

CREDIBILITY OF TRAVEL INFLUENCER ON MILLENNIAL TRAVELING BEHAVIOR



An Independent Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts (Communication Arts) in Strategic Communication Management

FACULTY OF COMMUNICATION ARTS

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บทวิทยานิพนธ์ : การรับรู้ความน่าเชื่อถือของผู้มีอิทธิพลด้านการท่องเที่ยวต่อพฤติกรรมการเดินทางของนักท่องเที่ยวกลุ่มมิลเลนเนียล. (CREDIBILITY OF TRAVEL INFLUENCER ON MILLENNIAL TRAVELING BEHAVIOR) อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก : ผศ. ดร.สุทธิลักษณ์ หวังสันติธรรม

การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อทำความเข้าใจความน่าเชื่อถือของผู้ทรงอิทธิพล ด้านการท่องเที่ยวในกลุ่มนักท่องเที่ยวมิลเลนเนียล และวิธีที่ผู้ทรงอิทธิพลด้านการท่องเที่ยวกระตุ้นพฤติกรรมการเดินทางของนักท่องเที่ยวกลุ่มมิลเลนเนียล การศึกษาใช้วิธี การเชิงคุณภาพที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึก โดยนักวิจัยได้สัมภาษณ์นักท่องเที่ยวกลุ่มมิลเลนเนียล 12 คน ทั้งผู้ที่เดินทางในและต่างประเทศ อายุระหว่าง 25 ถึง 40 ปี นอกจากนี้ผู้เข้าร่วมวิจัยต้องจัดทริปปายในหนึ่งปี และติดตามผู้มีอิทธิพลด้านการท่องเที่ยว ในส่วนของแนวคำถามที่เป็นเครื่องมือในการวิจัย ประกอบด้วย 4 ด้าน ได้แก่ ประชากรและการใช้สื่อ ทศนคติต่ออิทธิพลด้านการท่องเที่ยว แหล่งที่มาของความน่าเชื่อถือ และพฤติกรรมการเดินทางของนักท่องเที่ยว การค้นพบนี้เผยให้เห็นทัศนคติที่ดี ต่อผู้มีอิทธิพลด้านการเดินทางและการรับรู้ว่าเป็นแหล่งข้อมูลที่เชื่อถือได้ใน ขณะเดินทาง โดยประสบการณ์ด้านการเดินทางเป็นสิ่งสำคัญที่สุดที่นักท่องเที่ยว ต้องการ ในแง่ของพฤติกรรมการเดินทาง นักท่องเที่ยวกลุ่มมิลเลนเนียล 2 กลุ่มได้รับ แรงบันดาลใจและแรงจูงใจจากแหล่งข้อมูลออนไลน์ ประการสุดท้าย ผู้เข้าร่วมมีแนวโน้มที่จะหารือเกี่ยวกับการค้นพบการบอกต่อทางอินเตอร์เน็ตในแง่ของบริบทการเดินทางบ่อยขึ้น เป็นที่ชัดเจนว่า แทนที่จะใช้การตลาดแบบชำระเงิน ความสำคัญของผู้ มีอิทธิพลด้านการท่องเที่ยวได้เติบโตขึ้นอย่างต่อเนื่อง และตอนนี้จูงใจนักเดินทางรุ่นมิลเลนเนียล

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The objectives of this study was to understand the credibility of travel influencers among millennial travelers and how they motivate millennial travelers' travel behavior. It is based on a qualitative methodology that involves use of in-depth interviews. Twelve millennial travelers both domestic and international between the ages of 25 and 40 were interviewed. They had to organize the trip within a year and follow to travel influencers. This study employed a question guideline as the research instrument based on four dimension which are demographics and media usages, attitude towards travel influences, source of credibility, and travel behavior. The findings revealed a favorable attitude toward travel influencers and a perception that they are a reliable source of information while traveling. Regardless of the fact that authentic experiences of travel influencers are the most important aspect travelers required. In terms of travel behavior, two group of millennials travelers inspiring and motivating by online sources. Lastly, participants now tend to discuss eWOM findings in terms of travel context more frequently. It is clear that, rather than using paid influencer marketing, the importance of travel influencers has steadily grown and now motivates millennial travelers.



Field of Study:	Strategic Communication Management	Student's Signature
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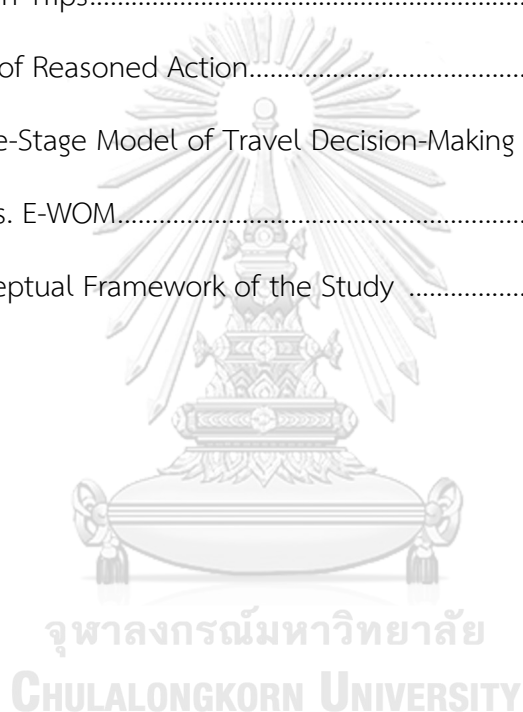
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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Significance of the Study

In an age of digitization, social media plays a vital role in terms of the availability and dissemination of information. Many daily human activities have moved online (Denning, 2014; Kusá & Záziková, 2016), and social media is becoming increasingly powerful in brand and consumer behavior (Mohsin, 2020; Smart Insights, 2018). The online content provided by the social media platforms considerably changes the intentions of the consumers, especially during travel activities (Upananda, D. R., & Bandara, D. M., 2022). This boom in the accessibility of travel-related information can be found in the form of user-generated content on social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. To this end, the emergence of “senders,” also known as social media influencers (SMIs), is on the rise. (Freberg, Grahamb, McGaughey & Freberg, 2010; De Veirman, 2017). These additionally serve as a dynamic third-party advocate to convey a brand’s message to vast audiences all across the world.

Social media influencers represent a new kind of third-party endorser who can shape consumer attitudes and alter people’s lives (Freberg, Grahamb, McGaughey & Freberg, 2010). Social media influencers were individuals who regularly used their social media accounts, participated in

a certain topic, and provided new information (Loeper et al., 2014). It is now common for businesses to employ famous social media influencers to endorse their products and services through social media platforms. In a report published by Gallagher (2018), it was revealed that brand engagement as a result of social media influencers jumped from 81% in 2017 to 90% in 2018. Each year, more social media influencers become visible on our feeds, and some collaborate with businesses on virtually every post, story, and video that they produce. In this regard, marketers see this as a valuable type of advertising. Santiago and Castelo (2020) mentioned that “the perception of the effectiveness of influencer marketing by marketers has been positive, playing an increasingly important role in the marketing strategy of brands.”

On a global scale, the capability of the internet can provide various sources of information in the form of words, sounds, virtual reality, and video, which save time and cost more than traditional methods. As travelers, they can now use social media to search for travel-related information and make important travel decisions by reading other travelers' experiences. Even though it is challenging for them to find a credible source, Travel influencers are considered a more reliable source when compared with the information provided by companies (Chu & Kim, 2011). Moreover, this two-way online interaction between travelers (those producing travel-related content) and users (individuals who view and

consume this content) has brought about rapid and radical changes today.

According to statistics by Think With Google, 2014, more than 75% of travelers use the internet for trip planning, 65% of leisure travelers do online research before making their destination choice, and 53% of online travel videos are viewed. Travelers are constantly acquiring updated information. Upananda and Bandara (2022) stated that consumers cannot evaluate travel products and services without traveling because of an intangible characteristic. As a result, consumers are now increasingly using self-study trips instead of tour agencies to obtain necessary information. In this regard, influencer marketing is therefore a commonly employed strategy that can drive travel intentions. For example, some travelers decide on travel destinations based on available information and suggestions provided by travel influencers, as well as organizing their vacations, flights, and accommodations in advance (Gerritsen & Zeng, 2014). Therefore, online recommendations or reviews can be utilized as evidence, which will reduce the associated risk before a trip occurs.

Today's popular, non-academic literature has extensively explored and talked about the expanding phenomenon of influencer marketing on social media. Most studies that approach this topic examine whether or not these tactics have been financially beneficial from a marketing or business perspective. However, that is only a part of it. The travel

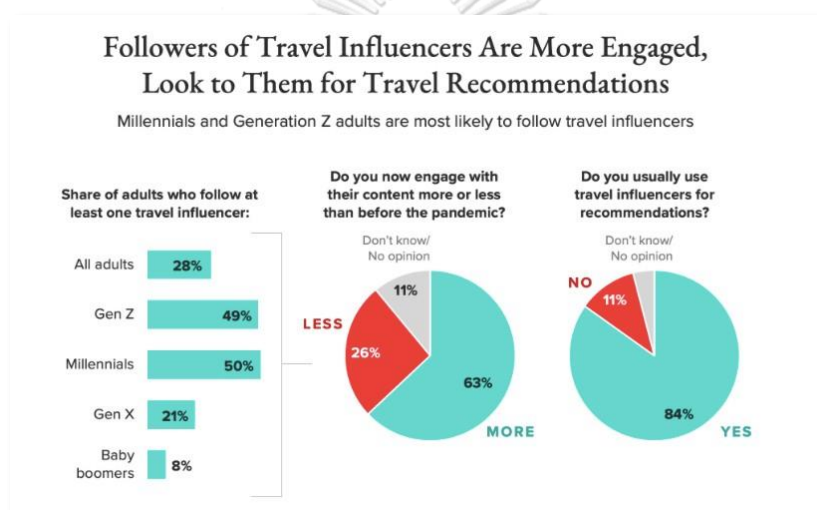
representations uploaded by this group of travelers are created in distinctive ways that balance between their personal traveler's photography styles and the authenticity of their travel destinations. In today's technology-mediated world, which will direct travelers' decision-making, the digital utilization of these travel influencers is unique (Baruah, 2017).

According to the generation of travelers, experts believe that social media has a particularly powerful on millennials (also known as Generation Y, born between 1981 and 2000), who are the first social media generation to have grown up and been exposed to readily accessible technology (Gursoy et al., 2013; Smith and Anderson, 2018). Similar to the Tourism Authority of Thailand (2018), it shows the millennials are a potential group of travelers, and they are the generation that is willing to pay more for experience as they will have the highest purchasing power in recent years.

With 38% of millennials also trusting social media influencers and their content, it can be seen that influencer marketing is one of the significant factors on the decision-making process of this generation (Klein, 2018). In addition, millennials have made a significant contribution to the growth of the travel industry through social media platforms. Trip pictures are being posted online every minute, enticing many people to travel. Millennials would choose to have new experiences rather than stay

comfortably in a luxury destination. However, the travel activities of millennials will probably change in the near future. Their preferences would change as they aged (Kovacs, 2019). Therefore, it depends on several online sources that consumers tend to use in searching for information before traveling.

Figure 1.1: Followers of Travel Influencers

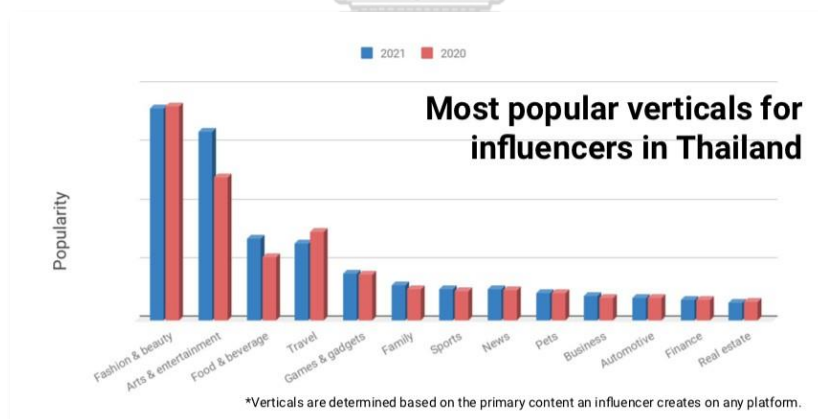


Source: Meyers, A. (2022). *Influencers are the new travel agents for millennials, generation Z*. <https://morningconsult.com/2021/05/24/social-media-travel-influencers/>

As shown in *Figure 1.1*, global results show that 84% of followers of travel influencers said they have turned to them for recommendations, and 63% said they are engaging with that content, such as posts and reviews, now more than they were before last year's initial lockdown. This suggests that travel influencers could be a valuable resource for travel brands trying to entice all types of consumers back to

their sites (Meyers, 2022). According to social media users and businesses who recognize social media users are spending more time online, particularly in the most recent year due to COVID-19, businesses have been utilizing these influencers' platforms to increase brand awareness, product sales, and conversions. More social media influencers are entering the social media world, resulting in some platforms being overwhelmed by social media influencers. Recently, out of different social media platforms, KResearch's poll found that Facebook and Instagram are now influential.

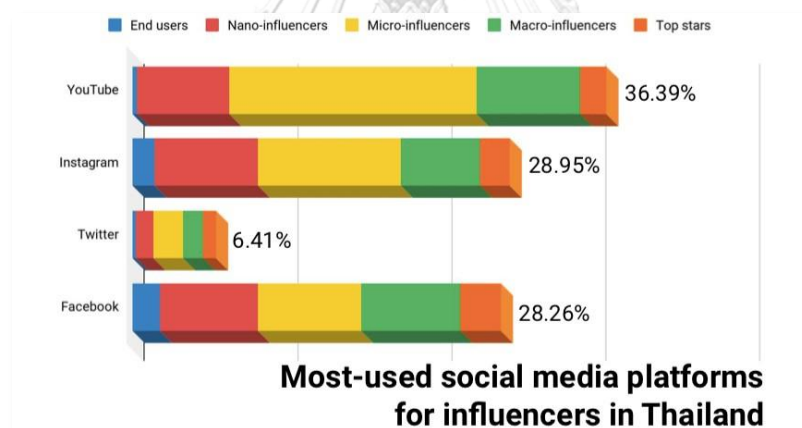
Figure 1.2: Influencer Verticals in Thailand



Source: Communications, A. M. G. (2021). *Influencer marketing in Thailand for 2021: Instagram leads all platforms for engagement rates by users on influencer marketing campaigns*. <https://anymindgroup.com/news/press-release/16363/>

Based on statistics from Anymind (2021) in *Figure 1.2*, the most popular socialmedia influencer verticals are the fashion and beauty, arts and entertainment, and food and beverage verticals, respectively. The content in the travel vertical has been growing over the past few months, and it may soon reclaim third place for the upcoming year. Additionally, businesses do not necessarily have to limit themselves to a single vertical. Instead, regardless of the vertical, businesses can examine the demographics of their followers to invest in social media influencers.

Figure 1.3: Influencer by Platforms in Thailand



Source: Communications, A. M. G. (2021). *Influencer marketing in Thailand for 2021: Instagram leads all platforms for engagement rates by users on influencer marketing campaigns*. <https://anymindgroup.com/news/press-release/16363/>

According to *Figure 1.3*, of the top social media platforms used by socialmedia influencers in Thailand, YouTube ranks first at 36.39%, whilst Instagram and Facebook are similar at 28.95% and 28.26%, respectively. On YouTube, the social media influencer vertical that belongs to arts and entertainment influencers accounts for 45.3% of total social media influencers. On the other hand, there are several famous travel channels that are represented by travel influencers. For example, Chillpainai has a number of 5.82K subscribers, Go Went Go has a number of 6.2K subscribers (*Figure 1.4*), The Gaijin Trips has a number of 8.65K subscribers (*Figure 1.5*), etc. With restricted movements caused by the pandemic, YouTube had increased audiences and usage durations, which ultimately had an power on social media influencer earnings from content on YouTube and a higher usage rate on YouTube. But there is also the most populous demographics on Instagram and Facebook. However, the largest social media influencer segment in Thailand is micro- influencers, which account for 41.7% of all kinds of influencers.

Figure 1.4: Go Went Go



Source: Sukanlayaruk, P. (2020). *Koh Similan yok office pai thiao talay Thai thi tit andap lok | vlog | Gowentgo*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtTPwc-QeOU>

Figure 1.5: The Gaijin Trips



Source: Passornsirikul, T. (2021). *The gaijin trips baek pe thiao khon diao EP62 Fuji mueang Leoi*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7e2wZmiiSk>

The study will look at two types of travelers: international and domestic, to see how their travel habits differ as a result of the COVID-19

situation. There are various distinctions when comparing different aspects of travel behavior, such as information, accommodation, transportation, food, destinations, and ability to travel. As a result, many travel influencers share content with regards to these two kinds of travel to satisfy their needs.

However, the increasingly popular phenomenon of influencer marketing has become yet another factor that influences the purchase intentions of consumers online (Akar & Nasir, 2015; Forbes & Vespoli, 2013). But there is insufficient research regarding the effectiveness of travel influencers, particularly on millennials. The purpose of this study aims to perceive credibility of travel influencers among millennial travelers and how they motivate millennials travel behavior. This may further drive their intention to visit the destination. It may help marketers and travel influencers to contribute practical strategies, influencer sponsorship tailored to millennials, and a rise in business purchases.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To describe the perceived credibility of travel influencers on millennial travelers.
2. To investigate motivation of travel influencers on millennials travel behavior.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What is the perceived credibility of travel influencers on millennial

travelers?

2. How do travel influencers motivate millennials travel behavior?

1.4 Scope of the Study

In order to gain a better understanding, the research is based on a qualitative approach through an in-depth interview. With purposive sampling techniques, a total of twelve people will be chosen as participants. The participants can be males and females between the ages of 25 and 40 who are millennials. They can range in level of expertise, business, and location. The interview will be divided into two groups: one for international travelers for those who traveled to another country, and another for domestic travelers for those who traveled to Thailand. Each participant must actively follow travel influencers relevant to their interest in travel-related content and organize the trip based on online sources within one year. The interview will also take place from October to November 2022, or approximately one month. The participants will respond to structured questions via the Zoom Cloud Meetings Application, where they can express their true opinions in a natural and neutral environment. Then, the extensive interviews will be tape-recorded and transcribed. They are given n regarding their confidentiality.

