Applied social media and the effects of its use during vacation travel: A case study of Millennials in Thailand

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Abstract

This research is focused on applied social media and the effects of its use during vacation travel on Millennials. The researcher investigated the usage of social network websites by traveller: before, during and after the vacation, granting comprehension on utilization levels, levels of association, and self-reliance. The 205 questionnaires were circulated to and gathered from experienced Thai travellers. It was found that the stage vacation when social media was mostly used was before the vacation as a tool for obtaining information, for instance information about accommodation and destinations. It was also found that there was a low correlation between levels of association with internet marketing and alterations made to vacation plans. In addition to this the findings appeared to show that social media was extensively used during the vacation for posting photos and looking for local activities. The result also showed that the information obtained from third party websites is more reliable than mass media advertising and government websites.

1. Introduction

Social media has become a major part of people's lives. User now have technology at their fingertips to share news, opinions and information of all kinds and all the times. Social media refers to website that allow people to interact with each other and to used other interfaces. Amongst the most familiar social media sites in Thailand are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instragram. The information that people post on those sites, includes photos, video comments, status updates and any other individual life activities that they want to share. The people that plan and have interest in journey-related outcomes has also been deeply guided by these technology developments (Mairead Newham, 2012)

Due to the development of the Web 2.0, the recent years have seen an extreme growth in online networking. In their network, Kaplan A. M. and Haenlein (2010) divided internet marketing sites in six types: social network sites (e.g. Facebook), content communities (e.g. YouTube), virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life), collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia), virtual game (e.g. World of Warcraft) and blogs. Mintel (2013) considered the following websites to be social media. There was journey blogs, social networking (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube etc.), social journey sites (WAYN, Gogobot etc.), journey criticism sites (TripAdvisor,

Holiday Check etc.), and any platforms and application, , that permitted users to make content.

Millennials on vacationer spend more time and money on vacations than other travellers. They stay longer and in virtue of their young age, they are most likely to revisit destinations (UWTO, 2011). They are savvy online networking users and fast adopters of new technology. Consequently, they are enthusiastic sharing their journey exposures online. 25% of travellers aged under 25 post photos and criticisms throughout their journey. Only 9% of travellers aged over 40 do this (Fotis *et al*., 2011). Understanding the impact of social networking on millennials decision making could assist companies in planning better communication designs that could market their products and services more successfully for these travellers.

The aim of this research was to examine the traveller's interactions with social network throughout their travel period. This will give social network utilization levels during all stage of their vacation during the planner and travelling period. The research made an effort to survey experienced of social media associate with destination and accommodation alternatives, The level of reliance to social network content related to other specialists of journey related information was also investigated.

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2. Literature Reviews

2.1 Using social media as journey information source

Xiang and Gretzel (2010) have explored those part of online networking concerning the travel majority of the data hotspot. Their perspective was that use of the Web 2.0 lead to "Travel 2.0" due to various innovative networks that enabled vacationers to get to know about their destinations or to make arrangements without leaving their homes. Tourism businesses needs also to react to the rise of social network innovations that enable travellers to distribute their satisfaction or disappointment with an endless number of prospective customers. An idea communicated through the web is undoubtedly easy to access by different travellers, In addition to this it has the potential to impacts company's reputation immediately (Lee, 2013), Dann and Dann (2011) demonstrated that online networking is organized on the premise of connected segments. These are segments such as correspondence media, substance, and social cooperation. Social media has given an alternate measurement for socialization of data. Correspondence flow has therefore been made simpler and many more people can spread their thoughts and opinions with many online groups of traveller. This promotes discussion and prompts an overall impact.

Litvin *et al.* (2008) noted that due to the experiential basis of the travel industry, visitors have a tendency to utilize online networking in planning their travel arrangements. Hence, when taking a vacation, consumers might not realize what precisely they will get in return for their spending. This is typically the case for every tourism body. What's more, this takes over from the principle benefits summarized by Kotler et al. (2010). There was intangibility, variability, perishability and inseparability. Moreover, East et al. (2013) found that when customers select services that they might not have tried beforehand, purchasers must depend on not only the different forms of word-of-mouth (WOM) from people they physically meet but the electronic word of mouth (eWOM).

