The Emergence of Thai Flashpacker in Japan

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the characteristics of Thai travelers who have been in Japan since they always called themselves as backpackers on the travel review on the online bulletin board. This study identifies and compares their characteristics with the recent researches on backpackers. It was found that Thai travelers' characteristics are in line with the recent studies. The purposes of this study were to observe their real characteristics and to investigate that Thai travelers in Japan presently are backpacker like they called themselves or not. The respondents were selected from the persons who had experiences in Japan from the travel reviews on Thai famous online community namely Pantip.com, and administered an online survey and in-depth-interviews. The findings revealed that their characteristics are similar with the new travel lifestyle called "flashpacker".

CHAPTER I   INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Background

After the exemption of Japanese visas for Thai people on 1st July 2013 (Embassy of Japan in Thailand, 2013), the number of Thai travelers in Japan has increased rapidly in recently years (See table 1.1). The augmentation of low price airplane tickets from Thailand to Japan as well impacts to the travelers for their decision to discover Japan. Thai travelers prefer to share their travel memories on the online community called Pantip.com where people can share and communicate with other people via the online bulletin board on this website. This online community is famous among Thai travelers. Therefore, the tons of travel reviews especially reviews about travel in Japan have been shared on Pantip.com. Most of the Thai travelers defined themselves as a backpacker on their short-stay travel review. Initially, the author had an intention to conduct a study about backpacker tourism by using a case study from Thai travelers in Japan. However, after having examined their characteristics and travel lifestyle by comparing with the existent academic researches on backpacker tourism, it seems that Thai travelers' characteristic is different from the backpackers that were mentioned in recent studies. According to Pearce (2009), he described "backpacker" as a low expenditure person, flexibility in itinerary and expanded travel period longer than normal holiday. Most of backpackers are the westerners particularly from European countries, America and Australia.

Hence, this author has questions that "If they are not the backpackers, so who are they?" and "What is their travel lifestyle presently?" These questions motivated this author to conduct a study in order to discover what is the real lifestyle of Thai tourists visiting Japan these days. Having examined the existent studies about the travel lifestyle from the academic journals, the author has found a new term of travelers' lifestyle, "Flashpacker". Jarvis & Peel (2010) uses the term "flashpacker" to refer to the travelers who have high income and high expenditure. Hampton (2013) stated that flashpackers prefer to stay for a short periods unlike the backpackers. In addition, the flashpackers are also the tech-savvy person who always carries the high-technology devices during the trip. Flashpacker's characteristic is interesting because it is quite similar with Thai traveler's characteristics. In this thesis, the author will look into the characteristics of Thai travelers in Japan by comparing them with both backpacker and flashpacker's characteristics. In addition, the researcher found that social network usage among Thai travelers is indispensable part of their travel. This motivated the author to explore the significance of social network as well. Regarding to the number of travel reviews on online world in Thailand, it is increasing presently. Thai travelers prefer to share and follow the reviews from other travelers. Hence, he added more reviews related to the social media in order to know how the social network such as online community (Pantip.com) influences the Thai travelers.

Table 1.1: Thai visitors to Japan from 2010 to 2015

Source: Japan National Tourism Organization

Year (total from January to December)					
2010	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
214,881	144,969	260,640	453,642	657,570	796,731

The thesis begins by describing the literature review related to travel lifestyle; backpacker and flashpacker's characteristics; and social media then arguing the dissimilarity between Thai travelers and backpacker's characteristic. It went on to suggest that the Thai travelers are not a backpacker as they called themselves. Then the research methodology's chapter describes the methods used in this investigation in order to examine the real travel lifestyle of Thai travelers in Japan.

1.2. The Research Questions

Because the flashpacker is a quite new travel phenomenon, studies on this topic is scarce. So, we do not have enough knowledge on flashpackers. Therefore, the author posts three main research questions in order to get more knowledge about flashpacker's characteristics and the difference between "Backpacker" and "Flashpacker". In addition, the question related to the influence of the social media among Thai travelers in Japan is raised.

1.   Are Thai travelers in Japan a backpacker or not?

2.   What are the characteristics of Thai travelers who identified themselves as

a backpacker in Japan?

3.   Does the social media influence to Thai travelers?

1.3. The Objectives of the Research

Base on the research questions which were mentioned above, this thesis is expected

to achieve the following objectives:

1.   To examine that Thai travelers in Japan are a backpacker like they called

        themselves on the online community called Pantip.com or not.

2.   To examine the characteristics of Thai travelers presently by comparing them

        with the recent academic researches about backpackers and flashpackers.

3.   To examine how the social media influence to Thai travelers.

1.4. Research Methodology

        This study used a qualitative methodology. Firstly, the researcher analyzed the

travel reviews related to the topic, "backpack trip in Japan", on the online

community, Pantip.com, as a primary data. Then, the researcher created an online

questionnaire in order to collect data from Thai travelers in Japan. The result from

this online survey showed only the general characteristics of Thai travelers in Japan.

Thus, the researcher also conducted in-depth-interviews in order to gather more

specific data. The respondents of this interview have been mainly selected from two

online communities; Pantip.com; and Thai traveler in Japan group on Facebook.com.

Most of the interviewees are the travel review writers on Pantip.com. In addition,

some of them have created their public page on Facebook.com and travel blog in

order to review and share their experiences. The researcher has met the Thai travelers during his field trip in Japan also and invited those travelers to join the in-depth-interview. The in-depth interview with these respondents gave the specific information for researcher in order to achieve his research questions and objectives. Before beginning the online survey and interviews, the researcher firstly analyzed ten travel reviews about backpack in Japan in order to know Thai traveler's characteristics. Later, the online survey was conducted in order to gather more information from 102 Thai travelers who have visited to Japan. After getting the data from the online based respondents, the in-depth-interview was conducted in order to gather more information from ten interviewees to support the data gathered from the online survey. Both online survey and in-depth-interview questions focused on their characteristics before, during and after the trip to Japan. The interviews were recorded by the digital device and transcribed word by word. After having examined the data gathered from both online questionnaire and in-depth interviews, the research aims to answer the research questions which were mentioned in 1.2.

1.5. The Significance of the Research

As explained earlier in the research background, Thai travelers presently visit Japan increasingly. The researcher found that their characteristics are interesting to study. However, there have been not many studies on Thai travelers visiting Japan before in the academic literature. Thus, the researcher aims that the results from this research could contribute to the literature and could be useful for other researchers

who aim to gather the knowledge about the characteristics of Thai travelers. In addition, the researcher found that Thai traveler's characteristics are similar with the flashpacker more than backpacker as they always called their trip in Japan as a backpack trip. However, there have been also not many studies on flashpacker in the academic field as well. Therefore, the researcher expects that this study could contribute to the literature and could be helpful for other researchers to conduct and study about the flashpacker phenomenon. Furthermore, the researcher aims that the term "flashpacker" will be used in the daily life as same as the term "backpacker". Since this term is not widely known, most of Thai travelers preferred to claim themselves as backpackers instead of flashpackers. Even if their real characteristics is similar with flashpacker. Regarding to the result from this study, the researcher found that Thai travelers are high-budget travelers. They also prefer to spend their trip for a short period and prefer to stay at a cozy and private accommodation as same as flashpackers. Furthermore, The term of social media is also playing an important role among Thai travelers presently. The researcher found that they prefer to seek the travel information from the other travelers' reviews on the online communities before decision to travel in Japan and they also share their travel memories or feedbacks after trip to other travelers as well. It can be clearly seen that the importance of the social media is now performing to persuade travelers to decide their trip. Thus, the researcher expects that this study could be advantage for Japanese tourism industry in

order to improve their capability and local staff to greet Thai travelers and satisfy their needs.

1.6. Outline of this Thesis

The research is structured as follows. Chapter I discusses the research background accompanied by synopses of the chapters that follow.

In Chapter ll, the researcher will provide the readers the literature about the travel lifestyle; backpacker's characteristics; flashapcker's characteristics and the power of the social media. The comparison between both backpackers and flashpackers were also illustrated in this chapter to make the readers more clear about both travel phenomena.

Chapter lll describes the methodology used for this thesis. The researcher will describe the detailed steps of the research process.

Chapter IV demonstrates the research findings from the analyses of data from three sources; the content analysis of online community Pantip.com; online survey; and in-depth-interview. This chapter would be the most important part of this thesis. At the end of the chapter IV, the researcher would discuss three topics based on the findings; they are, "Are Thai travelers in Japan presently backpacker?", "The characteristic of Thai flashpackers and a flashpack trend in Japan", and "Pantip.com, a bible for Thai travelers".

Chapter V contains the conclusion covering the theme of this thesis and the recommendations on the flashpacker phenomenon and the power of social media among Thai flashpackers.