1.5 Operational Definitions

Influencer Marketing – A process in digital marketing where social media influencers are integrated into a brand’s communication on social media platforms, where the focus is placed on specific individuals rather than a target market as a whole. In this study, “influencer marketing” refers to the travel influencers who create outstanding travel content with regards to international and domestic trips that is exposed on social media platforms such as Go Went Go, TheGaijin Trips, Asapapailong, and others.

Attitudes - In this study, “attitudes” refer to the participants’ experiences, knowledge, or wisdom gained from travel influencers.

Source of Credibility - It is defined as “believability” and refers to a person’s perception of the truth of a piece of information. It serves as a means for the receiver of information to rate the source of the communication. There are three dimensions, which are trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness.

- 1. Trustworthiness** - It refers to their confidence in the influencer’s ability to deliver the information travelers believe is most valid.
- 2. Expertise** - It refers to the knowledge, experience, or skills possessed by travel influencers as they relate to the communication topic.

3. *Attractiveness* - It refers to characteristics of a person's style or the appearance that can result in the group of travelers.

Quality of the Content - Consumers' perception of the information's quality, good, updated, accurate and reliable as expressed through social media platforms.

Travel Intention - It is regarded as a traveler's intention to travel and purchase travel products and services (Lee, 2009). In other words, "travel intention" can be defined as travelers' being interested in a destination and subsequently making a trip (Lu, 2010).

Travel Behavior - It refers to how travelers make decision and behave in regards to their attitudes for pre-trip , during trip, and post-trip.

Millennials - The generation is defined as individuals who were born between the years 1980 to 2000 (Young & Hinesly, 2012). In this study, the term refers to millennial travelers who are traveling on an international or domestic trip.

1.6 Expected Benefits from the Study

1. Academically, the results from this study should extend the better understanding credibility of travel influencers on millennial travelers, which could be beneficial for those who are interested in this area.

2. Practically, the result can also be significant to the marketing business and travel influencers. They can use the results as a guideline to develop their practical strategies, influencer sponsorship that are tailored to millennials and maintain a rise in business purchases.



CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The goal of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the study's fundamental ideas and to perceive credibility of travel influencers on millennial travelers and how they motivate millennial travel behavior. The variables and various concepts associated with this study must be explored. Thus, the chapter is divided into five key concepts, which are the concept of attitude towards influencer marketing, source of credibility, travel behavior, and millennials.

2.1. Influencer Marketing

Since the advent of social media platforms, the development of marketing technology has made it much easier for businesses (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Digital marketing is one of the marketing approaches that has been defined as “the use of digital technologies to create integrated, targeted, and measured brand communication that helps to acquire new consumers and retain existing consumers while building deeper relationships with them” (Langan, Cowley & Nguyen, 2019). Thus, the way to update information has completely changed. Online is now facilitated by social media through texts, photos, videos, blogs, or social networking sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter (Nedra et al., 2019; De Valck et al., 2009).

Digital marketing, in particular, relates to online marketing. The real world and internet technologies are becoming more tactile (Chaffey, 2018). Pitana and Pitanaric claim that consumer behavior in the tourism sector has changed dramatically as internet technologies and digital marketing progress. According to Satapathy (2016), digital marketing is the latest trend and the future for all businesses. The success rate of digital travel agencies is remarkably high in terms of both numbers and quality. In terms of paid advertising, television has traditionally dominated, but digital advertising spending surpassed it in 2017. (Woods, 2016). Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) marketing has replaced traditional word of mouth (WOM), and influencer marketing has emerged (Chatzigeorgiou, 2017). The new platform primarily focuses on the best practices for communicating with consumers and how to convey their decisions. Facebook and Instagram, for example, are preferred platforms for sharing personal experiences that contribute to a sense of authenticity and credibility; as a result, this type of user-generated content has been widely adopted (Alic, Pestek & Sadinlija, 2017). Content about a trip or vacation can be easily posted to the Internet and can also generate buzz, motivate traveler' decisions. In order to explore trips and share their personal experiences with a hotel, restaurant, travel attraction, or activity, consumers also use social networking sites. According to statistical data from 2019, TripAdvisor has approximately 70 million monthly visitors who are

actively seeking out travel information and advice from the site. Due to social media's low cost and global reach (Alic, Pestek & Sadinlija, 2017), marketers have begun to utilize the advantages of social media by incorporating them into their marketing strategy and stimulating conversations between potential consumers.

As the world progressed into the digital era, the key marketing strategies changed and adapted to the emerging generation of digital and social media marketing. Celebrity marketing has consistently generated positive returns for advertisers throughout time (Francis and Yazdanifard, 2013). It has also evolved with the new digital world and is now more commonly referred to as "influencer marketing." Influencer marketing has become increasingly popular over the last 10 years and is a type of online advertising that utilizes social media (Bogner & Puljic, 2019). While advertising has historically used celebrities to increase brand awareness of a product or service, influencer marketing is distinct because it uses social media celebrities with a significant online presence. These "social media influencers" can leverage their follower base to purchase products or services from a third-party endorser that they represent (Freberg & McGaughey, 2011). The business's good reputation and goals are based on this type of endorsement (Lim & Wong, 2011). The increase in social media influencers' ability to persuade consumers has shifted them toward becoming endorsers by increasing brand awareness. This type of

advertising, while still a relatively recent phenomenon, is effective compared to other, more traditional marketing strategies. Additionally, this phenomenon is an emerging channel that advertisers invest in as it promises a strong relationship with consumers and a rise in sales (Knoll 2016; Smartinsights 2018). Recent statistics indicate that businesses will increase their spending on influencer marketing, which will reach a market size of \$2 billion in 2018 and account for almost 25 million influencer posts (influencermarketinghub.com 2017; Sweeney 2017). As a result, businesses strive to build relationships with their customers by using their trademarks to increase consumer intent to purchase their products and services (Knoll, 2016).

Carter (2016) stated that influencer marketing is the practice of using social media users who are regarded as influential to disseminate information in order to “promote products or increase brand awareness.” It has also been defined as “marketing that identifies and activates individuals who can influence the brand preferences, buying decisions, and loyalty of the broader community” by the Association of National Advertisers (2017). “Social media influencers represent a new type of independent third-party endorser who shapes audience opinions by using blogs, tweets, and other forms of social media” (Freberg et al., 2011). As a result, the number of influencers who are available to collaborate with the aforementioned brands has increased, increasing the opportunities available

to marketers. According to Haenlein et al. (2020), “the influencer marketing market is predicted to increase to \$9.7 billion in 2020, or about 5% of the total online advertising market of approximately \$250 billion.”

According to Haenlein et al. (2020), there is a variety of terminology for different types of influencers, such as mega, macro, micro, and nano influencers, with no widely accepted consistent definition. However, according to the Association of National Advertisers, micro-influencers are those with 50–25,000 followers, mid-level influencers have 25,001–100,000 followers, and macro-influencers have 100,000 or more followers (ANA, 2017). As a result, there are many different types of social media influencers, which expands the opportunities for brands to collaborate with social media influencers that have the endorsement of their potential consumers. Consequently, influencer marketing usage has increased globally. In the upcoming year, two-thirds of businesses intend to increase their investment in influencer marketing.

Since businesses believe that influencer marketing generates an 11-times higher return on investment than traditional forms of marketing, the use of influencer marketing has grown dramatically over time (Tapinfluence, 2017). Influencer marketing is having a positive side on the marketing field, particularly for Millennials, with the developing wave of interactive social media. Through a social media outlet, influencer

marketing enlists third-party influencers to promote a brand's message, products, and services and otherwise communicate with the proposed target market (Lim et al., 2017). Influencers frequently update their followers with the latest information in order to interact with them (Lim et al., 2017). On social media platforms, their content is not only available to their followers, but it is also accessible to the wider public. Social media users are allowed to comment and tag their friends and family on these posts and videos, which expands their dissemination. A joint study by Twitter and Annalect has revealed that 49% of participants said they relied on recommendations by influencers (Swant, 2016). As a result, businesses recognize the value of influencer marketing and want to form strong relationships with consumers through collaboration with influencers (Korotina and Jargalsaikhan, 2016). Several businesses also believe that engaging with influencers can help them establish a more authentic relationship with their potential consumers (Cultureshop, 2015).

However, the study by Seibel (2021) indicated that influencer marketing has been easier to assess than traditional marketing because the number of followers, viewers, likes, and shares can be immediately calculated on a global scale. The company has the ability to control its influencer by creating a plan for what to post and regularly communicating with it based on feedback from followers. This feedback assists businesses

in developing and implementing practical marketing strategies. As stated by previous research, influencer marketing is flexible in terms of posting procedures and stories, which gives this form of advertising a competitive advantage. In a world of rapidly changing trends, influencer marketing allows businesses to portray a brand image that is in tune with current trends.

Influencer Marketing in Tourism Industry

Influencer marketing has already been shining a light on the travel and tourism industry. Some social media influencers produce impactful travel content that influences travel decisions and motivations while also creating product content for various platforms. These prominent travel influencers establish WOM in the travel context, which spreads among a vast number of followers on social media. Social media, which essentially publish content created by influencers, are a major source of travel information and a factor in travel intentions (Park, 2015). Gretzel (2018) states that marketers have realized the advantages of using social media influencers to amplify messages catered to a certain niche. Destination marketing has already been utilizing social media as a critical tool in promoting locations (Bokunewicz and Shulman, 2017; Hays et al., 2013; Pan et al., 2007). Travel marketers can profit from influencers' ability to reach the targeted audience, engage at a higher level, and build relationships and images that are consistent with their brands (Gretzel, 2018).

Due to the increased competition among many different sectors, such as fashion, food and beverage, and tourism, it has become challenging for marketers to develop a strategy that will regain and retain consumers. Information gathering and evaluation have become essential parts of the travel's decision-making process for selecting a destination (Karamehmedović, 2019). The sources of the trip-related information will be based on social media, family, friends, travel agencies, or social media influencers. . For example, if the individual traveled to a destination because he or she followed a social media influencer and was satisfied with the trip, it is more likely that the individual will return to the influencer's page to search for new travel activities. However, many studies have shown a shift in behavior towards the various platforms. People have realized that having travel information online is more affordable, more personalized, and available for 24 hours. Consumers must therefore be aware of the particular information in order to decide based on their intentions.

In recent years, travelers are now using social networking sites for purposes other than just discussing their own personal travel experiences. Online marketers use these platforms to promote their travel-related brands, products, and services through regular users, since they are less expensive than digital ads, generate conversation about the product, are highly effective in terms of authenticity and reach, and are more understated than traditional marketing. Users gain from these relationships by making large

amounts of money by simply discussing and posting about products and services they genuinely use and enjoy. Thus, social media users who enjoy traveling have aimed to become “travel influencers” by posting about their travels and showing hotels, brands, and services on their accounts in exchange for money or simply a free one-night stay or product.

According to many studies, Pestek and Alic (2017) interviewed 150 social media users and discovered that 79% followed a travel influencer and that the content the influencer shared could influence where the user traveled. This phenomenon was also confirmed by Xu and Pratt (2018), who advocated businesses’ collaborating with influencers and claimed that an influencer’s endorsement favorably endorses their followers’ perception of a travel destination. Influencers who had a positive experience, similar to Ong and Ito (2019), can spread positive information about a destination.

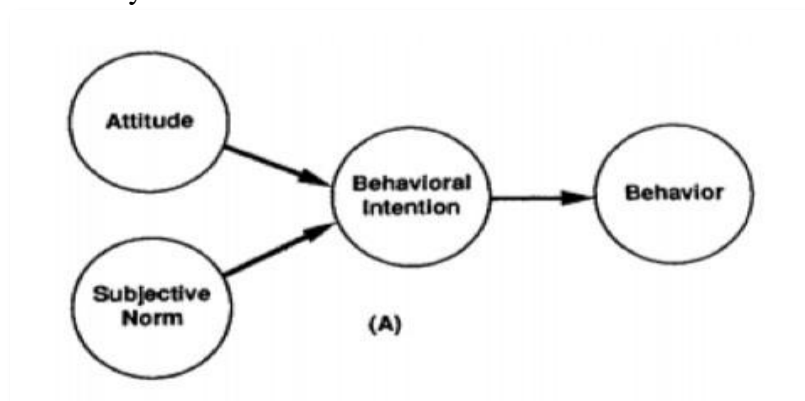
However, developing a strategy that incorporates influencer marketing can be difficult. Brands that use influencer marketing must exercise caution when deciding which influencer to work with, and keep in mind that a social media influencer with more followers does not necessarily mean that this influencer is better for your brand. There is no definite answer as to whether a micro-influencer will be more effective than a macro-influencer. “smaller influencers will have lower engagement

in absolute terms; they tend to have a greater engagement rate relative to the total number of followers and a more homogenous follower base” (Haenlein et al., 2020). Another survey revealed that “micro-influencers have over 20 times more conversations than average consumers” but also that “80% of people are very likely to follow their recommendations” (Haenlein and Libai, 2017). As a result, there are several factors that businesses consider, such as credibility, eWOM, etc.

The Theory of Reasoned Action

Many studies have found that human behavior may prove to be complex, particularly in regards to the variables that motivate actual conduct. The theory of reasoned action by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) explains that behavioral intention is the strongest predictor of volitional behavior. Moreover, the behavioral intention is influenced by two factors, which are attitudes and subjective norms, as illustrated in *Figure 2.2* (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980).

Figure 2.1: Theory of Reasoned Action



Source: Hannu, D., & Johannisson, M. (2020). *The power of Digital Marketing - influencers impact on purchase intention: A qualitative study among students at LTU. DIVA*. Bachelors Thesis, Luleå University of Technology.

Attitudes - The study demonstrated that attitudes are often formed by experiences, knowledge, and wisdom gained from past experiences, also known as “the outcome of the attitudes” (Ajzen, 1991). According to Albarracin (2018), attitudes are an aspect of social psychology. Social psychology can be divided into separate factors, including goals, behaviors, intentions, and beliefs (Albarracin, 2018). Also, Parment (2015) explains that attitudes are a pattern that is complex and challenging to change.

Subjective Norms - The socially perceived pressure to perform or refrain from performing a behavior. It is the function of the beliefs and motivations of consumers to comply (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). For two factors, normative beliefs refer to the things that are perceived as significant regarding their behavior. However, motivation refers to the emotional pressure to conform to perceived social expectations (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). It can be seen that if the subjective norms towards a particular behavior are positive, it is likely that behavior will become stronger in the future (Ajzen, 1991).

Behavioral Intention - One crucial component of the theory of reasoned action is behavioral intention, which is meant to capture motivational factors that motivate a behavior. Moreover, it shows how willing someone is to attempt and how much effort they are willing to put into doing a particular behavior. Most behavioral performances are also somewhat dependent on factors like the availability of necessary opportunities and resources like time, money, skills, and other people's cooperation (Ajzen, 1991). These elements relate to a person's actual level of behavioral control.

The Theory of Planned Behavior

Understanding travel behavior and travel intention is crucial (Juschten & Pürner, 2019). It is required to gain information about where they desire to travel. This study will apply the theory of planned behavior, which developed from the previous theory, to predict the intention to travel. The theoretical purpose is to look in depth within the individual to understand how behavior is created (Ajzen, 1991). According to Ajzen (1991), intentions are interpreted as the factors that motivate a particular behavior. Ajzen (1991) therefore developed the theory of planned behavior. This model is an extension of the theory of reasoned action and includes a third component: perceived behavioral control.

Perceived Behavioral Control - As mentioned earlier, the extended element of the theory of reasoned action is the perception of behavioral control. It refers to the individual's perception of their ability to perform an actual behavior. Researchers in tourism have shown that, within the theory of planned behavior framework, perceived behavioral control is the most effective predictor of an intention to travel to a destination. The individual's perception of control over a given behavior depends on different variables in different circumstances (Jordan & Boley, 2018). Individuals, for example, tend to overpurchase a trip when they have more financial resources, more time, or more options for travel. Ghaderi and Hatamifar (2018) define "perceived behavior control" as how difficult or easy it is to perform a behavior. On the other hand, there are many barriers that can influence an individual's behavior. However, if they can control the barriers, this can result in a positive or favorable intention to travel. Therefore, perceived control is an important element in predicting the individual's behavior and intention to visit a destination (Lam & Hsu, 2006).

2.2 Source of Credibility

The source credibility theory, as propounded by Hovland, Janis, and Kelly (1963), states that people or receivers are more likely to be persuaded when the source presents itself as credible. Similar to the perceived

credibility of an influencer, which refers to whether an individual perceives the influencer's recommendations as unbiased, believable, true, or factual (Hass, 1981).

The credibility of an influencer indicates that a message's effectiveness is dependent on the influencer's perceived level of expertise and trustworthiness (Hovland et al., 1953; Hovland and Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990). Credible information sources can influence beliefs, opinions, attitudes, or behaviors through a process known as "internalization," which occurs when receivers embrace the source's influence in terms of their personal attitude or belief (Erdoğan, 1999: 297). Similarly, source credibility is defined as "believability" and refers to a person's perception of the truth of a piece of information. For example, source credibility is often used to pay attention to the influencer's positive characteristics that influence the consumer's acceptance of communication. Because the principal information source is the influencer (Friedman et al., 1978).

The Ohanian model of source credibility was expanded by Ohanian (1991). This model plays an important role in conveying the persuasiveness of a message in the process of communication with a target audience, which depends on the characteristics of the source (Corina, 2006). According to three dimensions, which are a combination of social media influencer

expertise, attractiveness, and trustworthiness, especially in the advertising process (Sertoglu et al., 2014). The current study incorporates and adapts both models in order to measure the perception of purchase intention, in which the social media influencer served as a platform for marketers to market their products, particularly travel. Therefore, in this study, the perceived credibility of an influencer is measured in three dimensions: perceived attractiveness, perceived trustworthiness, and perceived expertise, as proposed by Ohanian (1990).

Trustworthiness - It is defined as believability, honesty, and transparency possessed by the influencers, and that is how the receiver unbiasedly perceives the source (Van der Waldt et al., 2009: 104). Trustworthiness is one of the dimensions of source credibility, and influencers must be trustworthy in order to influence their followers (Kim et al. 2018). According to Brown and Hayes (2008), 54% of consumers would recommend the products they purchased to others if the business gained their trust. Consumers are more likely to accept the products and services recommended by social media influencers they feel are reliable (Liu et al., 2015). According to the study conducted by AlFarraj et al. (2021), if a consumer has trust in an influencer and the influencer likes a brand, the consumer will like the brand as well. McGinnies & Ward (1980) stated that, for consumers, trustworthiness has a greater power on them than expertise. Without a doubt, a follower's trust in an influencer

benefit both the relationship between the influencer and the consumer as well as the relationship between the consumer and the business. McNair (2021) discovered that trustworthiness has a positive direct on travel intention. Influencers are more assertive in their ability to influence brand attitudes and consumers' purchase intentions than traditional media marketing tactics, according to Bruhn et al. (2012).