2.2 Reliance of social media as travel information source

Sherchan *et al.* (2013) demonstrates that there are three sorts of reliance associated with an online social interaction: (a) reliance between fellows of the circuitry, (b) reliance between a fellow and the granted online service, and (c) reliance between a fellow and the service contributor. The research focuses on two types of reliance associations.

The reliance that is between a fellow and the granted online service relies on numerous determinants, along with the service interface plan (Wang and Lu 2010). Suh and Han (2002) found that a client's experienced convenience of an interface positively affects his/her perceived value of the system. This therefore positively effects on his/her reliance on the system. This implies the usability of social networking sites improves individuals' reliance in them.

The reliance associate between fellows and service contributors are examined in the field of business and marketing. For instance, Johnson and Grayson (2005) found that service contributors' skill and service operation lead to intellectual reliance. From their research, they developed a model of client reliance in service contributors founded on psychological and emotional reliance.

The reliance associate with a fellow from the intercession system on compromise online social networks is determined by both the reliance between a fellow and the granted online service and a fellow and the service contributor. McLeod and Pippin (2009) examine the reliance associated between a fellow, the granted online service, and a service contributor in the context of e-government. They arranged the types of reliance into two general categories. Threr was system reliance, which incorporates security, separation, and all the rational perspectives, and associate reliance, which incorporates the associated element and programming.

2.3 Social media presence and association during the decision making process

- The Three-phase Model of Service Consumption
Journey scheming:

Research by Google (2012) stated that 70% of vacationers began planning an excursion without knowing their destination. Hence, a lot of prospective travellers utilized online networking as a source of inspiration. Some social media platforms have developed additional devices that aim to inspire and generate new travel ideas. Mintel (2013) found that customers began criticizing videos photos and reviews from other individuals when planning their vacation. Customers might explore a large number of destinations by way of online travel agents to find their perfect destination, price and plan. This led to the idea that the character of social media while at the trip arranging step was just constrained to being a data source (Hays *et al.*, 2012). They also looked up several social network, blogs, accommodation websites, forums and travel agents' sites (Amadeus, 2012). In addition, Lovelock and Writz (2011) purposed that the process of assessing a service indicates that utilization might be a function of the three sorts from claiming services qualities. Assessing the quality of hospitality products and services was found to be challenging when they were used assessed before utilization (Kotler et al., 2010).

Consumption of the vacation

Vacationers not only have smartphones at their fingertips but also other mobile gadgets to connect to

other technology users in the world, while at the data intake phase. Mintel (2013) found that the role of mobile phones, as a major aspect of journey exposure, was continually developing. Vacationers utilized their devices to post updates on online networking, share photos, videos and locate information about activities at their destination or flights. While on vacation, the tourists shared videos or photos around 43% of the time. Fotis et al., (2011) found similar result for the utilization of social network while on vacation. They found that 50% of vacation makers utilized social media to keep in touch with companions and 30% to search for vacation-related information. Customers unconsciously compared their desires with those service they had already booked. This was found to impact their fulfilment at those following stages (Pizam and Mansfield, 2007).

Post-consumption assessment

Satisfaction happens when the service operation meets or surpasses customers' expectation. Once satisfied, consumers were found to be less averse to repeating their purchase and recommending it to other people (Lovelock and Writz, 2011). The Text100 research (2012) explained that individuals posted their journey exposure on social media because they trusted that it would be attractive to companions and relations. Some however, were stimulated by loyalty or rebate motivations. 28% of vacationers expressed that nothing could empower them to make vacation-related social media content or to be more dynamic on social network. 25% of vacationers states that would "like" the area they had visited on Facebook and just 10% would "tweet" about their vacation.

### 2.4 Millennials – the social vacationers

A crucial characteristic of Millennials was the introduction to innovation as it was developed. The Internet and computers developed alongside them as they became adults. Millennials were found to utilize an extensive variety of information sources when arranging their journey. Word-of-mouth (WOM) from relations and companions' is considered vital information however the role of reviews and destination sites was becoming fundamental because of the development of mobile technology that gave constant web access (Lee, 2013).

