effect of credibility of the message source on persuasion, indicated that in terms of attitude toward the advertisement, perceived attractiveness of the endorser was more important than expertise and trustworthiness. Trustworthiness, attractiveness, and perceived similarity positively influence their followers' trust in their branded posts (Lou & Yuan, 2019) and the trustworthiness and similarity dimensions (e.g., demographics, values or cultural background) are the key sources of peer-endorser credibility that strongly influenced advertising effectiveness (Munnukka, Uusitalo, & Toivonen, 2016; Morimoto & La Ferle, 2008). Furthermore, in terms of tourism context, the scholars suggest that people, especially young generation, prefer to seek travel information from tourism influencers who are competent and experienced in certain inclusive information in order to avoid possible risks when travelling (Cholprasertsuk et al., 2020). Those who are perceived to be attractive are also considered to be similar to the consumer as well as normal looking (Munnukka et al., 2016). Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018) who studied source credibility of micro-celebrity on social media proposed new source credibility dimensions in terms of online context based on previous source credibility model who has developed a scale for measuring celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness, resulting in a high reliability and validity (Ohanian, 1990), and millennial respondents' discussion from the interview. Figure 2.5 shows four main online source credibility dimensions adapted from various research, including attractiveness, trustworthiness, competence, and similarity.

Table 2.3 Online source credibility dimensions

Attractiveness	Trustworthiness	Competence	Similarity
- Attractive	*- Dependable*	*- Experienced*	*- Easily identify*
- Elegant	*- Reliable*	*- Knowledgeable*	*- Similar lifestyle*
- Unique	*- Engaging with the*	*- Relevant to the*	*- Have a lot of things*
- Positive	*users*	*product*	*in common with*
- Good sense of humor	*- Authentic*	*- Intelligent*	*audience*
- Trendy	*- Consistent*	*- High fellowship*	*- Relevant to*
- Charismatic	*- Informative*	*- Competent*	*consumer*
	- Accurate		
	- Transparency		

Source: Ohanian (1990), Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018), Munnukka et al. (2016), and

Morimoto and La Ferle (2008)

Attractiveness: refers to the physical attractiveness, likeability, or familiarity of a communicator. It is considered to be seen in relation to the concept of certain groups with attractive appearance and personality. A widely accepted result revealed that gender and physical attractiveness of a person in the advertisement seem to influence consumer's perception of the commercial and the promoted product (Baker & Churchill, 1997). The more attractive the individual is, the more possibility others want to imitate him or her.

Trustworthiness: refers to the audiences' perception that consider speakers as sincere or truthful. An individual who is perceived as highly trustworthy are more influential than those who has a low level of trustworthiness. The degree to which audience perceive the dependable source is associated with trust. Since influencers credibility has been cultivated, influencers' perceived trustworthiness and attractiveness can affect their followers' trust in their content, even it is sponsored (Lou & Yuan, 2019). Chatzigeorgiou (2017) found that the personality of SMIs, especially those who have a great number of followers, and the authenticity of the activities strongly influence the trust of the millennials when it comes to making a decision to visit a rural area.

Competence: referred to as expertise. It is the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be competent in specific knowledge, ability, experience and skills. In the new model, 'Expertise' was replaced by 'Competence' since the people do not expect that micro-celebrities need to be experts with certain qualifications; on the other hand, they need to reach a level of competence when communicating with others (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2018). The competence of travel influencers can help them to be outstanding when it comes to forming the impression of the audience. For example, a travel vlogger can share his or her useful experiences and advice on travelling assumed to be a good role model for others to follow when making a travel decision (Le & Hancer, 2021).

Similarity: refers to characteristics of peer endorsers in terms of demographic and ideological aspects such as race, gender, lifestyle or cultural background (Munnukka et al., 2016). It is another important factor in making social media influencers more influential. When audiences are perceived as more similar to influencers they follow, assuming to be "more like us", they would have a higher likelihood of interacting with fans and be more trustworthy (Jin, Muqaddam, & Ryu, 2019). A finding indicates that the perceived congruence between SMIs and destinations led to a greater chance on making a decision to visit a destination (Xu & Pratt, 2018).

Hypothesis 4: Influencer credibility has an impact on travel decision-making process.

2.6.3 Quality of Content

In globalized world, social media have been used as an information search tool. Travelers will inevitably apply these tools as they are search-engine friendly. Contents are essential when creator wants to communicate and influence audiences' attention. In terms of tourism context, for marketers, travel content is the crucial method of attracting tourists to an endorsed destinations or activities (Chen et al., 2014) because they would prefer to know the travel-related information whether in the forms of photos, videos or recommendations before making the final decision. Consumers trust more websites with reviews than professional guides or travel agencies. Therefore, SMTIs who can produce more creative and interesting content will highly gain attentions not only from their potential followers but also travel marketers.

Content quality in tourism can be defined as the usefulness of information about travel product attributes in order to help tourists measure the worthiness of the product (Chen et al., 2014). Posting material that SMIs view as useful to their audience also indicates ethic of authenticity in content creation (Wellman et al., 2020). In addition to usefulness, the attribute of accuracy, enjoyment, timeliness, relevance, and consistency are the significant measures of travel content creation (Watts, Shankaranarayanan, & Even, 2009; Chen et al., 2014). Gretzel, Yoo, and Purifoy (2007) found that people tend to read tourist's comments such as from tripadvisor.com and travel blogs, the most popular online activity; because it is user-friendly, authentic, and easy to understand which means they trust travel information from these social networks as consumers now can access more information of providers than providers have information about consumers (Akehurst, 2008). People are likely to search information through various sources and follow those who create content that they find informative. Followers tend to value SMIs' content and visit the suggested websites (Guerreiro, Viegas, & Guerreiro, 2019). Blogs or posts on social media might less trustworthy than traditional word-of-mouth. However, it needs to be interesting and entertaining, updating fresh content, and providing useful information; otherwise, they will become faded or worse than that, unpleasant feedbacks (Akehurst, 2008). Nadanyiova, Gajanova, Majerova, & Lizbetinova (2020) discovered the main reasons that people follow influencers are interesting and attractive content, a source of inspiration, sympathy, relaxation and fun, and travel experiences. One of the findings regarding content and engagement showed that photos with faces regardless of the number of faces, their gender or age, can increase engagements in terms of the number of likes and comments (Bakhshi, Shamma, & Gilbert, 2014). The travel video content that has gone viral are mostly considered to be engaging, fun and, at times, touching, resulting shares and subscribers or followers gained (Crowel et al., 2014). The popularity implies the quality and the interestingness of the information or content which can influence the images of travel-related products or services which are perceived by potential tourists such as millennials who trust SMTIs reviews rather than professional service providers (Yu, Carlsson, & Zou, 2014). These influencers who created travel posts are WOM senders who not only can influence audience's engagement but also consumers' decision making and in consequence product sales (Yu et al., 2014).

Hypothesis 5: Quality of content has an impact on travel decision-making process.

2.6.4 Advertising Disclosure

As travel influencers become dependent on sponsored content as a source of income, their decision about which brands to collaborate with are guided by the desire to produce content that will resonate with their audience and preserve their credibility (Wellman et al., 2020). Dhanesh and Duthler (2019) who studied effects of followers' awareness of paid endorsement by social media influencers on follower's ad recognition, attitudinal and behavioral outcomes revealed that awareness of paid endorsement is positively associated with ad recognition meaning that when respondents, the average age was 20 years old, are aware of paid endorsement, they are more likely to trust and satisfied with the relationship. Similarly, Kay et al. (2020) also demonstrate disclosure of sponsorship leads to significantly higher levels of purchase intentions especially disclosure by micro-influencers.

Audiences perceived advertising from paid content that they are keen on the activities presented by influencers will tend to follow influencers in that field and followers use the information to help them in their decision-making, and not to decrease their relationship with influencers (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019). A report by Nielson study has revealed that millennials continue to watch the content on social media even there are commercial breaks as the content is free (Nielson, 2017).

Childers, Lemon, and Hoy (2018) interviewed advertising professionals' perspective regarding using SMIs as a brand advocate to promote their products or services which is largely impactful in decision making indicated that "Everyone knows it's paid". This means that the reason that consumer made a conscious decision to follow the influencers is because they find them credible and relatable who offer the followers the higher level of engagement and parasocial relationship (Childers et al., 2018). Evans, Phua, Lim, and Jun (2017) indicated that the word "Paid Ad" used by online influencers increases consumers' ad recognition which mean they will take greater notice of the message and report higher product knowledge. Moreover, some people might find the sponsored content more attractive as it enables them to know new more places to travel (e.g., partnership with hotel); however, some advertisements could seem displeasing and make audiences feel annoying. It can be said that it would depend on how

influencers convey the idea of content with sponsorship in a proper and interesting way (Cholprasertsuk et al., 2020). Therefore, the disclosure of a social media influencer's sponsorship potentially creates advertising recognition, which enhance audiences understanding of and receptiveness to what is being communicated and consumer perceive social media influencers as more honest and trustworthy when their posts clearly disclose sponsorship (Kay et al., 2020).

Hypothesis 6: Advertising disclosure has an impact on travel decision-making process.

2.7 Travel Social Media Influencers (SMTIs) in Thailand

In Thailand, the term influencer gets more widely used today, particularly in the context of social media. Travel influencers has become authentic source of information when it comes to travel planning or selection. These influencers play an important role influencing and inspiring people to explore off the beaten track. Thai people, especially young generation, has a positive attitude towards digital culture since they believe that using the appropriate tools or platforms will undertake the faster and better actions (Pimpiset, 2020). According to Cholprasertsuk et al. (2020), the most preferred types of content that Thai audiences would like to see are videos, photos, and posts including texts and visual aids which means it is crucial for travelers to observe the scenario through those videos and photos from travel influencers before making a travel decision and they are likely to trust those who are credible and experienced. A survey regarding the travel behavior of Thai tourists revealed that the main factors when choosing a destination by the tourists are the beauty of nature, the variety of attractions in the area and the convenience of transportation (TAT's Tourism Intelligence Division, 2018). With the total population of 70 million people in Thailand, about 50 million use Facebook which rank first among other social media platforms. Table 1.2 shows the examples of each type of travel influencers in Thailand based on their Facebook account.

Table 2.2 Travel influencers in Thailand

SMTI	No. of followers	Specialized field	Type of content
Mega SMTIs			
1. I Roam Alone	4.2m	Nature/Culture/Food	Photos and vlog videos
2. แบกกล้องเที่ยว (Carry a camera and travel)	1.9m	Nature/Review Hotel/Homestay/ Resort/Camping	Photos
3. Sneak out หนีเที่ยว	2.9m	Nature/Review Homestay/Café/ Camping	Photos and videos
4. อาสา พาไปหลง (Asapapailong)	1.7m	Nature/Food/Review Hotel/Homestay/ Adventure	Photos and videos
5. กอล์ฟมาเยือน (Golf was here)	1.4m	Photographer/Nature/ Culture/Café/Photography and video-shooting techniques	Videos
Macro SMTIs			
1. Go Went Go	902k	Nature/Review Homestay/Camping/ Adventure	Photos and vlog videos
2. Backpacker Ball	919k	Solo adventure/Nature/ Backpacker/Culture/Long trip	Photos and videos
3. Pigkaploy	620k	Nature/Adventure/ Review Homestay/ Camping	Photos and videos
4.Couple Travel	356k	Review Hotel/Resort/Café/ Restaurant	Photos

Table 2.2 (Continued)

SMTI	No. of followers	Specialized field	Type of content
5. Go Rough	100k	Adventure/Nature/ Review Hotel/Homestay	Photos and short videos
Micro SMTIs			
1. เที่ยวแล้วยัง (Travel yet?)	93k	Nature/Camping	Photos
2. Nuan story	63k	Nature/Culture/Arts	Photos
3.Bank's Journey	92k	Nature/Adventure/ Camping	Photos and videos
4. The Walker	79k	Nature/Adventure/ Camping	Photos and videos
5.The Snap Thailand	26k	Nature/Hotel/Café/ Tour Package	Photos and videos

Source: Data collected on February 15, 2021

In tourism industry, influencer marketing has become an important marketing tool for promoting the destinations or activities. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) in partnership with many companies such as Thai Smile Airways, Air Asia, Cannon, and dtac held "Amazing Thai Tay Competition 2020" to promote domestic tourism by inviting young travel bloggers or influencers to take part in the competition (Bangkok Post, 2020). The target market was millennials because they are considered to be digital natives who seek for experiences and are likely to share photos or videos through social media and they also have spending capability. The popular destinations that the tourists tend to enjoy are nature travel (e.g., beaches, mountains or waterfalls) while the activities mostly done by these travelers are photography, sightseeing and food tasting (Lerspipatthananon, 2018). Thus, most SMTIs would create the content concerning nature and local food, describing the beautiful scenario and the atmosphere of the visited destination, the taste of local food or even trip planning. Furthermore, showing around the

accommodations and the facilities would also be added in the content which is one of the main factors that tourists are seeking for when they are planning a trip.

2.8 The Effectiveness of Influencer Marketing

Many tourism marketers now pay more attention to online influencers as the potential endorsers and influencer marketing seems to be one of the cost-efficient and effective marketing tools as it offers high value to their ability to deliver targeted message and it guarantees a wide reach to those highly engaged audiences (Ong & Ito, 2019). Influencer marketing is defined as the use of social media influencers, celebrity or non-celebrity, with many followers on their social media accounts to promote their products or services employed by marketers and brands to reach their target consumers (Martínez-López, Anaya-Sánchez, Fernández Giordano, & Lopez-Lopez, 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Gretzel, 2017).

A study by Tomoson, influencer marketplace, revealed that influencer marketing was rated as the fast-growing online customer-acquisition channel which surpassed organic search, paid search, and email marketing (Smart Insights, 2018). Furthermore, a survey from Mediakix (2019), an influencer marketing agency, found that almost half of marketers said they find influencer marketing effective and further 35% agreed that it is very effective because the content shared across social media by their potential audiences will help the marketers achieve more reach. The ROI is equivalent or even more effective than other marketing tactics and it can reduce the cost of reaching target audience and generate dominant benefits for brands from the message being shared (Childers et al., 2018). In tourism context, the campaign promoted by SMIs can cause an attitude change on destination image which results in increasing consumers' travel intention to the destination and increasing intention to WOM which means the more positive experiences of the campaign, the more favorable attitude toward destination image they tend to have (Ong & Ito, 2019). Since most of influencers independently create their content, they are the ones who manage the brand's message how to convey it in their own way to be as authentic as possible and to reach the target audiences but they also need to keep the brands' reputation which means the brand must take into account when choosing influencers as well (Mathew, 2018). When it comes to calculate the return of investment of influencer campaign, marketers usually

apply QR codes, promotional coupons, and trackable links to be able to measure influencer's performance and connect their activities on product purchased (Gretzel, 2017).

Key of indicators to measure influencer's performance usually include audience reach, engagement, impression, content quality, brand mention and conversion e.g., traffic to brand's website or pages, follower expansion on brand's channels, email signups, or increased sales (Gretzel, 2017). Engagement is the most often measured metrics in influencer marketing which is considered as a better indicator of effectiveness than the number of his or her audience on their social media whether views, the number of likes, comments, or shares. The campaign goals that marketers want to achieve are brand awareness, conversion and reaching new audiences (Mediakix, 2019). In addition to the size of engagement, the Influencer Marketing Manifesto showed that more than 70% of followers says the reason that they remain engaged with the influencer is because of influencer's authenticity (Krasniak, 2016). However, it is noted that most sponsored content will almost always have lower engagement rates than on organic posts.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter mainly provides details about the research approach, the population and sample group, research instrument, the method of data collection, the quantitative and qualitative method. For the quantitative approach, questionnaire survey was used to gather information and identify how importance of Thai SMTIs on influencing Thai millennials' travel decision making, and their attitudes towards the travel influencers. For qualitative approach, semi-structured interview was used to investigate in-depth information on the side of SMTIs whether how they organize their content to attract audiences and sponsors; also, how those sponsors, who collaborate with SMTIs. Furthermore, the description of the variables, pre-test questionnaires, reliability test, and data analysis are explained in this research.

3.2 Research Population

The target population of the study consisted of two different groups.

First target group was Thai millennials or Gen Y who was born in the year early 1980s to the late 1990s or 2000 as this cohort is seen as a digital native who grew up during the advancement of technology. These group must have done at least one domestic trip in 2019 or before Covid-19 pandemic happened (excluding business travel) and followed at least one SMTIs on any social media platforms. The reason that the study focused on this generation was because they represent an important economic force as they have become one of the largest and most influential young population.

Second group was the social media travel influencers who have different number range of followers on their social media channel, focusing on Facebook as it has been ranked first among other platforms used by Thai people. The study focused on Thai SMTIs, who mainly created travel-related content, as the main target tourist group were Thai millennials. Due to SMTIs are categorized into three types based on the number of followers which are mega, macro, and micro, researcher interviewed each of categories in order to find if there were any

possible differences in terms of practices and strategies that they organized the content and the approach of marketing when they were employed by marketers.

3.3 Sampling Method and Sample Size

3.3.1 Sample group of Thai millennials

The sampling method of the study was purposive sampling. The target sample of Thai millennials, who have travelled in 2019 or before Covid-19 pandemic, and followed SMTIs, were selected to make sure that they could answer the purpose of the research. The sample size was based on Taro Yamane's with 95% of confidence level. The number of populations aged 20-39 were 18,968,267 people (The World Bank, 2020). However, the number of millennials who travel and follow the influencers was unsure as there is no data. The target sampling size of the study was the total number of 400 respondents. The questionnaires were distributed through online platforms and face-to-face distribution. Researcher created online survey and distributed to the target aged group on travel-related private groups on social media channels and face-to-face distribution at tourist attractions such as shopping malls, viewpoints, beaches, and markets.

The following formula by Taro Yamane was used to calculate the sample size:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

n = the sample size

N = the population size of Thai millennials

e = the acceptable error at 0.05

$$n = \frac{18,968,267}{1 + 18,968,267(0.05)^2}$$

n = 399.99

3.3.2 Sample group of in-depth interviews

The purposive sampling was applied in this group selected based on the characteristics of the interviewees in order to answer the objectives of the study on practices and strategies that SMTIs apply to organize their content, how they interact with the potential followers and sponsors as it can influence tourist's travel decision-making process. The advantage

of in-depth interview was that interviewer had an opportunity to as follow-up questions or probed for additional information to understand their attitudes and motivations. The SMTIs that researcher selected were those as identify in table 1.2 from the literature review.