CHAPTER ll   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Travel lifestyle

   Lifestyle travelers are a person who travels at the host destination for a long period from country to country particularly in younger age. We can recognize them as a backpacker in our mind. However, the brief review of the origin of backpacker travel lifestyle is important for an understanding of the concept of travel lifestyle which exerted some influence to the backpacker lifestyle presently. Let's begin with the Grand Tours of the young educated traveler in the Victorian period (from the 17th and 18th century). It was a trip managed by the upper-class European youth particularly from the British families of aristocrats and their tutors. The main purpose of this trip aimed to experience the culture and to learn the new things on the road trip within the great cities of European countries (Loker-Murphy&Pearce,1995; Hampton, 2013). In addition, at the end of the nineteenth century the term "tramping" became a form of youth tourism (Adler, 1985). A tramp was a young man from the working class who departed to other countries. However, their ambition was different from the Grand tour that was mentioned earlier. The tramps moved to other countries in order to find work for instance craft work (Hampton, 2013). Even if the intention of the privileged class youth traveler and the young men from working class wasn't similar, both of them had the same outcome that they were separated from their family and their country of origin for a long period. However, they gained various

opportunities through travel, such as adventure, and education during their trip (Adler, 1985). The tramping movement in Europe ended with the World War I (Loker-Murphy&Pearce, 1995).

The term of youth movement appeared again. The young adults from the opulent countries in Europe escaped from the urban area in order to appreciate the beauty of countryside. During this period there was the emergence of inexpensive accommodation such as youth hostel for young travelers. England can be the outstanding epitome of the birth of cheap accommodation since there were associations for instance Young Men Christian Association and Young Women Christian Association (Loker-Murphy&Pearce, 1995). These associations provided the cheap room for the young travelers. Thus, the trend of cheap accommodation attracted the young people who have a limited budget to travel overseas without the uneasiness of their budgets. Furthermore, the appearance of hill stations in various countries that were once colonized by the European Empires particularly in Asia fascinated other youth such as hippies and backpackers after World War ll. The term "hippy" became commonly known since young traveler movement from the 1960s when the hippy traveled from Europe to South Asia was recognized. This was affordable for them to organize their overland trip from Europe to the Far East countries. However, the hippy trail route from Europe to Asia was blocked by political turmoil: the Islamic revolution in 1979 and the Soviet-Afghan War between 1979 to 1989 (Hampton, 2013). Although, this disturbance remained, they can make

their trip to other countries for instance from Europe to Asia by taking the cheap long-haul flights. Hampton (2013) stated that the Hippies at that time preferred to take a trip from Europe to Indian subcontinent such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. In addition, the hippies also prepared their trip by following other travelers' information since it was difficult for them to find the up to date information at that time. They always sought the cheap accommodation such as dormitory, guesthouse or free accommodation at the temple. They sometimes carried a sleeping bag, which they could sleep en route on night bus or train.

The emergence of hippy travelers during the1960s and 1970s effected to the economic of the host countries. According to Hampton (2013), there were the augmentation of infrastructure for instance local cafes, cheap hotels and guesthouses, and second hand book stores at the host countries after the emerging of hippies. The local community could earn the benefit. However, the hippies needed to save their travel expenditure in order to prolong their stay. Hence, they sought the way to economize their limited budget. They preferred to stay at the temple or local people's home for free accommodation and free food. They also used the free transportation by hitchhiking and sometimes they begged (Hampton, 2013). Notwithstanding, the appearance of backpacker who followed the hippy' lifestyle became the new travel lifestyle. However, there are unlikeness between backpacker and hippy that the backpacker did not steal or beg (Riley, 1988). There are backpacker routes presently in many countries that are approachable for the backpacker. Furthermore, the rise of

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Low Cost Airline also impact to the backpacker to save their travel expenditure as well. Gogia (2006) said that backpackers portray themselves as not being normal tourists. Vogt (1976) holds the view that mass tourists' trip is always organized by the travel agency. However, backpackers preferred to get away from the mass tourism sites, and plan their trip by themselves. Backpackers crave to travel for a long period on a low budget. Their intention for traveling is experience that is authentic and local.

Regarding to the lifestyle consumption, Hampton (2013) added some other aspects of backpacker such as clothing style, and English language. According to Giddens (1991) lifestyle such as dressing, eating, spending leisure time will make you who you are. Downes (2009) illustrated the current backpacker dress code on his study that the backpacker wears for example the T-Shirt with the local beer of the host countries. Backpackers particularly international backpackers tend to use English during their trip as their main language in order to communicate (Sørensen, 2003). In addition, the emergence of backpacker in many counties particularly less developed countries could impact to the local business since there are some backpackers who can't eat local cuisines. The business owners (hostel owners) try to cook other dishes which are familiar with backpacker's country of origin taste. There are various types of western foods such as banana pancake, or spaghetti etc. which can be found everywhere at the host countries (Hampton, 2013).

Backpackers also carry the tiny budget as same as their ancestor, the hippy. Hence, they find the way to survive by finding job at the host destination where they

can get the working holiday visas. In addition, some of them may return to their country for work, save money and then depart for the next trip (Cohen, 2010). This literature review of the origin of backpacker has shown that there are the dissimilarity and similarity between each travel lifestyle from the Grand Tour to the modern backpacker presently. We can see that all of travel lifestyles' duration is long. However, their personal intention to depart from their country of origin is different. The Grand Tour preferred to appreciate culture and study during their road trip whilst the tramping wanted to seek their work. Youth movement traveler needed to escape from their urban life to touch the beauty of nature while the 1960s young hippies escaped from their country to experience the exotic countries. Later, the backpacker preferred to explore the local authenticity. Nowadays there are a lot of tourists travels as a backpacker in many parts the word. It motivates the researcher to understand their concept more clearly in order to conduct the thesis. Thus, the review of backpacker characteristic is needed. In the section that follows, the literature on backpacker definition and characteristic will be reviewed in order to know the concept of backpacker in detail.

2.2. BACKPACKER

2.2.1. The definition and characteristics of backpackers

The term of backpacker was first used in the academic literature by Pearce (1990). Pearce et al. (2009) added as an age dimension to the definition of backpacker in their research which is being under 40 years old. He characterized them as using

budget accommodation, staying in the host destination longer than short holidays, having flexible in their itineraries, and exhibiting a willingness to be involved in social and participatory holiday activities. There are also other researches who have examined the definition of backpacker such as Hampton (2013) on his study about the backpacker tourism and economic development, claimed about the backpackers that they can be found at the less developed countries. Most of the backpackers are young western tourists with large backpacks, using the local transportation such as buses, trains or cycle rickshaws during their long journey, living on budget, normally travelling for longer periods than conventional holiday periods and searching for cheap accommodation or details about local tourist attractions from a Lonely Planet or other guidebooks (p.1). Speed & Harrison (2004) also expanded the definition of backpacker in term of their destinations that they are travelling in less developed countries and also the developed countries such as the United Kingdom and other European countries. Likewise, Clifford (1997) claimed that backpackers could be found from the remote villages to the urban areas such as London or Paris. In addition, the researchers also mentioned that backpackers are identified as the western especially from the Western Europe, North America and Australia (Hecht and Martin, 2006; Lee and Musa, 2008;). Nonetheless, there are also Asian backpackers who were mentioned by the academic researches through the observation in South-East Asia and other countries (Muzaini, 2006; Teo and Leong, 2006; Ong and du Cros, 2012).

Having examined the characteristics of backpackers from the various academic journals, there are tons of existent researches which defined this phenomena. Firstly, an ordinary level of backpacker's characteristics can be described as a person who always carries backpack, lives on low budget and also travel for longer periods (Hampton, p.3, 2013) mostly between 2.5 and 18 months (Sørensen, 2003). The five characteristics of backpacker are significantly useful to identify budget travelers: a preference for budget accommodation (such as hostel); an emphasis on meeting other travelers; an independently organized and flexible travel schedule; longer rather than very brief holidays; and an emphasis on informal and participatory holiday activities (Peace, 1990). Bradt (1995) has listed five "Badges of honour": spending expenditure US$15 per day, using local transport; carrying all belongings on back, bargaining for goods and services; and getting away from crowds and discover new places, which is what Welk (2004) defined as the pillars of backpacker ideology:

- To travel on a low budget;

- To meet different people (other backpackers and local people);

- To be or feel free, independent and open-minded;

- To organize one's journey individually and independently;

- To travel as long as possible (p.80)

As discussed above about the backpacker ideology, it can be clearly seen that how to identify the backpacker. Furthermore, the backpackers prefer to meet and

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make friends with other backpackers or local people on the road in order to broaden their horizon, learn new cultures and share their experiences or information. This is later became the word-of-mouth which Moshin & Ryan (2003) stated that it is an important source for backpacker. However, these low budget travelers are not only get the travel information from other backpackers by word-of-mouth but do they also use the Lonely Planet or other guidebooks such as Guide de Routard etc. (Hampton, 2013).

The backpackers presently are not only young people but they are also the older travelers such as the "peter pan" travelers. Recent research has illustrated that the peter pan travelers is the older person aged around 40 years old. They leave their monotony life from their country of origin and arrange their trip like young backpacker. Loker-Murphy & Pearce (1995) stated that they seek a chance to live a second youth.