Bolton *et al*. (2013) summarized that social networks had existed since 1981 however they were generally used on a wide scale 2003.Millennials were found to use social network for similar reasons as others. They used them gather information for socializing and for stimulation. Siam Commercial Bank (2014) defined "Millennials" as those who were born between 1981 and 2000. Growing up surrounded by technology has led this group to have higher expectations than any of the generations that have come before.
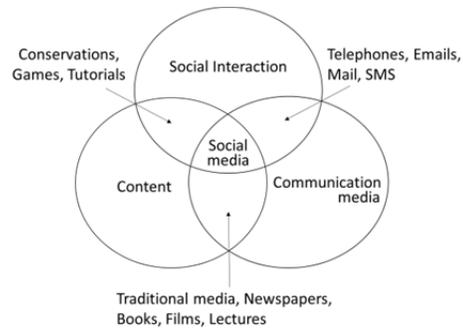
Figure 1 Social Media Components
Source: Dann and Dann (2011)
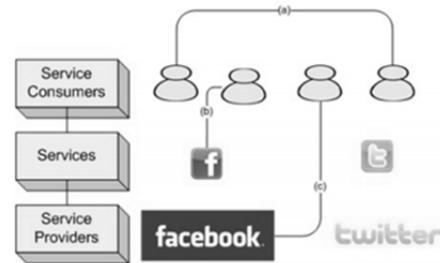
Figure 2 Reliance relationships in an online social interaction
Source: Sherchan, Nepal, and Paris (2013).

3. Research Methodology
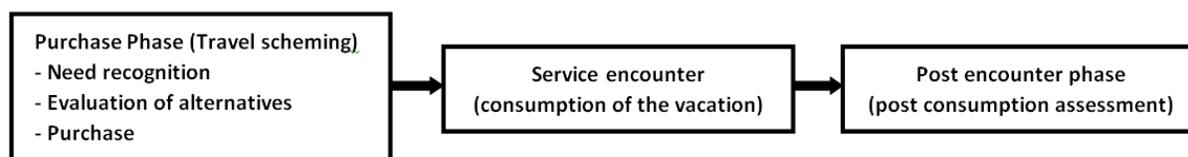#### 3.1 Research Framework

The first conceptual framework was adapted from a previous theoretical framework that is shown in (Figure 1). This was produced by Dann and Dann (2011) and investigated the relationship between (social interaction, Content and Communication media.) within social media.

The second conceptual framework was adapted from a theoretical framework produce by Sherchan *et al*. (2013) and is show in (Figure 2) This show the relationship between (a fellow and the granted online service, between a fellow and the service contributor.) and reliance.

The third conceptual framework that was used for this study is show in Figure 3 .It describes the three-stage of purchase intention which are Travel planning, Consumption of the vacation and Post consumption assessment.

3.2 Conceptual Framework

For this research a conceptual framework was produced which combined the theoretical frameworks show in Figures 1-3.In order to understand more about Usage of Social Media(USM) and Reliance on Social Media (RSM) on a whole throughout the vacation travel method (VTM). The researcher developed the following hypothesises:

Figure 3 The three-phase model of service consumption
Source: Lovelock and Writz (2011)
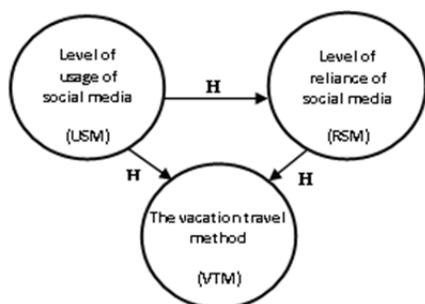
Figure 4 Conceptual Framework
Source: Developed by the researcher for this study

- H1: There is a significant relationship between level of usage of social media (USM) and the vacation travel method (VTM).
- H2: There is a significant relationship between level of reliance of social media (RSM) and the vacation travel method (VTM).
- H3: There is a significant relationship between level of usage of social media (USM) and level of reliance of social media (RSM).

3.3 Research Method

This research used a quantitative and deductive methodology. Data was collected from the target population using an online questionnaire. The study was concentrated on Millennials in Thailand and asked them to respond based on their last vacation trip. The study sample was 205 respondents, who had travelled on at least one vacation or journey within the last 12 months. As the researcher was interested only Millennials consumers, questionnaires received from members of the population aged over 34 were discarded.