3.4 Research Instruments

This research was a kind of exploratory research which applied mixed approach, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The reason of applying mixed methods was to compare the findings between Thai millennials (demand side) and the travel influencers (supply side) whether they had some similarities or differences in terms of the perception on travel content created by SMTIs and the understanding of the target audience if their needs are met. Also, using mixed methods were not only for triangulations, but also to get more insights on the practice in organizing travel content for both sponsored and non-sponsored content.

Quantitative approach: Questionnaires is the most fundamental tool designed to ask questions to a sample, using various variables to collect data from Thai millennials who follow at least one travel social media influencer in order to understand the attitudes towards the influencers and how importance of the influencers on influencing them to travel to a specific location in Thailand. Most of the measures used in this research were adapted from the literature. Influencer credibility was reviewed from Ohanian (1990), Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018), Reinikainen et al. (2020), and Munnukka et al. (2016). Travel decision journey in three stages was adapted from Kang and Schuett (2013) Guerreiro et al. (2019), and Dwityas and Briandana (2017). The statement in the questionnaire regarding advertising disclosure which was about the awareness of paid sponsorship presented content by the influencers was reviewed from Dhanesh and Duthler (2019), and Kay et al (2020). The Questionnaire in 5-point Likert scales were developed and general information of the respondent were asked for further analysis. It was divided into six parts in total, including open-ended questions as follows (Appendix A and C):

Part 1: Personal information: Gender, age, marital status, monthly income before Covid-19, educational level, career, the number of frequencies that they travel in Thailand per year, the information sources when planning a trip, the most influential person when making a travel decision, the social media platforms that they use as information search, name SMTIs that

they rely on when making a travel decision, and the destination they have been suggested by SMTIs

Part 2: Credibility of social media travel influencer (SMTIs). There are four dimensions of influencer credibility: Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, Competence, and Similarity

Part 3: Quality of content created by SMTIs

Part 4: Advertising disclosure towards SMTIs

Part 5: Travel decision-making process when consuming SMTIs' content: Pre-trip, during trip, and post trip

Qualitative approach: Phone and online interview were conducted to get the insight information from social media travel influencers, focusing on Thai nationality as the target informants were Thai millennials who travel in Thailand. The interview questions were prepared in advance which was adapted from literature review and designed to relate to the conceptual framework. A semi-structured interview was used as questions were planned and all informants were asked the same questions to compare and analyze the strategies that they used to organize the content and collaborated with sponsors (Appendix B and D). The interview questions included:

1) Questions related to the tourist behavior of social media travel influencer and social media behavior when searching information, content posted photos/videos on their account, and characteristics of SMTIs.

2) The important attributes that define quality of content

3) The practices and strategies that they organize their content and interact with potential followers

4) The interactions of SMTIs when collaborating with sponsors and organizing of sponsored posts

5) The impact of Covid-19 on travel-related social media postings

3.5 Reliability and Validity

Validity explains how researchers measure the collected data accurately and cover the area of investigation (Taherdoost, 2016). To test validity, both the questionnaire and

interview questions were sent to professors in related field to give feedbacks and further suggestions which had been revised accordingly before distributing to the respondents.

Index of Item – Objective Congruence (IOC) was the procedure used for evaluating content validity. It was applied based on the score range from -1 to +1.

Congruent = +1

Questionable = 0

Incongruent = -1

Three experts in the related field were asked to review the survey and questions for interviews. In general, the accepted value is 0.75 (Turner & Carlson, 2003). The items that scored at minimum of 0.75 were reserved. On the contrary, the items that scored lower than 0.75 were revised.

Reliability is the measurement method to suggest that the scale of the questionnaires is reliable, referring to the consistency in each part of the instrument (Taherdoost, 2016). Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is one of the most commonly used in testing reliability for Likert-scale instrument. The total of 40 sample questionnaires were collected and used for reliability test. George and Mallery (2003) demonstrated the value of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient as the following rules: ≥ 0.9 = Excellent, ≥ 0.8 = Good, ≥ 0.7 = Acceptable, ≥ 0.6 = Questionable, ≥ 0.5 = Poor, and ≤ 0.5 = Unacceptable. Therefore, it should be noted that the Coefficient Cronbach's Alpha at 0.7 is reasonable and reliable. The table 3.1 shows all variable scored above .70 which indicates that the statements are highly reliable.

Table 3.1 Reliability Statistics

Variables	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Influencer Credibility	13	0.91
Quality of content	5	0.93
Advertising Disclosure	6	0.84
Travel Decision-Making Process	15	0.92

This study also received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. To recruit subjects, two authorities provided reviews and approved all the research activities involving human participants.

3.6 Data Collection

The quantitative method consisted of three ways to collect the data. It was conducted from September to October 2021. The questionnaires translated from English into Thai were distributed to Thai millennials through face-to-face approach and online platforms. The actual sample size was 436 respondents. In the questionnaire, the instruction and key terms such as "millennials", "social media travel influencers" were informed in the first page of the questionnaire. Before Covid-19 or January 2020, the respondents must have traveled at least once and follow at least one social media travel influencer. The distribution was done face to face, and the locations selected were tourist destinations in Thailand, such as Promthep Cape and Thalang Road in Phuket as there were hundreds of tourists visit these places each day. The respondents were asked for permission and were informed about the purpose of the research before distribution. Approximately 70 of the questionnaires were distributed but 67 were usable. Due to the third wave of covid-19 outbreak when happened in the beginning of April, online distribution was deployed in order to continue collecting data, researcher used social media platforms (e.g., tourism-related Facebook groups, Line, Twitter, and Instagram) to distribute the online questionnaire. The total number was 369 respondents. Thus, the data were collected using web-based survey by Google Form as it indicated the overall results of each part in the form of charts and could download Excel sheet to see the results in detail for further analysis. For Facebook platforms, researcher posted travel-related photos with interesting caption and attached the hyperlink in the posts, asking members in the group to complete the questionnaire. Researcher also posted on twitter and put travel-related hashtag such as #travelthailand #hotels, #beachvibes, #DaysinChiangmai, and #Phuketbeach, etc. The respondents from Line and Instagram were researcher's colleagues and acquaintances.

The qualitative method was conducted by online interview via communication program, and phone interview with social media travel influencers, focusing on Thai influencers. All influencers had their own Facebook page account where email address was shown on the

profile page for work contact. Therefore, researcher contact the influencers mostly through email address and for those who did not show their email address, Facebook Messenger was another option that was used to approach them. More than 50 letters were sent to influencers but 21 agreed to be interviewed. Researcher created the letter asking for permission to interview and then revised before being sent. The informants were assured that their answers would be kept in confidentiality and used for the purposes of academic research only. After the requests were accepted, appointments were set up and the interviews were conducted primarily over the phone, Google Meet and the Line call application. The influencers were also asked if they consented to their voice being recorded throughout the session which took approximately 30-45 minutes. Researcher had observed the number of followers and the start date of their Facebook pages.

Table 3.2 Criteria of sampling

Quantitative Approach (Millennials)	Qualitative Approach (SMTIs)
Birth year: 1981-2000	Thai nationality
Domestic travel experience in 2019	Specialized in tourism-related field
Use social media	Have at least one social media account
Follow at least one Thai SMTI	Obtain more than 10,000 followers

3.7 Data Analysis

The questionnaires and online interviews that were collected from the target respondents used the system called The Statistical Package for Social and Science (IBM SPSS Statistics program) to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the frequencies of variables, percentage, mean and standard deviation of the demographic characteristics, tourist behavior particularly focusing on the influence of social media travel influencers. The comparison between two group such as gender used t-test to see the difference on the level of attitude towards social media travel influencer and the factors influencing them to travel. The same test was done to compare the perception on quality of content, advertising disclosure and travel decision-making process. Multiple Regression analysis was also used in the research to estimate the relationships between one dependent variable and two or more independent variables. Content analysis was used to compare the difference of more than two group for open-ended questions

and to determine the qualitative data of the interviews, coding data into code categories for analysis.

The data analysis was based on the interval level through both the questionnaires and in-depth online interview which was calculated as follows:

$$\text{The interval level} = \frac{(Max-Min)}{n} = \frac{(5-1)}{5} = 0.80$$

Therefore, the mean scores of the respondents' opinion towards the level of agreement of travel decision-making process is as follows: Strongly Agree (Mean Score = 4.21-5.00); Agree (3.41-4.20); Neutral (2.61-3.40); Disagree (1.81-2.60); and Strongly disagree (1.00-1.80).

3.8 Overall Design of Research

Table 3.3 Overall design of research

Subject	Content	
	Quantitative method	**Qualitative method**
Population	Thai Millennials aged 20-39: 18,968,267 people (The World Bank, 2020).	Thai social media travel influencers, including travel bloggers (unknown size)
Sampling method	Purposive sampling	Purposive sampling
Target sample size	400 respondents	Until data saturation
Actual sample size	436 respondents	21 informants
Research instrument	Questionnaire	Online or phone semi-structured interview
Data collection method	Questionnaire distribution via face-to-face approach and social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Line	Contact the influencers via email, Facebook Messenger Google Meet and Line
Data analysis	Descriptive statistics, One-way ANOVA, t-test, Multiple Regression	Content analysis

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the results of quantitative and qualitative data using the research methodology to analyze the data collected from the target respondents. The questionnaire distribution included face-to-face approach and online approach using web-based survey with Google form. Approximately 70 questionnaires were distributed through face-to-face and there were 67 usable questionnaires while the other 369 usable questionnaires were collected through online platforms. The collected data was analyzed to find the results of the descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentage, mean, and standard deviation), independent sample t-test, ANOVA analysis, and regression. In addition, qualitative data which collected from 21 in-depth interviews were analyzed by content analysis.

4.2 Quantitative Results

4.1.1 Results of demographic characteristics of the respondents

Table 4.1 shows the demographic information of the respondents. The majority of the respondents were female at 265 (60.8%) and 171 (39.2%) were male. The age range between 27-30 and 23-26 were the majority of the respondents at 131 (30.1%) and 102 (23.4%) respectively. 266 (61.0%) of them were single and 104 (23.9%) respondents were married. Most of the respondents' average salary per month before Covid-19 pandemic was 20,001-40,000 Baht which occupied 190 (43.6%), then followed by less than 20,000 Baht at 146 people (36.5%). Almost 80 percent of the respondents (309, 77.3%) held bachelor's degree and followed by master's degree at 56 (14.0%). Almost half of the respondents work in private companies with 186 (46.5%), followed by government officers and students occupied 81 (20.3%) and 68 (17.0%) respectively.

Table 4.1 Demographic profiles of the respondents

Demographic Profiles		Frequency (n=436)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	265	60.8
	Male	171	39.2
Age	20-22	47	10.8
	23-26	102	23.4
	27-30	131	30.1
	31-35	76	17.4
	36-40	80	18.3
Marital Status	Single	266	61.0
	Married	104	23.9
	In Relationship	63	14.4
	Divorced	3	0.7
Monthly Income (Before Covid-19)	Less than 20,000 Baht	136	31.2
	20,001-40,000 Baht	190	43.6
	40,001-60,000 Baht	70	16.1
	60,001-80,000 Baht	22	5.0
	80,001-100,000 Baht	12	2.8
	More than 100,000 Baht	6	1.4

Table 4.1 (Continued)

Demographic Profiles		Frequency (n=436)	Percentage (%)
Education	Secondary/High School	19	4.4
	Diploma	15	3.4
	Bachelor's degree	328	75.2
	Master's degree	68	15.6
	Ph.D.	6	1.4
Career	Private company	208	47.7
	Government officer	89	20.4
	Student	62	14.2
	Self-employed	47	10.8
	Professionals	11	2.5
	Housewife	6	1.4
	Others	13	3.0

4.1.2 Results of travel behavior on information search

Table 4.2 shows the result of travel frequency per year before Covid-19 pandemic. The majority of the respondents traveled 1-3 times (232, 53.2%), then followed by 4-6 times (128, 29.4%), more than 10 times (61, 14.0%), and only 15 (3.4%) of the respondents travel 7-9 times.

Table 4.2 Travel frequency per year of the respondents

Travel frequency (Per year)	Frequency (n=436)	Percentage (%)
1-3 times	232	53.2
4-6 times	128	29.4
7-9 times	15	3.4
More than 10 times	61	14.0

Table 4.3 demonstrated the result of the sources that the respondents used for travel information search before they made a decision. One respondent was able to choose more than one answers. The majority of the respondents used comments on social media from SMTIs/bloggers as the main source of information with 348 people (80.2%), then followed by recommendations from friends and family counted 254 (58.5%), and review sites 238 (54.8%). The least used source of travel-related information was newspaper/magazine which had 41 respondents (9.4%). According to the result, it was found that more than half of the respondents decided to visit a destination because of the advice from SMTIs. The travel influencers who were mentioned most by the respondents included I Roam Alone, Asapapailong, Carry a camera and travel, Go went Go, Sneak out, and Pigkaploy.

Table 4.3 Sources of information used by the respondents

Sources of Information	Frequency	Percentage * (%)
Comments on social media (travel influencers and blogger)	348	80.2
Recommendations (family and friends)	254	58.5
Review sites (e.g., TripAdvisor, Agoda, Booking.com)	238	54.8
Past experiences	122	28.1
Travel guidebooks	69	15.9
Television	66	15.2
Newspaper/Magazine	41	9.4
Others	4	0.9

* Note: The sum of percentages exceeds 100 due to the fact that multiple answers were possible.

Table 4.4 presented the most influential person that made them decide a place to visit. Most of the respondents were influenced by their family and friends occupied 206 (47.2%), by influencers/bloggers 160 (36.7%), and spouse/partner 52 (11.9%) respectively. Travel agent was the least influential person for the respondents on travel decision making with the number of 2 (0.5%).

Table 4.4 The most influential person when making travel decisions

Items	Frequency (n=436)	Percentage (%)
Family/friends	206	47.2
Influencers/Bloggers	160	36.7
Spouse/Partner	52	11.9
Celebrities	5	1.2
Kids	3	0.7
Travel Agents	2	0.5
Others	8	1.8

Table 4.5 shows the number of respondents on using popular social media platforms, specifically in Thailand, for their travel-related information search. The most used social media channel was Facebook with 380 respondents (87.2%), followed by YouTube, video-sharing site, 263 (60.3%), and Instagram 195 (44.7%). Pantip.com ranked fourth with 159 respondents (36.5%) using this platform for their travel search.

Table 4.5 The use of social media for travel information search

Social media platforms	Frequency	Percentage* (%)
Facebook	380	87.2
YouTube	263	60.3
Instagram	195	44.7
Pantip.com	159	36.5
Twitter	75	17.2

*Note: The sum of percentages exceeds 100 due to the fact that multiple answers were possible.

4.1.3 Results of Influencer credibility, quality of content, and advertising disclosure variables

According to the result of table 4.6, attractiveness dimension shows that "I find SMTIs are attractive" (M=4.02) ranked first and followed by "I find SMTIs are unique (M=4.00). For trustworthiness dimension, the highest mean score was "I find SMTIs are authentic" (M=4.08) and secondly was "I find SMTIs are consistent" (M=4.00). For competence dimension, "I find SMTIs are competent" (M=4.08) and "I find SMTIs are sufficiently experienced about the destination" were the top dimensions for Thai millennials' attitudes. Lastly, for similarity dimension, "I feel that I can easily identify with SMTIs" (M=4.06) was highest responded by the respondents for their attitudes towards SMTIs. Overall, the respondents have positive attitudes towards social media travel influencers

(Grand mean = 3.96, S.D = .713).

Table 4.6 Mean and standard deviation of influencer credibility

Dimensions	Mean	S.D.	Level of Agreement
Attractiveness	**3.96**	**.786**	**Agree**
I find SMTIs are attractive. (At-1)	4.02	.917	Agree
I find SMTIs are unique. (At-2)	4.00	.903	Agree
I find SMTIs have a good sense of humor. (At-3)	3.92	.990	Agree
I find SMTIs are trendy. (At-4)	3.92	.904	Agree
Trustworthiness	**3.89**	**.808**	**Agree**
I find SMTIs are authentic. (TW-1)	4.08	.918	Agree
I find SMTIs are consistent. (TW-2)	4.00	.910	Agree
I find SMTIs are engaged with the users. (TW-3)	3.60	1.058	Agree
Competence	**4.00**	**.768**	**Agree**
I find SMTIs are competent. (CP-1)	4.08	.857	Agree
I find SMTIs are sufficiently experienced about the destination. (CP-2)	4.02	.916	Agree

Table 4.6 (Continued)

Dimensions	Mean	S.D.	Level of Agreement
I find SMTIs are intelligent. (CP-3)	4.01	.897	Agree
I find SMTIs are relevant to the product. (CP-4)	3.91	.914	Agree
Similarity	**3.98**	**.805**	**Agree**
I feel that I can easily identify with SMTIs. (SM-1)	4.06	.856	Agree
I feel SMTIs and I have a lot of things in common (e.g. attitude, lifestyle, interest). (SM-2)	3.90	.903	Agree
Influencer credibility	**3.96**	**.713**	**Agree**

As the result of quality of content shows in Table 4.7, "Give travel information that I am interested in and useful to me" (M=4.24) was the highest mean, followed by "Convey concise and clear information which is easy to understand" (M=4.23), and "Present entertaining content which makes me enjoy while watching" (M=4.22). The result indicated that the respondents who are millennials placed relatively high level of agreement in content that is useful and interesting to them. Overall, the respondents perceived that the influencers produce good quality of content (Grand mean = 4.16, S.D. = .689).

Table 4.7 Mean and standard deviation of quality of content

Attributes	Mean	S.D.	Level of Agreement
Give travel information that I am interested in and useful to me (QC-1)	4.24	.797	Strongly agree
Convey concise and clear information which is easy to understand. (QC-2)	4.23	.806	Strongly agree
Present entertaining content which makes me enjoy while watching. (QC-3)	4.22	.841	Strongly agree
Provide accurate information about the destinations, products, and services. (QC-4)	4.10	.839	Agree

Table 4.7 (Continued)

Attributes	Mean	S.D.	Level of Agreement
Provide enough information so that I can compare with similar products and services. (QC-5)	4.00	.812	Agree
Quality of content	**4.16**	**.689**	**Agree**

According to the result of advertising disclosure in table 4.8 the highest mean belonged to "I still want to watch SMTIs' content even though it is sponsored" (M=3.66), then the second rank was "I am okay to see some advertising showing in the SMTIs' content" (M=3.65) and followed by "I feel an attempt to make travel posts honest when SITMs discloses sponsorship" (M=3.50). The result shows that it was reasonably acceptable for millennials to watch the content from SMTIs with sponsorship included.

