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Experiential Tourism Marketing to Create a Memorable Experience for International Tourist in Bangkok

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Abstract

This study explores the role of experiential tourism marketing in creating memorable experiences for tourists in Bangkok, Thailand. The research aims to identify key components contributing to unique and memorable tourism experiences (MTEs), the influence of social media marketing, and the importance of cultural exchanges in enriching tourists' experiences. Primary data were collected using a purposive sampling technique through comprehensive in total, 20 interviews were conducted in English, at which point theoretical saturation was reached, providing insights into their perspectives on the factors that enhance their travel experiences. To analyze the qualitative data, a systematic approach involving labelling, open coding, and axial coding was used. In the labelling phase, key concepts and phrases were identified from the interview transcripts. Open coding was then applied to categorize the data into distinct themes, while axial coding helped to establish relationships between these categories. The findings highlight that tourists value eco-friendly practices, cultural immersion, and personalized experiences, all fostering deeper connections and long-lasting memories. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram and TikTok, play a significant role in shaping tourists' itineraries by providing reviews and recommendations from influencers. Additionally, there is a growing trend toward niche tourism experiences and community-based tourism that cater to individual interests. The study underscores the importance of leveraging authentic cultural engagement and user-generated content through social media to strengthen Thailand's position as a premier destination for memorable tourism.

Keywords: Experiential Tourism Marketing, Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTES), Key Components Of MTES, Social Media Marketing, Cultural Exchange

Introduction

Tourism is a dynamic sector that focuses on creating memorable experiences for travellers, fostering happiness, and loyalty, and sharing stories. These are crucial for a destination's success and empowering the brain through emotional and positive memories. A study by (Kim et al., 2018) demonstrates how MTEs enhance tourists' overall satisfaction, strengthen their sense of loyalty, and encourage them to recommend destinations to others highlighting the importance of memorable experiences in tourism. When a tourist is delighted, they believe their time and money were well spent, leaving them with a favourable memory of their trip (Kim et al., 2012). These lead to a higher level of satisfaction, where tourists are likely to return and recommend positive for that destination when they have unique and interesting experiences (Brent Ritchie et al., 2011). Memorable experiences are the key to increasing tourist loyalty. In a highly competitive industry, places that provide unique and unforgettable experiences stand out (Brent Ritchie et al., 2011). Loyalty develops through emotional connections with a destination, resulting in memorable experiences. Repetitive visitors are valuable resources for a destination, as they engage in various activities at reasonable fees, benefiting local businesses (McKercher & Denizci Guillet, 2010). Word-of-mouth marketing is extremely effective in the tourism industry. Memorable experiences frequently result in stories that tourists gladly share with their friends, family, and social media networks (Varra & Rossi, 2019). Positive word-of-mouth and glowing online reviews are powerful tools for attracting new visitors. They act as genuine endorsements that potential tourists trust more than traditional advertising. Destinations that consistently deliver unforgettable experiences can build a strong reputation, amplifying their appeal through organic, user-generated promotion. Unique experiences in tourism are not just luxury but also the foundation for a strong company. Influencing tourist pleasure, loyalty, and word-of-mouth advertising can create customised strategies for captivating experiences, ensuring long-term success.

Research Objectives

The study investigates the following objectives:

RO1: To identify key components of creating MTEs in Thailand

RO2: To explore international tourists' insights into the power of social media marketing for making MTEs in Thailand

RO3: To explore the role of cultural exchange in MTEs in Thailand

Research Questions

1. Which specific elements go into making tourism experiences unforgettable?

2. How does social media marketing influence travel experiences?

3. How do interactions with local customs and communities and cultural exchanges help to create unique experiences?

Significance of the study

Experiential tourism, a growing sector in the travel industry, prioritizes meaningful and immersive encounters over traditional sightseeing. It focuses on active engagement and personal interaction with destinations, catering to modern travellers' desire for authentic and transformative experiences. The significance of this study is deeply rooted in its practical applications for enhancing Thailand's tourism industry, particularly for tourism marketers. By identifying the key components that contribute to memorable tourism experiences (MTEs)—such as eco-friendly practices, cultural immersion, and personalized experiences—the study offers marketers actionable insights to refine their strategies. This will help them create marketing campaigns that not only attract tourists but also foster emotional connections, boosting satisfaction, loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth.

The study's focus on social media marketing is particularly relevant in today's digital landscape. Tourism marketers can leverage platforms like Instagram and TikTok, as the findings highlight how these platforms influence tourist decisions through user-generated content and influencer recommendations as noted by the Social Media Influence Theory (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). By effectively utilizing these platforms, marketers can enhance Thailand's global brand image and engage a wider audience through authentic, experience-driven content. For event organizers, The Cultural Exchange Theory (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006) emphasizes the study where the role of cultural exchanges and unique experiences in creating memorable trips. Organizing events that foster meaningful interactions between tourists and locals can increase tourist satisfaction and contribute to cultural preservation. This insight helps event planners design activities that align with tourists' preferences, further strengthening Thailand's position as a top tourist destination.

Additionally, the study offers valuable guidance for local communities and policymakers, providing data to support sustainable tourism growth. By understanding how events and cultural exchanges impact the visitor experience, policymakers can allocate resources effectively, fostering both economic growth and cultural preservation. In conclusion, this study equips stakeholders across the tourism industry with the tools needed to enhance Thailand's appeal and sustain long-term growth.

Definition of the terms

Experiential Tourism: A form of tourism that focuses on actively and meaningfully engaging with a destination's culture, people, environment, and history. It aims to provide a kind of immersive travel experience that comes from distinctive personal growth in engaging with the destination and generating long-lasting memories.

Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTEs): The vivid and captivating capture of inspirational activities that make a lasting impact on visitors impressively. The experiences are true to be said in geniuses, novelty and emotional interconnection and can be seen in customization.

Key components of MTEs: The memory assists tourists and travellers in the fundamental ingredients to create delightful and long-established happy memories. These may include novelty, personalization, cultural immersion, infrastructure, emotional engagement, and authenticity.

Social Media Marketing*:* This refers to usage in social media platforms Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube which promote tourist locations and activities. These online applications enable third-party providers for tourism to communicate with potential travellers, highlight their offerings, and generate enthusiasm and anticipation.

Cultural Exchange*:* This refers to the process of conversation and engagement between visitors and local people in Thailand, facilitating the tourists' acquisition of knowledge about the local culture, traditions, and practices, thus promoting a sense of comprehension and connection.

Literature Review

This study investigates the various factors contributing to MTEs in Thailand focusing on key components, social media usage and cultural exchange. Understanding these elements is essential for stakeholders in the tourism sector, including marketers, policymakers, event organisers, local communities, and travellers. Tourism significantly impacts Thailand's economy, culture, and society, making it crucial to identify what makes experiences memorable.

The study aims to identify memorable experiences, evaluate social media's impact, explore cultural exchange, and assess event impact. It will benefit tourism marketers, policymakers, and event organisers by enhancing visitor satisfaction and loyalty. The findings can help Thailand strengthen its tourist position, promote sustainable growth, and enrich the tourism experience for visitors and local communities. Tailoring activities to tourists' interests and promoting cultural exchanges can enhance visitor engagement.

Theories related to the study

Experiential tourism, a growing sector in the travel industry, prioritizes meaningful and immersive encounters over traditional sightseeing. The Experience Economy Theory (Pine & Gilmore, 1998) highlights four key types of tourism experiences: aesthetic, educational, entertainment, and escapist, which enhance visitor engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty, catering to modern travelers' desire for authentic experiences. It focuses on active engagement and personal interaction with destinations, catering to modern travelers' desire for authentic and transformative experiences. These experiences enhance visitor engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty. Social media also plays a significant role in shaping travel experiences, as noted by the Social Media Influence Theory (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Platforms like TripAdvisor and Instagram help travelers make informed decisions, discover hidden gems, and build communities through shared experiences, further enriching their travel journeys. The Cultural Exchange Theory (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006) emphasizes the importance of authentic cultural exchanges between tourists and locals, fostering understanding, breaking down barriers, and promoting personal growth. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984) emphasizes that participation in activities like cooking, traditional crafts, or sports fosters personal development and creates memorable travel experiences, enhancing engagement and satisfaction.

Theoretical perspective

Thailand's tourism offers a unique blend of cultural experiences, influenced by anticipation theory, with activities like cooking classes and temple visits enhancing tourist memories (Vroom, 1964). Authentic experiences, as noted by (Kim et al., 2009), involve immersion in the local culture, such as staying in homestays or attending festivals. Sustainable tourism, advocated by (Bramwell & Lane, 1993), focuses on eco-friendly and socially equitable practices, such as Thailand's eco-tours, which support conservation efforts. Intercultural communication theory (Gudykunst, 1993) highlights the importance of cultural exchanges, promoting mutual understanding between tourists and locals. Finally, Kolb's experiential learning theory (1984) asserts that active involvement, such as participating in a Thai cooking class, fosters deeper learning and connection than passive observation.

Related Literature Review

This literature review explores the key factors influencing MTEs in Thailand, including sensory, emotional, lifestyle dimensions, social media marketing's influence, and cultural exchange. Sensory and emotional aspects are vital in creating MTEs, as highlighted by (Volo, 2009), (Andersson, 2007), and (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011). (Salerno, 2009) emphasise sensory experiences, like a calming Thai spa atmosphere, significantly influence customer satisfaction.

Social media marketing significantly influences travel decisions, with platforms like Instagram and TripAdvisor influencing tourists' expectations through user-generated content (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). Travelers share their experiences in real-time during trips, which enhances both their satisfaction and provides real-time advice to others (Leung et al., 2013). Post-trip activities, like posting images and reviews, help solidify memories and inspire future travelers (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).

Cultural exchange is crucial for creating MTEs, as it offers authentic experiences and educational opportunities (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). In Thailand, participating in local customs, festivals, and homestays enhances connections and makes the destination memorable (Smith, 2009). These elements contribute significantly to MTEs, making Thailand a memorable destination.

Conceptual model

This study aims to explore the key elements of creating MTEs in Thailand, emphasising the comment of social media marketing and the role of local communities and cultural exchanges. Memorable experiences enhance tourist satisfaction and evoke strong emotions, fostering a deep connection to the destination. Satisfied tourists are likely to share their positive experiences with friends, family, and on social media, leading to invaluable word-of-mouth promotion that attracts new visitors. Additionally, memorable experiences cultivate brand loyalty, benefiting tourism businesses in the long run.