Items in the question were adapted and developed from previous research (Fotis et al. 2011). Five point Likert scale (1 = Not associate to 5 = Very associate) was used to measure the amount of social media use associate with investigating destination or accommodation options as well as how it had been used to alter the original plan. The respondent were asked "Before your definite decisions about your last vacation, did you make any changes to your original vacation travel plans due to social media?". Perceived level of reliance of social media versus usage of social media for

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Percent
Age	
18-22	14.6
23-28	67.8
29-34	17.6
Gender	
Male	40.5
Female	59.5
Education	
Bachelor Degree	79.5
Master Degree	19.5
Ph.D Degree	1.0
Province	
Bangkok	62.9
Up-country	37.1
Frequency of usage of social media	
	60.0
Several time a day	
Almost every day	38.5
A few times a week	1.5
Frequency of journey	
Once a year	20.0
Twice a year	23.9
More than twice a year	56.1

Table 2 Reliability Test

Variable	N of items	Cronbach A
Usage of social media (USM)	2	.959
Reliance of social media (RSM)	7	.965
Vacation travel method (VTM)	12	.876

vacation travel information and, perceived level of vacation travel method from social media used also 5-points Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Perceived levels of reliance of social media versus the usage of social media for vacation travel information, were assessed using seven items in the questionare. A sample question was: "I feel that reliable information about vacations was given to me by my companions and relatives." Finally, the questionnaire included questions to give demographic characteristic,

Table 3 Usage of social media associate and alters in original vacation plans

Before you make a definite decisions on your latest vacation, did you make some alteration to your original plans due to social media?	% of Respondents (n=205)	Influence on destination alternate	Influence on accommodation alternate
		Mean Scores* (SD)	
I am not sure/cannot remember if I made some changes	2.9	1.67 (.516)	1.67 (.516)
I did not make some changes	32.7	1.19 (.398)	1.21 (.410)
I did make few changes to my original vacation plans	48.3	1.98 (.141)	1.97 (.172)
I did make significant changes to my original vacation plans	16.1	1.82 (.392)	1.73 (.452)
Pearson Correlation test:		$r(205) = .532**, sig. = .000$	$r(205) = .460**, sig. = .000$

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
(*) Measure on a 5-point Likert scale, where: 1 = Not associate, 5 = Very associate

social media use and travel behaviour. The questionnaire used both global social media sites, and websites operating in Thailand such as http://thai.tourismthailand.org/home and Pantip.com

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Profile of Sample and Usage of social media

The data collected (Table 1) shows that 59.5% of respondents were females and 40.5% were males. The majority of respondents 67.8% were in the age bracket 23-28., 62.9% were found to be living in Bangkok, and 37.1% outside of Bangkok , 79.5% were Bachelor's degree, and 19.5% had Master degree. More than 50% of respondents' were found to used social network several times a day, 38.5% almost every day and only 1.5% once per week. Moreover, the majority, 56.1%, of the respondents had vacations more than twice a year.

For testing the reliability of the questionnaire, this paper used the calculation of Cronbach's alpha Coefficient. Sekaran (2003) states that if the reliability is less than 0.6 it is considered low, if it is 0.7 considered acceptable and 0.8 or overhead. Hence, Table 2 it can be seen that they are all above 0.8 and so it was concluded that all questions are relevant, reliable and applicable for research.

4.2 Social media associate with vacation plans

The most popular stage during which respondents used social media was found to be "before vacations" 45% of respondents said that they used it in searching for ideas on where to go for vacations. During their vacations, 47% respondents used social media to keep in touch with companions 4, and 24% used to find out information about specific attractions and leisure activities. Besides this 75% of the respondents used social media to post about their experiences and photos

with their companions and / or other vacationers was at 75% 10% used social media to give them ideas for to their next vacations.

To evaluate alternative in vacation plans, respondents who searched for information through social media while they were planning their vacation travel (n=205) were asked: "Before you made a definite decisions on your latest vacation, did you make some alterations to your original plans due to social media? Table 3 shows their responses.