Table 4.8 Mean and deviation of advertising disclosure

Attributes	Mean	S.D.	Level of Agreement
I still want to watch SMTIs' content even though it is sponsored. (AD-1)	3.66	.942	Agree
I am okay to see some advertising showing in the SMTIs' content. (AD-2)	3.65	1.014	Agree
I feel an attempt to make travel posts honest when SMTIs discloses sponsorship. (AD-3)	3.50	1.052	Agree
I think advertisement is a way to discover something new. (AD-4)	3.41	1.158	Agree
It is likely that I will buy products or services (e.g., hotel, tour agency, restaurant, electronic device) advertised by SMTIs (AD-5)	3.41	1.140	Agree

Table 4.8 (Continued)

Attributes	Mean	S.D.	Level of Agreement
Travel posts with advertisement does not make me feel annoyed. (AD-6)	3.36	1.139	Neutral
Advertising disclosure	**3.50**	**.900**	**Agree**

4.1.4 Results of t-test analysis for differences between male and female respondents

As a result of t-test in terms of the attitudes of the respondents towards social media travel influencers credibility, there is no significant difference between male and female. The mean score of females was 3.98 and male was 3.93.

For quality of content created by the influencers, the result indicated that 4 out of 5 attributes had no significant difference between male and female; as a result, the overall mean score of females was 4.18 and male was 4.11. However, table 4.9 demonstrates that there was significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level when females perceived that the influencers could present entertaining content which makes them enjoy while watching rather than males do.

Table 4.9 also presents the significant difference between male and female on perceived advertising disclosure shown on the influencers' content. Males still wanted to watch the content even though it was sponsored, they did not feel annoyed to travel posts with advertisement, they found it was a way to discover something new, they were more likely to buy products or services advertised by the influencers, and they felt those SMTIs were honest to make travel posts and disclose sponsorship rather than females.

Table 4.9 t‑test analysis for quality of content and advertising disclosure towards social media

influencers (only statistically significant result shown)

Attributes	Female (Mean)	Male (Mean)	t‑test	p‑value
Quality of content created by SMTIs				
Present entertaining content which makes me enjoy while watching.	4.30	4.09	2.566	.011*
Advertising disclosure				
I still want to watch SMTIs' content even though it is sponsored.	3.58	3.78	-2.096	.037*
Travel posts with advertisement does not make me feel annoyed.	3.27	3.50	-2.059	.040*
I think advertisement is a way to discover something new.	3.25	3.64	-3.482	.001**
It is likely that I will buy products or services (e.g., hotel, tour agency, restaurant, electronic device) advertised by SMTIs	3.27	3.61	-3.092	.002**
I feel an attempt to make travel posts honest when SMTIs discloses sponsorship.	3.38	3.67	-2.848	.005**

*Note: * indicates statistically significant difference p ＜ 0.05*

** indicates statistically significant difference p ＜ 0.01

4.1.5 Results of one‑way ANOVA test for differences among demographic characteristics

Age

Based on the result of one‑way ANOVA using the Tukey HSD Post Hoc test for important influencer credibility dimensions, quality of content, and advertising disclosure in age, there was no significant difference at p ＜ 0.05 level.

Education background

The result shows that there was no significant difference for influencer credibility, quality of content, and advertising disclosure among education level: secondary/high school, diploma, bachelor's degree, and higher degrees.

Income per month (Thai baht)

The result in table 4.10 shows that there was significant difference for quality of content (F=2.864, p=0.015). The respondents who earn salary less than 20,000 Thai baht and those earning 40,000-60,000 shows the significant difference at .021 level. The quality of content is more important for the respondents earning less than 20,000 Thai baht per month than the people who earn 40,000-60,000 Thai baht. However, the other attributes show no significant difference.

Occupation

Table 4.11 presents the result that there was statistically significant difference in terms of influencer credibility (F=3.086, p=0.006), quality of content (F=2.534, p=0.020), and advertising disclosure (F=2.191, p=0.043). The respondents working in a private company and those who were categorized in "others" shows the significant difference at .011 level in terms of influencer credibility. Furthermore, the respondents working in a private company and those who are government officers also shows the significant difference at .024 level in terms of quality of content. Although the overall ANOVA test indicated statistically significant differences between groups regarding advertising disclosure, the post hoc Tukey HSD tests indicated that the differences among the means are not statistically significant; this is possible due to the higher power of post-hoc tests to detect such differences.

Table 4.10 Differences among income towards influencer credibility, quality of content, and

advertising disclosure

Dimension	Mean	Std.	F-value	Sig.
Influencer credibility			1.134	.341
Less than 20,000	3.85	.740		
20,001- 40,000	3.96	.708		
40,001- 60,000	4.08	.617		
60,001 – 80,000	4.04	.877		
80,001- 100,000	4.10	.618		
More than 100,000	3.92	.761		
Quality of content			2.864	.015*
Less than 20,000	4.01a	.758		
20,001- 40,000	4.16ab	.666		
40,001- 60,000	4.32b	.600		
60,001 – 80,000	4.37ab	.491		
80,001- 100,000	4.35ab	.655		
More than 100,000	3.96ab	.823		
Advertising disclosure			.930	.461
Less than 20,000	3.39	.864		
20,001- 40,000	3.49	.905		
40,001- 60,000	3.59	.940		
60,001 – 80,000	3.75	.832		
80,001- 100,000	3.47	1.046		
More than 100,000	3.69	1.002		

Note: * indicates statistically significant difference $p < 0.05$

Table 4.11 Differences among occupation towards influencer credibility, quality of content, and advertising disclosure

Dimension	Mean	Std.	F-value	Sig.
Influencer Credibility			3.086	.006**
Student	4.00ab	.708		
Private company	4.06a	.648		
Government officer	3.80ab	.759		
Self-employed	3.92ab	.782		
Housewife	3.88ab	1.211		
Professionals	3.88ab	.599		
Others	3.36b	.609		
Quality of content			2.534	.020*
Student	4.13ab	.795		
Private company	4.26a	.564		
Government officer	3.98b	.803		
Self-employed	4.13ab	.695		
Housewife	4.36ab	.496		
Professionals	4.18ab	.918		
Others	3.78ab	.695		
Advertising disclosure			2.191	.043*
Student	3.55	.876		
Private company	3.60	.845		
Government officer	3.38	.935		
Self-employed	3.31	.989		
Housewife	3.61	1.254		
Professionals	3.39	.969		
Others	2.88	.800		

Note: * indicates statistically significant difference $p < 0.05$

** indicates *statistically significant difference $p < 0.01$*

4.1.6 The result of Pearson Chi-square test results of relationship among demographics

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between the most influential person when making a travel decision and demographics. According to the test result of the relation between the most influential person and gender and age, table 4.12 and 4.14 found that there was no significant difference x^2 (3, N = 436) = 2.939, p = .401 and x^2 (12, N = 436) = 11.254, p = .507 respectively. For monthly income (Table 4.13), the result shows that the relation between the variable was significant, x^2 (15, N = 436) = 60.321, p = .000. The respondents with salary per month less than 20,000 Thai baht are likely to be influenced by family/friends rather than by SMTIs/bloggers while those who earn 20,000-40,000 and 40,000-60,000 are more likely to be influenced by SMTIs/bloggers. For the relation between influential person and education (Table 4.15), the result also shows significant difference, x^2 (12, N = 436) = 32.105, p = .001. The respondents with bachelor's degree are likely to be influenced by family/friends while SMTIs/bloggers ranked second. The respondents with master's degree are influenced by both family/friends and SMTIs/bloggers at the same range.

Table 4.12 Chi-square test result of the relation between influential person and gender

Influential person	Female	Male	Total
Family/friends	133	73	206
Percentage (%)	64.56	35.44	100.00
SMTIs/bloggers	94	66	160
Percentage (%)	58.75	41.25	100.00
Spouse/partner	29	23	52
Percentage (%)	55.77	44.23	100.00
Others	9	9	18
Percentage (%)	50.00	50.00	100.00
Pearson Chi-Square 2.939 df = 3 p = .401			

Table 4.13 Chi-square test result of the relation between influential person and monthly income

Influential person	Less than 20,000	20,000- 40,000	40,000- 60,000	60,000- 80,000	80,000- 100,000	More than 100,000	Total
Family/friends	86	79	26	10	4	1	206
Percentage (%)	41.75	38.35	12.62	4.85	1.94	0.49	100.00
SMTIs/bloggers	27	84	36	9	4	0	160
Percentage (%)	16.88	52.50	22.50	5.63	2.50	0.00	100.00
Spouse/partner	20	18	4	2	4	4	52
Percentage (%)	38.46	34.62	7.69	3.85	7.69	7.69	100.00
Others	3	9	4	1	0	1	18
Percentage (%)	16.67	50.00	22.22	5.56	0.00	5.56	100.00
Pearson Chi-Square 60.321 df = 15 p = .000							

Note: statistically significant difference $p < 0.05$

Table 4.14 Chi-square test result of the relation between influential person and age

Influential person	20-22	23-26	27-30	31-35	36-40	Total
Family/friends	28	44	57	34	43	206
Percentage (%)	13.59	21.36	27.67	16.50	20.87	100.00
SMTIs/bloggers	15	42	52	31	20	160
Percentage (%)	9.38	26.25	32.50	19.38	12.50	100.00
Spouse/partner	3	12	16	9	12	52
Percentage (%)	5.77	23.08	30.77	17.31	23.08	100.00
Others	1	4	6	2	5	18
Percentage (%)	5.56	22.22	33.33	11.11	27.78	100.00
Pearson Chi-Square 11.254 df = 12 p = .507						

Table 4.15 Chi-square test result of the relation between influential person and education

Influential person	Secondary/ high school	Diploma	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Ph.D.	Total
Family/friends	6	9	163	26	2	206
Percentage (%)	2.91	4.37	79.13	12.62	0.97	100.00
SMTIs/bloggers	8	6	119	26	1	160
Percentage (%)	5.00	3.75	74.38	16.25	0.63	100.00
Spouse/partner	5	0	31	15	1	52
Percentage (%)	9.62	0.00	59.62	28.85	1.92	100.00
Others	0	0	15	1	2	18
Percentage (%)	0.00	0.00	91.18	2.94	5.88	100.00
Pearson Chi-Square 32.105 df = 12 p = .001						

Note: statistically significant difference $p < 0.05$

Table 4.16 reveals the Chi-square result of the relation between the sources of information and gender. The two significant differences include travel guidebook x^2 (1, N = 436) = 16.117, p = .000, newspaper/magazine x^2 (1, N = 436) = 8.037, p = .005., and past travel experience x^2 (1, N = 436) = 3.999, p = .046. The other sources were not significant. Overall, Male respondents would still find the travel information from travel guidebooks, newspaper/magazine, and past travel experience rather than female respondents do.

Table 4.16 Chi-square test result of relationship between sources of information and gender

Sources of information		Female	Male	Total (N=436)
Recommendations (family and friend)	Yes	154	100	254
	%	60.63	39.37	100.00
Pearson Chi-square = .006	No	111	71	182
df = 1, p = .940	%	60.99	39.01	100.00

Table 4.16 (Continued)

Sources of information		Female	Male	Total (N=436)
Comments on Social media (SMTIs, bloggers)	Yes	218	130	348
	%	62.64	37.36	100.00
Pearson Chi-square = 2.513	No	47	41	88
df = 1, p = .113	%	53.41	46.59	100.00
Travel guidebooks	Yes	27	42	69
	%	39.13	60.87	100.00
Pearson Chi-square = 16.117	No	238	129	367
df = 1, p = .000*	%	64.85	35.15	100.00
Review sites (e.g. TripAdvisor, Agoda)	Yes	142	96	238
	%	59.66	40.34	100.00
Pearson Chi-square .274	No	123	75	198
df = 1, p = .601	%	62.12	37.88	100.00
Newspaper/Magazine	Yes	17	25	42
	%	41.46	58.53	100.00
Pearson Chi-square = 8.037	No	248	146	394
df = 1, p = .005*	%	62.94	37.06	100.00
Television	Yes	35	31	66
	%	53.03	46.97	100.00
Pearson Chi-square = 1.959	No	230	140	370
df = 1, p = .162	%	62.16	37.84	100.00
Past travel experience	Yes	65	57	122
	%	53.28	46.72	100.00
Pearson Chi-square 3.999	No	200	114	314
df = 1, p = .046*	%	63.69	36.31	100.00

Note: statistically significant difference p < 0.05*

4.1.7 Travel decision-making process

Table 4.17 shows that the highest mean score for pre-trip stage belonged to "I tend to read travel influencers' reviews/blogs or watch their videos to make sure that I choose the right destinations" (M = 4.09), followed by "I often want to visit the destinations after seeing travel influencer's posts" (M = 4.00). In pre-trip stage, the respondents were likely to agree with the influencers as the travel references when they were planning a trip, whether destinations, activities, and accommodation.

For during trip, the highest mean score was "I like to taste local food that I have seen on travel influencers' posts" (M = 3.95) and followed by "I tend to visit destinations (e.g., tourist attractions, café, restaurant, and hotel) where I have seen on travel influencers' social media" (M = 3.90). Generally speaking, the respondents agreed that they tend to search and visit the destinations where they had seen on the influencers' posts during a trip, especially for tasting local food.

For post-trip, the respondents would recommend their family and friends to visit the places they had been to where they saw on travel influencer's posts which shows the highest mean score (M = 3.98), and the second highest belonged to "I normally feel happy and satisfied with the places I have been to which are mentioned on travel influencers' posts" (M = 3.88). The lowest mean score was sharing their travel experiences on the influencer's social media (M = 3.67). The respondents were likely to agree that they would suggest others to visit the places where they had seen from the influencer's posts as they were happy and satisfied with the places, seeing as the travel inspiration and tend to share their travel experiences on social media.

Table 4.17 Importance of travel decision-making attributes

Attributes	Mean	Std.	Level of Agreement
Pre-trip	**3.99**	**.731**	**Agree**
I tend to read travel influencers' reviews/blogs or watch their videos to make sure that I choose the right destinations (S1-1)	4.09	.851	Agree

Table 4. 17 (Continued)

Attributes	Mean	Std.	Level of Agreement
I often want to visit the destinations after seeing travel influencer's posts (S1-2)	4.00	.846	Agree
I tend to consider travel influencers' recommendations on activities when I make my travel decisions (S1-3)	3.98	.848	Agree
I tend to search travel influencers posts on social media when I am planning a trip (S1-4)	3.97	.973	Agree
I tend to consider travel influencers' recommendations on hotel when I make my travel decisions (S1-5)	3.89	.906	Agree
During trip	**3.88**	**.741**	**Agree**
I like to taste local food that I have seen on travel influencers' posts (S2-1)	3.95	.878	Agree
I tend to visit destinations (e.g., tourist attractions, café, restaurant, and hotel) where I have seen on travel influencers' social media (S2-2)	3.90	.917	Agree
I tend to do further information search from travel influencers' posts during my trip (S2-3)	3.89	.883	Agree
I would go sightseeing and take photos or videos of the same locations that I have seen on travel influencers' posts (S2-4)	3.77	.846	Agree

Table 4. 17 (Continued)

Attributes	Mean	Std.	Level of Agreement
Post-trip	**3.75**	**.767**	**Agree**
I would recommend my friends or family to visit the places I have been to where I see on influencer's posts (S3-1)	3.98	.843	Agree
I normally feel happy and satisfied with the places I have been to which are mentioned on travel influencers' posts (S3-2)	3.88	.850	Agree
I feel travel influencer inspired me to travel (S3-3)	3.74	.999	Agree
I tend to share my travel experience on social media (S3-4)	3.67	.951	Agree
I share my travel experience at the influencer's social media (e.g., post on the comment box) (S3-5)	3.47	1.127	Agree

4.1.8 Regression Analysis of influencer credibility, quality of content, and advertising disclosure on travel decision-making process

Multiple regression analysis was performed to test whether travel decision-making process can be predicted based on influencer credibility, quality of content, and advertising disclosure. Table 4.18 shows the results on the relationship between those variables and travel decision making.

To test hypothesis 4, 5, and 6, a multiple regression was conducted, and the result indicates that these three independent variables have relationship with decision-making process where the dimensions of influencer credibility, quality of content, and advertising disclosure were positively correlated with the dependent variable. The adjusted R square value revealed that 50.1% of the dependent variable (R^2 = .501) was explained by the three characteristics. Furthermore, this model has not violated the multicollinearity assumption as the

tolerance level of each variable was greater than .10 and VIF value did not surpass the suggested value of 10.00.

The result shows that "influencer credibility" significantly influenced travel decision making which supported H4 (beta = .199, t = 4.125, p = .000), followed by "quality of content", which supported H5 (beta = .327, t = 7.001, p = .000) and scored the highest value, and "advertising disclosure", which supported H6 (beta = .319, t = 7.849, p = .000). Hence, it can be concluded that if the SMTIs put more efforts on building their credibility (e.g., attractiveness, trustworthiness, competence, and similarity), producing quality of content, and disclose their sponsors, the millennial consumers will be likely to make a decision to travel. Therefore, hypotheses 4, 5, and 6 were all supported.

Table 4.18 Results of multiple regression for overall travel decision-making process

Model	Standardized Coefficients	Coefficients		
	Coefficients Beta	Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)		.147	6.631	.000
Influencer Credibility	.199	.045	4.125	.000
Quality of Content	.327	.046	7.001	.000
Advertising Disclosure	.319	.030	7.849	.000

Note: Dependent Variable: Overall decision making, Adjusted R-square = .501

Table 4.19 shows the result of pre-trip of travel decision making. All three characteristics were found to be significant. "Influencer credibility" significantly influenced travel decision making (beta = .154, t = 3.073, p = .000), followed by "quality of content" (beta = .384, t = 7.885, p = .000) which scored the highest value, and "advertising disclosure" (beta = .266, t = 6.275, p = .000). The adjusted R square value was .501.