Expertise - It is defined as a high level of skills or knowledge from which the influencer is derived to have the adequate skills, knowledge, or experience to promote brands. The most crucial element for an endorsement to be successful is expertise, as Daneshvary and Schwer (2000: 104) indicated. Social media influencers have the ability to develop a trustworthy and creative message for a brand or product to attract the attention of consumers. Silvera and Austad (2004) emphasize that the purchase intention of target groups is higher when the influencers are more credible as they have higher expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. Influencers use their expertise to post about brands and products on social media that are usually seen by their followers. The message of the brand and product is perceived as more credible and trustworthy than paid sponsorship advertisements (Kassoway, 2015). Kassoway (2015) defined influence as a long-term relationship between social media influencers and consumers that is the key to the market in this

technological era. Social media influencers are able to improve bond relationships with consumers by posting reliable information on social media platforms and interacting with them, which is referred to as “expertise” (Chun et al., 2018). Related to travel intention, consumers prefer to believe that those with travel expertise have knowledge and experience gained through their particular travel information.

Attractiveness - Attractiveness - According to Erdogan (1999: 299), attractiveness is the “stereotype of favorable associations for an individual and not only entails physical attractiveness but also other characteristics such as personality and ability.” Joseph (1982) provided some evidence regarding the fact that physically attractive influencers are more frequently believed, liked, and desired to have a favorable view on products than unattractive influencers. Influencers “whose attractiveness is perceived as persuading the purchase intention” (van der Waldt et al., 2009: 104).

Quality of the Content - According to Casaló et al. (2020), influencer content on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram is the presentation of their posts, photos, videos, voices, or words that have a motivation on the receiver. As mentioned by Song and Zinkhan (2003), “content quality” is the extent to which consumers believe the information is good, updated, accurate, and reliable. The way a follower engages with

an influencer is heavily influenced by the quality of the content. However, a beautiful image is not the only indicator of content quality; it represents a connection between brands and consumers that functions best when the content is good, natural, and realistic (Childers et al., 2019). In terms of tourism, the researcher McNair (2021) discovered that the quality of the content directly boosts travelers' intentions to travel. It is necessary for travel influencers, as it has been shown to "alter users' perceptions" of a location based on the image shared by the influencer (Shuqair & Cragg, 2017). Moreover, the study also discovered a possible correlation between places shared by influencers and whether or not followers visited the place (Viegas & Guerreiro, 2019).

2.3 Travel Behavior

Consumer behavior is the process of selecting, buying, and using a good or service to satisfy one's desires and needs. While doing so, the consumer desires to maximize benefits and reduce the amount of time. The various factors that motivate consumers are: social, cultural, personal, psychological, and economic (Cobble, 2011). Peter and Olson (2002) propose a model for consumer behavior in which they include the value of information. Consumer behavior is classified as a cognitive process. Typically, the consumer chooses how to solve their problem during this process. According to Erasmus et al. (2001), it is essential for the study of consumer behavior to adapt to the particular circumstances or products that

are the subject of purchase. Depending on the outcome, specific decisions made during the decision-making process may be more or less dangerous. They also include all the actions that occur both before and after the purchase in their model of consumer behavior.

In the tourism context, it will help effectively define whom to target, when to target them, and where to target a particular destination. More importantly, it will help persuade travelers to select a certain destination that is created to satisfy their unique needs and desires. Additionally, it will enhance the creation of successful strategies and satisfy travelers. Understanding consumer behaviors, and more specifically, traveler behavior, is crucial for marketers and marketing organizations. Understanding the motivations underlying travel decisions, the form of attitudes on destination choice, and how various reference groups exert individual travel decision-making are crucial for the implementation of effective marketing strategies in the tourism sector. On the other hand, connected to the decision-making process within the consumer behavior activity, McColl et al. (1994:116) outlined the fact that this process represents “the actions a person takes to buy and use products and services, including the decision-making process that comes before and determines those actions.”

In a review of the literature in the field of travel behavior, making a

decision can be one of the early stages of a purchase in some models, and other researchers even make it the core of their model of travel behavior. The process of travelers comprises planned, impulsive, and spontaneous purchases. Moreover, it included the following eight crucial indicators that reflect travel decision-making.

1. **Values** - It is deciding between product categories, brands, and attributes, values play a significant role. Values serve as the consumer's compass, directing their behavior, emotions, and judgment (Crick-Furman and Prentice, 2000 in Scott et al., 2014).
2. **Motivation** - It has received a great deal of attention from tourism academics due to how crucial it is to marketing choices including segmentation, product development, promotion, and positioning (Bieger and Laesser, 2002, in Scott et al., 2014).
3. **Self-Concept** - Many researchers have investigated it focuses on visual and destination selection, as well as travel intentions, as well as personality, which can be seen as a component of self-concept. Personality is a significant factor in the processes of risk-taking, innovation perception, attitude change, and decision-making (Kassarjian, 1971; Scott et al., 2014).
4. **Expectations** - It cannot be satisfied, reached, or surpassed. When a travelers experience meets or surpasses their expectations, it will always be remembered favorably. Expectations are based on both personal (word of mouth) and impersonal prior experience (advertising) sources, motivation, gender, and ethnicity of the

individual (Sheng and Chen, 2012; Zeithaml et al., 1993; Scott et al., 2014).

5. **Attitude** - It is referred to in research as a "general attitude" or, more broadly, as the relationship between important qualities of an object (e.g., the characteristics of a travel destination can shape the image of a destination). Gnoth (1997, in Scott et al., 2014) urges a deeper comprehension of attitudes in the context of feelings and moral principles. It can be difficult to determine how travelers feel about the products, destinations, and brand names of travel companies because it also needs to take into account how they are feeling when the measurement is being taken.
6. **Perception** - is one of the most intriguing marketing ideas. Studies on travel satisfaction are primarily focused on risk and security perception, including the perception of crime, terrorism, or epidemics of specific diseases (George, 2010 in Scott et al., 2014). (Rittichainuwat and Chakraborty, 2009, in Scott et al., 2014).
7. **Satisfaction** - and data on consumer satisfaction statistics is crucial. According to researchers, contentment is actually correlated with the way a purchase or its component parts are evaluated.
8. **Trust and Loyalty** - are inter-related characteristics in models of consumer behavior. Without trust, there can be no lasting loyalty (Sirdeshmukh, Singh and Sabol, 2002 in Scott et al., 2014). McKercher et al. (2012 in Scott et al., 2014) believe that the study of travel loyalty must take into consideration the uniqueness of the

tourism industry.

Theoretically, there are five stages of the consumer decision-making process: 1.) need recognition, 2.) information search, 3.) evaluation alternatives, 4.) product or service choices, and 5.) post-purchase evaluation (Kotler and Keller, 2016). Firstly, need recognition is the most crucial part of this process, as it can result in a successful purchase circumstance. Needs can also arise from both internal factors of the individual consumer and external factors stimulated by others, for example, social interaction and advertising. After the need is recognized, the consumer is likely to search for more product or service-related information before making a purchase decision. The consumers can compare the alternatives based on their own past experiences; however, marketers can help consumers narrow down their choices with appropriate marketing strategies during the evaluation process. Then, the consumer can make a final purchase after analyzing all the alternatives. The final stage, known as the post-purchase evaluation, will reflect the consumer's experience of purchasing a product or service, which can be the most significant factor as it directly enhance the repurchase behavior of similar products and future purchase intentions (Dudovski, 2013).

Figure 2.2: The Five-Stage Model of Travel Decision-Making Process



Source: Rosca, I.M. (2017). Consumer's behavioural patterns: the Romanian tourists.

Similar to Matheison and Wall (Clayton, 2013), the five-stage model of travel decision-making process can be shown in *Figure 2.3*. First, travelers want to travel. Following the identification of a need, they gather information from available information sources and evaluate it based on the travel's image and travel activities. Then, they make a travel decision regarding the destination, air tickets, activities, and accommodation. Travelers begin their trip during the travel preparation and travel experience stages, which include searching for additional information about the scope of the travel products once they arrive at their destination. Then, the bookings are confirmed, and the trip starts. Lastly, when the travel activities have been completed, their experiences are evaluated and will determine their future travel intentions.

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention can be described as the desire for a consumer to

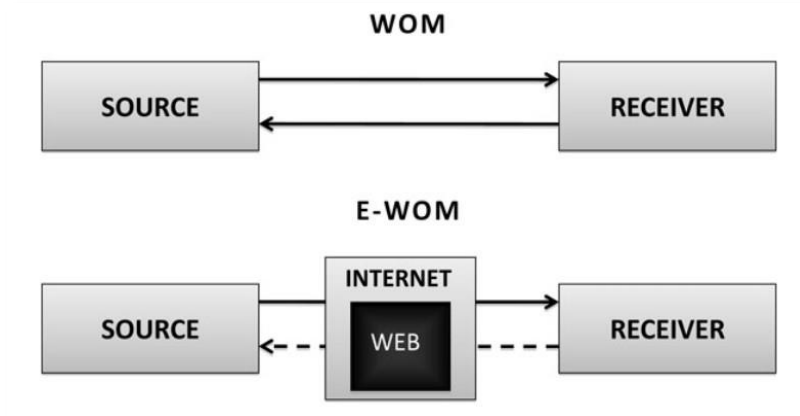
acquire certain products and services. However, this does not imply that it will result in a purchase (Chang & Wildt, 1994). In addition, Jayesh (2015) and Morwitz (2014) also explained that purchase intention does not resemble actual buying behavior but rather conveys the intention of the intended purchase. There are several factors that result in purchase intention, including logical, moral, societal, psychological, emotional, and economic factors (Renu, 2020).

Travel Intention

According to Hsiao et al. (2013), travel intention is one form of motivation to travel regarding one's demographics, visuals, content creation, and emotions. As per the study conducted by Terttunen (2017), 82% of Instagram users' travel planning was influenced by influencer marketing. Moreover, researchers indicated that travelers' attitude towards user-generated content were positively related to their intention to use the information in planning their trips (Ayeh et al., 2013; Ayeh, 2015). The sharing of content and information conveyed the travel intentions of travelers (Shuqair and Cragg, 2017).

The Evolution of Word of Mouth

Figure 2.3 WOM Vs. E-WOM



Source: López, M., & Sicilia, M. (2014). Determinants of E-wom influence: The role of consumers' internet experience. *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research*, 9(1), 7-8.

According to *Figure 2.1*, “word of mouth” is defined as “an oral or written recommendation by a satisfied consumer to prospective buyers of a good or service” (Business dictionary, 2017). However, due to the conceptual similarity between eWOM and traditional WOM communication, only WOM will be elaborated on. This comprises interactions between producers and consumers as well as interactions within the consumers themselves, both of which are crucial components of the word of mouth (WOM) flow and obviously distinct from interactions with the mass media (Lazarsfeld et al., 1944).

Ditcher (1966) stated that the psychology behind WOM is shared by

both speaker and listener. Speaker motivation is based on the fact that a speaker expresses opinions about products or services. Additionally, it is divided into four different forms of involvement: the first is “product involvement,” which is when a consumer has a particularly pleasant or unpleasant experience that leads to mental repetition. Second, “self-involvement” is the act of self-confirming in front of others in order to attract attention, exhibit preference, feel pioneering, etc. Thirdly, “other involvement” is necessary for consumers to reap the rewards of their purchases. Products and services can work as a tool to express emotional sentiments. Finally, “message involvement” is defined as consumer awareness or receptivity to advertisements.

Electronic word of mouth was based on the same principles established by word of mouth, such as social ties, strength, and trust. The potential reach of eWOM was vastly increased by allowing those with influence to expand their network exponentially. Previously, influencers could only result their local community, but they can now use the power of the internet to reach vast virtual communities located far beyond their geographical boundaries. The primary use of eWOM in this context was on the internet with “comments and reviews of products on blogs, sites, or socialmedia platforms” (Cheung and Thadani, 2012).

eWOM has become popular in recent times. With 59.5% of the world’s population using social media in the digital age, according to a

report by Hootsuite called “Digital in Ireland: DataReportal-Global Digital Insights, 2021,” Because of the large number of social media users, the characteristics of eWOM, such as opinions, reviews, comments, and recommendations, have increased in importance due to the speed of information. eWOM can provide various benefits, including reducing the risk associated with online purchases from influencers. It shows the credibility of eWOM when a consumer has made a successful previous purchase by relying on eWOM and the ease with which eWOM spreads. However, eWOM spreads much faster than WOM because of where it is published: on social media platforms.

Many social media platforms have enhanced the benefits of eWOM through the increased accessibility and sharing of online information. For example, Instagram is a major platform in this evolution. “On network sites, an online peer turns into a significant tool for information dissemination, and eWOM originates a network site of interconnected consumers” (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017). The formats used by platforms are valued by their followers and contribute to the development of a strong relationship between brands and consumers. Thus, the combination has made the celebrity or influencer a crucial marketing and business tool.

As previously indicated, social media platforms have produced beneficial prospects for eWOM conversations in the travel industry. People are now able to discuss products and services with their acquaintances.

Online reviews about travel, hotels, and tourism services have become important sources of information for travelers (Pan, MacLaurin, & Crotts, 2007), with studies indicating that hundreds of millions of prospective visitors consult online reviews annually. Another study discovered that consumer decision-making processes are strongly influenced by word of mouth from other consumers (Goldenberg et al., 2001). The previous study shows that reviews provided by other travelers are often perceived by readers to be more current, pleasurable, high-impact, and trustworthy than information provided by travel service providers (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008). Due to the widespread use of social media, people can even share their opinions or reviews through the posts they correspond with. As a result of many studies, eWOM information on social media, particularly among influencers, can arise in many different ways. Consumers resort more to social media platforms to obtain information (Erkan I. & Evans C., 2016). Consumers can also unintentionally reveal their preferences to their network, such as by becoming fans of certain brands, interacting with those brands' posts through liking and engaging, or posting a brand that includes content without any advertising purpose. Recently, marketers have also posted information using their official accounts on social media websites (Alboqami et al., 2015). Therefore, people who encounter eWOM on social media need to comprehensively analyze the information in order to adopt it for their ideal purchase intentions.

However, purchase intentions are influenced by favorable online

experiences, recommendations, product and service quality information, or eWOM (Dhar & Jha, 2014). Unlike traditional WOM, which occurs in a simultaneous and multidirectional conversation face-to-face between source and receiver, eWOM is a process in which the conversation does not have to be in real-time and bidirectional. In e-WOM, the source posts an opinion or recommendation on the Internet that can remain there for a long time, given that consumers are able to see this statement and choose to respond to the source or not. It is also very common to find that the source and the receiver remain anonymous, which makes this process more biased and less trustworthy (Pihlaja et al., 2017; Brown & Reingen, 1987).

2.4 Millennials

Millennials refer to people who were born between 1980 and 2000 (Young & Hinesly, 2012). also known as “generation Y” (Pentescu, 2016). They are known to be the most tech-savvy group, or “digital natives” (DeVaney, 2015). Millennials accepted and familiarized themselves with technology early on.

Millennials are becoming a significant and increasing growth segment for travel activities (Lončarić & Dlačić, 2019) Among the millennia, there are various motivations and inspirational travel arrangements. Especially at this age, they tend to rely on social media to search for information before making a purchase (Liu & Wu, 2019). Also,

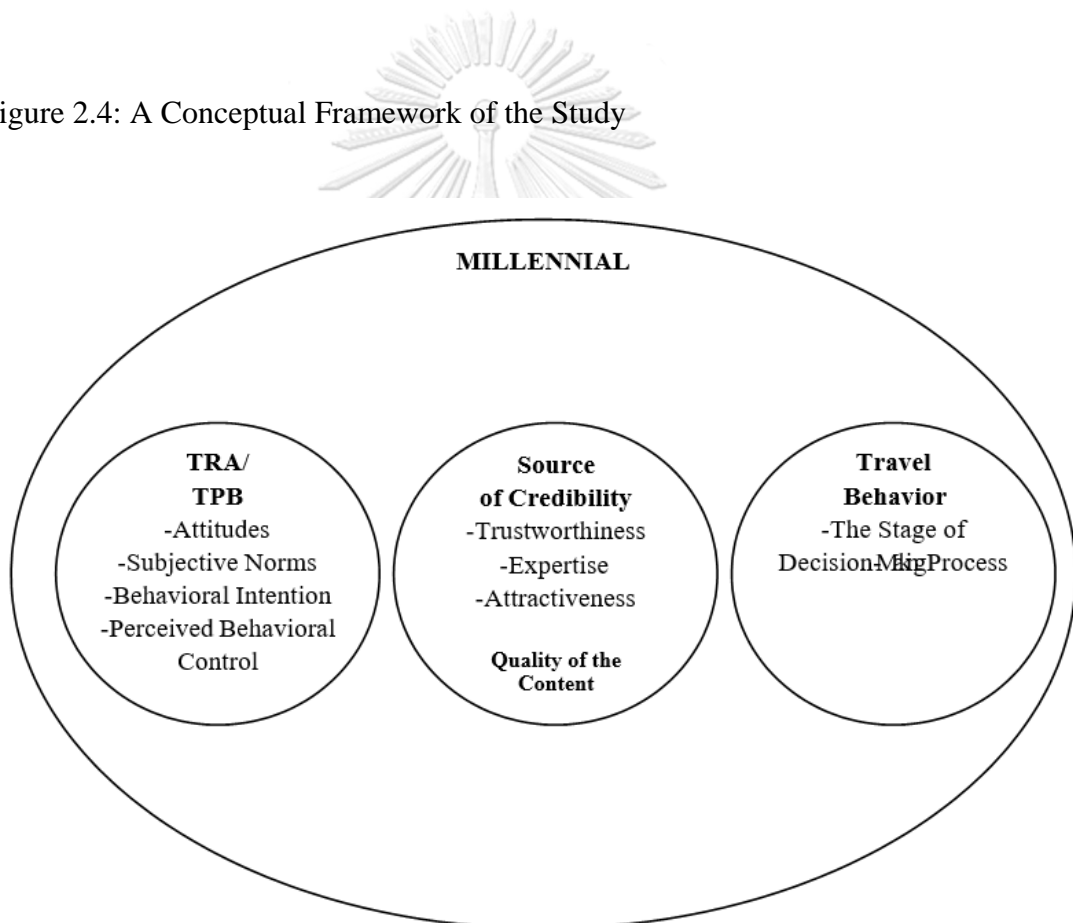
millennials enjoy comparing themselves to others and are more likely to envy other people's posts on social media. Technology and visuals are essential for millennials as social media posts define their social characteristics and status (Wang & Siegel, 2019). Furthermore, literature has indicated that social norms and social behavior of millennials have been persuaded by social media, which in turn to consumer behavior (Ortíz & Corrada, 2019).