Hecht & Martin (2006) hold the view that the motivations, expectations and demands about traveling and hostels depends on backpackers age, gender and country of origin. The result of their research clearly explains the backpacker characteristics well. This result can be divided into four sections: the youth tourist backpackers; the contemporary backpacker; gender differences; and country of origin as follows:

1) The youth tourist backpackers

The youth tourists seek more opportunity to communicate with other travelers at the host destination, they gain more excited experiences during their backpack trip.

This group tends to be confused in their life after they have completed their education or about to graduate. They are still blind about their future career, so travelling is the proper way for them to postpone this situation.

2) The contemporary backpacker

The travelers of thirty years or more demand an extensive choice of room types depending on their budget. They need for privacy during their stay.

3) Gender differences

This can be divided into two groups: female backpackers and male backpackers. First the female backpackers care more about cleanliness in their accommodation, and also the quality of staff and security. They also seek the travel information from reviews by other backpackers' recommendations or website. The female backpackers also book the accommodation in advance while male backpackers tend to go to hostel without pre booking.

4) Country of origin

Regarding to Hecht & Martin (2006)'s result on country of origin, they divided the group of travelers into two groups: the Australians and Europeans; and the Asians and Americans. The first group tends to focus more for social experiences and meeting other backpackers during their long journey at the host destination while the second group, the Asians and Americans, tends to focus more on the facilities, services and security.

2.2.2. The Dissimilarity between Western Backpackers and Asian Backpackers

In order to examine the difference between the western backpackers and Asian backpackers, the author needs to review the characteristic from the existent researches. It seems like the research about the western are plentiful, for instance, Murphy and Pearce (1995) examined the young budged travelers in the context of the "backpacker" phenomenon in Australia which stated the contemporary social definition of a backpacker in Australia. As regards to their research, they identified the backpacker in term of preference of budget accommodation; an emphasis on meeting other people; an independently organized; and flexible travel schedule. In addition, about the study about the international backpackers to Malaysia, Lee and Musa (2008) claimed that 33.2% of travelers came from The United Kingdom, Ireland and Scotland, and 12.2% came from Scandinavia (p.128-143). Yet, the research about Asian backpacker is still sparse. However, there are some researches which clearly differentiate Western backpackers from Asian backpackers in Taiwan (Huang, 2008). Referring to her research finding of the behavior of Western and Asian travelers in Taiwan, she claimed that the behaviors of both travelers are completely different due to the cultural characteristics of both societies. Firstly Huang examined constitutional differences in each society; Asian societies are based on collectivism, in contrast, the western societies are grounded in individualism. According to her, 34.8 percent of Western travelers preferred to travel alone, contrary to Asian travelers (30.5 percent) who preferred to travel with friends and relatives.

Hecht and Martin (2006) also claimed that Australian and European travelers preferred to look more for social experiences and meeting other backpackers during their journey. Conversely, the Asians preferred to focus on the facilities and services and security of the accommodation such as Hostel. A report by the European Travel Commission's report (ETC, 2007) claimed that Thai travelers presently prefer to travel by group which is similar with the existent study of Asian backpacker in Taiwan (Huang, 2008). Since Thai culture is a collectivism-oriented culture, Thai people always respect their family as the center institution (Hofstede, n.d.). Hence, Thai travelers frequently travel with their family or friends to feel more protected during their travel. In addition, most of Thai travelers plan to travel abroad particularly to European countries by consulting travel agency. The report mentions that the majority of Thai travelers who travel abroad were male (51%), followed by female (49%). The report claimed that the destinations that are more adventurous such as the Middle East attract Thai male travelers more than female travelers who prefer European destinations that offer shopping spots and sightseeing. According to the ETC's report (2007), they divided the Thai travelers to Europe into two categories: "first generation" and "new travelers". The first generation is a person, who is well educated, comes from the wealthy family, able to communicate in English very well, and had travel experiences in Europe before. The new travelers are defined as the person who comes from the middle class of Thai society, who attained income and education and speak English less. Hence, the new travelers are more

likely to use a travel agency because they are unfamiliar with the new destination. However, ETC's report also shows the emerging of Thai young travelers who travel in the United Kingdoms alone. Likewise Thai travelers who aged over 15 years old traveled alone in Australia. As a result, western backpacker and Asian backpacker is quite different. Western travelers are more likely to travel in the less developed countries (Hampton, 2013). On the other hand, Asian travelers especially Thai travelers are more likely to visit the developed countries such as European countries and other developing countries in Asia such as Japan.

2.3. FLASHPACKERS

2.3.1. The definition of Flashpackers

Since the flashpacker phenomenon appears recently as the new trend of a travel lifestyle, the study about this phenomenon is still minor compared with the study of backpacker (O'Reilly, 2006). The term of flashpackers has been referred to a sub-group of backpacekers and also it was frequently identified as travelers with higher disposable income and concomitant levels of expenditure (Jarvis & Peel, 2010, p.21-22). They also defined the meaning of flashpacker as the high-income travelers who are independent and aged from mid twenties to older. Most of flashpackers is travelling during career breaks or extended paid holidays. Hannam and Diekmann (2010) defined the flashpacker as "the older twenty to thirty-something backpacker, who travels with an expensive backpack or a trolley-type case, stays in a variety of accommodation depending on location, has greater disposable income, visits more off

the beaten track locations, carries a laptop, or at least a flash drive and a mobile phone, but who engages with the mainstream backpacker culture. (p.2)".

2.3.2. The characteristics of flashpackers

In the recent years there are some existent researches about the flashpacker's characteristics. First, Hampton (2013) explained about the flasgpacker's trait on his research as follow:

1) The tourists who still may travel with backpacks;

2) Tend to have shorter overall trip durations (a few weeks);

3) Travelling in their annual holidays or sabbaticals;

4) Less need to survive on very low budgets;

5) Prefer to stay in slightly more expensive accommodation

(P.25)

According to the case study of flashpacking in Fiji by Javis & Peel (2010), they claimed that the flashpacker exhibits the following characteristics:

1) A traveler who found the time to travel by either being on a career break or an extend holiday from paid employment;

2) Typically aged in their mid twenties and upward;

3) A preference for small scale, value for money accommodation;

4) An emphasis on meeting other travelers and locals;

5) An independently organized and flexible travel schedule;

6) A preference for longer rather than brief holidays;

7) An emphasis on informal and participatory holiday activities;

(p.36)

Miles (2004) also mentioned about the idiosyncrasy of flashpacker on his article that they want for the care-free days of river-rafting, visit villages, buy some local products, learn about the culture and meeting other people during their trip. Furthermore, flashpackers also need privacy during their stay. They prefer their own room without sharing space with other travelers like dormitory style in order to make their stay more private and comfortable. From these studies, the researchers have found that the flashpackers always travel in the same route as backpackers and the same infrastructure but their specific peculiars are comprehensively different. They need more comfortable factors than backpackers. In order to make their travel more convenient, the flashpackers also carry their expensive technology gadgets such as a smartphone, digital camera, iPod, a laptop and the multifunction backpack during their journey.

2.3.3. The differences between Backpackers and Flashpackers

Hannam and Dickmann (2010), referring to the definition of flashpacker, they argued that the flashpacker engages with the mainstream backpacker culture (p.2). Both backpacker and flashpacker lifestyles, regarding to the observation from some studies on this phenomenon, are quite similar in that both of them always carry "backpack" during their trip. However, the two key characteristics that are used to

differentiate between backpackers and flashpackers are travel expenditure and technology use (Paris, 2011). Firstly, the backpackers tend to stay at the host destination longer rather than short holidays (Pearce, 1990). They spend money for their stay for more than 2 to 18 months (Sørensen, 2003). Conversely, the flashpackers tend to have shorter overall trip durations such as a few weeks during their annual holidays (Hampton, 2013).   Thus, the duration of stay in the host destination of both backpacker and flashpacker is totally dissimilar. The second dissimilarity is the technology usage among these two forms of travelers. Javis and Peel (2010) argued that flashpackers are more tech savvy because they always carry their high-tech gadget during their oversea trip (p.22). Backpackers presently not always carry their laptops and use Wi-Fi in order to contact their relatives and friends as well while they are travelling (Hampton, 2013; Pearce et al., 2009). The dissimilarity in the usage of technology between backpackers and flashpackers is the outstanding point to distinguish backpackers from flashpackers.