Table 4.19 Results of multiple regression for first stage (pre-trip) of travel decision making

Model	Standardized Coefficients Beta	Coefficients Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)		.167	5.451	.000
Influencer Credibility	.154	.051	3.073	.000
Quality of Content	.384	.052	7.885	.000
Advertising Disclosure	.266	.034	6.275	.000

Note: Dependent Variable: Pre-trip, Adjusted R-square = .459

Table 4.20 shows the result of during-trip of travel decision making. All three characteristics were found to be significant. "Influencer credibility" significantly influenced travel decision making (beta = .162, t = 2.945, p = .000), then "quality of content" (beta = .297, t = 5.573, p = .000) which scored the highest value, and "advertising disclosure" (beta = .248, t = 5.349, p = .000). The adjusted R square value was .350.

Table 4.20 Results of multiple regression for second stage (during trip) of travel decision making

Model	Standardized Coefficients Beta	Coefficients Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)		.185	6.297	.000
Influencer Credibility	.162	.057	2.945	.000
Quality of Content	.297	.057	5.573	.000
Advertising Disclosure	.248	.038	5.349	.000

Note: Dependent Variable: During trip, Adjusted R-square = .350

Table 4.21 shows the result of post-trip of travel decision making. All three characteristics were found to be significant. "Influencer credibility" significantly influenced travel decision making (beta = .214, t = 4.048, p = .000), then "quality of content" (beta = .205, t = 3.994, p = .000), and "advertising disclosure" (beta = .336, t = 7.521, p = .000) which scored the highest value. The adjusted R square value was .398.

Table 4.21 Results of multiple regression for last stage (post-trip) of travel decision making

Model	Standardized Coefficients Beta	Coefficients Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)		.184	4.791	.000
Influencer Credibility	.214	.057	4.048	.000
Quality of Content	.205	.057	3.994	.000
Advertising Disclosure	.336	.038	7.521	.000

Note: Dependent Variable: Post-trip, Adjusted R-square = .398

To see which attributes of the three main characteristics significantly influence travel decision making, multiple regression analysis was also used to see whether the independent variables have a relationship with each stage of travel decision making. Table 4.22 shows the result of regression on the attributes of independent variables including credibility, quality of content and advertising disclosure towards overall travel decision making. All three independent variables have relationship with travel decision making where "Honest travel post" (beta= .168, p= .005), "Usefulness" (beta= .138, p= .010), "Relevance" (beta= .116, p= .024), "Engagement" (beta= 1.01, p= .027), and "Discover new things" (beta= .127, p= .028) were positively correlated with travel decision making with the adjusted R square value at 52%. CP-4 and TW-3 attributes are included in the characteristic of influencer credibility. QC-1 attribute is included in quality of content characteristic while AD-3 and AD-4 attributes are included in the characteristic of advertising disclosure. This indicated that SMTIs who disclose sponsorship when posting their travel post, producing interesting and useful content, and being relevant to the product can influence millennials' travel decision making.

Table 4.22 Results of multiple regression for overall travel decision-making process (only statically significant results shown)

Model	Standardized Coefficients Beta	Coefficients Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)		.145	6.390	.000
Honest travel post (AD-3)	.168	.038	2.834	.005
Usefulness (QC-1)	.138	.045	2.595	.010

Table 4.22 (Continued)

Model	Standardized Coefficients Beta	Std. Error	t	Sig.
	Coefficients			
Relevance (CP-4)	.116	.038	2.263	.024
Engagement (TW-3)	.101	.029	2.224	.027
Discover new things (AD-4)	.127	.033	2.198	.028

Note: Dependent Variable: Overall travel decision-making process, Adjusted R-square = .520

Table 4.23 reveals the results of regression for pre-trip stage of travel decision making. "Sufficient information" (beta= .152, p= .009), "Usefulness" (beta= .139, p= .014), and "Relevance" (beta= .123, p= .024) had significant impact on travel decision making at pre-trip stage. It can be said that the content which can provide enough information on certain destinations, being seen useful to the audience, and present a relevant product are likely to impact the first stage of their travel decision making.

Table 4.23 Results of multiple regression for first stage (pre-trip) of travel decision making (only statically significant results shown)

Model	Standardized Coefficients Beta	Std. Error	t	Sig.
		Coefficients		
(Constant)		.168	5.318	.000
Sufficient information (QC-5)	.152	.052	2.633	.009
Usefulness (QC-1)	.139	.052	2.462	.014
Relevance (CP-4)	.123	.044	2.259	.024

Note: Dependent Variable: Pre-trip stage, Adjusted R-square = .461

Table 4.24 reveals the results of regression for during-trip stage of travel decision making. "Discover new things" (beta = .169, p = .011), "Usefulness" (beta = .175, p = .004), and "Honest travel post" (beta = .165, p = .016) had significant impact on travel decision making at during trip stage. At this stage, millennials were likely to find advertisement as new

knowledge or a new experience which they might have never seen before, and they also found sponsorship disclosure promoted by SMTIs an honest post while useful information was another significant attribute that influence people's decision making while travelling.

Table 4.24 Results of multiple regression for second stage (during trip) of travel decision making (only statically significant results shown)

Model	Standardized	Coefficients		
	Coefficients Beta	Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)		.185	6.109	.000
Usefulness (QC-1)	.175	.057	2.861	.004
Discover new things (AD-4)	.169	.042	2.558	.011
Honest travel post (AD-3)	.165	.048	2.420	.016

Note: Dependent Variable: During trip stage, Adjusted R-square = .365

Table 4.25 shows the results of regression for post-trip stage of travel decision making. It revealed that the engagement between consumer and SMTIs (beta = .144, p = .003) is significantly affected travel decision making at post-trip stage. Travel post that are disclosed sponsorship has showed honesty to consumer (beta = .183, p = .004) which significantly affected the decision making. The concise and clear information also significantly affected the decision making (beta = .164, p = .010), followed by seeing ads can discover new things (beta = .157, p = .011), and travel content is relevant to a product (beta = .132, p = .017).

Table 4.25 Results of multiple regression for last stage (post-trip) of travel decision making

Model	Standardized	Coefficients		
	Coefficients Beta	Std Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)		.178	4.510	.000
Engagement (TW-3)	.144	.035	2.983	.003
Honest travel post (AD-3)	.183	.046	2.872	.004
Authenticity (TW-1)	-.177	.054	-2.735	.007

Table 4.25 (Continued)

Model	Standardized Coefficients Beta	Coefficients Std Error	t	Sig.
Conciseness (QC-2)	.164	.060	2.597	.010
Discover new things (AD-4)	.157	.041	2.547	.011
Relevance (CP-4)	.132	.046	2.406	.017
OK with Ads (AD-2)	.124	.044	2.114	.035

Note: Dependent Variable: Post-trip stage, Adjusted R-square = .450

Table 4.26 shows the result of multiple regression for overall satisfaction of the respondents towards social media travel influencer in terms of source credibility, quality of content, and advertising disclosure. It demonstrates that two characteristics which are quality of content (beta = .212, t = 3.688, p = .000) and advertising disclosure (beta = 282, t = 5.634, p = .000) were found significant whereas influencer credibility was not significant. The adjusted R square value was .244.

Table 4.26 Results of multiple regression for overall satisfaction

Model	Standardized Coefficients Beta	Coefficients Std Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)		.190	11.563	.000
Influencer Credibility	.098	.058	1.655	.099
Quality of Content	.212	.059	3.688	.000
Advertising Disclosure	.282	.039	5.634	.000

Note: Dependent Variable: Overall satisfaction, Adjusted R-square = .244

4.3 Result from in-depth interview with influencers

    The second set of data was derived from interviews with 21 Thai influencers. The information was acquired using a purposive sampling technique selecting interviewees, particularly focusing on Thai influencers, until reaching saturation with different categories of influencer to explore the interaction with the followers and to investigate strategies and practices that they use to organize the sponsored content and interaction with sponsors. This study focused on three types which were mega (1+ million followers), macro (100,000 – 1 million followers), and micro (10,000 – 100,000 followers). However, there were some nano influencers (1,000 – 10,000 followers) included. Based on the interviews and observation on their Facebook pages regarding the number of followers, their type of content, and the start date of the pages, the summary profile of SMTIs is shown in table 4.27. The reason that this study chose to see the start date of the page from Facebook was that it ranked first among Thailand's most popular social media networks.

Table 4.27 Profile of SMTIs

No.	Category of influencer	No. of followers (Based on Facebook)	Travel frequency (monthly)	Posting frequency (weekly)	Social media platforms	Start date of Facebook page	Type of travel	Type of content
1.	Mega	1.9m	7-10	3	Facebook, Instagram	2 August 2015	Nature/Hotel/Homestay /Resort/Camping	Photos
2.	Nano	1.6k	2-3	1-2	Facebook, Instagram	25 January 2020	Nature/café	Photos
3.	Micro	69.7k	2-3	3-4	Facebook	27 February 2017	Nature/Culture/Arts	Photos
4.	Micro	26.6k	2-3	1	Facebook, Instagram	6 April 2017	Nature/Hotel/café/ Tour package	Photos and videos
5.	Micro	42.2k	2-3	3	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter	21 September 2017	Nature/Culture	Photos
6.	Micro	92.9k	3-4	2-3	Facebook, Instagram, YouTube	2 February 2018	Nature/Camping/ Homestay	Photos, and vlog videos
7.	Micro	36.1k	1	2	Facebook, Instagram, Twitter	14 January 2017	Nature/Food/Café/ Hotel/Homestay	Photos

Table 4.27 (Continued)

No.	Category of influencer	No. of followers (Based on Facebook)	Travel frequency (monthly)	Posting frequency (weekly)	Social media platforms	Start date of Facebook page	Type of travel	Type of content
8.	Macro	100k	3-4	7 (IG)	Facebook, Instagram, YouTube	4 January 2019	Nature/Adventure/ Hotel/Homestay	Photos and short videos
9.	Micro	82.8k	1-2	2-3	Facebook, Instagram, YouTube	16 January 2016	Nature/Adventure/ Camping	Photos and vlog videos
10.	Micro	42.5k	1-2	1	Facebook, Pantip.com	21 October 2013	Nature/Camping	Photos
11.	Micro	50.8k	2-5	2-3	Facebook, personal website	20 August 2013	Nature/Culture	Photos
12.	Macro	919.6k	30	7	Facebook, YouTube	30 June 2015	Nature/Solo Adventure /Backpacker/Culture	Photos and vlog videos
13.	Micro	67.3k	4-5	2-3	Facebook, Instagram	28 January 2019	Nature/Food/Café	Photos

Table 4.27 (Continued)

No.	Category of influencer	No. of followers (Based on Facebook)	Travel frequency (monthly)	Posting frequency (weekly)	Social media platforms	Start date of Facebook page	Type of travel	Type of content
14.	Micro	38.3k	1-2	4	Facebook, Instagram	26 February 2017	Nature/Café	Photos
18.	Macro	609k	< 4	4	Facebook, Website	18 August 2015	Nature/Hotel/Café/ Family activity	Photos
19.	Macro	101k	1-2	3-4	Facebook	7 May 2018	Nature/Solo Adventure	Photos
20.	Micro	27.8k	2-3	2-3	Facebook. YouTube	1 October 2017	Nature/Food/Café/ Hotel/Homestay	Photos and vlog videos
21.	Macro	124k	25	7	Facebook, Instagram	5 August 2019	Nature/Food/ Café/Hotel	Photos

4.2.1 Sources of travel information

There are two major sources of information that the informants use to find travel-related information. The first one is from social media, especially on Facebook and Instagram. Most of the influencers would follow and were likely to find the destinations and activities from other travel influencers. All informants have created Facebook fan page and most of them also own Instagram account as well. Many informed that social media would be the first source that they use to find the destination. The reason is that they can see more photos with different angles. For example, people who posted photos or videos on the social media will be presenting some different point of views and activities. For Instagram, the informants were likely to find a destination by searching from "Tags" feature where users can put name of a destination. The second one is from Google. Many of them search the detailed information from Google such as transportation, direction, places to eat, and travel expenses. Moreover, some use Google Map to find a place to visit as they can see landscape as well as other interesting places nearby.

Informant 1: *"Most of the time when it comes to searching travel information, I prefer to search from social media like Facebook and Google".*

Informant 6: *"I don't really search the information from Facebook but from Instagram because I don't want to know a lot of detail but just pictures. Otherwise, it won't be exciting".*

Informant 12: *"I usually search the information from Google and sometimes from Facebook when I see some interesting posts".*

Informant 8: *"I normally search rough information from Facebook and use Google and Google Map when I go in details".*

Informant 10: *I do search travel information from Facebook and Google most of the time. I usually use Google Map when planning a trip because I can see the overview and I need to be very thorough as I'm travelling alone and I'm a woman.*

For the social platforms that they have and use for posting content are Facebook and Instagram; however, Facebook is mostly engaged by followers.

Informant 1: *In the beginning, I started writing blog on Pantip.com and created Facebook page at the same time but later Facebook is the main platform that I use to post the content because there is a lot more engagement".*

Informant 2: "I only have Facebook page".

Informant 5: "I do have both Facebook and Instagram but mostly post the content on Instagram as there are more engagement and followers. However, both platforms are linked. I also have twitter account but just for looking some photos".

Informant 8: "I have both Facebook and Instagram and now I'm starting to create my YouTube channel. Instagram is the most active platform, but Facebook seems to be more engaged by followers".

Informant 9: "Facebook and Instagram are my main platform, but Facebook has a lot more followers and engagement. I have no idea why Instagram doesn't have many followers".

4.2.2 Kind of content or activities and content that people want to see

According to the interview, majority of the informants produce their content in the forms of photos with travel information. Some of them put the details while some put only necessary information, for instance, name of place, transportation, accommodation, open hour, contact number, activity, and price. Some influencers start to make a video content since it can express a stronger feeling while watching and people are likely to get more engaged. When it comes to engagement rate, most of influencers similarly said that single picture with short caption posts is likely to have higher engagement rate than more than 10 pictures with long-described posts. However, most of them remarked that they still prefer to post numerous pictures (20-30 pictures) with necessary information. While a few influencers stated that the posts with several photos and detailed information are likely to receive a large amount of engagement and reach rate. This can be said that it depends on an individual's style of content creation and their target followers.

There are three main characteristics showing that the content interest people. First, people prefer to see content that is useful to them. Travel knowledge that audience acquire from these influencers helps them on decision making. However, travel influencers should know how to communicate with audiences and maintain destination image when they encounter with any difficulties during their stay to alert them prior to the trip. Second, they are likely to watch the content that introduce something new, such as new destination, activity, restaurant and café, and hotel, etc. People also prefer to see nature-related travel posts. Third, the

fun and interesting content, especially in terms of video, are seen to be attractive to audiences. Many informants informed that there are a number of followers request SMTIs to create travel-video content because it can convey stronger feeling.

Informant 1: "Our page focuses on pictures because I love taking photos and it's easier to make than video content. In our opinion, content that audience wish to see is the content that can give them something useful and enjoyable; for example, destination information, how to get to a place, how much expense per trip, etc. You need to give some information as well. Therefore, there are no fixed strategies on creating travel content but just make sure that it's useful and interesting to see".

Informant 2: "I always put a lot of photos with description about the place, its location, activities, and cost. People like to see nature-related content. There will be more than 20 photos in one post because when compared to the post that has less pictures, the post that has more pictures will gain better engagement. People want to see the places that are easy to go, have a lot of activities to do".

Informant 4: "The kind of content that I do is in the form of both photos and videos. As there are so many travel bloggers creating their content in the form of photos, video posts, therefore, are more official and commercial because it is more difficult to make a video interesting and outstanding. Generally, people like to see new destinations but for me, I prefer to visit the popular ones or could be the places I have been to, presenting in different point of views; for instance, comparing the color of sea or the texture of sand".

Informant 11: Apart from realistic content that people want to see, you ought to know how to warn viewers and will not negatively affect the image of the place if you have encountered with some struggles during your stay at homestay; for example, instead of telling people there are tons of mosquitos here, you can advise them to bring mosquito sprays when go stay at this place.

Informant 12: "I prefer to post photos and tell a short story that happen during a journey. Besides, I have also started making videos on YouTube because it can convey a greater feeling and people are likely to watch the video that is fun, exciting which can easily get engaged".

4.2.3 Characteristics that travel influencers should have

The characteristics of travel influencers varied. The essential characteristics that SMTIs should have include passion on travel, authenticity, photography skills, and communication skills. These four characteristics were mostly mentioned by the informants. One informant remarked that SMTIs should well-understand about social media platforms that they use which is vital when practice their content through these major platforms in order to gain engagement, rate of reach and the number of followers.

Informant 5: "Travel influencers should make an honest post and be authentic".

Informant 6: "Those who are travel influencers must enjoy travelling, good at storytelling, and love to share their experiences".

Informant 8: Travel influencers must clearly present the content style of their own, have photography skills, be passionate about travel, understand the features of each particular social media platform.

Informant 12: "Be different and authentic".

Informant 15: "They must love to travel, have communications skills and photography skills".

4.2.4 Important Attributes that define quality of content

Quality of content is another vital variable that can motivate travel decision making. The result of in-depth interview revealed that the important attributes that are mostly mentioned by the informants included beautiful pictures, accurate and concise information, authentic travel posts, and entertaining content. Interestingly, there is one macro travel bloggers (Informant 19) whose posts mostly gain high engagement, especially number of likes and shares. According to the observation and interview, this influencer can convey the picture through touching statements or quotes. Most of her posts are created by posting a single photo with a short quote that makes readers feel engaged and connected. Her page has no sponsorship which can lead to a sense of authenticity from viewers.

Informant 7: "I think the photos must be attractive with sufficient information that people can follow and accessible".

Informant 9: The quality of content must include beautiful pictures, accurate and concise information, and honest post.

Informant 10: The important things that show quality of content are multiple photos in different point of view, providing important information (e.g., name of place, how to get there, weather, place to stay, and contact details, etc.), accurate information.

Informant 15: "Providing necessary information, presenting beautiful pictures, especially the first four pictures that are first seen by the audience. All pictures should be able to attract people's travel motivation to visit".

Informant 19: I think the reason that my posts gain high engagement is that I like to put quotes in the caption that is related to the picture even though my photos are not as beautiful as other bloggers.