This study explores the role of social media marketing in creating unforgettable travel experiences for tourists, offering practical insights for tourism marketers, policymakers, event organizers, and local communities, aiming to enhance Bangkok's tourist appeal, promote sustainable tourism, and improve visitor experience.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model Developed by Authors
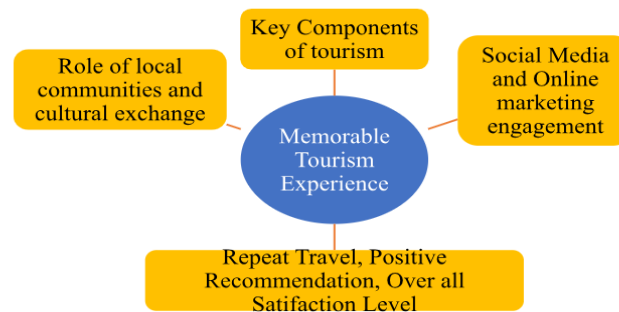
Research Methodology

Research Design

This study utilises qualitative research methodology. The qualitative technique is selected for its efficacy in investigating intricate phenomena, comprehending participants' viewpoints, and offering comprehensive, profound insights into the aspects of tourists that contribute to remarkable tourism experiences.

Target Audience

The main objective of the study is to understand the deeper perspectives of tourists in making their travel experiences memorable, unique and unforgettable. Therefore, the study mainly focuses on the international tourists currently in Bangkok, Thailand. They can be of any nationality and are exploring various areas in Thailand now.

Sampling Procedure

The study used purposive sampling, selecting 20 participants likely to offer relevant insights on MTEs in Thailand. This approach allowed for diversity in nationality, profession, and tourist experiences.

Sampling Distribution

The chosen locations—Central World, The Nine Center Rama, Platinum Shopping Mall, and BTS stations—were selected for their ability to attract a diverse range of international tourists in Bangkok. These areas represent a mix of shopping, entertainment, and transit hubs frequented by tourists from various backgrounds. Central World and Platinum Shopping Mall's centrally prime locations cater to urban, retail-focused Generation Y visitors, who live a modern lifestyle, are affluent, and are willing to pay more for higher quality. While The Nine Center Rama offers a quieter, local shopping experience. BTS skytrain stations capture young and dynamic commuter tourists in transit to major attractions.

The selected locations may only partially encompass tourists who prefer authentic, off-the-beaten-path experiences, such as cultural landmarks or local neighbourhoods. Future studies could explore alternative sites popular among the locals to capture insights from these visitors, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the diverse motivations and preferences within Bangkok's international tourist population.

Interview Questions

Tourism Experience:

IQ1: What motivates you to choose Thailand as a travel destination?

IQ2: Could you please describe one MTEs moment you have had?

IQ3: Which elements do you consider crucial for an unforgettable tourism experience?

Social Media Influence:

IQ4: How do the influencers/bloggers impact your travel decisions?

IQ5: Which social media platforms do you rely on the most for travel inspiration?

IQ6:How do reviews and suggestions on travel-related websites such as Yelp and TripAdvisor help create more memorable travel experiences?

Cultural Exchange:

IQ7: How does participating in local customs during travel enhance your understanding of a community's cultural heritage?

IQ8:How would you comment of interactions with local communities on your overall travel experience?

IQ9: What role do local guides or hosts play in facilitating authentic cultural experience for travellers?

Interview Procedure

A total of 20 in-depth interviews were conducted over 5 days at various locations in Bangkok. The sample size of 20 participants was deemed sufficient to achieve theoretical saturation, where no new information or themes were observed. Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were carried out using 9 open-ended questions in English, with two interviews conducted via Zoom. Each interview lasted between 10 to 45 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed to identify key themes related to MTEs. The decision to limit the sample to 20 participants was based on the principle of data saturation, ensuring comprehensive coverage without the need for further data collection.

Table 1

Demographic of Informants

Informant	Nationality	Occupation
1	British	Student
2	British	Student
3	Singaporean	Software Engineer
4	Singaporean	Work in plant production

Informant	Nationality	Occupation
5	Italian	Freelancer
6	Burmese	Sales Representative
7	Vietnamese	Online Coach
8	Vietnamese	Online Coach
9	German	Former Flight Attendance
10	Myanmar	Freelancer
11	Myanmar	Internship
12	Myanmar	Own Business
13	Myanmar	Online Language Coach
14	Myanmar	Jewellery Designer
15	Myanmar	Yoga Instructor
16	Myanmar	Final Year Student
17	Myanmar	Restaurant Owner
18	Myanmar	Accountant
19	Myanmar	Interior Designer
20	Myanmar	Marketing Executive

Table 2

Sampling Procedure

Period	Context	Data Collected
04 June 2024	To conduct face-to-face interviews with tourists at Central World	Qualitative Data in the form of 9 open-ended questions, completed 5 in-depth interviews.
05 June 2024	To conduct face-to-face interviews with tourists at The Nine Center Shopping Mall	Qualitative Data in the form of 9 open-ended questions, completed 5 in-depth interviews.
06 June 2024	To conduct face-to-face interviews with tourists at Onnut Station	Qualitative Data in the form of 9 open-ended questions, completed 5 in-depth interviews.
07 June 2024	To conduct face-to-face interviews with tourists at Platinum Shopping Mall	Qualitative Data in the form of 9 open-ended questions, completed 4 in-depth interviews.
08 June 2024	To conduct a face-to-face interview with tourists at Ramkhamhaeng Road	Qualitative Data in the form of 9 open-ended questions, completed 1 in-depth interview.

Data Analysis
Labelling, open coding and axial coding

Table 3

Coding for RO1 by IQ 1 of "What motivates you to choose Thailand as a travel destination?".