For millennials, the use of mobile technologies is very intensive and diverse in planning all trip stages (Femenia-Serra et al., 2019). According to a demographics examination of how people use the Internet for trip planning, employing many online intermediaries and search engines and paying special attention to user-generated content on social media influencers are shown to be specific traits of millennials (Kim et al., 2015). Millennials spontaneously seek destinations and plan their trips on social media. Taking pictures and sharing them on different social media platforms were the main reasons for using their mobile devices during their trips (Gotardi et al., 2015). In addition, Millennials tend to spend more money faster than other groups. The more they participate in products, services, and content, the more likely they are to purchase it.

2.5 A Conceptual Framework of the Study

The Conceptual Framework of this study is illustrated in *Figure 2.4*. The illustration shows an overview of the concept that will be used in this study. The focus of attitude and source of credibility towards travel influencers use in this study among millennials travelers. Moreover, millennial travel behavior will be explored.

Figure 2.4: A Conceptual Framework of the Study



CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

This study follows an exploratory research design and a qualitative approach based on the use of in-depth interviews. Qualitative studies involve the interaction between individuals to produce findings based on human behavior and social characteristics. The purpose of this study is to perceive of travel influencers on millennial travelers and how they motivate millennial travel behavior. By divided them into two groups; first, an analysis relating the theories provided in the paper and the data gathered from the interviews will be conducted in order to arrive at a satisfactory answer to the research question (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Therefore, this chapter will be divided into sections on the research sample and sampling method, the procedures of data collection, the research instrument used, and the validity and reliability of this study.

3.1 Research Sample and Sampling Method

This study uses a qualitative approach to investigate the perceived credibility of travel influencers on millennial travel behavior. In order to fulfill the purpose, purposive sampling was used to select a total of twelve people to be chosen as participants. The participants can be males and females between the ages of 25 and 40 who are millennials. They can range in level of expertise, business, and location. The interview will be divided into two groups: first, international travelers who have a trip or staying

overnight outside of Thailand for business, pleasure, or other purposes. Second, domestic travelers for those who travel within Thailand for work or pleasure (Damsgaard, 2022). Each participant must actively follow travel influencers relevant to their interest in travel-related content and organize the trip based on online sources within one year.

As mentioned, this study used in-depth interview methodology, semi-structured to cover a deeper level of information. The method allows participants to explain their feelings and opinions in more details. In this study, their findings can be transferred into an understanding of travel intentions towards travel influencers.

The interviews were conducted from October to November 2022. Each of the interviews ranged in length from 45 to 60 minutes. All participants met in their preferred locations and used the Zoom Cloud Meetings Application, which created a relaxing atmosphere. A digital recorder was utilized since it recorded interviews and allowed the interviewer to concentrate on the interaction as well as emotions, body language, nonverbal signals, and perceived experiences (Jain et al., 2018; Whiting, 2008). Therefore, their answers were confidentially recorded and transcribed.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an influence on people's physical and emotional health due to the difficulties in daily connection (Gualano, 2020). As a result, it was agreed that the interviews would be conducted online rather than in person. The Zoom Cloud Meetings Application was selected as an online learning platform where participants could readily participate in discussions without concern about their health. Additionally, the procedures for data collection are divided into three parts as follows:

3.2 The Procedures of Data Collection

Procedure for Pre-Interview

1. Identified and recruited millennials' travel followers from the researcher's personal network.
2. Screened potential participants using the selection criteria and recording their contact details.
3. Contacted selected participants to check date and time availability and arrange an appointment for them.
4. Contacted participants a day prior to the appointment to confirm participation and asked them to download the Zoom Cloud Meetings Application.
5. Pre-tested the Zoom Cloud Meetings application and prepared necessary equipment such as a system, recorder, or notes.

6. Informed the participants about the goals and objectives of the research and asked for permission to record the interview by they could ensure confidentiality.
7. Reviewed the discussion in order to have a clear understanding of the topic.

Procedure during the Interview

1. The researcher stimulated a relaxed atmosphere to ensure participants were natural and comfortable.
2. The researcher began an interview with prepared questions.
3. Notes were recorded during the discussion.
4. The researcher closed the in-depth interview and thanked the participants.

Procedure for Post Interview

1. The recorded interviews were carefully checked and transcribed.
2. Highlighted key statements from the interviews were used for interpretation.

3.3 Research Instrument

The research used a discussion guideline shown in *table 3.1* as the research instrument. It is based on existing literature and covers the subjects of 1.) demographics and media usages, 2.) attitude towards travel influencers, 3.) source of credibility, and 4.) travel behavior. In order to gather data for analysis with regard to the developed conceptual framework,

interview questions were created.

The first section is entitled “participant introductions” to obtain demographics information, and it serves as an icebreaker for fellow participants. To clearly comprehend the participants’ points of view, questions began with travel influencers to explore the understand among millennials and follows by source of credibility as the third section. Therefore, the question of travel behavior, which related to decision-making process was also formulated.

Before conducting the interview, participants will be asked the screening questions that used to qualified the criteria. Those who not meet the research’s goals, they will not be allowed to participate in the interview.

Table 3.1: An Example of Interview Questions

An Example of Interview Questions	
# Screening Questions	1.) How old are you? 2.) Do you follow a travel influencer?
1. Demographics and Media Usages	1.) Can you tell me about yourself? 2.) Do you use social media on a daily basis? How many hours a day do you use it?
2. Attitude towards Travel Influencers	1.) How do you define a travel influencer? 2.) What makes you like and follow them?

3. Source of Credibility	1.) Do you believe the number of their followers matter to trustworthiness or not?
4. Travel Behavior	1.) How long do you search for travel information? 2.) Based on your prior trip, can you tell me about your experience?

3.4 Data Collection and Data Analysis

David and Sutton (2016) discussed two important factors when considering qualitative analysis, which are how the data collection process should be integrated and what the research is trying to achieve. Qualitative data collecting usually consists of a vast amount of textual material. The purpose of the analysis process is to organize and narrow down the most relevant information from the material.

To analyze the in-depth interviews, which were conducted via the Zoom CloudMeetings Application. During the interview process, data was collected in the form of notes and recorded to allow the researcher to gain a better understanding. The data was gathered into a summary of all the transcripts, and every component of the theoretical framework was investigated and connected to the gathered data.

3.5 Ethics

This paper adheres to the ethical standards in order to conduct research with a high awareness of its ethical responsibility to the participants, as outlined by Saunders et al. (2016). Ethical considerations that arise during the design and planning stages of the research are specific to each study. While there is no one-size-fits-all “formula” for ethical behavior, research should aim for ethical principles and practices. Furthermore, the ethical approach is also significant in that regard because the research involves individuals. From that perspective, confidentiality, integrity protection, and participant anonymity are important ethical approaches (David & Sutton, 2016). Moreover, the researcher should also respect the privacy of the participants and get their consent in order to ensure confidentiality.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

According to David and Sutton (2016), reliability and validity constitute whether the data is trustworthy or not. Reliability is important when conducting the interviews and gathering the data. The list of requirements proposed by Creswell and Poth (2013) first of all, an approach is considered authentic when the participant’s meaning is accurately reflected in the data. Second, once all participants and opinions have been considered, the validity of the study is guaranteed. Third, all parts of the study are evaluated critically. Thirdly, every aspect

of the research is critically analyzed. Finally, it indicates that the researcher's legitimacy is based on introspection. The measurement of validity and reliability has been taken to include the following:

1. The researcher used terms such as subjective in all statements without changing process and meaning.
2. The study analysis took into account all the interview data.
3. The researcher examined the paper's validity and reliability



CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

The study collected primary data by in-depth interviews with millennials. This chapter reveals data declared to answer the research questions of the study. The data is divided into four sections which represent the various parts of the interviews. Since validating that the participants were relevant to the study, the first section of the interview consisted on demographics and media usages from qualified participants. The following section served the purposes to discuss attitude towards travel influencers, sources of credibility, decision making process, and travel behavior.

4.1 First Section - Demographics and Media Usages

To begin the interviews, the participants were first asked if they were millennials, whether they followed travel influencers, whether they could name a travel influencer, and whether they arranged the trip within a year based on online reviews. These requirements were validated before heading into the core questions of the interview. Preliminary findings included that all participants were millennials and ranged in age from twenty-five to thirty. Many travel influencers, like *“Go Went Go, Asapapailong, Thuean Travel, I Roam Alone and others”*, have been followed by them. Each participant claimed that they had planned the trip within the preceding year,

both in domestic and international trip, and used social media platforms to search for travel-related information, especially on ***“YouTube and Facebook.”*** However, the vast majority of them also organized the trip based on the situation and timing. A table summarizing the participants is presented below.

Table 4.1. Interview Samples

Interview Number	Age	Follower of Travel Influencers	Example of Travel Influencers	Trip Arrangement within a year.
#1	25 Years Old	Yes	Mayy R and Katheryn Lee	Yes (International Trip)
#2	25 Years Old	Yes	Go Went Go, I Roam Alone, and Asapapailong	Yes (International Trip)
#3	25 Years Old	Yes	Go Went Go, Nat Nisamane, and I Roam Alone	Yes (International Trip)
#4	25 Years Old	Yes	Go Went Go, Pikaploys, and The GaiJinTrip	Yes (Domestic Trip)
#5	27 Years Old	Yes	Go Went Go, I Roam Alone, and Asapapailong	Yes (International Trip)
#6	26 Years Old	Yes	The GaiJinTrip, I Roam Alone, Thuean Travel	Yes (International Trip)
#7	25 Year Old	Yes	Boom Tharis, Spin 9, Asapapailong, and I Roam Alone	Yes (Domestic Trip)

#8	26 Years Old	Yes	Go Went Go, Asapapailong, and Painagaimangai	Yes (Domestic Trip)
#9	25 Years Old	Yes	Go Went Go and Thuean Travel	Yes (Domestic Trip)
#10	26 Years Old	Yes	Brinkty, Klai Baan, Nungpapai, and Rubsarb	Yes (International Trip)
#11	30 Years Old	Yes	Ray Macdonald, and Go Went Go	Yes (Domestic Trip)
#12	25 Years Old	Yes	Janeti, I Roam Alone, and Thuean Travel	Yes (Domestic Trip)

Demographics and Media Usages

After validating the participants, questions on demographics and media usages were asked for the first section, the participants were asked basic information, such as, name, age, gender, or location and if they used social media on a daily basis, the participants were required to describe the media usages to understand their travel behavior and attitude towards travel influencers.

A total of twelve participants were millennials, both male and female. They almost all live in Bangkok. Some of them are business owners with flexible hours, while others work as full-time employees in a variety of companies. The majority of them used smartphone to communicate with friends and access regular internet searches, while using laptop or iPad for business or in-depth information searches.

“I mainly use my phone and computer. Mostly, I use my phone during free time and use the computer to search for information.” - Interview 7

More specifically, 80% of participants use social media on a daily average of five hours. Additionally, the number of platforms that they use daily based on usages; for example, they primarily searched travel-related information on Youtube and Facebook, while Line is used for communication and social interaction at work and Twitter, TikTok, and Instagram are used for entertainment.

Regarding the use of social media platforms. The majority of participants kept watching YouTube travel influencer videos because they intended to experience the atmosphere of the destinations through the motion of the videos. It is more obvious. Additionally, because participants occasionally do not have the time to read lengthy texts in their daily lives.

“YouTube, because I think it will be a full stream that includes voice, picture, and video. I can see a clearer picture on YouTube, like I was on her trip.” - Interview 1

“I’m watching Boom Tharis on YouTube. I don’t enjoy reading more because of how stressful my working life is.” - Interview 7

Some participants engage in travel-related Facebook content because there are active travel influencers on this site, and it features text, photos, and videos that can help them create connections with each other. One female participant also mentioned that travel influencer is a person who acts as a close friend through online distribution.

“I’ll check her Facebook page, because she mostly uses this platform to update and share travel content like a diary.” - Interview 4

On the other hand, participants who were **“loyal followers”** of travel influencers followed practically all of their accounts, for example, their Youtube, Facebook or Instagram to remain up to date on their information.

“YouTube, but I followed all his channels, such as personal accounts, Facebook, or IG.” - Interview 2

4.2 Second Section - Attitude towards Travel Influencer

The second section will be related to the theory of reasoned action

and the theory of planned behavioral. The participants had the opportunity to respond to the key questions during the interview, which covered the attitudes, subjective norms, behavioral intention and behavioral control components. The purpose of that was to understand the participants' attitude towards travel influencers.

- Attitudes

In this study, “attitudes” refer to the participants’ experiences, knowledge, or wisdom gained from travel influencers.

When asked the definition of travel influencers, many of the participants stated that travel influencers are “*tour guide*” and “*persuasive person*” who have travel experience and express travel content authentically for travelers. Positive repetitive attitudes were mentioned by some participants that travel influencers explore new things and create content that is both entertaining and newsworthy.

“When they visit new places, Influencers act as guided tours. They provide the information on how to decide whether to stay or leave. They made it simple for us to arrange our trip.” - Interview 5

“Someone who makes us open our eyes and brings us to explore new things in the outside world.” - Interview 6

“A travel influencer, they contain current information, such as travel news from a new place. News, in my opinion, doesn’t always deliver this information, but travel influencers create fresh content for us to consume.” - Interview 7

Another participant's point of view was that travel influencers provided comprehensive travel information that could simultaneously increase their knowledge and value of a specific travel destination, persuading travelers to follow their actions. However, based on the experience, knowledge, and wisdom that were mentioned in the attitude’s component, they showed favorable attitudes toward travel influencers.

“Travel influencers come to the area to visit and gain insight, which they then share or review on various internet platforms. If it’s good, it can inspire value there by inspiring the audience to feel, do, and follow. -

Interview 11

- ***Subjective Norms***

This section covered the “theory of reasoned action” second component. The answer regards participant’s beliefs and motivations allowing the researchers to relate it to subjective norms. It can also clearly explain participant normative belief and motivation responses across travel influencers and travel destination.

When questioned about the criteria to select the most appropriate travel influencer, *travel lifestyles*, *travel destinations*, *storytelling*, and *fresh Content* are the four categories into which the participants split the criteria they use to choose the best content. For example, the majority of them stated that travel influencers who have a similar “*travel lifestyle*” are connected with finding travel information that would suit their itinerary, such as a travel budget or travel schedule. Some of them mentioned that they are looking for a travel influencer who can provide comprehensive information to aid in planning or making a trip. Since they can be easily followed, there will be an increase in their needs and travel behaviors.

“I will choose from a travel lifestyle and travel budget. Actually, I love traveling both in the countryside and in the cities.” - Interview 1

“The most important factors are; firstly, “Lifestyle” - Do they connect with me? Do they travel similar to me? Because I need the information

that is accessible since I travel normally. It is simple to follow.” -

Interview 2

Secondly, participants are inspired by *“travel destinations,”* and given this knowledge, they may easily fit the destination into their travel plans. Meanwhile, *“storytelling”* comes in third. Travelers increasingly focus on how travel influencers convey their information and how creators may come up with gimmicks to make it more interesting since travel reviews have gone online. As a result, they may be encouraged to choose a travel influencer and adopt their travel habits.

“I would initially choose a well-known channel, but I have now changed my interest to focus on video creators and ways of expressing stories.” -

Interview 4

“It is a narration of storytelling. It depends on your own style that has its own gimmick to express their story. I will focus on how they tell a story. Moreover, if it can be like a travel documentary in itself. I love this kind of content.” - Interview 3

One of the last criteria indicated above is that the content that travel influencers expose should be *“fresh content,”* in addition to developing the

creator. Since the internet is accessible everywhere, they have a variety of sources to select from. Travelers will therefore find something new or different from other online reviews.

“To choose the right influencer, I will have an interest based on; new content, like bringing us to explore or do new things. Interesting content topic, it will make me interested how they will express a story on that topic.” - Interview 6

“I’m interested in travel influencers that take us to real places that few people never go to or discover new things.” - Interview 9

However, none of the participants, however, mentioned well-known travel influencers as a consideration. Those who are **“follower seekers”** or **“popularity seekers”** are less likely to engage. The fact is that travelers appreciate travel influencers' content more than their popularity. The motivation of the participants is typically provided by travel influencers through a variety of sources.

- ***Perceived Behavioral Control***

As mentioned earlier, perceived behavioral control is the

extended component of the theory of reasoned action. In this part, it was discussed about the participant's perception of their ability to perform an actual behavior. However, if they can control the *“travel barriers,”* this can increase a positive or favorable intention to travel.

Based on their travel interests, each participant has named their preferred travel influencer. While Go Went Go channel is the one that gets the most attention. They claimed to have followed Bas when he was a singer, but when he transitioned to become a travel influencer. He can convey the context of travel well and is neutral. Additionally, he has a talented content creator who produces infographics, insert information, and videos which cover comprehensive travel information. However, he constantly improves his channel and provides a variety of destinations for travelers to consume travel-related content. Travel information, such as budget, or transportation that he provided would also be an alternative for travelers to make a decision.

“He's connected to my interest. He has a posting schedule. I think it is easy to follow and may be watched continuously, just like a Lakorn episode. Additionally, while he is funny, it is not nonsense. His content goes beyond merely narrating a story through a video or photo. To summarize, his content was created by a good editor.” –

Interview 3

“First of all, he traveled with his friend. He provides facts while being entertaining. He will recommend the spotted area when they travel. He has recently started carefully talking, expressing and adding graphics to their content. This may suggest that he has done extensive research and gathering of information. It’s also creative.” - Interview 5

Another influential traveler mentioned by several participants is “Thuean Travel,” by K. Singh. Participants all agreed that this channel is sincere and authentic in every way. In order to enable travelers to view the actual situation, he is describing how excellent or horrible that place is. He is also an adventurous travel influencer who explores unknown places for travelers. They claimed that the place to which this channel led them was occasionally unexpected. It is an accessible other world. Similarly, this channel provided travel tips while traveling which can be useful information for travelers to perceive their travel behavioral control.