4.2.5 Sponsorship selection

According to the result of in-depth interview, most of the interviewees remarked that they will choose to collaborate with the sponsorships which are related to travel and tourism which can be used when travelling because it shows the relevance between the products or services and the content, and they believe that this is more genuine. Moreover, the sponsored posts must be created by travel influencers themselves instead of only placing links in the post or allowing the content produced by the sponsors posting on the influencer's page. This kind of practice can prove trustworthiness of the followers on content created by SMTIs and for those influencers who just post hyperlinks of brand company, they are likely to be seen less authentic and valued.

Informant 1: "Most of the sponsors that I work with are accommodation, restaurant, and travel agency, etc. I prefer going to the place where is not too difficult to get there".

Informant 6: "When it comes to collaborate with a sponsor, I would choose travel-related sponsorships; for example, backpack, watch, drinks, and camera".

Informant 9: Personally, I usually select the sponsors who offer me any travel equipment or accessories that I can use during my journey, such as footwears, camera, bag, and thermos, etc."

Informant 12: "I will choose to collaborate with the products or services that are useful. I also consider about the rates pay; however, I will definitely not accept the sponsor that ask me just to post their link on my page even though it is easy to get the pay because it does not make any value for myself and others".

4.2.6 Practices and strategies for organizing sponsored posts and interacting with sponsors

4.2.6.1 Strategies for organizing sponsored posts

From the interview, the common strategies for organizing sponsored post which many of the informants stated in the same way were posting time, the number of product photos, tie-in strategy, interesting content, useful information, and avoiding using words related to sales and marketing.

Posting time

More than half of the informants observed that it will be better if they schedule posting sponsored content. For example, they post two sponsored content two days a week and the rest five days of a week they post organic content which means the content without sponsorship because it makes audience still enjoy with the content and does not feel annoyed. Most of informants will post their content between 9:00 to 10:00 and 19:00 to 20:00. Some informants basically post the content at lunchtime and two of them have no fixed time for posting.

Number of product photos

Many of the informants remarked that they usually specify how many photos will include products or services because if there are too many sponsored pictures in one post, audience can get bored and does not enjoy with it. For example, influencers would allow not more than 10 product photos in one post and the other 20 photos are non-product photos.

Tie-in strategy

Most of the SMTIs used tie-in strategy to promote or review the content instead of taking the big-scale product picture alone because it looks more natural and less commercial when using tie-in to promote. Especially, the product or service that related to

travel and tourism can easily get engaged by audience as it is the product that the influencers are using when travelling.

Interesting content

In addition, producing interesting content is one of the critical strategies. Although the posts include advertisement, if the travel influencers can make the content interesting and fun, people still want to watch the content.

Useful information

Most audiences would like to watch content that provides them useful information whether they find it fun or they can discover something new, these are all useful to audience even though the posts included advertisement.

Avoiding sale-and-marketing words

Words used to describe the product and service can affect the audience's perception. It is important to mindfully select the friendly sentence or word that does not make audience feels annoyed or distracted because people have already noticed the advertisement.

Informant 1: "When organizing sponsored post, we will keep time distance for posting. For example, we would post sponsored content one post and two post of organic travel content. We have specified the limited number of sponsored photos in one post, less than six photos per post. We don't have to particularly tell the audience that this post is sponsored by whom or this post includes Paid Ads; except the sponsor requests, because it is obviously noticeable. If you put those specific words in the content, the engagement will be less than those posts without explicit advertisement. On the other hand, we will use other friendly words that doesn't make the audience feel annoyed".

Informant 8: It is obvious when it comes to a sponsored post. However, although people have already known that the post is sponsored, influencers still need to tell them directly, but I will explain one way or another to let them know. The main point is that does the content is worth to watch or does it give any useful content to the audience. The products or services must be related to the travel content. For example, using the tie-in strategy can reduce the annoyance if you make it blend with the content.

Informant 11: Since most people know which post is sponsored, tie-in strategy can help your post look more natural, not too much commercial. However, sponsored posts will probably gain lower engagement because the posts that contain sale-related words will be somehow disable by Facebook algorithm or people might not want to support sponsored posts.

Informant 12: It is better to tell the audience that the post is sponsored. I would say thank you to the sponsor when posting and it does not depend on whether it is a sponsored post or an organic post so the post will have much engagement, what really matter is the content itself. I will tie-in products and use them as a part of my life. I think be yourself is the most important thing.

Table 4.28 Categories of important attributes mentioned by the informants

Categories	No. of the informants
1.Content that people want to see and define quality of content	
Beautiful pictures/photos	15
Interesting and entertaining content	15
Authenticity	15
Sufficient and concise information	13
Useful information	11
New destinations	9
2. Strategies in organizing sponsored content	
Tie-in strategy	17
Relevance between the product and SMTI's character	15
Implicit advertising disclosure	14
Number of product photos	11
Posting time/timeliness	8
3. Measurement of effectiveness of SMTI's posts	
Engagement rate (like, share, comment)	21
Awareness (impression and reach)	19
Number of followers	2

4.2.6.2 Practices for interacting with sponsors

The practices for interacting with sponsors is another vital part when it comes to influencer marketing. Sponsors sometimes directly contact social media influencers whilst sometimes SMTIs are reached by digital marketing agencies who are hired by sponsors to promote their brands. When a sponsor is interested in an influencer, every sponsor basically will briefly inform the overview of the project first, then request the influencer 's page traffic to monitor a certain platform's insight visit report by screenshotting the page and sending them the report and ask the influencer rate per post. Once both sides agreed with the condition of the project, sponsors would send the influencers the information in detail. In case of some small businesses, they would only give the brief overview of work, then they just freely let the influencers create content. Most of the informants were requested to send sponsors a draft or storyboard before starting to work on a project. The things that the informants mentioned when they discuss with sponsors on the project description are project theme, production costs, destination, engagement rate, keyword, date of shooting and posting content, number of photos or the length of a video which normally the rate costs for video sponsored content is higher than photo-oriented content because it requires more technical skills to create. After accepting the condition, the influencer then start the project work. For the project that requires monthly posting or long-term scheme, there will be an agreement contract. Before posting, the influencers must send sponsor the draft content to make sure that it meets their needs. If it does not, the creator is required to adjust its content. Those influencers who work with a big company tend to be expected for the targeted engagement rate and the number of views. Most of the digital marketing agents who contact SMTIs will not determine the number of engagements, but they will boost the post by themselves if the engagement rates do not reach their expectation. In another way, SMTIs might be offered to boost the sponsored post with additional costs. Thus, after posting for a while, some sponsors will ask for the page's traffic to see the performance of the post. Eventually, the influencers will be paid after posting; however, some SMTIs receive 50% of the payment in advance which depend on the agreement written in the contract.

Informant 9: Sponsors initially contact me through Facebook or email, then they give me a brief picture or work with condition. After I accept it, I will write a

storyboard and show them before starting shooting. Next step is creating sponsored content.
Generally, sponsors will have scheduled the time for posting.

     Informant 11: Before getting informed about the scope of a project,
the sponsor and I will first negotiate the production costs because most sponsors are likely to
compare the cost of other influencers before deciding to collaborate with. Conditions that include
in the document or agreement are theme (e.g., color of outfit), keyword, things influencer must
include in the content, date and time of posting, payment date, other rules involved brand
reputation; for example, do not create any kind of content that negatively affect the company.

     Informant 21: Marketers or sponsors normally contact me on my
Facebook page. My page focuses on reviewing the places like café and restaurants and most of
them just freely let me create the content. However, in case of big company such as camera
product, the sponsor will inform me the project details before I start producing the content.

4.2.7 Interaction with followers and organizing organic content by SMTIs

4.2.7.1 Interaction with followers

     Interaction with followers is another important practice influencers need
to pay attention to because these potential audience, who click likes and give comments in their
posts can significantly affect the page's traffic which indicate the popularity and the impact of the
content. Due to the evolution of the internet, influencers can now interact with their followers in
real-time. The practices that all SMTIs do are replying to their followers' comments and
questions whether from inbox chat or the comment box under the post. Moreover, the content that
influencer has created is one of the practices for interacting with audiences as it is another way to
communicate with audience whether in forms of photos with texts or videos. For instance, some
travel influencer decided to make a post about a certain destination or activity because of their
followers' requests. These audience is considered as an inspiration for the travel influencers as
well which eventually can encourage them to create the content since audience are the one who
keeps the page active. Some influencer interacts with followers by asking questions in their
Instagram stories, providing a couple of choices; for instance, the place that viewers want to see,
opinion about the color of the photos, or their favorite travel style.

     Informant 8: I'm more active on Instagram and I like to play with
Instagram stories asking people questions and post short videos.

Informant 17: I normally interact with the followers by replying to them if they have sent any questions. For example, some people asked me through inbox chat about where the good place to propose his girlfriend is or where you buy the outfit you wore for the camping trip.

Informant 12: I interact with my followers like a friend. Basically, if there is any question from the audience, I will reply to them or offer them suggestions in a specific topic. I think the content I have created also represents the interacting with my followers because the inspiration to travel and the content creation also comes from audiences' suggestions.

4.2.7.2 Practices for organizing organic content by SMTIs

When organizing non-sponsored posts, most of the informants are likely to make the content in forms of photograph as the main practices. Beautiful photo is considered as the most important component of content whether it is filtered or not. Apart from that, the caption or text message is another strategic practice to attract audiences' attention. Most of the informants would review a destination informing the information of a specific place such as name of the place, location, price, contact number, open hours, and highlights of the place. In addition, each SMTI has different descriptive writing in expressing their personal experience or feeling about a destination, depending on the characteristics of the influencers. Many informants stated that organic posts tend to gain higher engagements than sponsored posts. One influencer explained that when making non-sponsored posts, you can freely create your content without concern about target reach or engagement rate determined by sponsors. Some influencers also put hashtag with their page's name and the destination. However, Informant 12 who has almost one million followers on Facebook with high engagement rates created travel posts differently compared to other informants. His photos might not be as beautiful as others, but his character is unique and distinctive. The practice that the informant use for writing text is, apart from name of the place, his extremely adventurous experience, the plan of the trip, reporting during-trip situation, and attitudes toward life, etc.

Informant 12: I'm not the type of travel influencer who review hotels, restaurants, or café. I would share my exotic and special travel experience with my followers, who I have met during the trip, how many days a trip takes, sharing my thought about

life. My journey is not visiting some place a couple days but I ride my motorbike from south to north of Thailand or ride a bike from Hua-Hin to Lumpang, for example.

Informant 17: Most organic posts in our page include destination website or social platform, location, price, contact number, highlight of the place, and open hour.

Informant 21: When posting either organic or sponsored posts, photo is the core value for my page. In one post, normally I would put necessary information like name of place, location, open hours, contact number, signature product or service, and price. If it's sponsored post, there could be a promotion, activity for audience to join; for example, share, like, and tag three friends in this post to randomly get a free voucher.

4.2.8 Influencer marketing effectiveness

In tourism context, influencer marketing was significantly effective as the main platforms that people receive travel information is from social media especially from travel influencers or bloggers' reviews. People were likely to visit the places that they had seen on social media since there were a great number of pictures taken in different angles which audience can easily make a decision to visit. Some unknown destination has become popular among travel seekers as the result of influencer visiting. Another reason that influencer marketing is effective is that audience views her/him as an opinion leader who can provide feature informative and interactive content which is one of the most important quality. SMTI is seen as an authentic source of information; not only about a product/service's features, but also the reviews from their personal experience.

On the side of travel influencers, the engagements (Likes, comments, and shares) and the number of people who can see their content (reach) are considered the core measurement of effectiveness. The number of shares is mentioned by many informants that if your posts are shared by a great number of followers, it means your content is undoubtedly interesting and impactful. In fact, many informants stated that engagement rates of sponsored posts might gain less than organic posts. Yet, some influencers believed that it is not about sponsorship or organic posts, content is king. If the content is fascinating enough to grab audience's attention, they tend to either like, comment, or share your content even though it is sponsored.

Informant 1: "Very effective because influencers can turn an unknown place into a popular one in a few days".

"I normally measure the effectiveness of my posts from engagement rates. The number of shares is the most important because the more people share your post, the more you will get reach, engagement, and followers".

Informant 4: "I think it is 80% effective. From my experience as the owner of a tour company, there is no other more effective way than collaborating with travel influencers to promote tourism".

"Engagement rate and the number of bookings, in case of sponsored posts, are the measurement of effectiveness".

Informant 10: Influencer marketing really works. However, when selecting an influencer to promote a product or service, you need do some research because there are types of influencers and brand image is very critical"

"The measure of effectiveness for my posts is the engagement (e.g., like, comment, share), especially the number of shares because it means your content has the quality".

4.2.9 Effects of Covid-19 situation for travel posting

During Covid-19 situation, it totally affects mobility and sponsored posts but slightly affect organic travel posts. Due to travel restriction, SMTIs would repost their previous trips or use the old material and make new content to post because people still use social media to search and see travel information. To prevent misunderstanding or drama when posting travel content during Covid-19 is that SMTIs must clarify audience about when the trip started. Most of the informants suggested that travel influencers should be consistently posting content so that the chance that their followers are able to see their content on their news feed once they post are likely to be higher than those who reduce posting. Otherwise, those who post once a month, for example, are likely to gain less engagements due to the algorithm of the specific platform. Therefore, the informants would keep the same frequency of their posts. However, when it comes to sponsored posts, the pandemic apparently impact on SMTIs as hospitality and tourism industry is the most severely affected as many travel-related businesses must be closed owing to the

economic downturn and government policies of Covid-19 which leads to reduced income. Since the source of their revenue is from sponsorship, SMTIs are critically suffering from this effect.

Informant 5: "If organic posts, Covid-19 does not affect much but the sponsored posts have to be postponed and some were cancelled".

Informant 7: "The only effect of covid-19 for travel posting is sponsored posts as people cannot travel which directly affects travel-related businesses".

Informant 11: It affects me quite a lot because we cannot travel so I must repost the old trips so that my Facebook page keeps running and gives followers awareness of my page existence. Otherwise, if you reduce posting, the algorithm possibly makes your post disappear from news feed.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This chapter includes summary of the main findings, recommendation for the tourism marketing implication, and limitation of the research. The findings of this study are discussed, according to the objectives of the research:

1. To analyze the importance of Thai SMTIs and their characteristics, such as source credibility, quality of content, and advertising disclosure on Thai millennials' travel decision-making process

2. To explore the Thai SMTIs' interaction with followers and organization of their organic content.

3. To investigate the practices and strategies of Thai SMTIs in organizing their sponsored content and interaction with sponsors.

5.1 Summary of the main findings

5.1.1 Millennials

5.1.1.1 The demographic characteristics of the respondents

The actual sample size of the research is 436 Thai millennials who were born in the year range between 1981 and 2000, had travelled in 2019, and have followed at least one SMTI. The majority of the respondents were female (60.8%) and aged between 23-30 years old. Furthermore, 61% of the respondents are single. The main education level of the respondents was bachelor's degree (75.2%) and most of these millennials had monthly income before Covid-19 between 20,001 THB – 40,000 THB (43.6%) and less than 20,000 THB (31.2%). For career, most of the respondents works in private company (47.7%).

In terms of travel behavior, most of the respondents travelled 1-3 times in a year (53.2%). When it came to information search, the majority of the respondents include comments and reviews from social media e.g. from travel influencers and bloggers (80.2%) as the main source. Moreover, the most influential person for most of the millennial tourists when making a travel decision was family and friend (47.2%), followed by travel influencer/blogger (36.7%). The most popular social media platform that Thai millennials use was

Facebook (87.2%) and YouTube (60.3%). This means social media travel influencers have an impact on Thai millennial tourists when it comes to travel decision making.

5.1.1.2 Attitudes and perceptions of Thai millennials towards social media travel influencers' credibility, quality of content and advertising disclosure

The current study is comprised of four online source credibility dimensions which are Attractiveness, Trustworthiness, Competence, and Similarity. According to the result in table 4.6, Thai millennials have positive attitudes towards influencer credibility. Source credibility is the extent to which the audience perceives the source as experienced and qualified and from whom the consumer can acquire product knowledge. Therefore, the consequence of this study shows that competence is the most important dimension that millennials want to follow a specific influencer as users would trust those influencers that provide a lot of useful information which support previous scholar from Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018) whose result showed that almost 40% of the participants stated that the reason that micro-celebrities become famous is that they have informative and interesting posts, as well as the fact that they are qualified individual of a kind.

The other important characteristics that can affect domestic travel decision making are quality of content and the disclosure of sponsorship. As the result of quality of content in table 4.7, it indicated that the respondents placed relatively high level of positive agreement in content created by the influencers that is useful and interesting to them. Apart from usefulness, concise and clear information, entertaining content, accurate and sufficient information are also indicated a positive agreement by the respondents.

In terms of advertising disclosure, according to the result in table 4.8, the millennials moderately accept the disclosure of sponsorship included in travel influencer's content. As sponsored post is the main source of income for social media influencers, although there are advertisements appearing in the content, people still want to watch their posts and are ok to see some advertising presented by the influencers. Most of the respondents had given relatively positive agreement on advertising disclosure that it is a way to discover something new and they would consider buying the product or service advertised by SMTIs. This may indicate that the respondents might have instantly identified the sponsored posts. On the other hand, the respondents were not likely to see an attempt to make travel post honest and

although the audience still wanted to watch SMTIs' content, they still found advertisement annoying somehow.

5.1.1.3 t-test and one-way ANOVA findings

The result of t-test for differences between female and male on their attitudes towards SMTIs' credibility, quality of content, and advertising disclosure shows that both genders had similar positive attitudes. Furthermore, females perceived that SMTIs could present entertaining content which makes them enjoy while watching rather than males do. In terms of disclosure of sponsorship, Males are less annoyed than females when seeing advertisements in influencer's posts, they find it is something new, they have a higher intention to buy products or services advertised by influencers, and they can feel a higher degree of an attempt to make sponsored posts honest. For the result of one-way ANOVA, the differences among demographics (i.e age and educational levels) showed that no matter how old millennials are and what level of their education was, they do not have an impact on influencer credibility, quality of content, and advertising disclosure. However, when it comes to their monthly income before Covid-19, the result indicates that quality of content is more important for the respondents earning less than 20,000 Thai baht than those who earn 40,000 Thai baht. For occupation, the respondents working in a private company and those working as the government officers have a significant difference on perceived quality of content created by SMTIs. According to both t-test and one-way ANOVA results, they partially rejected hypothesis 1, 2, and 3, which stated that millennials' demographic characteristics have an impact on attitudes towards influencer credibility, quality of content, and advertising disclosure.