The result from the study of evolution of the backpacker market and the potential for Australian tourism by Pearce et al (2009) shows that 11% of backpackers often use video camera, 16% use MP3 or Ipod for other media (such as internet, social media etc.), 3% often use blackberry smartphone or PDA, and 4% use GPS navigation devices. Having compared usage of technology among the flashpackers, we know that they tend to use these devices more habitually than the backpackers. The existent research thus distinguishes flashpackers from non-

flashpacker in term of the difference in technology usage (Paris, 2011). Paris (2011) claimed on his finding that the flashpackers are more tech-savvy than the non-flashpacker group. Flashpackers always carry Wi-Fi enabled mobile devices (such as smartphone, ipod, PDA etc.) than non-flashpackers. Moreover, most of flashpackers perpetually connect to the Internet in order to share their travel experiences via their personal blog, twitter, facebook, youtube etc. It is stated that 32.7% of flashpackers use the Internet several times a day while traveling, while only 12.1% of non-flashpackers do so (Paris, 2011). In addition, the specific result of mobile phone usage of backpackers is also valuable to compare them with the high budget traveler. Pearce et al (2009) stated that 5% of backpackers use smartphone to access to social media (such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter etc.) during their everyday life while 7% of them use it during travel whilst flashpackers tend to use social media more frequently than backpackers. Furthermore, the recent study from Javis and Peel (2010) mentioned about the difference between backpackers and flashpackers that the latter needs for more expensive accommodation. Even they always travel in the same routes as backpackers do and use the same traveler infrastructure such as local transportation or hostels, these high-budget travelers have more money to spend for their accommodation per night in order to make their journey more convenient and private than the backpackers. This means that the flashpackers have more purchasing power to spend during their trip in the host destinations than the backpackers. This

will be the advantage for the tourism industry to provide and develop their services to satisfy those flashpackers.

2.4. The role of social media

As discussed above, the flashpackers always use the social media during their trip at the host destinations. The use of social media is one of the important parts of the traveler's behavior presently. In order to gain more knowledge and understanding of how the social media impacts to this new travel lifestyle and how the social media can be profitable for the host countries, the literature review about the Web 2.0 including the social media is introduced in this section. The social media recently affects directly to the motivation and behavior of travelers in terms of decision and planning of their trip before the departure. The social media also empowers them to share their travel experiences and give positive or negative feedback to the tourism providers and the host destinations.

2.4.1. The background and evolution of social media which effects to traveler's behavior

The mobile world in which innovations of technology especially Internet and communications technologies connect the social life, home life and work life together (Hannam et al., 2006) becomes one important part of human life. Before examining the role of social media which is playing an important role presently, it is beneficial to review background of what backpackers did before the new technologies are used extensively. According to the research of changing communications and new

technologies by Hampton (2013), it is argued that since the 1980s, the local post offices in the host destination played an important role in order to send letters or postcards from backpackers to their family and friends during their overseas trip. At the mid 1990s the international telephone calls were developed in which travelers can contact their family and friends easily. However, the cost of international call was high and needed to make a reservation in advance until the international direct dialing was introduced during the 1990s. Now the backpackers could use it with lowered prices than before. Since the 2000s affordable mobile phone is increasing rapidly. The application such as short text messages also became popular among backpackers. They could also use roaming and buy a cheap SIM card from the host destination in order to contact their family and friends. During the early to mid-1990s, the Internet was developed. The users of the Internet are increasing swiftly. The backpackers as well tend to use this new technology in furtherance of sending message and e-mail. However, the internet connection at that time was slow. Lately, the speed of the Internet access is increasing, thus, many websites surged rapidly. Backpackers can search tons of information about their prefered destinations via online websites. Furthermore online community where many travelers around the world shared their travel experiences such as Tripadvisor or online bulletin board "Thorn Tree" are effective tools to get destination information. The accommodation owners at the same time maintain an online booking function that makes travelers book a room easily than before. The appearance of wireless network in recent years as well has changed

the characteristic of backpackers who nowadays carry laptop computers, netbooks or tablet computers. Backpackers can also communicate more easily and quickly with their family and friends through the built-in camera on laptop. In addition people are now introduced to the new technology which was merged between laptop and mobile phone together called "Smartphone" which allows backpackers to bring their friends on the road (Crang, 2006). This means that budget travelers use smartphone in order to communicate with their family and friends by sending text messages or emails. Moreover, they can surf the Internet, using social network such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, sharing their travel experiences on their travel blogs or personal pages on Facebook to their followers. Hampton (2013) also argued on his study that the previous methods that early backpackers used such as post service and international phone calls to communicate with their family and friends have been supplanted by the smartphone. However, O'Regan (2008) argued that even backpackers became hypermobile, they still want to discover local experiences in the host destination.

2.4.2. The introduction of web 2.0

The web 2.0 technologies authorize Internet users to participate and collaborate with other Internet users in order to produce, consume and spread the information and knowledge via social media such as Facebook, or other online communities on the Internet (Sigala et al., 2012). The development of this web 2.0 recently can change the way traveler's behave. This new technology can empower the travelers to get engaged also with the operations of tourism firms. Therefore,

travelers can complain or review satisfaction of services from tourism suppliers and tourism destinations via web 2.0 functions on the Internet. In addition, Singala (2011) holds the view that the travelers and their social networks are presently playing an important role for the tourism enterprises by creating a positive image for promotion and distribution. The travelers' travel experiences and feedback give the advantage to the tourism companies in order to improve their products and make other travelers to design their future trips in which their products are included (p.10). Recent research suggested that the web 2.0 technologies also transform travelers from passive consumers to active consumers of travel experiences. Travelers search and share their travel information, their experiences and their feedback after the trip (Yoo and Gretzel, 2008). McAfee (2006) cited the features and technique, which were included in the Web 2.0 namely:

- *Search*, a function where travelers can be able to look up information through key words.

- *Links*, a function that can be connected information sources together from one website to others.

- *Authoring*, a function that users can edit the information together such as in Wikipedia, users can add or edit data or in blog, users can post comment.

- *Tags*, a function which users post just a short or one-word in order to categorize the content which can be convenient to other users when they want to search some information from the search engine.

- *Extension*, a document server such as Adobe Reader, Adobe Flash, Microsoft Silverlight, Active X, Oracle Java, QuickTime and Windows Media.

- *Signals*, an operation which notifies users of content changes such as RSS.

Hence, the development of Web 2.0 is beneficial not only for the travelers who can search and share their travel experiences on the internet but also for the tourism company to utilize their business opportunities and improve their service from the travelers' feedback as well.

2.4.3. The impact of social media on traveler's behavior

Regarding to the web 2.0 technology, it was adapted by the tourism industry and also affects the travelers' behavior because it provides them with tons of information. The travelers' feedback for tourism providers such as hotel, restaurant etc. and for host destinations nowadays influence their profit. Thus, this technology takes an important role for both tourism firms and travelers since its function is easy to use and access on the Internet. The information which is provided by travelers and tourism providers is also believable and useful (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; Yoo et al., 2009). Since the web 2.0 increased rapidly in the mobile world, the number of travelers who access to the Internet are also growing up. Thus, the traveler's behavior also changes from their trip preparation until their post-travel by consulting, reading and participating in web-based conversations on communication technologies and social media (Cox, 2008). In addition, Lopez et al (2012) argued that the new web-based technologies are now performing an important

role in consumption of tourism products which they mentioned "Three stages of the purchase process":

1) *Pre consumption stage*, this is the first process that travelers look up for the existent travel information on the Internet in order to plan their journey, form their expectations, decide their travel option, and compare the products, which they prefer the most.

2) *Consumption state*, this state refers to the during trip process. The travelers will connect to the Internet in contemplation of find specific information or resources, or contacts for the new services.

3) *Post-consumption state*, it refers to the after trip process which traveler share their travel experiences through web 2.0 functions on the Internet such as Facebook, Twitter, or other social media.

In addition, Cai et al (2004) stated that the Internet is the key information source for planning and taking information during trip. Gertzel and Yoo (2008) also mentioned that the contemporary information, which has already created by the travelers on the web 2.0 impacted to the decision of other travelers. Regarding to the study about the motivation, opportunity and ability to use social media, Lopez et al. (2012) argued on their result that the social media which the travelers use to provide their information about product or destination is useful for the community managers in order to gain benefit and perceive about their product through the travelers' participation on the social network. This empowers the community themselves to

develop their product as well. Furthermore, Lopez et al (2012) argued that since the traveler's behavior of tech-savvy has been currently changed, it impacts the tourism sector in two ways:

1) *From the content point of view*, it states that the travelers are co-creators of content by comment or feedback about the hotel, hostel or other accommodation during or after their stay, provide some new ideas for activities, and also communicate with other travelers.

2) *From the technology point of view*, due to the increasing of new devices such as smartphone, tablet, new technologies like online maps, and the way to connect to the Internet such as Wifi or 4G networks, these new development makes the traveler feels more gratified and comfortable on their participation before trip, during and post-travel.

In conclusion, the social media nowadays has a greater power to influence travelers to decide their future trips through the other travelers' reviews or feedback about the accommodation, tourist attractions, restaurant and/or other tourism infrastructures. This technology is also empowering the tourism firms to understand about traveler's needs in order to develop their services in the future.

CHAPTER lll   **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In social sciences, the commonly understood purposes among researchers are exploration, description and explanation (Babbie, 1995). The purpose of this study is categorized as exploration and description because the author focuses on a topic which has not been studied well. The purpose of this chapter is to review the research methods used in this thesis. The researcher uses diverse approaches to discover the characteristics of Thai travelers in Japan presently. Here, the researcher illustrates methods in detail which were applied in this research. The sections followed include the research design, the process of preparing study instrument and collecting data, and analyzing the data.