Informant	Labelling	Open Coding	Axial Coding
Informant 1	Value for money, unique cultural experiences and attractions, and of course the area's natural beauty all make it interesting.	Natural beauty	Thailand's appeal lies in its affordable shopping, street food, urban transportation,

Informant	Labelling	Open Coding	Axial Coding
Informant 2	The local transportation system offers good value for money, with delicious local food and fantastic shopping opportunities.	Affordability	cultural heritage, and natural beauty resources, making it a popular travel destination.
Informant 3	Tourist enjoys natural beauty, parks, historical sites, and regional cuisine. Public transportation is safe, and half-Chinese tourist visits Chinese temples, Grand Place, Wat Pho, and Wat Arun.	Cultural Immersion	
Informant 4	Thailand has delicious food and unwinds with cheap entertainment.	Value for money	
Informant 5	The natural attractions and food also motivate them to stay in Thailand, as well as with good transportation and affordable accommodation.	Transportation System	
Informant 6	Motivated for Food and Relaxation, Cultural exchange and some unique experiences like temple tours and authentic Thai Cuisine.	Cultural immersion	
Informant 7	Motivated to see historical sites and food, especially seafood markets. Thailand is value for money and feels safe as a travel destination.	Local cuisine, affordable	
Informant 8	Explore local food at affordable prices on the street and engage in activities like snorkelling, kayaking, or stand-up paddle to enjoy the local culture.	Cultural immersion, Active participation	
Informant 9	Mainly influenced by the beaches of natural attractions, food and multiple choice of adventurous activities in Phuket.	Local cuisine, Adventurous activities	
Informant 10	Motivated to do a lot of attractive places and affordable things, go to the shopping mall and see the entertainment of Thailand.	Affordable	
Informant 11	Inspired by local cuisine, to stay safe and have security for women, and a great shopping experience	Safety	
Informant12	Explore Thailand's vibrant cultures, diverse experiences, and delicious cuisine, explore beautiful historic sites, and enjoy adventurous activities in Phuket.	Cultural exchange	
Informant 13	Enjoy shopping and eating local foods	Local cuisine	
Informant 14	Enjoy The weather, the voice of nature and the beautiful scenery	Natural attractions	
Informant 15	Love to taste the food and the sightseeing	Local cuisine	
Informant 17	Motivate to have a shopping experience	Fantastic shopping	
Informant 18	Inspired by its food and shopping experience	Fantastic shopping	
Informant 19	Inspired by Thai food and its pay on value and return.	Affordability	
Informant 20	Motivated to explore colourful street art, amazing local Phuket food, enjoy the sunset	Cultural attraction	

Table 3 highlights the reasons why Thailand is a popular travel destination among international tourists. Key motivations include its attractive natural landscapes, diverse local attractions, delicious cuisine, and famous street food. The affordability of accommodations, food, and transportation also plays a significant role in drawing visitors. Additionally, Thailand offers excellent shopping opportunities, a convenient transportation system, and access to historical sites and adventurous activities. Overall, the combination of these elements, particularly the value for money, positions Thailand as a compelling choice for travellers seeking enriching and economical experiences.

Table 4

Coding for RO1 by IQ 2 of "Could you please describe one MTEs moment you have had?".

Informant	Labelling	Open Coding	Axial Coding
Informant 1	The trip offers a unique snorkelling experience, particularly in Koh Tao, where visitors can observe local wildlife like baby sharks, and participate in cooking classes in Chiang Mai.	Adventurous activities, cultural immersion	Thailand was a unique and unforgettable experience, featuring affordable adventurous activities, stunning natural landscapes, and a vibrant nightlife and entertainment scene.
Informant 4	Bangkok's nighttime transformed into a vibrant adventure.	Nighttime atmosphere	
Informant 5	The Banana boat activity near Pattaya Beach was a memorable experience, showcasing the beauty of nature, the blue sea, fantastic shopping, and fun entertainment.	Adventurous activities, Natural attractions	
Informant 11	The first train trip with friends was unforgettable, with beautiful scenery and a special moment witnessing the sunset hours.	Natural attractions	
Informant 12	The combination of dining experience on a cruise along the Chao Phraya River in Bangkok and exploring Pattaya's nightlife was truly remarkable.	Nighttime atmosphere	
Informant 13	The adventure activities in Chiang Mai provided new challenges and cherished memories, pushing the limits and pushing the limits of the participants.	Adventurous activities	
Informant 16	During the trip, I enjoyed banana boat riding and parasailing adventure, which was an amazing surprise. The nightlife in Pattaya was also enjoyable.	Adventurous activities.	
Informant 17	It was participating in the Songkran Festival in Chiang Mai.	Cultural immersion	
Informant 19	The trip included numerous water activities at the beach, including jet skiing, and was enriched by entertainment and nightlife.	Adventurous activities.	
Informant 20	Amazing food experiences all over the trip made it memorable.	Local Cuisine	

Table 4 illustrates why visiting Thailand is memorable for tourists. Travelling to Thailand is an unforgettable experience for every incoming international tourist because it offers a perfect combination of thrilling excitement of adventurous activities, vibrant nightlife, fantastic mainstream of entertainment and finally comes with stunning natural landscapes. These experiences are described as a top destination to Thailand by international travellers and seemed like unforgettable experiences.

Table 5

Coding for RO1 by IQ 3 of "Which elements do you consider crucial for an unforgettable tourism experience?".