“I’ve known him since I was young, and he inspires me to explore. He is bold even if he is shy. He doesn’t give up; he confronts the situation and is honest about it. He is passionate. I’ve learned from him.” - Interview

Since the researcher exposed the criteria that motivate their travel behavior in the previous section. Many participants made a direct connection to travel influencers. They seemed to learn towards influencers, when it comes to acquiring advice, recommendations, or approval regarding travel products and activities. All participants have a positive attitudes regarding their content and feel as though they are traveling with them. Additionally, travel influencers are beneficial for *“travel advice and risk management,”* which are connected to perceived behavioral control. However, travel influencers as many of them mentioned provided the travel barriers to be an alternative for travelers to be aware of how they intend to behave.

However, every participant identified time, money, and friends as primary travel barriers, and they tended to have favorable attitudes of travel influencers as expert travelers who helped them overcome those barriers. Many travel influencers claimed to be *“good” and “clever”* travelers. Participants also agreed that because they have direct experience, travel influencers can harmonize with locals and the environment as if they were residents of the area.

“I agree that his content is similar to what other influencers have posted in the past, but he does so in a more detailed and unique way. Consider

the Zig religion. He went to sleep there and his life can be seen in full clip.

Although he takes everything, it is not boring.” - Interview 6

4.3 Third Section - Sources of Credibility

In the third section of the interview, sources of credibility were discussed. Questions regarding sources of credibility based on trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness. Thereafter, the participants were assigned to describe the quality of the content that is related to credibility towards travel influencers in this part.

- ***Trustworthiness***

Participants perceive travel influencers favorably, as was already mentioned. Because they had “*experience*” and recorded the entire situation, they all claimed that the travel influencers they had been relying on were reliable. Especially for travel influencers who have traveled before, it can increase their credibility. Travel influencers occasionally go out of their way to stay with locals in order to gain first-hand experience in addition to the knowledge they already possess. This might also give it the appearance of being more credible. However, more trust will be placed in sincere and authentic travel influencers in particular.

“I think it’s about his experiences. Actually, I didn’t follow him at first, but I knew that he traveled a lot. He not only provides knowledge, but he also tells how it is good or bad. It is more than I can search for online.

So, once I watched his content, I trusted him.” - Interview 2

Additionally, modern travelers have easy access to online resources, which gives them the ability to verify evaluations before completing their travel arrangements by determining the reliability of the information source.

“Yes, I do, but I genuinely don’t trust just one source, so I’ll compare them to see which one is more reliable. For instance, if Boom Tharis reviews USA Trip, I’ll search for similar content to see if it matches other sources. I’ll have more trust in him. Also, trust comes from his preparation and knowledge. - Interview 7

Meanwhile, half of them claimed that credibility is less defined by the **“number of followers.”** Because the content they have stated depends on the travel content. If it attracts or matches the interests of the traveler. They will discover the information.

“Although less, the number of followers has a credible influence. Actually, I believe in his content more than popularity.” - Interview 8

Travel influencers who have been around for a while and have been featured on television or other channels, in particular. The number of followers is unimportant compared to the level of credibility one has already attained. On the other hand, if a travel influencer is someone they have never followed before or a new channel, the number of followers is one key component in their decision to view their content. The number of followers is simply an indicator that someone is interesting, though. It cannot claim that their large following establishes their credibility.

“I don’t care about his followers and am unsure of his number. I believe that the amount of followers is significant for other travel influencers that I never knew before.” - Interviewer 12

Similar way to understand how participants perceived the source of credibility for travel influencers. The participant’s negative attitudes regarding travel influencers is another indicator that the researcher asked the participant questions. The finding indicated that since they have enjoyed following and consuming their content, none of them can claim the circumstance. As a result, they try to imagine the circumstances and expose the unexpected situation in these ways. First, participants stated that because they are explorers who will experience the places, they should not create content that could *“harm to others”* others. In contrast, it will uplift

others, such as themselves, locals, travel attractions, and travelers, to gain value together. Second, *“sensitive content,”* some of them claimed to have encountered this kind of circumstance with one of their travel influencers and ultimately lost trust in her. Additionally, when creating travel evaluations, avoid offensive, political, or harmful content. As more people consume, more people with diverse perspectives consume. Third, *“no honesty”* is particularly a travel attraction, and therefore travelers must gather information and carefully organize their trip. Some participants said they would lie or hire travel influencers if they had such intentions. It will be negative for their perception. The traveler requires information from the sender that is true and authentic.

“Lying, but I will forgive you if it’s a mistake. Additionally, travel influencers do not create content that is harmful to society or act improperly.” - Interview 12

However, as soon as this question was posed, they admitted that it was challenging to respond because, as of yet, they had never experienced a problem with a travel influencer they had been following. It can be seen that travel influencers have a significant amount of trust.

“I don’t feel it because I’ve decided to give him greater trust right now.”

– Interview 9

- **Expertise**

Participants were questioned about travel influencers’ knowledge, skills, and experiences connected to expertise. Each participant said that all components are important to the credibility of travel influencers and result in their online reviews.

“Yes, I believe. If travel influencers have more life experience, they may be able to express it more effectively, in my opinion. I watch them, so I also wish to learn more about insight, because I believe we will be knowledgeable.” - Interview 7

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The majority of participants declared that they were aware of travel influencers’ expertise. They listed **“experience”** as one of the primary components of competence. Travel-related experience is necessary, and knowledge and skills will follow. While 30% of them claimed that since it involves travel, skills are more crucial since without them, travel influencers would not be able to survive and complete their trip.

- ***Attractiveness***

According to attractiveness, one factor of credibility in relation to influencer personalities, if they are physically attractive, they will be more believed, liked, and desired. This section will separate attractiveness into two categories: attractiveness of travel influencers and attractiveness of content.

Firstly, the attractiveness of the travel influencer. More than 80% of participants agreed that it is significant, but only as a source of attractiveness in relation to the travel influencer's personal image. In this case, being "***overly beautiful or handsome***" for a travel influencer is not a consideration. Due to the fact that they go outside and occasionally go to various locations, it is important to "***act appropriately and dress appropriately.***" If they act inappropriately, it might make travelers less inclined to watch their content.

"It is unimportant. Whatever the content, explanation and creator related to their travel destination are more interesting. I'll keep a close watch." - Interview 6

"It is important that I focus on how they respect a situation or a place. The emotional connection to it will increase, like being well dressed for

the occasion. I've seen some influencers reviews for the hotel and wearing shorts. I feel disappointed."

- Interview 7

"It reflects how people behave or dress in a way that fits a travel destination or product. However, personal image only tickles my interest to only 50%." - Interview 8

While 20% of participants argued that a travel influencer's personality has attracted their attention, after a travel influencer visited a stunning or luxurious destination. It should be more attractive to follow the destinations. However, the personal image of a travel influencer has less of an impact on how appealing a destination is to visit. Travel influencers should focus on the right approach, because it might increase participants' willingness to believe in or like their content and support of their channel.

"It attracts me. Because I've watched content that travel influencers do not dress up when they visit beautiful or luxurious destinations. I think there is more contrast." - Interview 3

Secondly, the attractiveness of the content has been less mentioned by participants. Only some of them mentioned that they would choose to

watch beautiful images on the Instagram platform. Actually, they need ***“comprehensive information on content more than beauty.”***

- ***Quality of the Content***

According to quality of content, it refers to travel influencer content on social media platforms that contains information that is good, updated, accurate, and reliable. Each participant provided their own definition of what quality content is, depending on the source, experience, or creator from which they obtained it. The majority of them consequently agreed that the travel influencer they were pursuing provided high-quality content, such as ***“value,” “uniqueness,” or “creative content.”*** None of the participants mentioned a negative outcome from travel influencer content.

“Firstly, they can highlight the value or uniqueness of the content, and many influencers start their posts with clickbait. Second, does the topic’s content match the content or not? It ought to express what they intend to say. 3. Storytelling appeals to creative creators. It should be smooth. Due to content I discovered where an influencer reviewed a flight, he swiftly switched their footage. I once left a complaint on his channel, because of the confusion.” - Interview 7

One of the most variable outcomes is the content material that each participant uses, which will be a combination of text, voice, and video.

They claimed that since viewers of the video can readily follow the detailed plot, it is appropriate for travel- related information. The unexpected circumstance that the travel influencer encountered can be inferred from what they are currently expressing. It makes them feel more emotionally stimulated. Moreover, videos have all of the elements, such as images, sounds, text, and infographics. They can stimulate a traveler's interest. They do not search for more information. Since the launch of TikTok, travelers have changed their habit of listening to voices more frequently than in the past, even when speech and photo are of the same rank. They said that voice is concise and appropriate for times when they don't have enough time to concentrate, while photos ought to have attractive visuals that can draw people in. Due to time constraints and regular behavior, this text-only form was the final one to be submitted. They don't desire to concentrate more, not reading at all. But if it's more significant, like a travel step, they will tend to consume.

*“Actually, the text is too long. If it's interesting, I will stop reading.” -
Interview 8*

As a result, sources of credibility for travel influencers consistently came across as positive, especially when it came to the component of expertise that incorporated experience. Travel influencers are required to offer travelers more than just beautiful images.

In contrast, paid advertising or tie-in products that are featured on the content of travel influencers are another element of travel attribution. All the participants stated that they had seen some form of marketing communication through travel influencers on social media and were “*aware*” of how they operate and what was being marketed. More than 90% of participants said that even while paid advertising is merely interesting, it cannot persuade them to purchase something, even if it is a travel-related item. If they are truly interested, they will search for further information. While one female participant said she had purchased the things mentioned in the travel influencer video because she had been a fan of travel influencer since she was a young child. More thought-related questions were asked, and they stressed out several hidden yet interesting points. The majority of them do not have a bad opinion of the sponsor; rather, they are grateful that both brands and consumers are supporting these travel influencers. They argued that it will be better if travel influencers can seamlessly integrate relevant products into content without being overly obvious. They will believe that their review skills are excellent. Because travel requires real and authentic experiences more than persuading messages, it is therefore too obvious that a sponsor advertising is not necessary regarding traveler preferences.

Therefore, the importance of authentic marketing that matches the character of the travel influencer Influencers' new marketing tactics must also match marketing tactics to some extent, or their attitude towards the travel influencer may become negative. This was due to their belief that there may be a significant amount of paid money involved, which would make them lose trust in them, resulting in no purchase intention.

“Travel influencers who will tie-in products should complete research that is connected to the theme, for instance, Female reviews sunscreen. It is logical. I will learn to always pack sunscreen when we travel, or if they visit a spa or stay at a hotel. It’s common. However, I won’t be okay with this if there is an exaggerated tie-in product. Even if I am neutral toward them, I’m glad that they have supporters.” - Interview 6

4.4 Fourth Section - Travel Behavior

The final section included questions about travel behavior and the decision-making process. To understand the process of selecting, purchasing, and using travel goods or services to meet needs, the questions will be divided into three phases: pre- travel, during-travel, and post-travel. Additionally, it will outline the five steps of the consumer decision-making process, which are: 1.) *needs recognition*; 2.) *information search*; 3.) *evaluation alternatives*; 4.) *product or service choices*; and 5.) *post-*

purchase evaluation. To better understand the differences in participant travel behaviors, the findings of this study will separate travel behavior into that of international travelers and domestic travelers.

The Stages of Decision-Making Process

1. Needs Recognition - International Travelers

Regarding their “*needs recognition*” during the pre-trip phase The majority of participants stated that their need to travel was higher after COVID-19 gradually declined. They all agreed that there were several reasons for concern before making a trip due to the regulation change. However, they want to make a long trip, return to their lost time and start to think of where to go. Moreover, including more than their needs, several factors come with their decision. 80% of participants indicated that money and time were the two most important considerations when deciding whether or not to go. When it comes to money, it all depends on how they can spend it to accomplish the goals they desire. It is not about a cheap vacation. For instance, the ticket price or accommodation price that will suit the seasonal. Additionally, they simply want to scope out the money for readiness. Moreover, each participant was millennial and has a full-time job, they must ensure that there is adequate time and the right time to travel in this circumstance. Especially, travel abroad, they must plan ahead and manage their work because they have made the decision to go. However, if they

have the money and time together, the trip will be a possibility.

“The most important thing is money. I make the decision to travel after I am certain I have enough money. The second is time. However, if I have both money and time, I would travel without hesitation.” - Interview 1

Only one female participant said that one of the main things that can entice her to travel is a promotional message, such as a discount for ticket prices or travel attractions.

“Time, pocket money, and promotion for a flight or travel attraction.” - Interview 9

2. Information Search

Secondly, *“information search”* is another step in the decision-making process. After they realize the need for recognition, the majority of participants who had international travel will search for travel information, especially on Google and YouTube platforms. They claimed that Google fully covers the basic information that they need to carefully prepare for things like travel information, costumes, weather, documents, etc., and that it takes about two or three weeks. And then they will search for travel influencer channels, especially on YouTube, to see detailed information because while travel influencers are traveling, participants can surround the

environment that travel influencers walk through. Moreover, even though they are traveling during the COVID-19 situation, participants have to seek more strict documents. Sometimes, the official website is not updated. Travel influencers are another attribution to help them gain more information because they are real, experienced travelers. Otherwise, they use Instagram less frequently because it is difficult to search for international travel.

“I previously performed a Google search. I now use YouTube to look for travel- related content. If I am really interested, I will discover more insights.” - Interview 3

“If I search for a cafe, I will search on IG, while traveling abroad and no experience. I will search on YouTube.” - Interview 10

3. Evaluation Alternatives

Regarding the third stage of evaluation, the majority of participants stated that they can discover more travel information on various platforms due to the internet’s widespread availability. To find common practices to follow and accurate information, they will compare a variety of sources and decide on a trip. Additionally, the international traveler spends more than a week searching for information and determining whether it is sufficient based on checklists and feelings, particularly when traveling abroad.

However, they all claimed that travel online sources had a high level of trust, more than 80%. The remaining 20% is made up of outdated or personally evaluated information.

“I think it’s around one week. I use Google to search for where I want to go and check for nearby locations before including them to a schedule.

After that I won’t look for more information.” - Interview 2

“YouTube, where I found recently updated travel influencer content from no more than two weeks ago.” - Interview 3

4. Travel Preparation and Travel Experiences

Since they traveled abroad when the COVID-19 situation was in transition, they all agreed that there were several factors about which to be concerned. They determine “*where*” to go or “*country*” before researching travel details. They did not mention any special bargains; instead, they will look for safety and compare seasonal pricing. By making this assumption, they were simply assuming that they would want to carry out the plan. Some participants mentioned that they would look up the basics on Google first, and then they would look up travel influencers on YouTube to get more knowledge. Afterwards, they would plan their trip and collect the necessary information into a travel schedule. In contrast to those who travel domestically, this group adheres strictly to the itinerary in order to avoid a

complicated journey and unforeseen circumstances, such as the necessity to make a temporary itinerary. Nevertheless, it does not mean that they are concerned; rather, they believe that dealing with the situation is exciting.

“I visited Singapore, and I enjoyed it. However, I occasionally encounter unexpected situations, such as when a suggested restaurant and it was not as tasty as an online review. Sometimes I will adjust while traveling.” -

Interview 5

While traveling, all of the participants stated that they constantly look online for more information because they are unfamiliar with the area and the locals' various traditions and cultures. They primarily search for nearby locations, well-known restaurants, and transportation. Even though they planned the itinerary, there were times when the plan was missed due to external factors. Some of the information they have read online, such as about crowded people or disappointing food flavors, may have changed since they read it.

Therefore, they claimed that it was not a problem because they would confront it and search for other places. *“If I find a mistake, I will search for more and use Google to find nearby places.” -Interview 5*

One of the female participants who went to Europe discussed their trip and how concerned they were with cultural differences. She will also stress other travel-related facts, such as rules or regulations, dos and don'ts,

public transportation, and travel tips, in order to behave properly and minimize problems that may arise during the trip. Similarly, to others participants, they also asserted that the travel influencer they had been following had also given them the knowledge they required. They cannot learn everything about it from basic information. Additionally, they can discover the sensation, environment, and emotional aspects of vacationing in this country when they consume content from travel influencers.

“I always search before and during traveling. Basically, I look up dos and don'ts on Google since there are different cultures in each country like tip giving that I need to be aware of. Europe and Asia are not the same.” - Interview 1

5. Post Purchased Evaluation

They have lately visited several other countries. Although each of them had a different experience, they all insisted that the trip had been enjoyable and satisfying. They will return for another visit if they have the chance. They both share real-time pictures on personal accounts and discuss WOM and eWOM with friends. Thus, it can be seen that the first group of international travelers ultimately gains up new knowledge on the trip since they encounter real-world challenges and must adapt to fit in with the locals. Online reviews also include those from actual travelers.

"In Terms of information, Google is unavailable in Korea. I will use the "Never" application to search for such things as cafe activities. This is the information that I just knew it" - Interview 3

1. Needs recognition - Domestic Travelers

The majority of the second group have gone within Thailand's provinces, according to their travels. Majority of them stated that they decide to travel in the country to travel nearby. Moreover, due to the COVID-19, their travel behavior has changed. Their main needs, they desire to have leisure time, especially since they are full-time employees and do not have enough time to travel or do other activities. Similarly, the factors that motivate their travel decision making is similar to the first group is money and time. Another important factor, according to some participants, is friends or partners that will place third. They need to make sure that the number of people traveling together will make it simple for them to assess the sort of attraction and how well their lifestyles align. They further stated that if they are aware that they will travel with others, they will be able to evaluate their friends' personalities and locate the exact place.

“I consider my money, time, and friends. Sometimes, I have to travel in a group and go in the same direction. I must ensure that we achieve the goal together.” - Interview 4

2. Information Search

They mostly claimed that despite having been there several times, they were still thrilled with their trip since they continually searched for new things to discover there. Additionally, 80% of them compare sources online before deciding where to go, using platforms like Google, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. On the other hand, they will find a Facebook group or trip location to explore the top 10 travel destinations or search for interesting information. One of the male participants said they would go with his partner if he knew she enjoyed cafes. He will search the information to see the picture on Instagram, because there are great visuals available on this platform. In addition, it was posted by a real traveler who had actually been to the place, therefore it was reliable.

“I searched on YouTube, Google, Facebook, and Instagram, to see friend’s photo who went to cafe for my partner” - Interview 11

3. Evaluation Alternatives

since they are traveling in Thailand. They probably would not

search for more than a week because they are quite familiar with the place and surroundings. Some participants cited that they only started making preparations two or three days before they left and have become “*passive travelers*” since COVID-19. Also, once they have gathered sufficient data, they will estimate their observations based on their feelings or their travel checklist, which is similar to the first group.