3.1. Research design

In order to gather data from Thai travelers who have been in Japan, the researcher used the netnography method because it is a beneficial way for conducting the research and finding information from online communities on the Internet. This is one of the suitable methods for the researcher to gather data and information from the Thai travelers since the distance between Japan, where the researcher are staying, and Thailand is one major drawback. Hence, using netnography method is convenient for conducting this thesis. The term netnography has been defined in the literature as a marketing research tool that utilize online communities in which travelers share their travel memory online with other travelers via the social media such as Facebook,

Twitter or Travel blog (Chandralal et al., 2014; Velo, 2010). It will be useful for a researcher to get the proper information directly from the travelers through these social media due to the fact that most of travelers nowadays share their travel experiences and they always participate on online community as well. Thai travelers presently are an outstanding epitome. They not only seek travel information from the Internet but they also share their travel reviews on the online communities such as Pantip.com. Hence, netnography method will be valuable for researcher in order to comprehend the travel behaviors directly. The researcher used qualitative data based on the netnography through the Internet (Chandralal et al., 2014). First the researcher collected data from online bulletin board "Pantip.com" where many travelers posted their travel experiences. Later, the researcher collected data from larger samples of the target population of Thai travelers visiting Japan through the internet-based-survey. Thirdly, he collected data on the behaviors of the target group by making in-depth interviews with Thai travelers who have been in Japan as the supplementary data in order to clarify the findings from the ternet survey.

The researcher chose a qualitative method as his main method of inquiry. As Taylor et al., (2016) note, the qualitative methodology produces descriptive data that consists of people's written or spoken words and observable behaviors. This exploratory research takes advantage of qualitative method by using open-ended questions in which the respondents can freely express their own opinion. Therefore, the researcher can gather the elaborated answers from his participants. It is not similar

with the online survey where the respondents have to choose the answer through the fixed answer category (Mark&Woodsong, 2005).

3.2. Process of preparing study instrument and collecting data

3.2.1. Content of Thai online community (Pantip.com)

The Internet became an important tool for travelers in order to gather the information from the other travelers' review on the Internet. The travelers can also share their travel experiences through the online-based community (such as Thorn Tree by Lonely planet, Trip Advisor etc.). In order to comprehend the characteristic of Thai travelers in Japan, travel contents from online-based community was analyzed. The online community presently provides the function by which travelers can write their travel reviews. McNeill (2003) and Rak (2005) argued that the travelers tell their real story on their online review, by which the researcher can gain the real and rich information. Chandralal et al. (2014) performed an analysis of two travel blogs in order to explore what constitute memorable tourism experiences (MTEs). They acknowledge that the online narrative travel blogs were beneficial for their study. Therefore, this researcher also uses this method in order to explore the characteristic of Thai travelers and identify whether they are backpackers as they called themselves or not. The data collection took place from September 2015 to December 2016 in one online community,"Pantip.com", where many Thai travelers share their travel reviews. This community is quite famous among Thai travelers and has tons of reviews especially travelling in Japan. The researcher used Pantip's search

engine in order to look up the reviews on this bulletin board by typing the word "Backpack in Japan" in Thai. Later, several of reviews which are related to the backpack trip in Japan appeared. The researcher has selected 10 reviews in order to analyze the characteristics and gather travel details from these online reviews. The chosen travel reviews were transcribed from html format to writing format.

3.2.2. Online survey

Fricker and Schonlau (2012) hold the view that recently the Internet survey research is popular among the researchers as a way to collect data. The online-based surveys are cheaper to conduct than the paper-based survey. In addition, Kozinets (2010) found that the online survey is accessible and easy-to-use. Also, it is easy for the researcher to distribute the survey to respondents directly by sending a hyperlink of survey. Furthermore, the Internet surveys are faster than the paper-based survey. Thus, the researcher can gain the higher response rates swiftly. In this study, an online survey has been distributed to 102 respondents via "Thai tourists in Japan group" on online social media (Facebook) and online bulletin board (Pantip.com). The online survey was divided into three parts: 1) general information; 2) trip preparation process; and 3) post-trip. This online survey was performed in order to gain general information about traveling in Japan from the beginning of trip preparation until after trip processes.

3.2.2.1. Selecting the respondents for the online survey

This study is about Thai travelers in Japan, therefore, the population of this survey is the Thai people who have been in Japan. The respondents have been selected from the Thai traveler in Japan group on Facebook and from Thai famous online community Pantip.com. The researcher posted the hyperlink of online survey on Facebook (see figure 3.1) in order to invite the members to complete the online survey. There are 96 persons out of 18,226 persons on this online community participated this online survey.

Figure 3.1: The invitation of online survey on Thai travelers in Japan group on Facebook.com

Secondly, the researcher sent the invitation to the respondents who perform as a travel review writer about travelling in Japan on Pantip.com by using direct message function provided on Pantip.com. The respondents from both online communities must have been in Japan before. There were 6 persons from Pantip.com out of 102 participants. The researcher added one question "Have you ever been in Japan?" at the first page of the online survey in order to remove the participants who have not been in Japan from this survey. If the respondent answered "No", they will be rejected from this survey immediately. Thus, it can be guaranteed that the respondents who have been invited to this online survey are the persons who travelled in Japan. The respondents for this Internet survey were 102 people.

3.2.2.2. Writing online survey questions

Making survey questions is an important part of research in order to gain the respondent's opinion, knowledge and behavior. Knowing how to write proper survey questions is necessary for the researcher to achieve the survey result without problem such as the misunderstanding of survey questions, inaccessible to online survey page etc. The perfect questionnaires are short and significant to the respondents (Sue & Litter, 2012a p.71). Sue and Litter (2012a) recommended about writing an online survey question in which the main factors of question on online survey must be self-explanatory, and easy to understand and answer. Thus, the researcher used the closed-ended questions on this online survey because this type of questions are easy to answer and familiar to the respondents.

This survey followed the guidance from Sue and Litter by using the formats, which are necessary for online survey for instance: dichotomous questions, multiple choices, ranking and rating scales. There are two more important points to address. The first point is social desirability bias, which can be happened on the result. The respondents may not give the real or valid answer because they want to conform to the social norms. Reducing the social desirability bias is needed. Sue and Ritter (2012a, p.73) have suggested the way to reduce social desirability bias on the online surveys. The researcher found one way from their suggestion. Firstly, repeat the promise of anonymity and confidentiality which the researcher told to the respondents on the invitation of online survey that this online survey will not ask about their personal details such as their real name or their e-mail addresses. This is done because some respondents may feel inconvenient to give their personal details and they may answer just a positive answer rather than the real or valid answers. This way will make the respondents feel relaxed while they perform this online survey. The last part is using the contingency questions. Because the purpose of this online survey is focusing on Thai traveler who has been visited Japan, the researcher asked one contingency question at the first part of the survey that "Have you ever been in Japan?" which was an effort to gain the real information from the real population. If the respondents answer "Yes", they can access to the whole questions and complete this survey. However, if they answer "No", they will be rejected from this survey.

Some of the questions in this survey were adapted from recent researches on backpacker behavior and motivation (Huang, 2008; Paris, 2010). Huang's (2008) questions about the behavior of backpackers in Taiwan for instance travel party size, accommodation type, and participants in trip planning, are useful for this study on the behavior of Thai travelers in Japan, especially these questions can answer the research question of "Are Thai travelers Backpacker or not?". In addition, it is important for researcher to comprehend the technology usage among Thai travelers. Paris (2010) asked questions related to the technology use of flashpackers and non-flashpackers. The researcher has found that these questions are able to answer the research question of "What are the characteristics of Thai travelers in Japan?".

3.2.2.3. Designing and developing an online survey

Before launching the online survey to the main population, consideration of the design of the online survey is needed. A quality survey must be good in appearance, easy to read and understand, and have user amiability. Moreover, the online-based-questionnaires must look professional and motivating. The easy accessibility to the online survey is also important for the target population (Sue & Litter, 2012b p.89). Having examined free online survey from various websites on the Internet, the researcher found that Google Form (see figure 3.2) is convenient to create the web questionnaire. The Google Form is suitable for researcher because it is free to use and it provides various useful functions for making an online survey such as questions options: multiple choice, checkboxes, dropdown, and linear scale. The

Google Form also provides some options for designing a survey screen such as managing color on survey. Colors are also a considerable part of the survey appearance because they have feeling and meanings, which effect directly to the target population's feeling while they are answering the survey. The researcher used the "blue" color as the main color on his survey appearance. Regarding to Sue & Litter (2012b) think that blue color can have in the positive meanings such as "sky, water, peace and calm".