Informant	Labelling	Open Coding	Axial Coding
Informant 1	a range of exciting things to do and see	Fantastic activities	Travelers in Thailand enjoy adventurous activities like ziplining, boat excursions, and snorkeling, creating lasting memories. Local culture and delicious cuisine add to positive experiences. Nightlife in Thailand offers value for money and safety.
Informant 2	Numerous boat excursions around Phuket's Island and opportunities for snorkelling within a stunning natural ecosystem, snorkelling tours, cooking classes and temple tours	Adventurous activities	
Informant 3	astonished and thrilled by the city's lit-up streets while experiencing an exciting tuk-tuk ride to feel bravely diving	Urban nightlife	
Informant 4	the incredible kindness of the people in the area, reasonably priced transportation. the distinctive tastes of the food	Affordability	
Informant 5	More engaging tours in addition to camping and distinctive pursuits like homestays and dining at little, hidden treasures	Fantastic activities	
Informant 8	Cheap price for food	Affordability	
Informant 11	Homestay culture, Eco-tourism, Niche experience	Cultural immersion	
Informant 12	Personal historic tour	Cultural immersion	
Informant 13	people creating memories like personalization preferences.	Personalized	
Informant 14	Ecotourism involves authentically exploring hidden gems and local cuisine.	Authentic	
Informant 16	relaxation in more beach places	Leisure	
Informant 17	personalized and niche offerings, catering to specific interests and passions.	Personalization	
Informant 18	taking a cooking class or participating in an adventure activity.	Cultural immersion	

Table 5 identifies essential elements for creating an unforgettable trip, particularly in Thailand. Key components include:

Adventurous Activities: Opportunities like ziplining in Chiang Mai, boat excursions in Phuket, and snorkelling in Koh Tao.

- Local Cuisine: Enjoying Thai Street food, cooking classes, and meals at well-known local restaurants.

- Nightlife: Experiencing Bangkok's vibrant nightlife, Chiang Mai's night markets, and beach parties in Koh Samui.

- Value for Money: Thailand's affordability, offering luxurious experiences at lower costs than many Western countries.

- Safety: A reputation for being safe for tourists, supported by friendly locals and a solid tourist infrastructure.

Table 6

Coding for RO2 by IQ 4 of "How do the influencers/bloggers impact your travel decisions?".

Informant	Labelling	Open Coding	Axial Coding
Informant 1	They help tourists decide which attractions or activities to pick They help to show places which we wouldn't have known about otherwise.	Sources of Information	Influencers and bloggers significantly influence travelers' decisions, providing reviews, preparations, and exploring hidden places. Social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook offer inspiration and practical tips, enhancing travel experiences. Online advertisements are more visible than traditional marketing methods.
Informant 2	TikTok and Instagram aid in understanding activities, tours, and restaurants by analyzing reviews and suggestions from social media influencers and people.	Insights into Attractions	
Informant 3	TikTok, YouTube, and Google are used for food and accommodations. They are first-hand experience to see places and things on their preferences to choose.	Insights into Attractions	
Informant 4	It's opened doors to hidden gems that never would have been found alone by following influencer's recommendations, Travel websites offer insights on shops and experiences too.	Insights into Attractions	
Informant 5	Real-time reviewers and blogs are utilizing travel blogs and TikTok influencer content to plan trips and discover famous cafes, resulting in memorable experiences.	Sources of Information, Insights into Attractions	
Informant 6	Before trip, use TikTok to research destinations, restaurants, and hotels, as travel bloggers who share detailed information about the trip can be helpful in real life.	Sources of Information	
Informant 7	They regularly monitor various platforms for updated trends, comments, and suggestions to avoid bad merchants and gain more destination ideas from their videos or articles.	Insights into Attractions	
Informant 8	Social media is getting more and more videos on travel-related things so they can influence our decision as well.	Sources of Information	
Informant 9	People are motivated to travel to Thailand after seeing numerous island-hopping videos on Instagram, featuring beautiful scenery of mountains and famous beaches.	Insights into Attractions.	
Informant 10	TikTok features extensive travel content primarily focusing on food and restaurant exploration in Thailand, highlighting the	Highlighting Hidden Gems	

Informant	Labelling	Open Coding	Axial Coding
	influence of social media on virtualization.		
Informant 11	it can help in choosing good accommodations to have a great time on a trip. It also helps to estimate the budget for the whole trip and choose the places to go around	Sources of Information	
Informant 12	Online reviews are crucial for 70% of all pre-travel decisions, as they assist in selecting accommodations, activities, and activities for a comfortable and enjoyable experience.	Sources of Information	
Informant 13	Online reviews and bloggers' videos are crucial for making informed decisions and ensuring a great experience before visiting a place or activity.	Sources of Information	
Informant 14	70% of decisions are inspired by Instagram, their true experiences and sharing,	Sources of Information	
Informant 15	People are using search engines and Google Maps to plan their travels, with Facebook users sharing the BTS application for convenient Bangkok destination viewing.	Insights into Attractions	
Informant 16	From Facebook, travelers can get a lot of information and travel tips.	Sources of Information	
Informant 17	Influencers and bloggers offer valuable insights into popular attractions, dining spots, and unique experiences, often highlighting hidden gems not found in traditional travel guides.	Insights into Attractions	
Informant 18	Utilize Facebook to discover natural attractions and food options, as influencer reviews provide valuable information on these locations and activities.	Sources of Information	
Informant 19	Especially on TikTok, found some places and some famous restaurants in which able to get some information and famous restaurants as well as accommodations.	Sources of Information	
Informant 20	Travelers should utilize Facebook and TikTok for essential information, as they offer detailed, relatable content that traditional ads cannot match.	Sources of Information	

Table 6 highlights the significant influence of bloggers and influencers on travel decisions. Unlike traditional advertisements, they offer in-depth reviews and personal experiences, providing honest opinions about accommodations, dining, and attractions. Their content often reveals hidden gems that standard travel guides may overlook. Influencers also share practical advice on saving money, packing, navigating local transport, and timing visits to attractions, which is especially helpful for first-time travellers. Ultimately, their authentic and engaging content across social media and travel websites has become an invaluable resource for modern travellers seeking to enhance their travel experiences.