“I mainly search websites. I’ve recently been drawn to travel influencers or reels. It motivates me to conduct further research. similar to how our behavior changed to passive traveler because I lost motivation after COVID. If anything comes up, I’ll list it and search for it later.” -

Interview 7

4. *Travel preparations and Travel Experiences*

This group of travelers does not set up a regular routine because they are either very familiar with the destination before. Additionally, one male participant said that he tries not to expect trips. One similarity to the first group is their ability to deal with unexpected circumstances, should they arise. The traveler said that they had followed the advice found online while on the trip. If something had changed, they just searched for nearby locations or, if they wanted to explore the new things, they simply let it go.

“Sometimes plans go wrong, but it’s not always necessary to carry them through. I don’t know what to expect while traveling.” - Interview 7

“Although I do have a plan, it is not completely direct. I want to be free because I want to relax and chill.” - Interview 12

In contrast, one of the participants, a male, argued from a different point of view, and said that while planning the trip, he changed his mind once there. He also requested that the locals verify the plan. because it is the province within the country. The ability to communicate will improve.

5. Post Purchased Evaluation

According to the second group of travelers, they stated that they were always happy when they returned since it was an authentic experience that nobody else could have provided. Regardless of how it goes, a trip can satisfy their needs. Domestic travelers likewise stated that they interact with both WOM and eWOM, while they particularly share on online groups or Instagram.

“I’m satisfied. Because I planned my trip and wasn’t expecting certain services. Even if it was raining, I’m not serious. I told my friends who DM me if they were good. I’ll post updates or pictures from my trip, because I enjoy sharing happy moments with other people.” - Interview 7

The process of travelers comprises planned, impulsive, and spontaneous purchases. Moreover, it included the following six crucial indicators that reflect travel decision-making as follows.

1. **Value** - Comparing two groups of travelers, regards to value, participants were asked to explain the benefit of travel influencers. This is aimed to capture the participant's perspective to overall travel influencer. There were repetitive answers from the majority of participants, who said that travel influencers have a greater benefit to travelers. The seven key benefits that the researcher can capture are; "travel information," "knowledge," "updated information," "travel attribution," "convenience," "risk reduction," and "entertainment."
- **Travel Information** - It contains the essential details that travelers need. To plan a trip, they require information about places, transportation, budget, timing, and highlighted areas. As a result of viewing travel influencer content, they were able to learn this kind of specific knowledge.

"Yes, it is useful. First, travel information. I can bring their information to make adjustments for my trip. For example, on this budget, I will take a 2- to 3-day trip." -Interview 1

- **Knowledge** - While consuming material from travel influencers, travelers will learn more than just travel information. They learned new information about the places they were visiting, such as the history, character of the area, or any hidden information. Travelers can learn more from their simple information searches.

“Yes, it has benefits. They convey knowledge to the audience such as K.Bas, he reviews stunning and inserting history of places sometimes. K.

Bas also responds to people’s needs.” - Interview 8

- **Updated Information** - Most of them stated that sometimes they searched for websites or google, but information is not to date. Travel influencers can be one of the information attributes that reviews from their recent experiences. However, it depends on the period that travelers search for.

“Yes, I think it’s useful, because Influencers visited the real destinations before us, I do believe it is informationally beneficial. They will share a

hidden place or a unique location that occasionally is not shown on

Google.” - Interview 4

- **Travel Attribution** – With regard to the most recent facts provided above, a traveler may choose to use a travel influencer while making a selection. Consuming information and comparing sources is quite simple when making a decision. Additionally, the travel influencer offered complete forms of content. It is not necessary to switch more to see other sources.

- **Convenience** - Many participants claimed that the reason was that those who had traveled and experienced things before us. They'll have more knowledge to share with us. For this reason, it is more convenient for them to imitate their travel plans and methods of transportation. Additionally, since a lot of information is reviewed by travel influencers, choosing what they desire is simple.

“Preparedness, as occasionally I require a document, a checklist, or a weather review. He usually stays there and only provides a budget summary on large trips, like those to the US. I need him to include all the details.” - Interview 5

- **Risk Management** - It is essential information, especially for those who have never been to that place or visited another country. Most travel influencers are sincere when they describe actual vacation

experiences in their reviews. Travelers can gather travel advice to help them prepare and be careful when traveling. Because one aspect of the travel process is safety.

“Secondly, a trick that we can use when we carefully plan or go to a new place. Lastly, it is knowledge.” - Interview 1

- **Entertainment** - Some participants mentioned that each travel influencer has their own personality and expressing style. They don't just convey knowledge and information; they may also occasionally entertain us in unique ways, which encourages travelers to travel and consume their content more because it is not monotonous. The term **“Edutainment,”** as it is used in the present, refers to content that combines education and entertainment.

“Yes, in my opinion. updated information first. Second, entertainment that is both enjoyable and relaxing.” - Interview 7

2. **Motivation** - When questioned about the high motivation towards spirit of travel, more than 50% of participants less mentioned about travel promotion or discount, instead they are stated about the unique place or travel activities which is related to their travel behavior can has a high motivate to them to decide to travel. While travel influencer

content can be one of the decisions making for them to follow the trip and imitate some of influencer activities. Moreover, even in a technology era, some of participants stated that storytelling and content creator that is amazing in terms of information and visual can motivate their travel behavior as well.

“A style of travel that focuses on mystery and adventure places or activities.” - Interview 4

“It depends on the form of contents in terms of visuals, such as, Reels on IG.” -Interview 8

Any research has investigated that visual and the selection of the destination and personality has reflected to the self-concept. In this finding will be indicated into two terms which are; self-concept towards travel destination and second, self-concept towards travel influencer.

3. ***Self-Concept*** - According to travel destination, place is depending on their interest at that moment, such as, types of destination or seasonal travel. Each participant has a different travel style, Moreover, they will arrange the trip based on their objective at that moment. For example, they need to have a luxury trip, they will seek for beautiful and luxury visual content to imitate the trip, or they need to have a leisure trip,

they seek for the related information and ensure that the trip is not complex and difficult to follow. but many travelers mentioned that they seekfor fresh destination, even though they ever visited at that place, they will find a new different. While related to self-concept towards travel influencer, each participant also has criteria to qualify or match type of travel influencer that they want to follow, Actually, the main point of them is to seek for who were had *a close interest, direction, form of travel, or behavior* that direct to them.

5. *Expectations* - Regarding to many research indicated that expectations cannot be satisfied, reached, or surpassed. It can be concluded that majority of them were have a positive perspective towards sources they gathered, even though personal (WOM) or impersonal prop experience (advertising). They all claimed that it is similar to what they have gather over 80%. While some participants argued that because of it it a travel destination and trip for enjoy, they will try to not expect and excited with unexpected situation that will happen during the trip. Moreover, majority of them less concern, because they can adjust the trip while traveling because they have an online search. It can be seen that travel has less concern in travel expectation, they desired to face it themselves.

“I keep searching. In reality, the place is similar to an online review.

Overall, everything is good.” - Interview 4

“However, I occasionally encounter unexpected situations, such as when a suggested restaurant and it was not as tasty as an online review.

Sometimes I will adjust while traveling” - Interview 5

“Although I do have a plan, it is not completely direct. I want to be free because I want to relax and chill.” - Interview 12

6. **Attitude** in the context of feelings and moral principles. It can be difficult to determine. In the stages of decision-making process, it can be indicated that 12 participants as a traveler have a positive side opinion towards travel destination or their travel related and travel influencer, because they researched the post information before travel. Moreover, the participants perceived that it is a characteristic of travel destination that will have many factors. They do not argue negative point in terms of attitude towards travel destination. Also, they can learn and experience new things in their travel. In terms of travel influencers like they mentioned earlier that they are more trust towards travel influencer. Moreover, the place of travel information that they reviewed is real from their travel experience and once they visit, it is similar and practical. It can increase a side of attitude towards them.

“Since the travel destination cannot be fake because so many people viewed and traveled it, I personally give it a score of 98%. However, the 2% difference is merely a comparison of my own opinions with online reviews and those of others.” - Interview 1

7. **Perception** - They also have a perception in terms of risk and security perception. They all prepared to seek for the risk-related information in each place and safety conditions to avoid the unexpected situation during the trip. They also stated that regard to travel influencers, they able to provide a hidden trick to travel, because they are an authentic traveler who explore the places before.

“Secondly, a trick that we can use, when we carefully plan or go to a new place.” - Interview 1

However, a **satisfaction** is one thing that crucial for evaluation. It can be evaluated that 12 participants all agreed on one thing when they said that, regardless of whether the trip followed the plan exactly or not, they were all satisfied with the trip. Every time they took the trip, they enjoyed and remembered the details. Thereafter, satisfaction will lead to **trust and loyalty**, majority of participants have trust towards the experts of travel influencer and sources online. The research believed that the more trust of

source, the more trust of travel destination. Moreover, some of participants argued that they already know the places through online and many travelers review on that place. Actually, travel destination has trust in itself. Moreover, repetitive answer of participants claimed that travel influencer has more trust because their experience.

Additionally, both of the two groups said that depending on the circumstance, they communicate using both WOM and eWOM. When they meet up with friends, they will communicate with WOM. Friends will easily absorb and perceive the feelings of destination. To conclude the conversation, they clarified that in order for their friends to see their expression, they must provide some online source like a trip photo or video. It is impossible to deny the significance of an internet source. On the other hand, they also share eWOM when friends or other people respond to their communication. They will describe their trip and suggest places that they really must visit. They are occasionally posted in real time via Instagram stories or photos. All participants stated that *“they are not travel influencers”* since they are only providing their own opinions and because they do not believe they are qualified to perform this function, such as, knowledge or skills. Instead, they only provide evaluations on their own personal accounts.

“I’m satisfied. Because I planned my trip and wasn’t expecting certain services. Even if it was raining, I’m not serious. I told my friends who DM me if they were good. I’ll post updates or pictures from my trip, because I enjoy sharing happy moments with other people.” - Interview 7

The Evaluation of Word of Mouth

Additionally, 80% of participants said that eWOM is more significant than WOM driving travel behavior. due to the influence of the internet and modern traveler behavior. It offers the advantage of being real-time and accessible around- the-clock. Travelers only need to perform a single click to easily find reviews online. Additionally, it has been stated that online reviewers and travel influencers have expertise and skills. Some participants asserted that occasionally they believe eWOM to be more significant than WOM since WOM is sometimes unable to explain the problem very precisely because it lacks photos or sources that can verify the information. Similar to this, eWOM nowadays is more trustworthy because sources with more reviews tend to be more reliable. Additionally, pay attention to recommendations from friends who have had genuine travel experiences. They continue to search for more information online. This is evidence that online communication is becoming more popular and that travelers can benefit from vital information provided by travel influencers while on the trip.

“eWOM, I am unable to explain this situation very clearly because WOM will not have a photo at this time. However, people can view impressive photos online. It will have an impact on travel behavior.” - Interview 9

According to online reviews they have read, all participants give the score an upper 70%. They argued that the various traveler reviews and supporting evidence made it a reliable source. Furthermore, because they were there and had firsthand experience, they could express their reviews truthfully.

“Because I won’t ask from friends. I will give 90%, especially Google. When I’m traveling. I found that it has less errors online. It will also make me trust. Moreover, online reviews are from many travelers experienced in that place.” - Interview 2

For 30% remaining, they split down the reasons into 4 main categories which are; “no up to date”, “own thought”, “disappointed”, and “sponsor”

“I’m rating a score of 70%. Online reviews sometimes include advertising.

Measuring who is paid or not is difficult. They will work with an influencer, much like a hotel. For another 30%, I cut off the score. It

depends on opinion. Some reviews are excessively positive, while others are too negative.” - Interview 4

The majority of them expressed that they are interested in exploring new or unknown places that are very difficult for them to explore, according to travel decisions to consume travel influencers and behavior. There will be more incentive to go. Some of them impassively make the claim that they will be more motivated to interest content creators and other creative works. However, the study revealed that travelers have a more favorable perception of online sources because they frequently search for information there. Fewer of them were questioned by friends or neighbors. They were even asked to compare to an online source at the conclusion. As a result, their research and planning for their trip are focusing on the goals they desire to accomplish.


Therefore, in the final section of the questionnaire, participants were given five suggestions that would help travel influencers: be authentic, be yourself, be completely informed, be creative creators, and understand the target audience. Additionally, every participant stated that they will keep following both their old and new favorite travel influencers in the future because they have a positive attitude toward them and are willing to learn new things from them. The qualifying criteria they will use, nevertheless,

are interesting and matched.

“Yes, I will, even though they are new travel influencers, but their content will be good. I will try new things that match me to follow.” - Interview 11

Table 4.2: Keyword of Findings

Keyword of Findings	
1. Demographics and Media Usages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Popular Travel Influencers</u> - Go Went Go, Asapapailong, and Thuean Travel • <u>Popular Platforms</u> - YouTube and Facebook • <u>Loyal Followers</u> - Travelers who liked, loved, or believed travel influencers
2. Attitude towards Travel Influencers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Definitions</u> - Tour guide and Persuasive person • <u>Negative Attitudes towards Travel Influencers</u> - Follower seekers or popularity seekers • <u>Criteria</u> - Travel lifestyles, Travel destinations, storytelling, and fresh content • <u>Travel Barriers</u> - Time, money, and friends • <u>One Word for Travel Influencers</u> - Good and clever

3. Source of Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Credibility</u> - Experience • <u>Number of Followers</u> - Less significant • <u>Trust</u> - Avoid harm to others, sensitive content, and no honesty • <u>Attractiveness</u> - Act appropriately or dress appropriately rather than overly beautiful or handsome • <u>Quality of the Content</u> - Value, uniqueness, and creative content • <u>Paid Advertising</u> - Be aware
4. Travel Behavior	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Millennials Travel Behavior</u> - Passive travelers, adventurous travelers, focus on interest and needs, and they are not travel influencers • <u>eWOM or Internet</u> - High level of trust • <u>Key Benefits</u> - Travel information, knowledge, updated information, travel attribution, convenience, risk reduction, and entertainment or edutainment

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

A comprehensive summary of the findings as well as the discussion is given in this chapter, beginning with the summary of the research findings. Consequently, discussion of demographics and media usages, attitude towards travel influencers, sources of credibility and travel behavior among millennials are all included. Finally, the practical implementations and limitations of the current research are provided for the further research.

5.1 Summary

The qualitative research data was collected in October to November 2022, using an in-depth interview with an attempt to understand the credibility of travel influencers and travel behavior among twelve millennials. The data summary will start with demographics profile and media usages, followed by attitudes, sources of credibility, and travel behavior in order to reflect research topic.

Demographics and Media Usages

The demographics profile concerns participant's age, gender, occupation, location, and media usages. Majority of them are female, and the other half are male. All participants are almost the age of twenty-five years old and

another is not older than thirty years old. Moreover, 80% of them live in Bangkok. In terms of their occupation, ten of participants are full-time employees who are working in a private company and working related to the marketing field, for example, content creator, media consultant, marketer, or media planner, etc. Only one female participant is working as electronic engineer. Other two participants are self-employed who have their own business and have more flexible time. A majority of them arranged the trip within a year. By five of them went abroad, such as Europe, Korea, Singapore, or Malaysia. Other seven participants traveled to several provinces in Thailand. Moreover, all of them engaged online sources both website and travel influencers in terms of travel preparation. The majority of participants named Go Went Go, Asapapailong, and Thuen Travel as their favorites channel.

According to their media usages, the majority of them own electronic devices and mainly use smartphones for connecting in a day while using computers or tablets for working and searching for detailed information. They spend time on social media approximately five hours per day which is higher usage due to the technology era. Moreover, they access various platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Tiktok depending on their usage. Regarding their travel behavior, they are mostly searched for YouTube and Facebook in order to seek travel-related content.

While there are some participants who are loyal followers of those travel influencers and follow them across all platforms.

Attitude towards Travel Influencers

In terms of attitudes, there are three key components that comprise attitudes: attitudes, subjective norms, behavioral intention, and perceived behavioral control in relation to the theories of reasoned action and planned behavior. Under the theory, participants were asked to explain how they define travel influencers and define the types of behavior that lead them to believe, like and follow a travel influencer. Most participants agreed that travel influencers serve as tour guides and persuasive person who attract them online to visit the destination and explore new things. Moreover, the main factors to choose the appropriate travel influencers were the depth of their information, knowledge, entertainment, and fresh content. Meanwhile, travel content will be consumed less by travel influencers who are primarily seeking to gain followers and popularity. Physically and emotionally, participants had a positive attitude towards travel influencers formed by experiences that gain from travel influencer content.

Source of Credibility

Regarding to credibility, it relate to whether a person perceived their advice as unbiased, believable, true, or factual. Participants were also

questioned about trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness in order to see the effectiveness of online message. The quality of the content in terms of information will be discussed in this part. In terms of trustworthiness, the vast majority of them agreed that because travel influencers have actual travel experience and information, which strengthens their ability to travel, they have a lot of credibility. While participants seemed to value experience as crucial characteristics for travel influencers expertise rather than knowledge and skills. Meanwhile, some felt that the skills is greater. However, the attractiveness of travel influencer and number of followers also have a less significance to travel behavior in this study. On the other hand, paid travel influencers are one of marketing tools that participants are aware of.

Travel Behavior

According to travel behavior, it was related to the process of trip perform at particular destination. The travel behavior connected to the decision-making process within the consumer behavior activity was described by McColl et al. (1994:116) also stated that the decision-making process will determine those action. To better understand, the study divided the questions on travel behavior into three phases: pre- trip, during-trip, and post-trip. It also compared two groups of travelers; those traveling abroad and those traveling domestically to see how their behavior and though decision-making processes evolved. Each group of participants travels

differently depending on a variety of factors, including place, culture, mode of transportation, environment, or people. One similarity between the two groups is that during the three phases, they all searched up online and travel influencer reviews, communicated both WOM and eWOM and shared real-time photos during the trip. As the previous reviews provided that millennials spontaneously seek destinations and plan their trips on social media. Taking pictures and sharing them on different social media platforms were the main reasons for using their mobile devices during their trips (Gotardi et al., 2015). This study supports the ideas, because Millennials are very tech-savvy and eWOM will rise in importance rather than WOM. However, they focus on their needs and even when they encounter the unexpected, they are able to deal with it, giving the impression that they are venture travelers.