The Pearson correction test was carried out to test if there was a significant relationship between the respondent's used of social media USM and their vacation destination or accommodation options and alterations to their original vacation plans. In both subjects (Table 2) the result of $sig = .000$ proved that there was an association between use of social media and destination and accommodation options. The use of social media reduced the probability is that vacation plans would be changed later on.

4.3 Reliance of social media and traditional bases of information

Table 4 shows the results that the respondents consider the most reliable sources of information to be companions and relatives (M = 2.04, SD = .633), followed by reviews made by vacationers on third party sites. The least reliable source of information was considered to be travel agencies.

The results below are in agreement with Fotis *et al*. (2012) who revealed that companions and relatives are the most reliable sources of information. The result contrasted with that found by to Cox *et al*. (2009) who found that travel agents and official tourism websites (state / government owned) are more reliable in comparison to vacationers on third party sites. Both of the study used the same scale.

Table 4 Reliance of social media in vacation based on information

I reliable information about vacations granted by (N=205, 5-point Likert scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree)	Mean (SD)
Companions and Relatives	2.04 (.633)
Information granted by others vacationers in many websites	2.01 (.606)
Social media	1.96 (.580)
Formal tourism websites (government owned / state)	1.90 (.552)
Shows or features in television, in radio, or articles in publications and magazines	1.90 (.552)
Travel agency	1.89 (.487)
Advertisements in television, radio, presses and magazines	1.92 (.540)

Table 5 Pearson Correlation

Variable	USM	RSM	VTM
USM	1		
RSM	.605**	1	
VTM	.338**	.452**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
** *Sig.* = .000

Table 5 shows the correlation between the USM, RSM and VTM These result were used to test the hypotheses. H1 (There is a significant relationship between level of USM and VTM) showed a very low positive relationship $r(205) = .338$, *sig.* = .000. Therefore, the null was rejected. H2 (There is a significant relationship between level of RSM and VTM) indicated a very low positive relationship $r(205) = .458$, *sig.* = .000. Hence also, the null was rejected. H3 (There is a significant relationship between USM and RSM) indicated a low positive relationship $r(205) = .611$, *sig.* = .000. As a result, the null was rejected, and the hypothesis was accepted.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study investigate the connection between social media use and vacation travel method on Millennials. Millennials was found to depended on social networks to arrange their vacation, particularly while they were searching for journey motivation and information about destinations and accommodation. Information provided by third party websites was the most utilized by travellers.

Social media was used broadly befoe, during and after the vacation. Millennials have embraced social media and use it as a part of their every day lives. It permits them to connect with contacts online and to share information and experience with companions to show how they enjoyed their vacation in real time. Rajab and Rumyana (2014) found that social media websites were used prior to vacations as a source of information and also used during the holiday. Moreover,

people are trusting social media to search information more than WOM for their travel in near future. The research appeared to show a trend towards increased utilization of social media, The results also showed that people were enthusiastic to use social media for sources of specialist journey related information.

In terms of levels of association, social media were evaluated as "some association" on the selecting ofboth accommodation and destination alternatives. In addition, the study discovered a low correlation a between use of social media to investigate accommodation and destination alternatives. Before a final decision was made, social media was used alterations were made to vacation plans as a result.

This study also investigated the level of reliance respondents places on the information provided by different sources. It found that companions and relatives were the most reliable source of information followed by, third party websites. This result aligns with Fotis *et al.* (2012) who discovered that information from other vacationers in numerous websites were considered more reliable than formal tourism sites and that provided by travel agencies.

The results from this study suggest that social media is a big source of travel information that it used by Millennials. In order to be successful, the associates from the tourism industry should adjust their marketing tactics to focus on inexperienced travellers. Associates need to encourage the circulation of reccomendations through word-of-mouth and third party websites. Millennials had high trust in third party websites. Traval firms could boost their reputation by being specified as an editor on a website.

Limitation

There is twao main limitations in this study: (a) The sample were self selected through online recruitment; and (b) the study focused only on people who live in Thailand and were in the Millennial age bracket (18-34).

Future study

Studies focused on a larger sample size should be carried out in order to obtain more conclusive analysis the use of social media and its association during vacation travel method. Moreover, social media travel associated study should set up equal significance in all phases of the vacation travel method.

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