Table 7

Coding for RO2 by IQ5 of "Which social media platforms do you rely on the most for travel inspiration?".

Informant	Labeling	Open Coding	Axial Coding
Informant 1	Used TikTok and Instagram	TikTok Instagram	Social media platforms have plenty of recommendations for locations and eateries.
Informant 2	Used TikTok and Instagram	TikTok Instagram	
Informant 3	Watched TikTok, Google Apps and YouTube for food and accommodations.	TikTok Instagram YouTube Google	
Informant 4	Used TikTok or Instagram's reel	TikTok Instagram (Reels)	
Informant 5	Searched at TikTok for travel places, Searched on Tripadvisor website.	TikTok Travel Website	
Informant 6	searched on TikTok	TikTok	
Informant 7	Checked every platform for updated trends	Social media platforms	
Informant 9	used IG for activities and Trip Advisor for review and destination	Instagram Travel Website	
Informant 10	Instagram's Reel	Instagram's Reel	
Informant 12	used Facebook and Instagram (Reels)	Facebook Instagram	
Informant 13	rely mainly on Instagram and some posts from bloggers on Facebook	Facebook Instagram	
Informant 14	used IG for daily	Instagram	
Informant 15	used Instagram and Facebook	Facebook Instagram	
Informant 16	Facebook	Facebook	
Informant 18	Facebook	Facebook	
Informant 19	TikTok	TikTok	

Table 7 shows the list of social media platforms that use online marketing and are most popular for travel inspiration. Each offers a unique take on travel inspiration, making them all quite useful when planning your next vacation. Some of the most popular platforms are TikTok short films, Instagram photographs, stories, reels, YouTube long videos, Google Maps, reviews and articles, guides, and personal travel blogs from websites and blogs.

Table 8

Coding for RO2 by IQ6 of "How do reviews and suggestions on travel-related websites such as Yelp and TripAdvisor help create more memorable travel experiences?".

Informant	Labelling	Open Coding	Axial Coding
Informant 5	The TripAdvisor website was searched for unusual vacation ideas to obtain additional recommendations, reviews, and real-time comments.	Real-time information	Travel websites like TripAdvisor, Trip.com, and Yelp provide valuable information for trip planning, including real-time
Informant 6	Reviews of travel-related websites can contribute to 20% of trip decisions.	Real-time information	

Informant	Labelling	Open Coding	Axial Coding
Informant 9	Travel websites can show the destination which knows more about that area and easy information to plan to visit.	Insight of destination	reviews, suggestions, and recommendations.
Informant 13	Checking Google for any information regarding the place or activity beforehand. Then can prepare about the place or activity. When booking accommodations, and transportation tickets, platforms like Agoda and trip.com are useful.	Source of Information	

Table 8 emphasizes the role of travel-related websites like Yelp, TripAdvisor, and Trip.com in enhancing travel experiences through real-time reviews and recommendations. These platforms offer authentic insights from fellow travelers, providing a realistic picture of destinations, accommodations, restaurants, and attractions. Users often share detailed feedback, allowing others to set realistic expectations and avoid disappointments. Visual insights from photos and videos enhance understanding, while practical advice on navigating destinations and avoiding tourist traps enhances the overall travel experience.

Table 9

Coding for RO3 by IQ7 of "How does participating in local customs during travel enhance your understanding of a community's cultural heritage?" .

Informant	Labelling	Open Coding	Axial Coding
Informant 1	They try to learn customs before as it shows respect to the people in the area when interacting.	Learning culture	Engaging in Thai customs like wearing a Thai costume, using the Thai language, and using the Thai do can create a strong bond with locals, enhance travel experiences, and provide valuable insights.
Informant 3	Visit to Wat Arun experienced a deeper connection to Thai culture through trying Thai costumes, enjoying Thai dramas, and listening to Thai music.	Learning culture	
Informant 4	A pillar of travel experiences is interacting with the local population. It opens a greater awareness and respect for the culture of a place than just sightseeing.	Cultural Respect	
Informant 5	During travels, I discovered Thai people use hand gestures for greetings, farewells, thanks, apologies, and reverence. Learning Thai Basic Language helps me greet people and order food, making me feel more connected to locals.	Cultural Greeting	
Informant 7	Yes, it is great if you prepare some connections with locals before you go and have a good relationship that can help me to see more cultural exchanges here.	Cultural exchange	
Informant 9	wearing Thai costumes.	Learning culture	
Informant 11	Also knowing the culture of the place, I travel to feel comfortable and respectful when meeting with local people.	Learning culture,	
Informant 15	The individual is learning Thai language to communicate effectively with senior staff in	Learning culture language	

Informant	Labelling	Open Coding	Axial Coding
	food ordering, overcoming language barriers and achieving desired food items.		
Informant 16	A local food vendor taught me how to order Pad Thai, and Tom Yum's unique voice made me feel special when conversing with others.	Deep connection	
Informant 17	Engaging with locals fosters respect and appreciation for their culture, fostering meaningful interactions and a deeper connection with the place, often resulting in unique experiences and lasting memories.	Learning culture	

Table 9 highlights the importance of engaging in local customs during travel to understand a community's cultural heritage. Wearing a Thai costume, using basic phrases, and extending greetings with the "Wai" gesture can create lasting memories and deepen cultural understanding. These practices not only connect travellers visually and culturally but also demonstrate genuine effort to engage with the community.

Table 10

Coding for RO3 by IQ8 of "How would you comment of interactions with local communities on your overall travel experience?".