5.2 Discussion

Demographics and Media Usages

According to the study's findings, millennials are the target market for travel influencers. Due to their high level of engagement with the digital era, millennial travelers frequently access online sources when searching for travel-related content. Many participants highlighted certain travel influencers in their comments, including ***“Go Went Go,”*** a channel run by K. Bas, who transitioned from being a singer to a travel influencer. The majority of them claimed that by watching his content, they could learn

more, and that his travel style was simple to imitate. They also said that K.Bas has a funny personality, but not an excessive amount. His content will seem more engaging as a result. Additionally, K. Bas did a trip channel for many years, the participants all agreed that they could observe how his channel was growing in terms of information and creator. In contrast, participants requested that this channel allow them to offer a budget overview for both domestic and international travel. Regardless of how close or far away the destination is, participants must be aware of this information in order to travel preparation.

Second, *“Thuean Travel”* provided by K.Singh. Most of them said that the term that comes to mind while thinking of this channel is honest. Even though this channel does not appear to have a lot of innovative creators, K. Singh's narration and characters keep it engaging. He visited an unexpected location that sometimes participants do not think to visit, their worries about traveling will rise and fall as their needs change. The majority of them also claimed that this channel could surprise them on any kind of travel.

Regarding to *“Asapapailong”* provided by K. Wan, participants were mentioned his content in terms of entertaining and good video creator. In addition to providing the information, he occasionally adds voice

narration to make it more engaging. Additionally, they noticed that K.Wan is a producer. He is also creative and writes new songs with travel-related ideas.

The participants' preferred sites for finding travel-related material are ***“YouTube and Facebook.”*** Since it is a travel context, the narration and motion around the destination are crucial, the majority of YouTube users claimed that many of the travel influencers they have followed began on this platform. They may also sense the common expression, which encourages them to prefer to follow channels and exhibit certain travel behaviors. Apart from that, Facebook is also popular due to its large user base, but an interesting fact is that millennials tend to use this platform to consume travel content because they seek that Facebook is approachable and that travel influencers on it behave like close friends who tell them travel stories. Even if the text is too long, they will watch for some time. Moreover, a diary or photo album that includes a little text or information meets their travel material requirements. However, some participants who be a ***“loyal followers”*** will subscribe to every travelinfluencer channel because they value and want to see the most recent information.

Attitude towards Travel Influencers

A positive ***“attitude”*** supports an outcome, while a negative attitude

produces the opposite outcome. They were asked to describe their attitude toward travel influencers, including definitions, perspectives, and feelings.

The findings found that each participant has a positive attitude toward the travel influencers they follow. Participants' positive attitudes were based on their perception and belief that travel influencers provide valuable information about destinations. Moreover, they believe that those travel influencers who are "*tour guides*" have authentic experiences and skills regarding travel behavior that they could imitate in a proper way. Similar to a "*persuasive person*," travel influencers also convey travelers to watch, believe, and travel to destinations.

In addition, the positive attitudes that could be found in most participants. The replies from them stated that the travel influencers had a personal preference toward them, such as, funny, sincere, straightforward, or common. Meanwhile, the participants' descriptions of some travel influencers included terms like "*follower seekers*" and "*popularity seekers*," which do not reflect a positive attitudes. They observed an overuse of characters and had experiences such as clickbait headlines and highlighted content. When they watched and found a little part of it, they will be dissatisfied. As a result, the narration needs to be detailed and relevant to the content they want to convey.

Since travel influencers are one of the “*subjective norms*” for travelers, participants in the interviews were questioned on their motivation for engaging in travel behavior toward travel influencers as well as the criteria by which they select the content of these influencers and how to adapt their own travel behavior. These kinds of questions revealed the potential aspects of travel influencers as follows:

Each participant has different criteria to match a travel influencer. The four primary factors for matching their interests; “*travel lifestyles, travel destinations, storytelling, and fresh content*” which can be summarized in the study. While it is possible that travelers are particularly interested in travel-related information and content, The vast majority of them added that if they have a similar travel lifestyle, it will ultimately connect their emotional and travel intentions. Being a popular or well-liked travel influencer is less frequently highlighted by participants as a requirement to complete; instead, they prioritize the content and benefits they intend to receive.

80% of the participants stated that travel influencers strongly motivate them to travel. Some to the extent that they would always search for travel influencers before performing a particular behavior, and also tended to listen to their advice and opinions. Only 20% compare asking

friends to the source of travel influencers. They claimed that online reviews are quicker and easier to find at that time. The participants further explained that they would rather obtain many advice, recommendations, and suggestions from travel influencers than from friends. All participants, however, thought highly of travel influencers as knowledgeable travelers. The claim was also seen as crucial because it was confirmed by Ajzen (1991), who asserts that participants are under pressure regardless of whether their behavior is positive. It is apparent that participants are pressured to increase their travel as a result of their exposure to travel influencers.

As perceived behavioral control is required to understand how behavior is formed. If travelers can control the barriers, this might lead to a positive intention to travel. To better understand individuals' perceptions, participants were asked about their abilities to travel.

Many participants realized that there were many barriers to travel, whether they were *“money, time, and friends.”* 80% of participants stated that the amount of time and money available motivated their travel behavior. The majority of them stated that one of the most important factors in spending *“money”* on acquiring valuable experience in terms of *“needs”* response, for example, if they are leisure-oriented, they must ensure that the accommodation is appropriate, quiet, and comfortable

enough to stay in without having to travel far. But when it comes to adventure trips, the various activities or unique destinations must be required. While *“time”* can be a barrier for them because the majority of them are millennials who are working and have fixed times for different activities, particularly traveling, they divide time into two categories: sufficient time and appropriate time. Many participants argued that it will be easier to engage in travel behavior unhesitatingly if they have both time and money. Likewise, 20% of participants mentioned *“friends or partners”* who would be traveling with them; they must ensure that their goals are met and they are traveling in the same direction. As a result, they will be concerned about more trip options. However, this can mean that travel influencers play a key role in predicting participant behavior, and they have provided the travel information regarding behavioral control, which may encourage a positive intention to travel.



Therefore, it seems that travel influencers are explorers who show travelers new worlds while also guiding and entertaining them. Many travel influencers claimed to be *“good” and “clever”* travelers. Participants also agreed that since travel influencers have first-hand experience of how to accomplish their goals, they can easily blend in with the community and environment similar to a native.

Source of Credibility

Trustworthiness - A travel influencer is considered trustworthy if they indicate believability, honesty, and transparency. Participants all asserted that the travel influencers they had been following were trustworthy based on their personal experiences. The majority of them also stated that their trustworthiness is unrelated to the number of followers they have followed, whereas travel experiences are essential and thus required. Similarly, the majority of them have followed those travel influencers for a long time. They absorb travel influencer traits that necessitate more trust. Moreover, some of the participants stated that the **“number of followers”** is less significant because sometimes they search for travel-related content on lesser-known channels, but those travel influencers can express complete information. Additionally, travelers are open to learning other sources so they can compare rather than restricting themselves to watching only their favorite travel influencers. Contrarily, some participants argued that if there is a travel influencer they have never heard of before, they will be able to tell by their follower count. However, the number of followers is only one factor that determines travelers' intent to travel. It is in contrast with this statement: “smaller influencers will have lower engagement in absolute terms; they tend to have a greater engagement rate relative to the total number of followers and a more homogenous follower base” (Haenlein et al., 2020).

On the other hand, participants enjoy watching travel influencers'

content, and the majority of them cannot mention any negative situations towards lost trust of a travel influencer that could happen. The participants, however, attempt to assume the situation based on their personal opinions. The study classified the factors that could cause participants to lose trust in travel influencers into three categories: *“harm to others,” “sensitive content,”* and *“no honesty.”*

- ***Harm to Others*** - Since travel influencers are explorers who explore new places, they should respect others and refrain from giving harmful information. Contrarily, they should uplift themselves, locals, tourist sites, and other travelers when traveling in order to generate value.
- ***Sensitive Content*** - Some participants have had negative experiences with sensitive content from some of the travel influencers. In order to avoid offensive, political, or damaging information, they advised travel influencers. It is crucial to be unbiased and equal because they are distributing content to a large number of people.
- ***No Honesty*** - In particular, travelers should want to carefully obtain information. Travel influencers must give accurate travel information and refrain from lying because this might lead to a negative attitudes.

It can be seen that twelve of the participants have a lot of trust in the

travel influencers they follow because they trust in the influencers' experience and have never encountered an unpleasant situation while watching content.

Regarding another aspect of trustworthiness with regards to influencer marketing, the results revealed that over 90% of them said that ***“paid advertising”*** had no significance on their intentions; instead, they were merely interested and would look for more information from other online sources. The more experienced among the participants discovered that many influencers were being paid. Some participants said they could identify it as advertising and tended to skip it in favor of the rest of the travel-related content. However, it is interesting to note that the majority of them do not view sponsored advertising negatively and instead express gratitude for the support received from both brands and consumers. They further noted that the product match-up with content, such as tying in sneakers with trekking content without making overly big claims, was the criterion for interest advertising that many participants stressed out.

As a result, the vast majority of them are knowledgeable about influencer marketing as a profession and how it works to increase sales. Instead of focusing on influencer marketing, travelers would prefer to read authentic online reviews from actual travelers and travel influencers. It can

also be beneficial for marketers to choose appropriate travel influencers to communicate their brand's message.

Expertise (Experience, skills, and knowledge) - Expertise is a component of the credibility that travel influencers acquire from their possession of the requisite skills, knowledge, or experience to present travel-related content. Participants are all in agreement that experience, knowledge, and skills have a greater result on travel reviews. The findings among 70% of participants found that the most important trait for a travel influencer is "*experience*" which is related to the trustworthiness attribute mentioned above. They stated that travel influencers have actually traveled before they express their views about travel so they can share their actual experience with others. According to travelers, their trip would be simpler once they observe travel influencers who have experience because those people have already done it. Then, skills and knowledge will come later. While 30% of participants argued that verbal, creative, and survival skills are more important if they lack this kind of expertise, They are unable to complete the trip and cannot easily review online content. Thus, it can be concluded that these three components are required for travel influencers, especially experience.

Attractiveness - Attractiveness refers to the stereotype of a person's

favorable associations, which attract travel intention. More than 80% of participants claimed that their opinion of a travel influencer's personal appearance or attractiveness was unimportant. The majority of them asserted that it was not a beauty product but rather a travel destination. There is no need for it to be excessively handsome or beautiful. Similar to this, other participants said that if it was an adventurous trip, they would enjoy seeing them act naturally, which can increase their attention. Thus, once they go outside, it is important to "*act appropriately and dress appropriately.*" Participants will have a positive attitude towards them. Compare to the statement stated in the research review about influencers "whose beauty is viewed as encouraging the purchase intention" (van der Waldt et al., 2009: 104). The results could be in contrast to the framework because travelers tend to trust travel influencers more based on behavior than on personal image.



Quality of the Content - As mentioned by Song and Zinkhan (2003), content quality is the extent to which consumers believe the information is good, updated, accurate, and reliable. Each participant gave their own definition of quality content based on the travel influencers they followed. The majority of them claimed that the quality of the content came from the source, experience, or creator that travel influencers obtained. The findings were in line with the literature review, which stated that the

criteria for content quality included complete information, useful information, current information, new information, and sincere content. Only 20% of participants noted attractive images, while others focus more on a good creative creator for an infographic insert, a piece of information, or storytelling than a beautiful visual. They simply visit Instagram to view beautiful images if they want to. For YouTube or Facebook, it is not required. If they want to look a beautiful picture, they can now visit Instagram. It is not necessary for Facebook or YouTube. However, it confirmed that travelers require more detailed information regarding travel-related topics.

As a result, the key findings of source credibility discovered that, from the traveler's perspective, trustworthiness and expertise, particularly experience of travel influencers, were more influential than others attractiveness. This is confirmed by Lee and Eastin's (2020), who found that trust in influencers can be more beneficial. However, the marketer who wants to create trust among travelers knows that the influencer must hold a level of credibility with the traveler. Travel influencers must focus on providing ***“value, originality, and informational creative content when it comes to travel content.”***

Travel Behavior

As stated in the concept of travel behavior, they proposed nine core concepts. This section of the study will discuss two categories of millennial travelers: 1) international travelers 2) domestic travelers to understand different decision-making processes and travel behaviors. By five stages of traveler decision-making, including 1.) *needs recognition*, 2.) *information search*, 3.) *evaluation alternatives*, 4.) *productor service choices*, and 5.) *post-purchase evaluation*.

- ***International Travelers*** - For “***needs recognition***,” most participants in the first group of participants who travel abroad said that their needs to travel increased after COVID-19 gradual decline. They all stated that there were a number of causes for concern prior to travel because of the changed regulations. However, their need for recognition is such that they have begun to plan a long journey to return to their lost time. Second, they began an “***information search***” to find all relevant travel-related information, such as flight tickets, accommodation, transportation, budget, and trip recommendations. At this point, they also searched websites and YouTube to see evaluations from more travel influencers. Many participants claimed that they could consume all of a travel influencer’s content and get all the knowledge they needed. Participants are also capable of observing their surroundings and the

places that walk-by influencers pass, because occasionally the official website is not updated and they are unable to find the relevant document. They also asserted that Google is the platform that is used the most because it is accessible everywhere. They do not primarily use Instagram to search for international travel information. Additionally, the majority of them claimed that they do not concern themselves with finding a deal while traveling abroad, but just consider safety and seasonal pricing when selecting the best option for their trip. Third, participants stated that they do not use just one online source for the stage of *alternative evaluations*; rather, they compare a number of sources to demonstrate their reliability and evaluate the accuracy of the information using their travel checklist and feelings. The participants' travel schedule was established to help them plan their trip and organize the plan for each day in the stage of *"product or service choices or travel preparation and travel experiences."* Participants in this group also mentioned that they were unfamiliar with the place and that it was not in their country. To ensure that their trip runs smoothly and to prevent any mistakes, they must plan their itinerary and travel schedule. However, if an unexpected situation occurred, they claimed that it wouldn't be a problem because they could deal with it immediately and resolve it. All of the participants acknowledged that they frequently conduct online searches, particularly on Google, when traveling. They search for close locations, popular restaurants, and transportation the most. Additionally, they mentioned that their travel plans had been continued and that the actual destinations

matched the reviews they had read online. Only 20% of them are not directly related to internet reviews, such as crowded locations or tasteless food. However, every participant said that they were satisfied with their trip and shared it with others through offline and online communication when asked about their *“travel satisfaction.”*

- ***Domestic Travelers*** - The majority of the second group of participants, who travel within a country, claimed that the COVID-19 situation and the fact that the destination country is not free and open are the main reasons why they prefer to travel locally. As a result, their *“needs recognition,”* was to have leisure time since they had not traveled in a long time. Actually, they were in the *“information search”* stage, deciding where to go on a trip using the resources available online. One of the participants, a male, made the interesting point that, following COVID-19, he had become a passive traveler who viewed sources before being active in his travels, such as watching beautiful reels on Instagram. More than 80% of the second group of travelers stated that they are the type of people who do not strictly adhere to the plan because they are either very familiar with the country or have a strong desire to explore it. They gathered some data and were *“venture travelers”* who confronted with the current situation during a trip. Moreover, the majority of them use a variety of platforms, like Google, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, to search for information because these sources are constantly available. For the third stage’s *“evaluation*

alternatives,” in terms of comparing sources based on online reviews and making decisions about their final destination, routes, activities, or accommodations, they are comparable to the first group. The majority of them said that they only start *“product or service choices or travel preparation and travel experiences”* two or three days before a trip. When compared to information found online, they all claimed that there will be some variables that are overlooked in evaluations due to crowded places or currently closed restaurants. They all proved highly successful after the trip, referred to as *“travel satisfaction.”*

1. **Values** - The results showed that participants appreciated travel-related activities and places highly. They will feel more emotionally involved and fulfilled after the trip.
2. **Motivation** - However, the majority of participants lacked strong motivation for promotion. Instead of focusing on advancement, they frequently focus on the experience they will gain. More than 50% of participants also said that unique travel destinations and a variety of travel activities drive their interest in travel influencer content.

Self-Concept - Because participants had to ensure that the travel influencers or online reviews they read prior to a trip reflected an interest, direction, type of travel, or behavior that directed them, the findings reflected their own personalities in the visual and

destination selection. Additionally, they will plan the trip in accordance with their current goal. For instance, if they require a luxurious trip, they will search for stunning and luxurious visual content to imitate the trip, or if they need a leisure trip, they will search for the relevant information and make sure the trip is simple and easy to follow.

3. **Expectations** - According to previous research, expectations cannot be met, exceeded, or satisfied. It can be said that the majority of them had a favorable ~~att~~ about the information they obtained, including WOM from friends and eWOM from actual travelers. They all insisted that it matched what they had gathered by more than 80%. While some participants stated that they would strive to not be surprised by unexpected situations that would happen during the trip because it was a trip for enjoyment.
4. **Attitudes** - A deeper comprehension of attitudes in the context of feelings and moral principles, which can be difficult to understand. Since participants conducted their research before traveling, this study shows that twelve of them have favorable opinions on their travel destinations and travel influencers. They all asserted that a travel destination is authentic, whereas it is the same as information found online. Similar to travel influencers, they are authentic travelers who share real experiences. Participants

believed that the more experience a travel influencer had, the more trustworthy they were. Travel influencers are also beneficial for information and entertainment.

5. **Perception** - Studies on travel satisfaction are primarily focused on risk and security perception, such as crime, terrorism, or epidemics of particular diseases (George, 2010; Scott et al., 2014). The majority of participants, particularly those who travel abroad, were found in the results. They have an opinion regarding security and risk perception. They were all prepared to search for risk-related information and safety precautions in each place to avoid unexpected situations while traveling. They added that travel influencers are one of the attributions that can provide a hidden trick for travel. According to information from them, participants typically exhibit better behavior control prior to a trip.
6. **Satisfaction** - One aspect that is important for evaluation is satisfaction. It can be determined that all twelve participants were satisfied and excited while on the trip. Some of them claimed that they were consistently satisfied following the trip. They cannot find this fresh experience without actually traveling.
7. **Trust and Loyalty** - As previously established, in models of customer behavior, trust and loyalty are interconnected characteristics. There cannot be permanent loyalty absent trust (Sirdeshmukh, Singh, and Sabol, 2002, in Scott et al., 2014). The majority of participants have trust in online resources and travel

influencers' abilities. They all planned to keep supporting and following travel influencers.