5.1.1.4 Regression findings

Multiple regression results demonstrates that influencer credibility, quality of content, and advertising disclosure significantly influenced travel decision making. In the pre-trip and during trip stage, it is found that the attributes of two characteristics (quality of content and advertising disclosure) had significant impact on travel decision making. People prefer to consume the content that provide them sufficient and useful information. Also, it should present an endorsed product or service that relevant with the character of SMTIs to show authenticity and attempt to make travel post honest. In addition, millennials were likely to find advertisement as new knowledge because many interesting products and services were recognized

and purchased due to influencer marketing which is proven to be more effective than traditional marketing. For post-trip or the stage of satisfaction evaluation, it is found that the engagement between SMTIs and followers affect their intention to recommend and share travel experience with others. They tend to be satisfied with the concise information about a destination, accommodation and so on, and advertisement disclosed by SMTIs which should be related to tourism and their individual because people acknowledge sponsorship and find it acceptable to see some advertisement in SMTIs' content.

5.1.2 Social media travel influencers

Social media travel influencer has become widely used for promoting a destination because of their ability to influence audience when making a travel decision. As travel influencers can be anyone who are passionate about travelling and happy to share travel experience with others through social media whether to inspire or to invite people to see the precious world, it is crucial for the influencers to create interesting visual content. Information search is the initial process that all travelers need to do before starting a journey. According to the interview, social media (Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram) and the search engine, Google, are the major sources of information for travel influencers.

In terms of content, the responses show that the kind of content that Thai influencers are likely to create is photos with brief information about the trip such as name of place, transportation, activity, contact number, and price. In addition to pictures, video is another type of content that some influencers have started to make it because audience tend to be more engaged with and it is able to convey a greater feeling. It is obvious that posting beautiful photos may require less efforts than creating a video content. When posting photos, many informants found that single picture would have higher engagement than 10 or more pictures in one post. Creating content to serve the audience's preference is considered important as well. According to the responses from the influencers, people, especially Thais, would like to see those content that give useful information to help them on decision making. Furthermore, they also like to see the content that introduce something new (e.g., new café, hotel, activity, etc.) and is fun and interesting to watch, particularly video-driven content. Therefore, the quality of content in tourism is not only about beautiful photos, but also accurate and concise information, authentic and entertaining content.

Apart from content itself, characteristics of SMTIs can indicate their credibility. From the data of the interview, the four characteristics that SMTIs should have are passion to travel, authenticity, photography skills, and communication skills. Additionally, social media knowledge is vital for them as well because each platform has different features and target. Hence, the influencers need to fully understand about this.

When it comes to choosing to work with sponsors which is SMTIs' main source of revenue, it is found that collaborating with sponsorships which are related to tourism is the first priority when selecting a sponsor. Also, it would be genuine if a product or service that SMTIs present is used by them too because it not only shows the relevance between the product/service and the content, but also trustworthiness from the audience toward the presenter.

In terms of tourism context, people tend to visit the place that they had seen on social media, especially from travel influencers or bloggers who are seen as opinion leaders. Therefore, the SMTI-sponsor collaboration in promoting brands and products is effective and cost-efficient as it adds significant value to their ability to deliver targeted messages and ensures that those highly engaged consumers are reached. For influencers, engagement rates and reach are the key measurement of effectiveness, especially sharing feature. A great number of followers sharing certain posts indicates that the content undoubtedly catches audiences' interests and is impactful.

Normally, digital marketing agencies would first see the influencer's characteristics, and their page traffic before making a decision whether to hire them or not. Before SMIs posting a sponsored content, marketers would always check beforehand to make sure that it meets their requirements. The key strategies for organizing sponsored posts are comprised of posting time, number of product photos, tie-in strategy, interesting content, usefulness, and avoiding sale-and-marketing words. The project conditions such as keywords, engagement rates, theme, and date of posting appears to be vitally important in terms of target reach. Another important practice apart from interaction with sponsors is interaction with existing and potential followers. Replying to the followers' comments and answer the questions are the basic practice that all influencers do since it shows the sense of friendship which can lead to the frequent engagement and positive eWOM. Many posts of travel influencers are also inspired by their

followers who give them comments and suggestions about travel ideas. It can be said that this is another indirect way to communicate with the followers.

Since the Covid-19 has occurred, it brought to inevitable travel restrictions which means it directly affects those who work in the tourism industry, including travel bloggers. Although the pandemic has stopped people's mobility, they still use social media to consume content and information for their future trip. Hence, the influencers would use their old material, sharing their previous trips by producing new content in order to maintain follower's engagements. It might not affect much on posting organic content, but it does for sponsored posts because there is no travel demand which resulted in reduced revenue.

5.2 Discussion

This research examines the importance of Thai SMTIs and their characteristics on domestic travel decision-making process by Thai millennials based on the primary data from 436 questionnaires through purposive sampling, in-depth interview from SMTIs and observation through social media. Understanding the attitudes of Thai millennials toward social media key opinion leaders who created travel content is vitally important for the development of tourism industry as millennials are considered as becoming largest workforce which would help drive the country's economy. These potential generational cohort values travel meaning whether personal development; interpersonal exchange; entertainment and relaxation; and escapism (Cavagnaro et al., 2018). Hence, travel experience seems to be one of the priorities in their lives and millennials are likely to be dependent on other's experiences (e.g., travel influencer or blogger) to improve their travel experience and reduce possible risk.

5.2.1 Objective 1: To analyze the importance of Thai SMTIs and their characteristics, such as source credibility, quality of content, and advertising disclosure on Thai millennials' travel decision-making process.

Examining characteristics that influence millennials' travel decision-making process is important as it can suggest on tourism development, and it is a useful tool for designing more effective content or campaign to attract these potential cohorts. As SMTIs has become one of the main sources of travel information, the three main characteristics explaining

the impact of SMTIs on millennials' travel decision making include influencer credibility, the content they create, and disclosure of sponsorship.

In terms of influencer credibility, Thai millennials, according to the result, tend to follow the influencers who are attractive, unique, authentic, and competent in the destination they visit or the activity they do. This quantitative finding suggests the similar findings of interview from the supply side or SMTIs who mentioned that people prefer to see the content that is trustworthy, informative, and entertaining which can indicate the level of competence in specific knowledge and skills. As SMTIs are perceived experienced travelers, viewers would expect to get useful travel information such as highlight of the place, must-do activities, accommodation, and beautiful spots for photos which mostly happen in the first stage (pre-trip) of travel decision making when people would read the information from SMTIs. Moreover, this generational cohort tends to follow SMTIs who are mostly of the same age, express similar mindsets and have the same travel preference. Millennials have positive attitudes toward SMTIs because they are perceived physically attractive as well as credible. The present finding reinforces the work of Le and Hancer (2021) whose finding revealed that viewers more likely desired to mimic vloggers who are physically and socially attractive and consumers will follow the trends created by guru in the field.

When it comes to travel content, audience, especially young generation, prefer to follow SMIs who can present quality content which mainly include interestingness and usefulness. The posts that are easy to understand and enjoyable to read can grab audiences' interest as visual content and message created by SMTIs is highly valued because they find it interesting and attractive, a source of inspiration, relaxation and fun (Nadanyiova et al., 2020). Moreover, this study found that females perceived the influencer-created content as more entertaining than males do. The research of motivations for social network site use explained that females' motive of the sites use are to communicate with peer group members, strongly related to entertainment, and passing time (Barker, 2009). According to the interviews, in addition to informativeness and interestingness, nature-related content, food and café posts are seemed to be, unsurprisingly, popular among viewers since Thailand is rich in natural resources and famous for Thai cuisine which is proudly promoted by TAT to increase appreciation for gastronomy tourism linked with culinary experience. Most of the respondents like to taste local food that they have

seen on SMTIs' posts and would visit the destinations during the trip, including restaurant and café, which they have seen on SMTIs' social media.

The findings regarding advertising disclosure by SMTIs support the study of Chapple and Cownie (2017) who discovered that lifestyle vloggers exhibit all the important dimensions of source credibility and disclosure of paid endorsements was seen to increase vlogger's credibility as it could mean that SMTIs are showing transparency and genuineness which makes audiences become more accepting of endorsement message. Since millennials are hailed as technologically savvy, ethnically diverse, assertive and flexible (Ahn et al, 2019; VisitScotland, 2017; Sweeney, 2006), their attitudes towards advertisement promoted by SMTIs does not notably decrease influencer's credibility, according to the result of the study. These results differ from the findings of Colliander and Erlandson (2015) who found that disclosure of sponsorship negatively affects the attitudes of perceived credibility of blogs and the bloggers. This research findings can be explained by the fact that sponsorship is known as the main source of SMTIs' income and online content is packed with advertisement; therefore, for the audience it makes sense to see that influencers collaborate with sponsors and brands. Besides, unlike traditional advertising, the product reviewed by the SMTIs is more trusted by millennials than using traditional celebrities because millennials tend to consider these social media influencers as peers who have similar thoughts to them and could give a sense of friendship, recommending worth-to-have products and services (Chapple & Cownie, 2017; Munnukka et al, 2016; Lou & Yuan, 2019; Morimoto & La Ferle, 2008). In terms of gender difference, this study revealed that males show a higher positive attitude towards advertisements than females which contradict to the research of Xu and Pratt (2020) who indicated that female has slightly higher positive attitude towards advertising. This can be explained by the fact that females perceived advertising more intensely and more complex (Birknerová et al., 2018) because they tend to rely on multiple choices before deciding whereas males have more heuristic system, making a quicker decision (Meyers-Levy, 1988).

Referring to the result, Thai millennials are satisfied with the places that have been mentioned or recommended by SMTIs who inspire people to travel and share their travel experience with others. Hence, they are likely to recommend their family and friends to visit the places they have been to where was presented by SMTIs. Reinforcing on the finding of

Kang and Schuett (2013), this study echoes the importance of eWOM on the increased use of social media as the result of perceived enjoyment whether visiting a destination or consume the travel content which directly influences the actual travel-experienced sharing behavior. The power of positive sharing from millennials who are the main active users forms the most significant consumer segment online (Trivedi & Sama, 2019) which has a great impact on travel planning process and intention to visit a destination.

5.2.2 Objective 2: To explore the Thai SMTIs' interaction with followers and organization of their organic content.

This study tries to explore how SMTIs interact with their followers which is considered as one of the effective practices to keep the SMTI-follower relationship. Most of the informants stated that they mostly reply to the followers' comments and to those who send them a direct message. Some influencers would ask their audience to share their travel experience with them while some would make a short question to ask their audiences' opinions. This kind of interaction enhances the stronger bond between SMIs and their followers. Glucksman (2017) found that the interactivity between influencers and viewers, when promoting the products, can turn a follower to a brand consumer which is considered strategic and persuasive as it can maximize brand recognition through individual's personalities. The two-way conversation is proven to be the meticulous strategy that influencers should know their audiences and make sure that SMTIs' reply meets the viewers' expectation which is a new dimension of advertising. The interaction between SMTIs and the followers seems to be more effective than the brand itself directly interact or reach the consumers because word of mouth from influencers is perceived as more credible and reliable. SMTIs or bloggers' page can be seen as a community where people participate in and have a similar preference or value to the influencers which result in positive attitudes and engagement (Chu & Kamal, 2008; Lou & Yuan, 2019).

When organizing non-sponsored content, it is found that beautiful pictures are among the most important elements when influencers organize their organic posts, followed by useful and attractive message. This finding is similar to that in the research of Djafarova and Trofimenko (2018), indicating that the essential characteristic of micro-celebrity is quality of posts (interesting posts and good-quality photos). The idea of the use of visual filters on photos and videos among the informants was similar. Most of them filtered their materials to look

professional and captivating; although followers could recognize this instantly, they did not mind the filtering. However, there were the minority of the audience who said that the pictures displayed by travel bloggers and the reality of the place was somewhat different. Apart from pictures with text message, the popular type of content in tourism that can satisfy and increase their travel motivation is video because audiences are able to see the real scenario before making decisions (Cholprasertsuk et al., 2020).

Although beautiful photos might be a crucial attribute, good-quality content was not less important. The authenticity and uniqueness of SMTIs' characteristics exposed through quality (Audrezet et al., 2020; Chatzigeorgious, 2017; Campbell & Farrell, 2020). One of the most popular SMTIs' pictures are not as spectacular as other SMTIs yet he can differentiate himself from those by displaying extreme adventures, challenging journeys, and lively express his life's experiences with audiences. Furthermore, language usage and communication skills are also as important as, or even more than, photo quality. One interviewee who is a micro-influencer gains a high number of Facebook engagement rate due to touching quotes or short statements with mostly a single photo that might not look perfect but catch viewers' feeling: *"Someone said people who travel alone possibly have two reasons: they're either running away from something or searching for something"*. Organic posts created by SMTIs do not only assist in travel decision making but also inspire young people to create their own content to store their memorable experiences in digital dairy and wish to share with others. Most SMTIs have also started from accumulating their travel experiences and posting on social media with the simple reasons to share with their friends or find a place for photo storage or make a portfolio so that customers can see their work.

5.2.3 Objective 3: To investigate the practices and strategies of Thai SMTIs in organizing their sponsored content and interaction with sponsors.

Influencer marketing is one of cost-efficient marketing tools due to the impressive value of influencer's ability to deliver targeted message and guarantee a wide reach to the very engaged viewers. A consumer-to-consumer medium through social media has enormously grown especially in tourism industry as it is a useful information search for travel planning and assisting in decision-making about destination, products and services (Kang & Schuett, 2013). In terms of tourism context, people tend to visit the place that they had seen on

social media, especially from travel influencers or bloggers who are seen as opinion leaders. Therefore, the collaboration between travel influencers and tourism marketers is considerably effective for brand awareness, social engagement and sales (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019; Bakhshi et al., 2014; Yu et al., 2014).

The influencer's identity is considered highly crucial as it represents the value and the image of endorsed brands. Most of marketers would prudently seek for the right endorser who can perform the best of its product or service in genuine way. SMTIs' page traffic is one of the first things that marketers would like to see about how well their performance or content is. However, influencers need to carefully select sponsors as well since those endorsers who create content to promote a certain product that is not relevant with their own characters will result in less engagements and possibly unfavorable attitude of the audience toward their credibility. This finding supports Audrezet et al. (2020)'s research about authenticity management on SMI-brand partnership. They found that the strategies that SMTIs use are passionate and transparent authenticity. In order to manage passionate authenticity, SMTIs would select brands that fit their style, respect their identity, and free their creativeness. The second type of authenticity refers to the sincere presentation by providing fact-based information about the product or service as well as personal opinions as it shows a sense of integrity as Informant 12 mentioned *"I use them (product) as a part of my life. I think be yourself is the most important thing"*. Disclosing sponsorship can build SMTIs' source credibility and project authenticity (Wellman et al., 2020). This finding agreed with the study of Wellman et al. (2020) conducting in-depth interview with travel influencers regarding tactics they use during the sponsored content process; producing content that is useful to audiences, joining with brands that fit their image, posting less relevant content, overlooking negative experiences that would be unhelpful to audiences. A previous study also revealed that the congruence between endorser and product can increase the intention to purchase and, in tourism context, can mark the uniqueness of a destination (Xu and Pratt, 2018). These imply that these tactics do not only enhance brand's image, but also can foster relationship between SMTIs and their followers. Most travel influencers in this study apply implicit disclosure message, avoiding using sale-and-marketing words but reviewing the product or service as if it is a friend's recommendation and using tie-in advertising to make the sponsored posts more natural and relevant to the content. In fact,

audiences can instantly recognize the sponsored content as advertising regardless of the explicit disclosure as they are encountering various promotional online content on a daily basis (Lee & Kim, 2020).

There is no specific set of standards on content creation by SMTIs because most of the influencers in this study began producing travel content from their enjoyment to travel and have different career backgrounds - some are now full-time SMTIs while others do it as an alternative job. The number of followers might not be the most effective indicator to measure the popularity and success of the influencers because this study found that some influencers have a high number of followers but low engagements (measured by the number of likes, comments and shares) while some micro influencers have a lower number of followers but gain higher engagements which might be because those mega and macro SMTIs have started their page for many years; nonetheless, their content might not meet audiences' expectation. In contrast, some interviewees have become macro influencers just within a couple years due to the content SMTIs created are unique and interesting even though it is sponsored. The finding supports Gretzel (2017)'s research that apart from audience reach, impression, and conversion, engagement is a more effective indicator than the number of followers on SMTIs' social media account when measuring influencer's performance. Therefore, creativeness is the key quality message that will enhance SMTIs' credibility, audiences' perception, and brand collaboration. It can be said that one of the most important factors that bring them success is great content that can convey what audiences are looking for.

5.3 Contributions and Implications

5.3.1 Theoretical contributions

The role of social media influencers (SMIs) in Thailand is understudied. Previous research studied how SMIs influence tourist's behavior and travel motivation (Cholprasertsuk et al., 2020). This study extends the literature using mixed methods to analyze the importance of SMTIs on millennials' travel decision-making process, and to explore influencers' practices and strategies they utilize for content creation both organic and sponsored posts; how SMTIs choose to work with brands, what type of content to produce, the content people hope to see, how to interact with followers, what characteristics travel influencers should

have, and how to manage the content included sponsored campaigns in genuine way. Besides, mixed methods contribute to better understanding the demand side (millennials) and the supply side (SMTIs) to see if there were any similarities or differences in terms of millennials' perceptions of SMTIs' travel content and the target audience's understanding of whether their needs are met, enhancing the validity of inferences. It was intended to get additional insight into the process of organizing sponsored travel-related content, not only for triangulations.

Furthermore, this study has proved the empirical evidence that marketing message presented in the travel influencer's content is perceived more authentic and effective than the brand directly interacts with the target audience itself since the influencers' reviews are seen as if it is a friend's recommendation. Millennials, as an economic workforce who are potentially digital natives, appears to be the important drive to promote domestic destinations and generate the country's revenue. Also, SMITs are hailed as key opinion leaders in the tourism-related field and perceived as a reliable source of travel information who play a crucial role in electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) which can reach greater number of audiences within a short period of time and considered vitally influential. The finding in this study clearly demonstrates that awareness (audience reach) and engagement rate (like, share, and comment) are more effective indicators than the number of followers since some informants can become popular and gain a high degree of engagement within a few years after starting their page. The main reason is that the content they produce is compelling and useful. However, although social media is widely used as an information source, this study confirm the previous research that the most influential person when making a travel decision is family and friends.