Informant	Labelling	Open Coding	Axial Coding
Informant 1	Lucky that the majority are so kind and welcoming to tourists.	Warmth of Local Communities	Thai people are friendly, polite, and welcoming, making interactions with them easy and comfortable for travelers.
Informant 3	The people in this location are highly comfortable and respectful, emphasising the importance of good cultural etiquette in communication.	Politeness	
Informant 4	Highlights the benefits of polite conversation, such as discovering delicious beef noodles, and the warmth of local communities during their travels.	Politeness and Respectful Conversation	
Informant 5	During my travels, I discovered that Thais typically use hand gestures as a form of greeting.	Warmth of Local Communities	
Informant 9	They help to teach us some basic words like Greeting, Thank you and sorry.	Cultural Greetings	
Informant 16	A local food vendor taught me how to order Pad Thai, and Tom Yum's unique voice made me feel special when conversing with others.	Local Food Experiences	
Informant 17	A local guide in Ayutthaya guided us to lesser-known temples and shared personal stories, making the visit very special.	Personalized Local Guidance	

Table 10 shows that travellers value their interactions with local communities as crucial to their travel experience. Thai hospitality enhances understanding of the country's cultural heritage. Learning basic phrases like "Sawasdee" and "Khop Khun" improves interactions. The friendly and sincere Thai community contributes to a welcoming and enjoyable destination.

Table 11

Coding for RO3 by IQ9 of "What role do local guides or hosts play in facilitating the authentic cultural experience for travellers?".

Informant	Labelling	Open Coding	Axial Coding
Informant 1	In Chaing Mai temple tours and boat trips to places taught us and could explain questions. Greetings involved and talking with locals have been some of the most memorable experiences.	Cultural Exposure	Engaging with native tour guides or hosts can offer tourists genuine cultural encounters. They offer more experiences and can be highly informative. Communication between travellers is very comfortable and easy. It increased the trip's emotional resonance and made it more remarkable.
Informant 4	They can help inform "dos and don'ts" and promote a more conscious relationship with the places.	Cultural Learning	
Informant 5	They help us teach basic greeting words and gestures.	Cultural Exposure	
Informant 6	They help to earn deeper insights into those places.	Cultural Exposure	
Informant 11	The volunteer program in Singapore, which included attending cultural exchange shows featuring Myanmar, Vietnam, Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand. This experience allowed them to study various cultures and feel a sense of belonging through participation in events and festivals, making them feel like a local.	Cultural Exchange and Learning	
Informant 12	The very first time I visited Thailand with my family we hired a local guide to communicate especially with the language barrier.	Cultural Exchange and Learning	
Informant 16	A local food vendor taught me how to order Pad Thai, and Tom Yum's unique voice made me feel special when conversing with others.	Appreciation	
Informant 17	Engaging with locals fosters respect and appreciation for their culture, fostering meaningful interactions and a deeper connection with the place, often resulting in unique experiences and lasting memories.	Appreciation of Local Culture, Deep Connection	

Table 11 highlights the crucial role of local guides or hosts in providing authentic cultural experiences for travellers. Engaging with native guides fosters comfortable communication, enhancing the emotional impact of the trip. These guides possess deep knowledge of their culture, traditions, and history, allowing them to share rich stories and insights that enliven Thailand's cultural heritage. They also introduce travellers to lesser-known attractions and local favourites, offering a unique perspective on the destination. Overall, local guides facilitate meaningful interactions, fostering empathy and appreciation for the culture, ultimately making the travel experience more memorable.

Results and Discussion

The analysis is based on primary data collected from 20 international tourists currently visiting Bangkok. The discussion aligns with the research objectives and is supported by the interview responses to the corresponding questions.

RO1: Key Components of Creating an MTE

The findings emphasise essential factors that contribute to MTEs in Thailand, including its breathtaking natural landscapes, rich cultural attractions, and delectable cuisine, particularly the renowned street food. The affordability of lodging and transportation enhances its allure, enabling visitors to indulge in luxurious experiences at a fraction of the price. Participation in adventurous activities, dynamic nightlife, and cultural interactions plays a significant role in creating lasting memories. Furthermore, the hospitality and warmth of Thai locals cultivate a friendly atmosphere, fostering emotional connections that enhance the overall travel experience and promote repeat visits.

Figure 2

*The Result of Key Components that demonstrated for creating in MTEs*
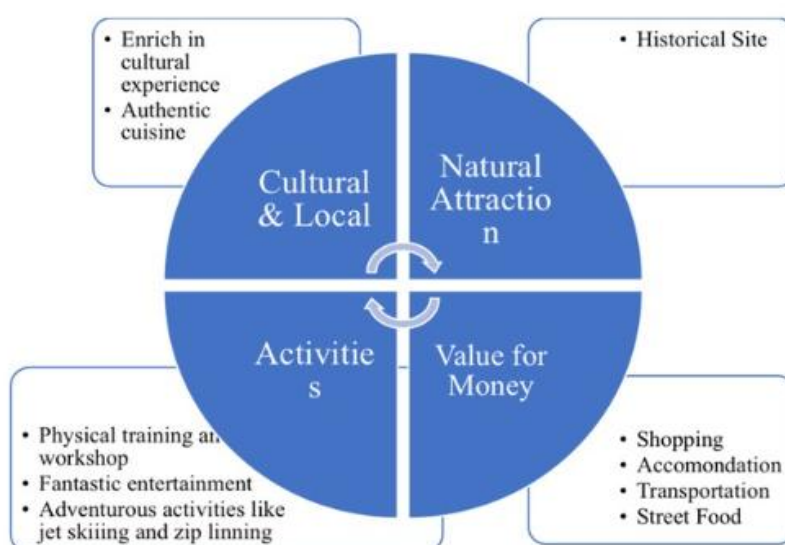
RO2: The power of social media/influencer marketing on creating MTE

Different social media platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, offer unique advantages for finding travel inspiration and significantly influence tourists' choices regarding destinations and activities. Influencers and bloggers impact travel decisions through inspiring content, detailed reviews, practical tips, and the discovery of hidden gems, making their contributions invaluable resources for modern travellers. Additionally, travel websites like Yelp, TripAdvisor, and Trip.com provide real-time reviews and recommendations. As young people increasingly turn to online content, influencers are likely to play a larger role, potentially replacing traditional travel guides.