Millennials

As DeVaney (2015) established that millennials are the most tech-savvy group, the study found that they spend a higher rate on social media usages, which is approximately five hours per day, and access all types of platforms based on their goals. Before making a purchase, they particularly turn to social media to search for travel-related information, according to Liu & Wu (2019). They revealed that Google is the most popular search engine and that YouTube is looking for travel influencer content. Also, social media motivates participants' travel behaviors in terms of their desire to travel. According to Femenia-Serra et al. (2019), millennials use smart phones the most during all stages of travel planning. Participants simply use a computer or laptop to pre-search for trip preparation. In addition, they search for travel influencer content on a variety of channels before booking a trip. It can be proven that travel influencers exhibit more millennial traits. Moreover, they seek out travel influencer content on various platforms to decide on their trip. Travel influencers are said to have more millennial characteristics. However, participants also shared online content throughout the trip, such as photos, videos, and Instagram stories. The majority of them stated that they wanted to share right away in order to bring joy to others. It can also be claimed that using electronic gadgets while traveling is necessary, according to research by Gottardi et al.

(2015). Additionally, as was already indicated, time and money are the two main considerations while arranging a trip. According to the study, millennials have both the time and the money to plan a trip without hesitation.

In terms of how millennials travel, they prioritize needs and interest in traveling. Their need to travel is greater, particularly in light of recent situation like COVID-19, they have a tendency to become “*passive travelers*” who decide after consuming travel-related content. Social media therefore clearly reflects their travels rather than their past. Moreover, millennials will appreciate and completely experience the moment by not being afraid of unexpected situations and they value the trip experience more than convenience or luxury. During the trip, millennials realized that there are numerous factors will come into play. Millennials appear to be an “*adventurous*” traveling group. Another aspect of them, attitude towards travel influencers and online sources, which aimed to capture the overall perspective of participants, there was a repetitive positive answer from the majority of participants that travel influencers have greater benefits to travelers as follows: “*travel information, knowledge, updated information, travel attribution, convenience, risk reduction, and entertainment.*”

The Evolution of Word of Mouth

Because of the evolution of WOM into eWOM, it can be stated that WOM is now stronger in terms of travel aspects. When comparing WOM driving travel behavior, 80% of participants stated that it was more significant, confirming Pan, MacLaurin, and Crotts (2007). Online reviews about travel, hotels, and tourism services have become important sources of information for travelers. Firstly, the majority of them stated that eWOM nowadays is fast and approachable. Travelers only need to click once to quickly find an online review. Second, they stated that eWOM is now trustworthy because it has numerous pieces of evidence from real travelers that contribute to its authenticity. Not only will they have a source of information, but they will also have to have the skills to review on those platforms. Moreover, eWOM includes all kinds of information, for example, video, photo, text, or voiceover, which can increase the understanding of them. Less than ten percent of online reviews are written by people who made an error while reading them and then continued to write them. Most participants claimed that they constantly compared the source because they knew it came from a different point of view. They have to measure it carefully. While there is some WOM, the researcher cannot deny that it is significant because 20% of participants indicated that it was beneficial to the finding. Firstly, while communicating in WOM, both the sender and the receiver can notice the reactions that happen during this situation. They will have emotional strength and will be able to obtain things quickly. Second, WOM is appropriate for a group of friends who want to

share a genuine experience; they stated that it is genuine from a genuine traveler. However, almost all participants communicate both WOM and eWOM in terms of travel context. It depends on the circumstances. But once they communicate in WOM, they are required to share a picture on their electronic devices or their personal accounts as well because they want their friends to perceive their feelings. Similarly, participants who rate for eWOM mentioned that sometimes they are not famous and do not have enough skills in terms of communication to express themselves precisely face-to-face with others. They will tend to occur through online communication instead. As a result of the evolution of internet usage and traveler behavior, participants now focus on eWOM than on WOM.

Travel influencers can positively represent a travel destination towards millennial. Contrast to the paid sponsor, they has a less significant to products or services while tie-in on travel influencer. They will significant in terms of travel- related product and make it connect with traveler interest. A generalisation form of this marketing is less likely to purchase on a products or services. However, with careful consideration throughly further campaign, influencer marketing can move the consumer along the travel journey or activities.

This study found a significant relationship between credibility and travel influencers, who regarded trustworthiness and experts, particularly

experiences, as top desirable characteristics that increase content consumption and lead to further decision-making. This study rejected previous research that having a high level of follower has less significant attractive to traveler, because they have own characteristic choices that match with them rather than a favourably. Marketers are needs to be more consideration for why an influencer's characteristics, trustworthiness, and expertise in the mind. Nevertheless, whether considered amongst consumers when purchasing a service within this industry will need to be studied in further research.

Furthermore, the study indicated the travel behavior into two types of traveling and it can be seen the different behavior. While one thing similar is both of two group use a technologies and social media platform as all necessary tools during the trip. They are close to media in all stage since pre-trip, during trip, and post trip to seek for travel-related information. As well as they stated that online information or travel influencers also generate benefit interns of knowledge for them.

5.3 Limitations

Even though the target group of this study is millennials, there is another age range or generation that is also a traveler and follows travel influencers. Thus, they can be another potential or hidden group involved

in buying and supporting brand and travel influencers. Moreover, due to the time of the interview, it should be expanded and transcribed in detail to gain more insight.

5.4 Suggestion for Future Research

Further research could be replicated in different contexts. This could be arranged by conducting similar research within a wider population of interest. A quantitative replication study involving target groups from several areas across Thailand could be conducted to validate the findings of this thesis. Additionally, other variables of interest, such as gender and age, could also be introduced. A non-academic population could also be of interest. There may be a possibility that the attitudes and subjective norms of highly educated people are different when compared to those of people with a lower level of education. With the assumption that they may not be impressed by influencers, the study's findings should be interesting in comparing the attitudes of the various populations.

5.5 Practical Implications

The findings of this study show what companies or marketers may need to take into consideration before adopting travel influencers to motivate travel behavior among millennials as a tool to increase brand performance.

- *Travel Influencers*

First of all, due to the rapid expansion of online sources, travel influencers must ensure the main target audience and aware of what target audience want. Travel influencers should conduct research on the topic to deliver accurate and truthful information, because modern travelers are more knowledgeable.

Secondly, travel influencers must to create content that flows naturally and being yourself. By avoiding the sensitive things that will come up while traveling, as many travelers have had negative experiences with this and have a tendency to lose trust as a result. Additionally, the information provided to travelers should be thorough and directly related to the content such as when visiting Europe, travelers have many concerns. The summarising of travel information should be included or while COVID-19 situation, the updated information should be provided. Moreover, Be careful not to exaggerate and act appropriately in the place that are traveling.

Thirdly, because today's travel influencers use many social media platforms, each of which has its own tools and functions. Travel influencers need to be careful and develop the ability to communicate effectively across all platforms. For instance, post a beautiful image on Instagram, create a

diary review on Facebook, create a video story on YouTube or create a short video with popular songs on TikTok. However, it is not fixed and the fact is that travel influencers are always working to develop the creator is more valuable to travelers than even the most amazing ideas. The majority of travelers will likely view the development pleasantly.

Therefore, to be *“authentic,” “be yourself,” “be completely informed,” “be creative creators,”* and *“understand the target audience”* are the crucial suggestions provided by participants. It can be an improvement for both marketers and travel influencers in order to enhance their comprehensive abilities.

- **Marketers**

Firstly, related to the attitude towards travel influencers A travel influencer’s lifestyle is characterized by their interest in travel, and each travel influencer has their own personality. Marketers should match those key factors with brands or products. In adverse situations, these findings have shown that participants may be wary about influencers being compensated for their promotional efforts, resulting in a negative attitude and no purchase intention.

Secondly, in order to stimulate traveler interest and behavior, the marketer must ensure that the travel influencer has a positive trustworthiness and is an expert in terms of travel content. The researcher suggests that the number of followers is not the key indicator of success. Marketers also have a carefully thought-out communication plan to increase brand awareness. Moreover, it should avoid sensitive or negative content that will reflect poorly on the traveler's trust in the future. Even if those travel influencers have more sources of credibility, the more negative they are, the more credibility they lose.

Thirdly, during the stage of travel behavior and decision-making process. A traveler only requires information. While promotional messages have less direct on travel behavior, the researcher suggests that being authentic and being yourself can increase travelers' interest without costing less in each campaign. Thus, using influencer marketing that may create relationships between product and content is interesting. Since participants are relying on their social environment, changing their attitude towards their subjective norms would more likely increase their purchase intention.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONS GUIDELINE

#Screening Questions

1. How old are you?
2. Do you follow travel influencers?
3. Can you give me an example? (Can you tell me 2-3 choice)
4. Have you arranged a trip based on online sources within 1 year? (Online review, travel influencer, etc.)

Section 1: *Demographics and Media Usages*

1. Can you tell me about yourself? (Name, age, gender, and location).
2. What is your occupation and what do you do in your job?
3. Which electronic devices do you use?
4. Do you use social media on a daily basis? How many hours a day do you use it?
5. What social media platforms do you use? Can you rank it?

Section 2: *Attitude towards Travel Influencer (Attitudes, subjective norms, behavioral control)*

1. How do you define a travel influencer?
2. What are the criteria for choosing the right travel influencer?
3. Which travel influencer do you like the most? Can you give me their name?(An answer will follow their story)
4. What makes you like and follow them?
5. What social media platforms do you use to follow them?

(YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.).

6. What do you think or feel about their content?
7. Can you give me one word to describe their travel reviews?

Section 3: Sources of Credibility (Trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness)

1. Do you think they are credible? What makes you think they are credible?
2. Do you believe the number of their followers matter to trustworthiness or not?
3. When did you lose trust in them?
4. Do you believe that the (1) experiences, (2) skills, and (3) knowledge of travel influencers motivate them on social media or not?
5. From #4 What is the most important part of their content?
6. Does their personal image attract your interest or not?
7. How do you define the good quality of travel influencers' content?
8. Do you think their content is good quality or not?
9. What kinds of content material do you like the most? (Text, photo, voice, or video) Can you rank it?

Section 4: Decision Making Process and

Travel Behavior#Pre-travel

1. When do you decide to travel?
2. Where do you search for travel information?
3. How long do you search for travel information?
4. From what you searched, do you trust online sources more or

less? Can you give me a number of percentages?

5. What kinds of content do you think motivate your travel behavior?

#During travel

1. Based on your prior trip, can you tell me about your experience?

2. While you travel, do you search more for online information?

Can you give me an example of information? Which platforms do you search for?

3. Sometimes, travel influencers not only review destinations but also incorporate travel products such as dinner discounts, spa discounts, or travel packages into their content. Do you purchase or just curious?

#Post-travel

1. Are you satisfied with your experience? Do you share it with friends or others?

2. Do you think travel influencers contribute useful information or not?

3. Do you think WOM or eWOM motivate travel behavior the most?

4. What advice would you give to travel influencers on how to communicate with you?

5. Will you continue to follow them in the future?

APPENDIX B

แนวคำถาม

#คำถามคัดกรองผู้เข้าสัมภาษณ์

1. คุณอายุเท่าไร?
2. คุณติดตามอินฟลูเอนเซอร์ด้านการท่องเที่ยวไหม?
3. ช่วยยกตัวอย่างอินฟลูเอนเซอร์ด้านการท่องเที่ยวที่ติดตามได้ไหม? (2-3 คน)
4. คุณจัดทริปท่องเที่ยวโดยใช้แหล่งข้อมูลออนไลน์ภายใน 1 ปีหรือไม่? (เช่นคำแนะนำออนไลน์ อินฟลูเอนเซอร์ด้านการท่องเที่ยว หรืออื่น ๆ)

ส่วนที่ 1: ข้อมูลประชากร

1. แนะนำตัวเกี่ยวกับคุณได้ไหม? (ชื่อ อายุ เพศ และจังหวัดที่อยู่อาศัย)
2. คุณประกอบอาชีพใด และลักษณะการทำงานของคุณเป็นอย่างไร?
3. คุณใช้เครื่องมือสื่อสารใดบ้าง?
4. คุณใช้สื่อออนไลน์เป็นประจำทุกวันหรือไม่ และใช้งานวันละกี่ชั่วโมง?
5. คุณใช้แพลตฟอร์มอะไรบ้าง? จัดอันดับหน่อยได้ไหม?

ส่วนที่ 2: ทักษะติดต่ออินฟลูเอนเซอร์ด้านการท่องเที่ยว (ทัศนคติ, บรรทัดฐานส่วนตัว, และการควบคุมพฤติกรรม)

1. คุณนิยามอินฟลูเอนเซอร์ด้านการท่องเที่ยวอย่างไร?

2. คุณใช้เกณฑ์อะไรในการเลือกอินฟลูเอนเซอร์ด้านการท่องเที่ยวที่เหมาะสมกับตัวเอง?
3. อินฟลูเอนเซอร์ด้านการท่องเที่ยวคนไหนที่คุณชอบมากที่สุด? ช่วยบอกชื่อพวกเขา หรือเพจของพวกเขาหน่อยได้ไหม?
4. อะไรที่ทำให้คุณชอบ และติดตามพวกเขา?
5. แพลตฟอร์มออนไลน์ใดที่คุณใช้ติดตามพวกเขา? (เช่น ยูทูบ เฟสบุ๊ก อิน스타그램 ทวิตเตอร์หรืออื่น ๆ)
6. คุณรู้สึกอย่างไรเกี่ยวกับเนื้อหาคอนเทนต์ของพวกเขา?
7. ถ้าจะให้คำนิยาม 1 คำเกี่ยวกับพวกเขา คุณมองวีดิโอการท่องเที่ยวของเขาเป็นแบบใด?

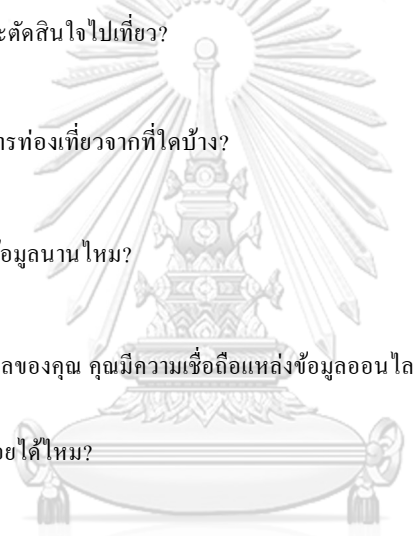
ส่วนที่ 3: แหล่งที่มาของความน่าเชื่อถือ (ความน่าเชื่อถือ ความเชี่ยวชาญ และความตั้งใจ)

1. คุณคิดว่าพวกเขาน่าเชื่อถือไหม? อะไรทำให้คุณเชื่อถือพวกเขา?
2. คุณคิดว่าจำนวนผู้ติดตามของพวกเขาส่งผลต่อความน่าเชื่อถือหรือไม่? เพราะอะไร?
3. เมื่อไหร่ที่คุณจะรู้สึกเสียความไว้วางใจจากพวกเขา?
4. คุณคิดว่า (1) ประสบการณ์ (2) ทักษะ และ (3) ความรู้ส่งผลต่อคำแนะนำของพวกเขาบนสื่อออนไลน์หรือไม่? เพราะอะไร?
5. จากข้อ 4 คุณคิดว่าอะไรสำคัญสุดต่อการให้คำแนะนำออนไลน์?
6. คุณคิดว่ารูปลักษณ์ภายนอกของพวกเขาส่งผลต่อความสนใจของคุณหรือไม่?
7. คุณให้คำนิยามเนื้อหาคอนเทนต์ที่ดีว่าอย่างไร?

8. พวกเขามีเนื้อหาคอนเทนต์ที่ดีหรือไม่? เพราะอะไร?
9. ลักษณะการนำเสนอเนื้อหาคอนเทนต์แบบไหนที่คุณชอบมากที่สุด? เพราะอะไร? (เช่น เน้นข้อความ รูปภาพ เสียง หรือวิดีโอ) จัดอันดับหน่อยได้ไหม?

ส่วนที่ 4: กระบวนการตัดสินใจ และพฤติกรรมกรรมการท่องเที่ยว

#ก่อนเดินทาง

1. เมื่อไหร่ที่คุณจะตัดสินใจไปเที่ยว?
 2. คุณหาข้อมูลการท่องเที่ยวจากที่ใดบ้าง?
 3. คุณใช้เวลาหาข้อมูลนานไหม?
 4. จากการหาข้อมูลของคุณ คุณมีความเชื่อถือแหล่งข้อมูลออนไลน์น้อยแค่ไหน? ลองบอกเป็นเปอร์เซ็นต์หน่อยได้ไหม?
- 
5. คุณคิดว่าเนื้อหาคอนเทนต์ลักษณะใดที่ส่งผลต่อพฤติกรรมกรรมการท่องเที่ยวมากที่สุด? #ขณะเดินทาง
6. คุณเคยจัดทริปท่องเที่ยวจากคำแนะนำออนไลน์ภายในระยะเวลา 1 ปี ช่วยเล่าหน่อยได้ไหมว่าเป็นอย่างไรบ้าง?

7. ในขณะที่ไปเที่ยวคุณยังค้นหาข้อมูลเพิ่มเติมจากสื่อออนไลน์อยู่หรือไม่? ยกตัวอย่างข้อมูลที่ว่าเกี่ยวกับอะไรบ้าง? ใช้แพลตฟอร์มใดในการหาข้อมูล?

8. บางครั้งอินฟลูเอนเซอร์ด้านการท่องเที่ยวไม่ได้รีวิวแค่สถานที่ท่องเที่ยว แต่มีการขายสินค้าไป

ในตัว เช่น ส่วนลดคินเนอร์ ส่วนลดสปา แพคเกจกิจกรรม และอื่น ๆ โดยส่วนใหญ่คุณซื้อเลย

หรือแค่รู้สึกสนใจ?

#หลังเดินทาง

9. จากทริปท่องเที่ยวที่ได้เล่ามา คุณพึงพอใจกับประสบการณ์ไหม? และได้บอกต่อเพื่อน

หรือคนรอบข้างไหม?

10. คุณคิดว่าพวกเขาให้ข้อมูลที่มีประโยชน์หรือไม่? อะไรบ้าง?

11. จากการเพิ่มขึ้นของแพลตฟอร์มออนไลน์ คุณคิดว่าการบอกปากต่อปาก หรือบอกปากต่อปาก

บนอินเทอร์เน็ตนี้มีผลกระทบต่อพฤติกรรมกรท่องเที่ยวมากกว่ากัน? เพราะอะไร?

12. คุณมีคำแนะนำเพิ่มเติมอะไรกับอินฟลูเอนเซอร์ด้านการท่องเที่ยวบ้างไหม?

13. คุณจะยังคงติดตามพวกเขาในอนาคตต่อไปไหม?

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