5.3.2 Practical implications

SMTIs can draw implications from these findings. First, in order to build a stronger relationship with the followers, in addition to replying to comments and answering questions in chat box, SMTIs might create Q&A content or question-and-answer content about travel-related topics. Inquiring about the opinions of followers can improve the interactive relationship while also demonstrating appreciation for their valuable responses. Apart from posting must-visit destinations, the posts like *Tips when going camping, Things you should prepare when travelling alone, Important items for travel bloggers, and 20 Facts about me* might attract consumer's attentions and make their page more interesting because informativeness and

enjoyment are seemed to be the priority for millennials when they choose to consume certain content. Second, social media influencers should disclose sponsorships, either implicit or explicit, to show the sense of transparency and authenticity with followers and they should take this opportunity to show their ability on creating content. The influencers who have the higher number of female followers should try to avoid explicit sponsorship disclosure but using tie-in strategy or product placement instead. Plus, the product or services endorsed by influencers should be relevant to their characteristics so that the content is more persuasive and can receive favorable feedbacks. Third, as pictures have been widely used in travel posts, it would be more interesting and receive increased engagement, video content might be a good option for SMTIs to enhance their page's traffic and popularity because video posts can give a stronger feeling and be more engaged. Furthermore, people, especially young generation, tend to consume more video content such as vlog which is one of the most popular form of content creation and video content also brings in more revenue for influencers because it looks professional and attracts digital marketers, but it requires video-editing skills and takes longer to create.

Digital marketers also can draw implications from this study. When selecting to hire a social media influencer, marketers should not only see the number of followers but the SMTI's characteristics if matches your products or services, performance of their content, type of content they are specialized, followers' demographics and engagement rates. These attributes are also important to consider before making a decision to work with them. Each type of influencers has their own uniqueness. The value of micro- or nano- influencers sometimes shows that niche audiences tend to be more expensive or difficult to be standardized. In addition, Marketers should let influencers or content creators freely produce the content in order to exhibit the individual's creativeness because influencers often enhance increased engagement to brand-related messaging in a more effective and personal way than brands can do themselves (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Marketers should accept both positive and negative reviews from influencers, not just informing the product functions and this would make the reviews more persuasive. To reach the target audience, marketer should understand the functions and algorithm of each social platforms as well. For example, if brands would like to post a one-minute video to catch viewers' attention, Instagram and TikTok might be the options while YouTube is more suitable for longer content which is seen as an online TV channel where YouTuber can create their own channel.

5.4 Limitations and suggestions for further research

This study has demonstrated the importance of Thai SMTIs who can influence millennial's travel decision-making process, and the role of travel influencers as part of a marketing strategy. However, this study has some limitations like other previous research. The research was conducted in Thailand only, focusing on Thai millennials (Gen Y) as they are the main cohort of this study. In terms of qualitative approach, is also limited to the interviewees who are Thai SMTIs. Examining other generations such as Gen X or Gen Z, interviewing both Thai and foreign influencers, and including those who blog on international tourism, might result in different perspectives on influencer's credibility. The practices and strategies that foreign influencers perform could also shed light on some cultural differences and variation in blogging practices across countries in content creation, sponsor collaboration and follower interaction. Future research could broaden the scope of area to a larger sample outside Thailand to receive different angles in other regions. Since there are several types of SMIs, specializing in different areas of interest or type of travel such as solo, couple, family, food, LGBT, luxury and so on, future research could examine other specific SMIs in order to receive different outlooks on practical implications. This research looks at the effectiveness of influencer marketing but only from the point of view of SMTIs; therefore, future research can also examine the endorsement effectiveness by interviewing digital marketers in order to obtain the insightful information regarding the measurement of sponsored posts produced by SMTIs and the criteria the marketers use when selecting an influencer. Lastly, some sponsors might hire digital marketers, who act as intermediaries, to employ the influencer in advertising their products; therefore, interviewing sponsors or the product-owned company can shed light on further insight such as influencer reputation, costs of influencer marketing, and risks of influencer marketing.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire for tourists (English version)

Social Media Travel Influencers: Strategic Insights and Impact on Domestic Travel Decision

Making by Thai Millennials

Dear Respondents,

This questionnaire is a part of master's degree in Business Administration in Hospitality and Tourism Management (International Program) of Prince of Songkla University, Phuket Campus. My research topic is the Impact of Social Media Travel Influencers on Travel Decision Making by Thai Millennials. Please assist me by spending some time on completing these questions. The information you provide will be kept confidential and the data will be used for academic purposes only.

Thank you for your kind assistance and valuable contribution to this research!

Part I: Personal information

1. Gender

☐ Female ☐ Male

2. Age

☐ 20-22 ☐ 23-26 ☐ 27-30 ☐ 31-35 ☐ 36-39

3. Marital Status

☐ Single ☐ In relationship ☐ Married ☐ Widowed ☐ Divorced

4. Monthly income before Covid-19 (THB):

☐ Less than 20,000 ☐ 20,001-40,000 ☐ 40,001-60,000

☐ 60,001-80,000 ☐ 80,001-100,000 ☐ more than 100,000

5. Education level

☐ Primary School ☐ Secondary/High School ☐ Diploma

☐ Bachelor's Degree   ☐ Master's Degree   ☐ Ph.D.

6. Career

☐ Student   ☐ Private company   ☐ Government officer

☐ Self-employed   ☐ Housewife

☐ Professionals (Physician, lawyer, economist, scientists etc.)

☐ Others (please specify…………………………….)

7. Normally, how often do you travel in Thailand per year?

☐ 1-3 times   ☐ 4-6 times   ☐ 7-9 times   ☐ more than 10 times

8. How did you get information of travel destinations or activities before deciding? (You can provide more than one answer)

☐ Recommendations (family and friends)

☐ Comments on Social media (social media influencers and travel bloggers)

☐ Travel guidebooks   ☐ Review sites (e.g. TripAdvisor, Agoda)

☐ Newspaper/Magazine   ☐ Television

☐ Past travel experience   ☐ Others (Please specify…………………….)

9. Who is *the most influential* person when you make a decision to visit a destination?

☐ Family/friends   ☐ Blogger/Influencer   ☐ Celebrities

☐ Spouse/partner   ☐ Travel agent   ☐ Kids

☐ Others………………......

10. Which social media platforms do you usually use when searching travel information? (Can answer more than ones)

☐ Facebook   ☐ YouTube   ☐ Instagram   ☐ Twitter   ☐ Pantip.com

11. Which social media influencer (s) that you rely on when making decision to travel? Please specify…………………………………….........…………………………………….............

12. Have you ever travelled to any destination because of the advice by the social media influencer?

☐ Yes (which destination…………………………....)   ☐ No

Part II: Attitudes towards social media travel influencers (SMIs)

Note: SMTIs are individuals who have ability to influence others' decision on travelling through social media platforms such as, I Roam Alone, Asa papailong, Go went Go, and Walker Talker.

Direction: Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Attractiveness					
I find SMTIs are attractive.					
I find SMTIs are trendy.					
I find SMTIs are unique.					
I find SMTIs have a good sense of humor.					
Trustworthiness					
I find SMTIs are engaged with the users.					
I find SMTIs are authentic.					
I find SMTIs are consistent.					
Competence					
I find SMTIs are intelligent.					
I find SMTIs are sufficiently experienced about the destination.					
I find SMTIs are competent.					
I find SMTIs are relevant to the product.					
Similarity					
I feel that I can easily identify with SMTIs.					
I feel SMTIs and I have a lot of things in common (e.g. attitude, lifestyle, interest).					

Part III: Quality of content created by social media travel influencers

Direction: Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
provide accurate information about the destinations, products and services.					
Provide enough information so that I can compare with similar products and services.					
Present entertaining content which makes me enjoy while watching.					
Convey concise and clear information which is easy to understand.					
Give travel information that I am interested in and useful to me					

Part IV: Advertising disclosure towards social media travel influencers (SMIs)

Direction: Please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements.

To what extent do you agree with the following sentences about how you feel when SMTIs disclose advertising?	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I am okay to see some advertising showing in the SMTIs' content.					
I still want to watch SMTIs' content even though it is sponsored.					
Travel posts with advertisement does not make me feel annoyed.					
I think advertisement is a way to discover something new.					
It is likely that I will buy products or services (e.g., hotel, tour agency, restaurant, electronic device) advertised by SMTIs					
I feel an attempt to make travel posts honest when SMTIs discloses sponsorship.					

Part V: Travel decision-making process when consuming SMITs' content.

Direction: Please rate how much you agree or disagree with each the following statements.

Level of Agreement: 1=Strongly disagree   2=Disagree   3= Neutral   4=Agree

5= Strongly disagree

Stage 1: Pre-trip	Level of Agreement				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
I tend to search travel influencers posts on social media when I am planning a trip					
I often want to visit the destinations after seeing travel influencer's posts					
I tend to consider travel influencers' recommendations on hotel when I make my travel decisions					
I tend to consider travel influencers' recommendations on activities when I make my travel decisions					
I tend to read travel influencers' reviews/blogs or watch their videos to make sure that I choose the right destinations					
Stage 2: During trip					
I tend to visit destinations (e.g., tourist attractions, café, restaurant, and hotel) where I have seen on travel influencers' social media					
I tend to do further information search from travel influencers' posts during my trip					
I would go sightseeing and take photos or videos of the same locations that I have seen on travel influencers' posts					
I like to taste local food that I have seen on travel influencers' posts.					
Stage 3: Post-trip					
I would recommend my friends or family to visit the					

places I have been to where I see on influencer's posts.					
I tend to share my travel experience on social media					
I feel travel influencer inspired me to travel					
I normally feel happy and satisfied with the places I have been to which are mentioned on travel influencers' posts					
I share my travel experience at the influencer's social media (e.g., post on the comment box)					

Overall, I feel satisfied with following travel SM influencers' recommendations

Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)

Any further suggestions about SMTIs, please feel free to let us know

……………………………………………………………………………………....…..…………

………………………………………………………………………....................................

…………………………………………………………………………..........................

****** Thank you for your kind assistance ******

Appendix B

In-depth Interview Questions (English version)

(For social media travel influencers)

1. What kind of travel do you like? Why?

2. Normally, how often do you travel in a month?

3. Where do you normally get travel information from (official website, travel guidebook, friends, social media etc.)?

4. Which social media platforms do you usually use for travel search?

5. How did you decide to create your own travel-related content, and why?

6. Which social media platforms do you use to post travel message, photos or videos and which one is mostly engaged by followers (Like, comment, share)?

7. What kind of activities or content do you usually engage in?

8. From your experience, what kind of travel content do you think audiences would like to see?

9. What kind of characteristics do you think travel influencers should have when they provide or share something with their audiences?

10. In your opinion, what are the important attributes that define the quality of content?

11. Are some of your posts sponsored? If so, how do you choose to collaborate with the specific product or service?

12. Do you think travel influencers should disclose their sponsorship, showing audiences explicit advertisement; for example, "Paid Ads", "Sponsored by", "Includes Paid Promotion"? Why?

13. What is your approach to promoting a certain product on your post without making audiences feel disturbed or annoyed?

14. Do you think influencer marketing has become, or will become, an effective marketing strategy in terms of tourism? Why?

15. How do you measure the effectiveness of your social media posts?

16. What are the practices when collaborating with sponsors?

17. How do you interact with your followers and sponsors?

18. How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected your travel-related social media postings? (e.g., virtual travel)

Appendix C

Questionnaire for tourists (Thai version)

แบบสอบถามสำหรับนักท่องเที่ยว

"อินฟลูเอนเซอร์สายท่องเที่ยว: กลยุทธ์เชิงลึกและอิทธิพลที่มีต่อการตัดสินใจเดินทางท่องเที่ยวใน

ประเทศของคนไทยกลุ่มมิลเลนเนียล"

เรียน ผู้ตอบแบบสอบถาม

        แบบสอบถามนี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาระดับปริญญาโทจากสาขาบริหารธุรกิจ คณะการบริการและการท่องเที่ยว (นานาชาติ) มหาวิทยาลัยสงขลานครินทร์ วิทยาเขตภูเก็ต ภายใต้หัวข้อ "อิทธิพลของอินฟลูเอนเซอร์สายท่องเที่ยวบนสื่อออนไลน์กับการตัดสินใจเดินทางท่องเที่ยวของคนไทยกลุ่มมิลเลนเนียล" ผู้วิจัยขอความร่วมมือท่านช่วยตอบแบบสอบถามตามความเป็นจริงอย่างครบถ้วน คำตอบของท่าน ผู้วิจัยจะเก็บเป็นความลับและเพื่อจุดประสงค์ใช้ในการศึกษาเท่านั้น

        ผู้วิจัยขอขอบคุณในความร่วมมือที่ท่านสละเวลาเพื่อตอบแบบสอบถามของงานวิจัยครั้งนี้

ตอนที่ 1 ข้อมูลส่วนตัว

1. เพศ

   ☐ หญิง   ☐ ชาย

2. อายุ

   ☐ 20-22 ☐ 23-26 ☐ 27-30 ☐ 31-35 ☐ 36-39

3. สถานภาพสมรส

   ☐ โสด ☐ อยู่ในความสัมพันธ์ ☐ สมรส ☐ แต่งงานแล้ว

   ☐ หม้าย ☐ หย่าร้าง

4. รายได้ต่อเดือน (บาท)

   ☐ ต่ำกว่า 20,000   ☐ 20,001-40,000   ☐ 40,001-60,000

   ☐ 60,001-80,000   ☐ 80,001-100,000   ☐ 100,000 ขึ้นไป

5. ระดับการศึกษา

   ☐ ประถมศึกษา   ☐ มัธยมศึกษา   ☐ ประกาศนียบัตร

   ☐ ปริญญาตรี   ☐ ปริญญาโท   ☐ ปริญญาเอก

6. อาชีพ

☐ นักเรียน/นักศึกษา ☐ พนักงานบริษัท ☐ ข้าราชการ/รัฐวิสาหกิจ

☐ ธุรกิจส่วนตัว ☐ พ่อบ้าน/แม่บ้าน

☐ ผู้เชี่ยวชาญ (เช่น แพทย์ ทันตแพทย์ นักวิจัย ทนายความ วิศวกร นักเศรษฐศาสตร์ เป็นต้น)

☐ อื่น ๆ (โปรดระบุ.........................)

7. ปกติภายใน 1 ปี ท่านเดินทางท่องเที่ยวภายในประเทศจำนวนกี่ครั้ง

☐ 1-3 ครั้ง ☐ 4-6 ครั้ง ☐ 7-9 ครั้ง ☐ 10 ครั้งขึ้นไป

8. ท่านรับข้อมูลท่องเที่ยวของจุดหมายปลายทางหรือกิจกรรมต่าง ๆก่อนตัดสินใจเดินทางจากแหล่ง
ใดบ้าง (เลือกตอบได้มากกว่า 1 ข้อ)

☐ คำแนะนำ (เพื่อนหรือครอบครัว)

☐ ความคิดเห็นจากโซเชียลมีเดีย (อินฟลูเอนเซอร์ หรือ บล็อกเกอร์ท่องเที่ยว)

☐ หนังสือท่องเที่ยว ☐ เว็บไซต์รีวิว (เช่น ทริปแอดไวเซอร์ อโกด้า)

☐ หนังสือพิมพ์/นิตยสาร ☐ โทรทัศน์

☐ ประสบการณ์เดิม ☐ อื่น ๆ โปรดระบุ.................................

9. ใครคือ**คนที่มีอิทธิพลมากที่สุด**ต่อการตัดสินใจเลือกเดินทางท่องเที่ยวไปยังสถานที่นั้น ๆ

☐ ครอบครัว/เพื่อน ☐ บล็อกเกอร์/อินฟลูเอนเซอร์ ☐ คนดัง/ดารา

☐ คู่สมรส/คู่รัก ☐ ญาติ/พี่น้อง ☐ ลูก/หลาน ☐ ตัวแทนนำเที่ยว

10. ท่านมักจะใช้โซเชียลมีเดียแพลตฟอร์มใดบ้างในการหาข้อมูลการท่องเที่ยว (ที่พัก สถานที่
ท่องเที่ยว ร้านอาหาร) (เลือกตอบได้มากกว่า 1 ข้อ)

☐ เฟสบุ๊ค ☐ ยูทูบ ☐ อินสตาแกรม ☐ ทวิตเตอร์ ☐ พันทิป.คอม

11. อินฟลูเอนเซอร์คนใดที่ท่านเคยใช้ในการประกอบการตัดสินใจเดินทางท่องเที่ยว (ระบุได้
มากกว่า 1 คำตอบ) ....