Additionally, the technological issues are significant to the respondents as well. Therefore, the researcher tested this survey in different browsers for example Safari, Internet Explorer, Firefox and Google Chrome in order to know that the sample population will be able to see the online survey in different application. Because some respondents may use mobile phone to complete the survey, the researcher also checked the accessibility via personal cellphone. Fortuitously, the Google Form works perfectly on every browsers and cellphone. Because the target population is Thai people, the language used in this survey has been written in Thai. After completing the design and development of survey, the pretesting with a small sample is needed.
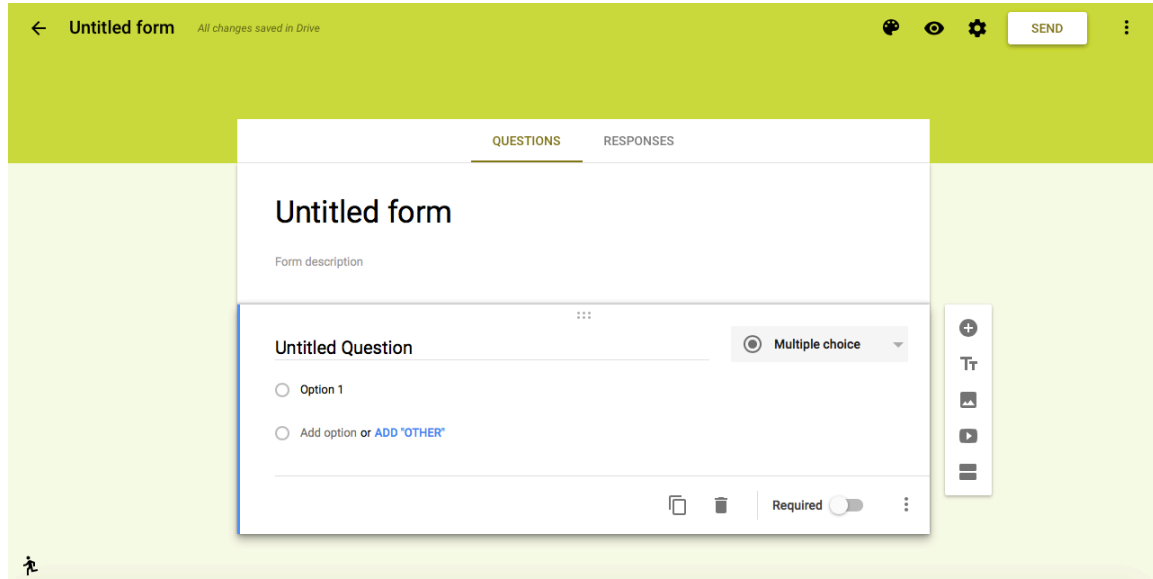
Figure number 3.2: The appearance of Google Form

3.2.2.4. Pretesting the online survey

After making the online survey, the researcher has to pretest this survey in order to know the problem of this survey, and gain some feedbacks about the online survey questions and functions from a small sample before launching the real survey to the entire sample. Firstly, selecting sample for this process is necessary. The sample must be from main target population who has knowledge and travel experience in Japan (Sue & Ritter, 2012a). Therefore, pretesting has been conducted by selecting the sample from online community (Pantip.com) and persons who has traveled in Japan from researcher's personal Facebook account. The number of pretesting sample was 27 persons. Later, when the first draft of the online survey has been sent to the small samples, the researcher received some feedbacks from the

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pretesting respondents such as "some questions are not easy to understand" and "some questions are multiple choices which respondents cannot select more opinion". Based on these feedbacks, the researcher conducted the survey again and did pretesting to the same sample until the researcher received the final positive feedback.

3.2.2.5. The distribution of online survey process

After pretesting, the author distributed this survey in two ways. Firstly, the researcher distributed this survey to the group Thai traveler in Japan on Facebook by sharing the survey link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/18h-h1RJvzNgi3SNTAmxXyCodjS-n8bmiGcNJr3jLXfg/viewform. Secondly, the researcher sent a message to the respondents directly via online bulletin board (Pantip.com). The duration of online survey was from February until the beginning of March 2016.

3.2.3. In-depth interview

For the in-depth interview, the researcher chose the representatives from the Thai online community "Pantip.com" by selecting the interviewees who have shared their travel experiences in Japan on this bulletin board. Firstly, the researcher used the keyword "Backpack in Japan" on the search engine of Pantip.com. The result from this keyword was plentiful with many reviews about backpack in Japan such as "Review Solo backpack trip in Japan and Malaysia with limited budget", "Share experience 16 days as a backpacker in Japan" and "Travel memory and photos from

14 days in Japan". After that, the researcher sent a personal message directly to the writer in order to invite to the in-depth interview. The researcher sent personal message to 7 review writers there are 5 persons accepted to be interviewed.

In addition, during observation trip in Tokyo, Osaka and Kobe, the researcher met five Thai travelers who were travelling in these cities. Thus, the research started to talk with them about their trip in Japan. However, both researcher and respondents had limited time, thus, the researcher asked the permission to add their personal Facebook in order to invited them to the interview session later when they came back to Thailand. The researcher invited 5 persons. All of them accepted to be interviewed. The interview was divided into two sub-groups: 1) face-to-face interview and 2) online interview due to the availability of interviewees. The interview process was conducted from February to March 2016 in Japan and Thailand. For some interviewees, it was not convenient to make a face-to-face interview because the distance between the researcher and interviewees is quite far. Thus, the researcher used the online interview via Facebook video call in order to make the in-depth online interview perfectly. However, during February-March 2016 the researcher made the face-to-face interview with some Thai travelers in Thailand. The duration of both online interview and face-to-face interview ranged from 30 minutes to 45 minutes. The interview questions were divided into three sections: 1) before the trip in Japan; 2) during travelling in Japan; and 3) post-trip from Japan. Mark and Woodsong (2005) hold the view that the in-depth-interview process is part of the

qualitative method which allows the researcher to use the open-ended questions to ask the interviewees. This type of questions is more elaborate than the closed-ended questions from online survey because of the researcher has the opportunity to interact with the respondents together. This means that the researcher can ask more specific questions to the respondent immediately in order to gather more detailed data on the characteristics and travel information from Thai travelers.

3.3. Data Analysis

The data analysis was the final part preceded by the data collection step. Later, the result could be utilized in answering the research questions and achieving its objectives. Before the step of analyzing, the data gathered from online community (Pantip.com) and the responses recorded from in-depth interview which were transcribed into texts word by word. Next, data from online-based-survey from Google Form were analyzed automatically by Google Form Analysis function. The data analysis was divided into three categories.

Firstly, the content of online community was transferred from texts gathering from 10 travel reviews into the table format. The researcher classified the information into 6 groups such as party size, trip duration, accommodation type; budget, travel information source, and Wi-Fi use during trip in order to understand travel background of Thai travelers in Japan. The results gathered from this online community were effective to the researcher because it could be used in comparing

Thai travelers, who claimed that they were backpackers with the backpackers' characteristics from the existent studies.

Secondly, the data from online-based-survey from Google Form was analyzed automatically by Google Form Analysis function. The researcher collected the data from the test which the respondents completed in the online survey, the results were automatically inserted into charts, percentage and graph. Since, the number of online-base-respondents is numerous, Google Form Analysis function performed perfectly in order to compile all results. Thus, the demographic profiles of respondents were transcribed into charts, and answers from the respondents were presented in percentage respectively. Whereas, the likert scale was presented in graph. The researcher could use these results directly to cross check with other results from both travel reviews from Pantip.com and in-depth interview.

Lastly, the data gathered from the in-depth interviews carried out in Thai language were transcribed from the recorder word by word. The researcher used the recorder to record the whole process of the interview. The data from in-depth interviews were categorized in three main parts: before the trip in Japan; during trip in Japan; and post-trip from Japan (see appendix B). The researcher could use the results from this process to compare and get more specific details.

After finishing the step of analysis the data, the researcher makes the comparison by making a list of similarities and differences between the existent studies and result gathering from the respondents before writing the final thesis.

CHAPTER IV   RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The research finding chapter addresses the research questions, which were mentioned in the first chapter, based on the analyses of content analysis of online community, online questionnaires and in-depth-interviews. The researcher firstly presents the results from the analysis of Pantip.com. The analysis of both online survey and in-depth-interview data is needed to make the researcher understand more clearly about the characteristic of Thai travelers in Japan. At the end of this chapter, there is a discussion part which will state the summary of result from these findings related to the research questions and the literature review from recent academic researchers.

4.1. Content analysis of online community "Pantip.com"

The researcher starts with a content analysis from Thai online community "Pantip.com" where many travelers expressed their travel reviews in Japan through this website. The data were gathered from ten reviews which topics are related to the term of Backpacker. Table number 4.1 illustrates the travel details analyzed from each ten users.