Figure 3

The result of social media platform that constructed to become enhancing travelling experience
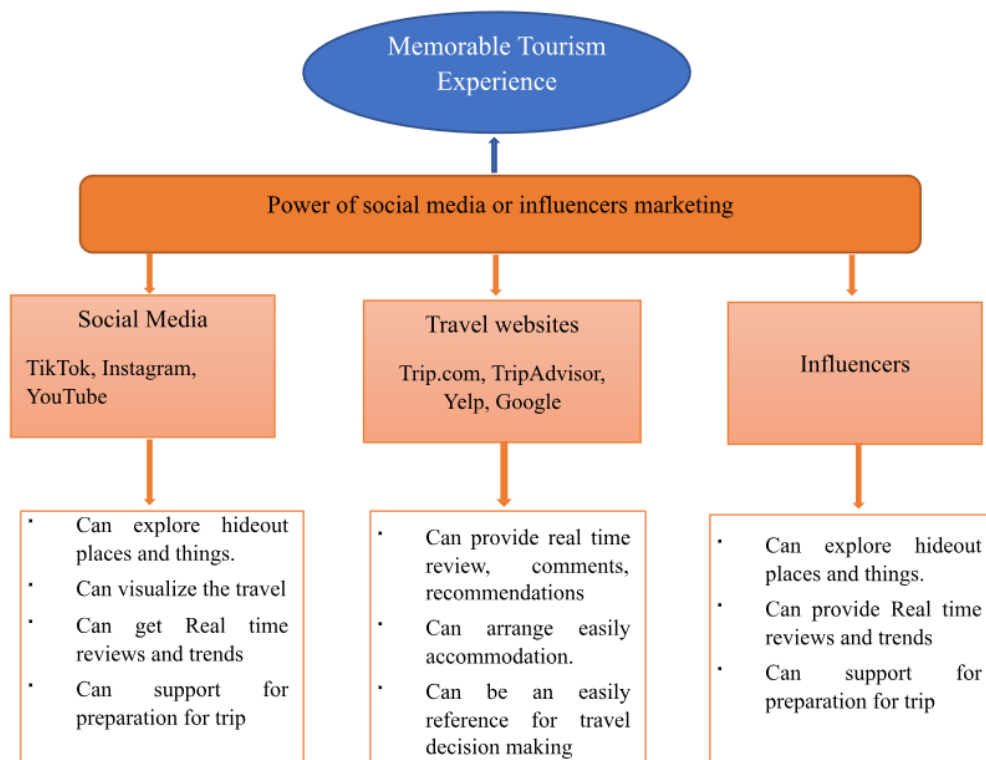
RO3: The role of the interaction with local communities and cultural exchange

Engaging with local customs and communities significantly enhances the travel experience in Thailand. Participating in traditions, such as wearing Thai costumes and learning basic phrases, fosters meaningful interactions and demonstrates respect for the culture. The warm hospitality of locals creates a welcoming environment, while local guides provide insights into lesser-known attractions and cultural heritage. These practices not only deepen travellers' appreciation for Thai culture but also lead to more fulfilling and memorable experiences, emphasising the importance of cultural engagement in tourism.

Figure 4

The result of local communication and cultural exchange interaction which support to be MTEs

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that unforgettable travel experiences in Thailand stem from essential elements like natural landmarks, vibrant activities, and affordable, flavourful food. Engaging in adventurous pursuits such as scuba diving and ziplining strengthens emotional connections to destinations. It highlights the effectiveness of social media marketing via platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube in shaping travel decisions, offering real-time reviews and insights that influence where travellers choose to go and what to do. Additionally, cultural exchanges with friendly locals enhance the travel experience, making visitors feel welcomed and connected. Overall, these factors contribute to enriching tourism in Thailand and fostering long-term growth.

The recommendations emphasise creating unforgettable travel experiences (MTEs) in Thailand through various thrilling activities like zip lining, scuba diving, and exploring Bangkok's nightlife, which help foster strong emotional connections for tourists. It suggests enhancing adventurous offerings and unique personalized experiences, such as cooking classes and local festivals like Songkran, while highlighting Thailand's affordability. Tourists should be encouraged to engage with local culture through homestays and reasonably priced events. Additionally, leveraging social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram for influencer marketing which is vital as travellers increasingly rely on these for destination decisions. Finally, promoting interactions with friendly local communities enriches cultural exchanges, making visitors feel more valued and connected. Local guides should facilitate these engagements to enhance tourists' emotional ties to the area.

Limitations

The study on sustainable tourism in Thailand, focusing on international visitors in Bangkok, has limitations due to a short time frame, small sample size, and limited generalizability. It suggests expanding the research to include diverse perspectives, considering evolving trends and technology advancements, and expanding the geographic scope to examine travellers' perceptions of significant experiences outside Thailand.

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