12. ท่านเคยไปสถานที่ท่องเที่ยวตามคำแนะนำของอินฟลูเอนเซอร์หรือไม่ หากเคย โปรดระบุชื่อ
สถานที่ท่องเที่ยวนั้น ๆ (เฉพาะภายในประเทศ)

☐ เคย (โปรดระบุสถานที่..) ☐ ไม่เคย

ตอนที่ 2 ทัศนคติต่ออินฟลูเอนเซอร์สายท่องเที่ยวบนสื่อออนไลน์

คำอธิบาย อินฟลูเอนเซอร์สายท่องเที่ยว คือ บุคคลที่บอกเล่าเรื่องราวเกี่ยวกับการท่องเที่ยวบน
โซเชียลมีเดียและมีอิทธิพลต่อการตัดสินใจกับผู้รับชมในการเดินทางท่องเที่ยว ตัวอย่างอินฟลูเอน

เซอร์ในไทย เช่น I Roam Alone, อาสา พาไปหลง, พลอยเรียนจบแล้วทำไรต่อ, Go Went Go: เที่ยวเว้นเที่ยว, Hash Corner เป็นต้น

คำชี้แจง โปรดเลือกระดับความคิดเห็นของประโยคดังต่อไปนี้ตามความรู้สึกของท่าน

ท่านรู้สึกเห็นด้วยหรือไม่มากน้อยแค่ไหนเกี่ยวกับความน่าเชื่อถือของอินฟลูเอนเซอร์สายท่องเที่ยว	ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง (1)	ไม่เห็นด้วย (2)	ปานกลาง (3)	เห็นด้วย (4)	เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง (5)
ความน่าสนใจ					
รู้สึกว่าพวกเขาดูน่าดึงดูดใจ					
รู้สึกว่าพวกเขาตามเทรนด์ ทันสมัย					
รู้สึกว่าพวกเขามีความเป็นเอกลักษณ์					
รู้สึกว่าพวกเขามีอารมณ์ตลกขบขัน เฮฮา					
ความน่าไว้วางใจ					
รู้สึกว่าพวกเขามีส่วนร่วมกับผู้ติดตาม เช่น การตอบกลับคอมเมนต์ การกดไลค์					
รู้สึกว่าพวกเขานำเสนอข้อมูลที่เป็นจริง					
รู้สึกว่าพวกเขามีความสม่ำเสมอในเรื่องคุณภาพของเนื้อหาที่นำเสนอ					
ความรอบรู้					
รู้สึกว่าพวกเขามีความรอบรู้					
รู้สึกว่าพวกเขามีประสบการณ์พอสมควรในส่วนของข้อมูลของแหล่งท่องเที่ยวนั้น ๆ					
รู้สึกว่าพวกเขามีทักษะในการนำเสนอเนื้อหา					
รู้สึกว่าสินค้าหรือบริการที่นำเสนอมีความสอดคล้องกับเนื้อหาหลัก					

ความคล้ายคลึงกัน					
รู้สึกว่าฉันเข้าใจได้ง่ายถึงเนื้อหาที่พวกเขานำเสนอในเรื่องนั้น ๆ					
รู้สึกว่าฉันกับพวกเขามีอะไรหลายอย่างที่คล้ายกัน (เช่น ทัศนคติ ไลฟ์สไตล์ ความสนใจ)					

ตอนที่ 3 คุณภาพของเนื้อหาที่นำเสนอโดยอินฟลูเอนเซอร์สายท่องเที่ยว

คำชี้แจง โปรดเลือกระดับความคิดเห็นของประโยคต่อไปนี้ตามความเห็นของท่าน

ระดับความสำคัญ 1= ไม่เห็นอย่างยิ่ง 2 = ไม่เห็นด้วย 3 = ปานกลาง 4 = เห็นด้วย 5 = เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง

ท่านเห็นด้วยหรือไม่มากน้อยแค่ไหนเกี่ยวกับคุณภาพของเนื้อหาที่นำเสนอโดยอินฟลูเอนเซอร์สายท่องเที่ยว	ระดับความคิดเห็น				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
ให้ข้อมูลที่ถูกต้องเกี่ยวกับสถานที่ท่องเที่ยว สินค้าและบริการ					
ให้ข้อมูลที่เพียงพอซึ่งช่วยให้สามารถเปรียบเทียบระหว่างสินค้าและบริการที่คล้ายกัน					
นำเสนอเนื้อหาที่สนุกสนาน ทำให้รู้สึกเพลิดเพลินขณะรับชม					
แสดงข้อมูลที่กระชับและชัดเจน ซึ่งทำให้เข้าใจง่าย					
สามารถให้ข้อมูลด้านท่องเที่ยวที่ฉันกำลังสนใจและเป็นประโยชน์					

ตอนที่ 4 การเปิดเผยสื่อโฆษณาที่แสดงบนโพสต์ของอินฟลูเอนเซอร์สายท่องเที่ยว

คำชี้แจง โปรดเลือกระดับความคิดเห็นของประโยคต่อไปนี้ตามความรู้สึกของท่าน

ระดับความสำคัญ 1= ไม่เห็นอย่างยิ่ง 2 = ไม่เห็นด้วย 3 = ปานกลาง 4 = เห็นด้วย 5 = เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง

ท่านเห็นด้วยหรือไม่มากน้อยแค่ไหนเกี่ยวกับสื่อโฆษณาที่เปิดเผยบนโพสต์อินฟลูเอนเซอร์สายท่องเที่ยว	ระดับความคิดเห็น				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
ฉันรู้สึกโอเคที่เห็นโฆษณาบางตัวบนโพสต์ของพวกเขา					
ฉันยังคงต้องการรับชมโพสต์ของพวกเขา แม้ว่าจะมีโฆษณาร่วมด้วยก็ตาม					
ฉันไม่รู้สึกรำคาญใจเวลาเห็นโฆษณาปรากฏบนโพสต์					
ฉันมองว่าโฆษณาทำให้ฉันรับรู้อะไรใหม่ ๆ					
เป็นไปได้ว่าฉันจะซื้อสินค้าหรือบริการที่พวกเขาโฆษณา (เช่น โรงแรม กิจกรรมต่าง ๆ ร้านอาหาร อุปกรณ์อิเล็กทรอนิกส์)					
ฉันรู้สึกถึงความจริงใจในการนำเสนอที่โพสต์ของพวกเขาได้รับการสปอนเซอร์					

ตอนที่ 5 กระบวนการตัดสินใจในการท่องเที่ยวเมื่อมีการรับชมโพสต์ของอินฟลูเอนเซอร์ท่องเที่ยว
คำชี้แจง โปรดเลือกระดับความคิดเห็นของประโยคต่อไปนี้ตามความเป็นจริง
ระดับความสำคัญ   1= ไม่เห็นอย่างยิ่ง 2 = ไม่เห็นด้วย 3 = ปานกลาง 4 = เห็นด้วย
5 = เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง

ระดับแรก ก่อนการเดินทาง	ระดับความคิดเห็น				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
ฉันมักจะค้นหาโพสต์ของอินฟลูเอนเซอร์เวลาวางแผนการเดินทาง					
ฉันมักจะรู้สึกอยากไปเยี่ยมชมสถานที่ท่องเที่ยวนั้น ๆ หลังจากเห็นโพสต์ของอินฟลูเอนเซอร์					
ฉันมักจะพิจารณาคำแนะนำของอินฟลูเอนเซอร์ในเรื่องที่พักเมื่อต้องตัดสินใจในการเดินทาง					
ฉันมักจะพิจารณาคำแนะนำของอินฟลูเอนเซอร์ในเรื่องกิจกรรมต่าง ๆ เมื่อต้องตัดสินใจในการเดินทาง					

ฉันมักจะอ่านรีวิวหรือดูวิดีโอของอินฟลูเอนเซอร์สาย ท่องเที่ยว เพื่อให้แน่ใจว่าเลือกสถานที่ที่ตรงกับความ ต้องการ					
ระดับ 2 ระหว่างการเดินทาง					
ฉันมักจะไปยังสถานที่ที่ฉันเคยเห็นบนโซเชียลมีเดียของ อินฟลูเอนเซอร์ เช่น แหล่งท่องเที่ยว ร้านกาแฟ ร้านอาหาร และที่พัก					
ฉันมักจะค้นหาข้อมูลเพิ่มเติมจากโพสต์ของอินฟลูเอน เซอร์ในระหว่างการท่องเที่ยวของฉัน					
ฉันจะไปสถานที่ท่องเที่ยวที่ฉันเคยเห็นบนโพสต์ของอิน ฟลูเอนเซอร์ เพื่อเดินเยี่ยมชมและถ่ายรูปหรือวิดีโอที่จุด เดียวกัน					
ฉันชอบที่จะลองชิมอาหารท้องถิ่นตามที่ฉันเคยเห็นบน โพสต์ของอินฟลูเอนเซอร์					
ระดับ 3 หลังการเดินทาง					
ฉันจะแนะนำเพื่อนหรือครอบครัวให้มาเที่ยวสถานที่ที่ฉัน เคยไปมาซึ่งเป็นที่ที่ฉันตามจากอินฟลูเอนเซอร์					
ฉันมักจะแบ่งปันประสบการณ์ท่องเที่ยวบนโซเชียลมีเดีย					
ฉันรู้สึกว่าอินฟลูเอนเซอร์เป็นแรงบันดาลใจให้ฉันอยาก เดินทางท่องเที่ยว					
โดยส่วนใหญ่ ฉันมีความสุขและพอใจกับสถานที่ ท่องเที่ยวที่ฉันเคยไปมา ซึ่งเป็นสถานที่ที่ฉันเห็นบน โพสต์ของอินฟลูเอนเซอร์					
ฉันจะแบ่งปันประสบการณ์ท่องเที่ยวของฉันบนโซเชียล มีเดียของอินฟลูเอนเซอร์สายท่องเที่ยว					

โดยภาพรวม ฉันรู้สึกพอใจกับคำแนะนำของอินฟลูเอนเซอร์สายท่องเที่ยวที่ฉันติดตาม

ไม่เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง	ไม่เห็นด้วย	ปานกลาง	เห็นด้วย	เห็นด้วยอย่างยิ่ง
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

ข้อเสนอแนะอื่น ๆ

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****** ขอบคุณอย่างยิ่งที่ให้ความร่วมมือในการตอบแบบสอบถาม ******

Appendix D

In-depth Interview Questions (Thai version)

คำถามเพื่อการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก
(สำหรับอินฟลูเอนเซอร์)

1. คุณชอบการท่องเที่ยวประเภทใด (เช่น เชิงธรรมชาติ เชิงวัฒนธรรม เชิงอนุรักษ์) เพราะเหตุใด

2. โดยปกติ คุณท่องเที่ยวกี่ครั้งใน 1 เดือน

3. คุณค้นหาข้อมูลท่องเที่ยวจากแหล่งใดเป็นส่วนใหญ่ (เว็บไซต์ท่องเที่ยว หนังสือท่องเที่ยว จาก เพื่อน หรือโซเชียลมีเดีย)

4. คุณมักจะใช้โซเชียลมีเดียแพลตฟอร์มใดในการค้นหาข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับการท่องเที่ยว

5. คุณตัดสินใจอย่างไรในการสร้างคอนเทนท์เกี่ยวกับการท่องเที่ยวเป็นของตัวเอง เพราะเหตุใด

6. คุณใช้โซเชียลมีเดียแพลตฟอร์มใดในบ้างการโพสต์ข้อความ รูปภาพ หรือวิดีโอที่เกี่ยวกับการ ท่องเที่ยว และแพลตฟอร์มใดที่ผู้ติดตามมีส่วนร่วมมากที่สุด (เช่น การกดไลค์ คอมเมนท์ หรือการ กดแชร์)

7. คุณมักจะทำกิจกรรมหรือสร้างคอนเทนท์แบบใดในการนำเสนอ

8. จากประสบการณ์ของคุณ รูปแบบคอนเทนท์การท่องเที่ยวแบบใดที่คุณคิดว่าผู้ชมอยากที่จะเห็น

9. เวลาที่จะนำเสนอคอนเทนท์ให้แก่ผู้ติดตามได้รับชมนั้น คุณคิดว่าอินฟลูเอนเซอร์สายท่องเที่ยว ควรมีลักษณะเฉพาะหรือคุณสมบัติอย่างไรบ้าง เช่น ตลกเฮฮา ทันสมัย เนื้อหามีสาระ กระชับและ ถูกต้อง มีความน่าเชื่อถือ เป็นต้น

10. ในความคิดเห็นของคุณ สิ่งสำคัญที่บ่งบอกว่าคอนเทนมท์นี้มีคุณภาพคืออะไร

11. โพสต์ของคุณบางโพสต์ได้รับการสนับสนุนเพื่อโฆษณาสินค้าหรือบริการบ้างหรือไม่ หากมี คุณมีเกณฑ์ในการเลือกที่จะร่วมทำงานกับบริษัทของสินค้าหรือบริการนั้น ๆ อย่างไร

12. คุณคิดว่าอินฟลูเอนเซอร์สายท่องเที่ยวควรเปิดเผยการได้รับการสนับสนุนจากโฆษณานั้น ๆ ให้ ผู้รับชมทราบหรือไม่ เพราะเหตุใด เช่นการขึ้นคำชี้แจงว่า "ได้รับการสนับสนุนจาก..., สนับสนุน โดย....," เป็นต้น

13. คุณใช้หลักเกณฑ์หรือวิธีการใดในการโฆษณาสินค้าหรือบริการนั้น ๆ บนโพสต์ของคุณโดยไม่ทำให้ผู้ชมรู้สึกรำคาญหรือถูกขัดจังหวะ

14. คุณคิดว่าตลาดออนไลน์ที่ใช้อินฟลูเอนเซอร์ในการโฆษณาสินค้าจะเป็นกลยุทธ์ทางการตลาดที่มีประสิทธิผลหรือไม่ในแง่ของด้านการท่องเที่ยว เพราะเหตุใด

15. อะไรคือตัววัดความมีประสิทธิผลบนโพสต์ของคุณ

16. ขั้นตอนของการร่วมงานกับสปอนเซอร์มีอะไรบ้าง

17. คุณมีปฏิสัมพันธ์กับผู้ติดตามและสปอนเซอร์อย่างไรบ้าง

18. การระบาดของโควิด 19 ส่งผลกระทบต่อการโพสต์ของคุณที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการท่องเที่ยวอย่างไร

Appendix E

Sample of interview from a micro influencer

1. What kind of travel do you like? Why?

Answer: I love to visit nature places and I love adventure.

2. Normally, how often do you travel in a month?

Answer: 1-2 times per month.

3. Where do you normally get travel information from (official website, travel guidebook, friends, social media etc.)?

Answer: I get the information from various sources like Google, travel-related website, Pantip.com, Facebook, and, sometimes, friends.

4. Which social media platforms do you usually use for travel search?

Answer: I mostly use Instagram and Facebook to seek for a destination. For Instagram, I basically use it to see the pictures of the current situation of a destination like weather, activity and so on. For Facebook, I normally visit specific Facebook pages of the blogger that I like, especially their style of travel, to see the place I am interested to go too.

5. How did you decide to create your own travel-related content, and why?

Answer: The reason I started doing my page was to find myself, to try something new because at that time I was not happy and satisfied with my life that much, then I first decided to go trekking which eventually I found it interesting and fun. Besides, I like writing stories, hence I created my Facebook page to keep the good memories and travel experiences.

6. Which social media platforms do you use to post travel message, photos or videos and which one is mostly engaged by followers (Like, comment, share)?

Answer: I have three social media platforms which are Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube for posting my travel content. Of course, the platform that gains a great number of engagements is Facebook.

7. What kind of activities or content do you usually engage in?

Answer: The main form of my content is photos with description below each picture. My page does not focus on product reviews. However, I have been started creating video content because I want to try something new even though it takes more time to make it, and the

followers seem enjoying watching them, but I must admit that the engagement is much lower than photo content.

8. From your experience, what kind of travel content do you think audiences would like to see?

Answer: Audience's interest varied. Personally, I think when it comes to travel, people like to see photos rather than spending more time watching videos. Importantly, a blogger or influencer should know the basic of photography composition; how to arrange visual elements within the frame. Apart from photos, people now are more likely to watch video content since there are some of my followers have requested me to make a travel vlog.

9. What kind of characteristics do you think travel influencers should have when they provide or share something with their audiences?

Answer: The most important characteristic of travel influencer, for me, is honesty. The content presented to audience must be real because influencers are individuals who have ability in influencing and inspiring people to travel or visit a destination. Hence, the honest communication is extremely vital to invite potential travelers go to a specific place. Apart from that, the technique of photography totally depends on a person's skill. It can be practiced as long as the blogger or influencer is passionate about travel.

10. In your opinion, what are the important attributes that define the quality of content?

Answer: The content with good quality includes beautiful and meticulous photography. The information presented in the post must be accurate. You might not need to provide a detailed information but necessary ones such as name of the place, contact number, price, and location.

11. Are some of your posts sponsored? If so, how do you choose to collaborate with the specific product or service?

Answer: I will not refuse to collaborate with hotel, shops, and restaurants because my page concerns about nature, trekking, and camping. If the product or service is related to equipment that I can use during my trip like camera, trekking boots, and backpack, then I am happy to accept. All sponsored posts must be created by me, not just posting the content created by others.

12. Do you think travel influencers should disclose their sponsorship, showing audiences

explicit advertisement; for example, "Paid Ads", "Sponsored by", "Includes Paid Promotion"? Why?

Answer: Yes, we should. However, most of audiences recognize the sponsored post when they first see it because it is obvious that we write something about product or service; for example, our trip for today, we travel by MINI Countryman. Therefore, we will not use explicit marketing words.

13. What is your approach to promoting a certain product on your post without making audiences feel disturbed or annoyed?

Answer: When promoting a product or service, most of the time I use tie-in strategy to communicate with audience because it looks more natural and does not make audience feel disrupted. I just review it based on my experience. I would start with some knowledge related to the product, telling them the advantage of the product, how do you feel after using it for a while. You should not be pretending to promote it just for money. Also, I will accept only two sponsored posts a month.

14. Do you think influencer marketing has become, or will become, an effective marketing strategy in terms of tourism? Why?

Answer: Yes, of course it has. Travel influencers apparently impact on audiences because from my experience, people around me consume travel content from influencers or bloggers and many follow them, including me.

15. How do you measure the effectiveness of your social media posts?

Answer: I measure it by number of reach and engagements (Likes, comments, and shares). For my page, the post received high reach and share, it means that post is interesting and effective. Yet, the number of shares on my page is still low.

16. What are the practices when collaborating with sponsors?

Answer: Firstly, sponsors are likely to contact me via email, giving the details of the content that they would like me to create for posting. They will ask to see my page's traffic and the demographic of the followers. The conditions may include hashtag, number of photos, theme, posting date, company regulation, etc. Second, after accepting the deal, I will draft the storyboard, which can be in any form e.g., Power Point, Word, or PDF file, and send them to check whether it need to be adjusted at any point. Next, when sponsors confirmed that my draft is

good to start, I start making the content and let them check for approval before posting in case there is anything that need to be changed. After posting, sponsors might ask to see your post's performance. Finally, sponsor will pay me within 30 days after posting.

17. How do you interact with your followers and sponsors?

Answer: I interact with my followers like a friend. Basically, if there is any question from the audience, I will reply to them or offer them suggestions in a specific topic.

18. How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected your travel-related social media postings? (e.g., virtual travel)

Answer: Covid-19 does not affect much on postings because normally we do not post the content right after we finish a trip. So, we have photo and video stocks that we can manage to post during Covid-19 even though there is travel restriction. One thing I need to be concerned about is posting time because if you post your content during the severe situation like second and third waves of the pandemic, you might get bad feedbacks and less engagements.

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