Table 4.1: Travel details of Pantip.com user 1-10

Source author

Details	Participants										Frequency
	User 1	User 2	User 3	User 4	User 5	User 6	User 7	User 8	User 9	User 10	
1. Party size											
- Travel alone									✓	✓	2
- 2 to 3 persons	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓			5
- 3 to 5 persons							✓				1
- more than 5 persons						✓					1
- Not mention on review		✓									1
2. Trip duration											
- 3-6 days		✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	5
- 1 week			✓	✓							2
- Less than 2 weeks or 2 weeks						✓		✓			2
- More than 2 weeks	✓										1
- Not mention on review											
3. Accommodation type											
- Hotel	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	8
- Capsule hotel											
- Hostel							✓				1

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	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	Total
- Apartment											
- Dormitory									✓		1
- Not mention on review											
4. Budget											
- 5,001- 10,000 baht	✓	✓						✓			3
- 10,001-50,000 baht									✓		1
- More than 50,001 baht			✓								1
- Not mention on review				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	5
5. Travel information source											
- Review from other travellers on- Pantip.com	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	7
- Guidebooks						✓					1
- Television											
- Word-of-mouth											
- Japan tourism fair											
- Not mention on review		✓			✓				✓		3
6. Wi-Fi use during trip											
- Yes		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	7
- No											
- Not mention on review	✓			✓					✓		3

The table above demonstrates the characteristics of Thai travelers from ten travel reviews about backpack in Japan on Pantip.com. The majority review writers mentioned their details that they travelled with 2 to 3 persons during the trip in Japan (5 reviews). Half of them stayed for a short period from 3 to 6 days. Over half of travel reviewers mentioned that they preferred to stay at the hotel. Only 5 review writers mentioned their budget during trip in Japan. Three of them mentioned that their budget were from 10,001 to 50,000 baht. Two reviews stated their budget were from 5,001 to 10,000 baht and more than 50,001 baht. Regarding to the travel information source, almost of review writers mentioned that they sought the travel information from other traveler's review on Pantip.com and they always use wifi during the trip.

4.2. Online questionnaire result

The researcher got the data from the online questionnaire through the Google Form. In order to answer research questions and achieve research objectives, the researcher divided the data into three main topics: 1) the demographic information; 2) the trip preparation process; and 3) the post-trip.

4.2.1. The demographic profiles of online-based-survey respondents

This part illustrates a brief outline of the demographic profile of the respondents which has been taken from Google From. In total, we have 102 respondents. The majority of respondents' genders was female (74.5%), while male respondents were 25.5%. The respondents aged between 26 to 30 years were the

highest proportion of this survey (35.3%), followed by the aged between 31 to 35 years (22.5%). 18.6% of respondents were aged between 20 to 25 years, followed by 13.7% of the respondents aged between 36 to 40 years and 5.9% of respondents aged between 40 to 45 years. The minority of the respondents on this survey was more than 46 years old (3.9%). On the respondents' career, 44.1% of them work with private company, less than a third of those who responded (12.7%) were student. The revenue issue of the respondents has been also asked on this survey in order to know their financial background. 36.3% of those who were asked indicated that they earn money from 10,001 – 30,000 baht per months.

Chart number 4.1: The gender of respondents

Chart number 4.2: The career of respondents
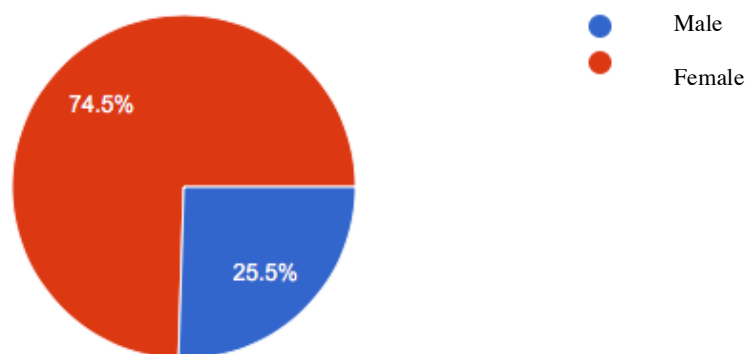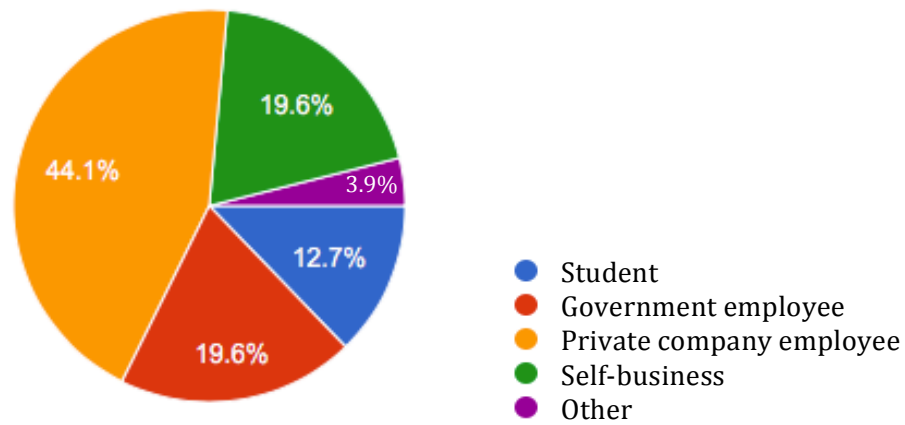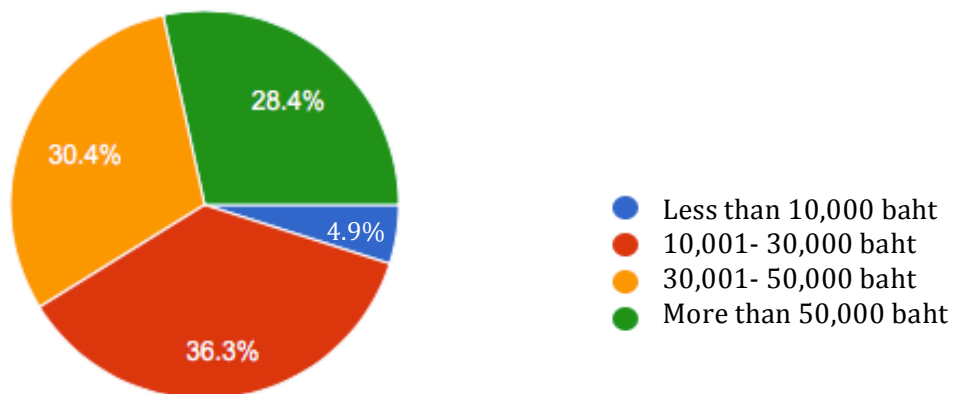

- Student
- Government employee
- Private company employee
- Self-business
- Other

Chart number 4.3: The income of respondents

- Less than 10,000 baht
- 10,001- 30,000 baht
- 30,001- 50,000 baht
- More than 50,000 baht

4.2.2. Trip preparation process

The respondents disclosed their information related to the trip preparation before departure to Japan through the online-survey questions. In order to illustrate this point clearly, the researcher has categorized the results into three categories: the motivation to travel to Japan; personal travel details; and the finding information before trip to Japan.

4.2.2.1. The motivation to travel in Japan

Before examining the motivation of Thai traveler in Japan, the short review on "push" and "pull" factors are needed. Dann (1977) describes the push and pull model in order to study the motivation of travelers. In the literature, the term "push" factor tends to be used to refer to the internal desire of travelers such as "to find new experience", whereas the following term "pull" factor defined as the external factor from the destination such as "the natural beauty of destination". Recent researchers have used this model in their study about the motivation of backpacker (Huang, 2008; Niggel & Benson, 2008). Table number 4.2 illustrated the push motivations of Thai travelers for this study. The majority of respondents stated that "To find new experience and things" motivated them to travel to Japan (54.9%). 35.3% of the respondents indicated that their motivation is to discover new technology in Japan, followed by 33.3% of them who stated that "to discover Japanese culture" was their motivation, whereas, 32.4% of them indicated that "Shopping" was their inner motivation.

Table 4.2: The push motivations

Push factors	Percentage
1. To find a new experience and things	54.9%
2. To discover new technology in Japan	35.3%
3. To discover Japanese culture	33.3%
4. Shopping in Japan	32.4%

The pull motivations were illustrated on the table number 4.3. "The natural beauty of Japan" has the highest proportion (81.4%). Over half of those surveyed indicated that "convenient transportation" was their pull motivation (66.7%). Nearly half of the respondents (48%) stated that "the low price of airline ticket" motivated them to decide to travel to Japan. The free visa policy for Thai nationality was also mentioned by 42.2% of the respondents, followed by 39.2% of them who stated that local people is friendly.

Table 4.3: The pull motivation

Pull factors	Percentage
1. The natural beauty of Japan	81.4%
2. Convenient transportation	66.7%
3. The low price of airline ticket	48%
4. Free visa for Thai traveler	42.2%

5. Friendliness of local people	39.2%
6. Positive recommendation from reviews about Japan on the Internet	23.5%

4.2.2.2. Personal travel detail

The researcher asked some questions to the respondents regarding to the personal travel detail in order to understand their trip preparation process. They were asked about details of the preparation stage before departure to Japan. The result was divided into 4 sub-groups: travel party size; duration of stay in Japan; travel budget; and accommodation (see table 4.4).

4.2.2.2.1. Travel party size

The question of "how many people have you travel with" was asked to the online-based-respondents. The majority of Thai travelers (64.7%) mentioned that they traveled with 2-3 persons, followed by 25.5% of travelers who stated that they traveled with more than 3 persons during the trip in Japan. The minority of respondents (8.8%) mentioned that they preferred to travel alone.

4.2.2.2.2. The duration of stay in Japan

The majority of Thai travelers preferred to stay in Japan for 1 week followed by 27.5% of them who said that they have been in Japan for 2-3 weeks. Only 17.6% of the respondents answered that they stayed in Japan for 5-6 days.

4.2.2.2.3. Travel budget

The budget detail was also examined. The majority of the participants mentioned that they spent from 10,001-50,000 baht per trip followed by 37.3% of them who spent more than 50,000 baht. However, there are the low-cost budget travelers who spent 5,001-10,000 baht during trip in Japan (5.9%).

4.2.2.2.4. Accommodation

There are various types of accommodation choices in Japan such as capsule hotels or Japanese style hotel "Ryokan". However, the majority of Thai travelers (63.7%) stayed at hotels followed by 34.3% of them who stated that they preferred to stay at business hotels. 10.8% and 3.9% of those indicated that they preferred to stay at a cheap accommodation such as Youth hostel and Capsule hotel respectively.

Table 4.4: Personal travel information

Travel variables	Percentage
1. Travel party size	
Travel alone	8.8%
With 2-3 people	65.7%
More than 3 people	25.5%
2. The duration of stay	
2-4 days	2%
5-6 days	17.6%

1 weeks	52.9%
2-3 weeks	27.5%
3. Travel budget	
5,001- 10,000 baht	5.9%
10,001-50,000 baht	56.9%
More than 50,001 baht	37.3%
4. Accommodation type	
Hotel	62.7%
Youth hostel	10.8%
Capsule hotel	3.9%
Japanese style hotel (Ryokan)	26.5%
Business hotel	34.3%
Other	18.6%

4.2.2.3. Finding information before trip to Japan

Turning now to the evidence on the behavior of travelers at the information finding stage, that is, how they found Japan as their destination. There are various types of information which travelers can access presently (see table 4.5). Regarding to the emergence of online communities on the cyber world, the majority of travelers (93.1%) gained their travel information from the other travelers' review on online communities. Over half of the respondents (66.3%) indicated that they seek the

information directly from the official site of their preference tourist attraction. However, nearly half of the respondents (39.6%) expressed that they used travel guidebooks as their primary information followed by 37.6% of the Thai travelers who found their travel information from Japan travel exposition which was held in Thailand. Last but not least, the recommendation from friends and family was also mentioned by 34.7% of the respondents whereas, 22.8% of Thai travelers indicated that they gathered the information about travel to Japan from the television and Youtube.com.

Table 4.5: Information finding stage

| Information finding stage	Percentage
1. Review from other travelers on online community	93.1%
2. Information from the tourist attraction official website	66.3%
3. Information from guidebooks	39.6%
4. Recommendation from friend, family etc	34.7%
5. Information from Television or Youtube	22.8%
6. Information from Japan travel exposition	37.6%
7. Other	9.9%

4.2.3. Post-trip from Japan

With regard to the study of traveler's behavior, the post-trip questions are also needed in order to understand their problem and satisfaction since Japan is quite unique country which language barrier maybe the problem for travelers during their stay. Over half of Thai travelers (69.6%) indicated that "language barrier" was their problem followed by 38.2% of them who also mentioned that the lack of information in English or Thai is a problem. However, only 4.9% of the respondents stated that the misunderstanding Japanese culture was also the problem during trip. There was some suggestions from the travelers that if some places provide information on pamphlet in Thai, it would be better for their convenience (Graph 4.1).

Table 4.6: The problems during trip in Japan

Factors	Percentage
1) The problems during trip in Japan	
Misunderstanding Japanese culture	4.9%
Lack of information in Thai and English	38.2%
Language barrier	69.6%
Other reasons	15.7%

Graph 4.1: Do you think that if there are pamphlets in Thai version, it will make your trip in Japan more convenient?


```
5 = strongly agree
4 = agree
3 = neutral
2 = disagree
1 = strongly disagree
```
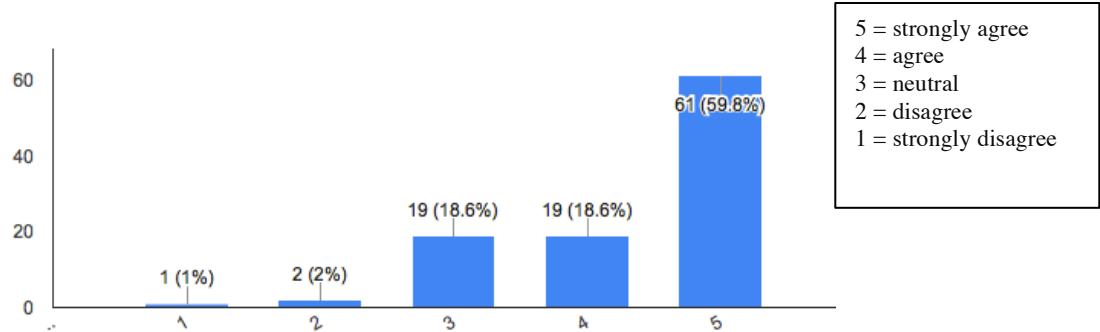
In addition, other questions were asked to the respondents in order to know more about their satisfaction. The free visa policy for Thai people was mentioned on this online questionnaire. Most of the Thai travelers were satisfied with this policy (71.6%). Furthermore, The airline promotion such as price reduction was also attracted Thai travelers to discover Japan easier (78.4%).

Graph 4.2: The satisfaction of free visa policy for Thai people.


```
5 = strongly agree
4 = agree
3 = neutral
2 = disagree
1 = strongly disagree
```
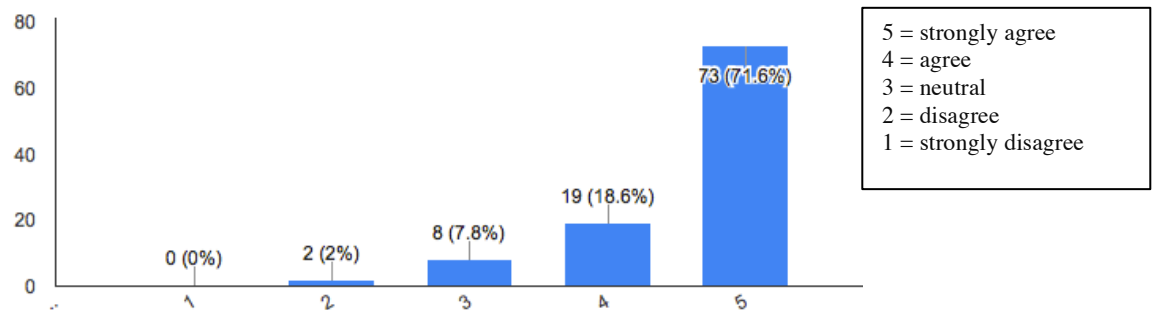
Graph 4.3: The satisfaction of low price ticket
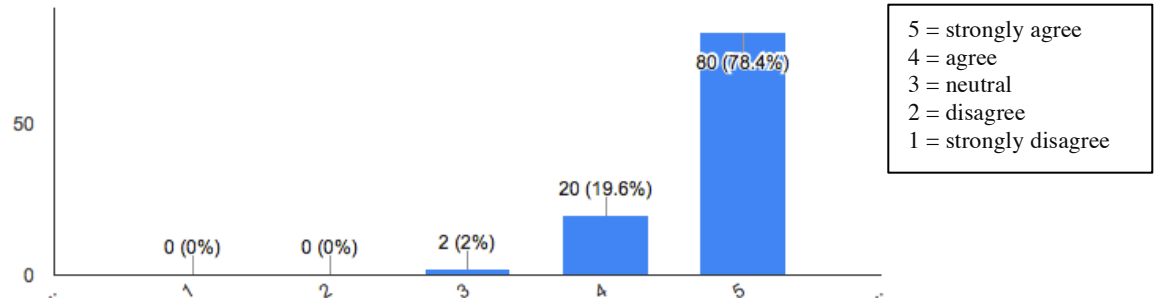
As explained earlier on the trip preparation process, the majority of Thai travelers received the travel information from other travelers' review on the online community (see table 4.5). The questions about the satisfaction on those sources were also favorable for researcher in order to know that they were useful for the Thai travelers or not. Fifty-two percent of the respondents from absolutely agreed that the reviews from other travelers were essential for their trip in Japan (see graph 4.4).

Graph 4.4: What do you think that the review from other travelers on the Internet was useful for you during your trip in Japan?
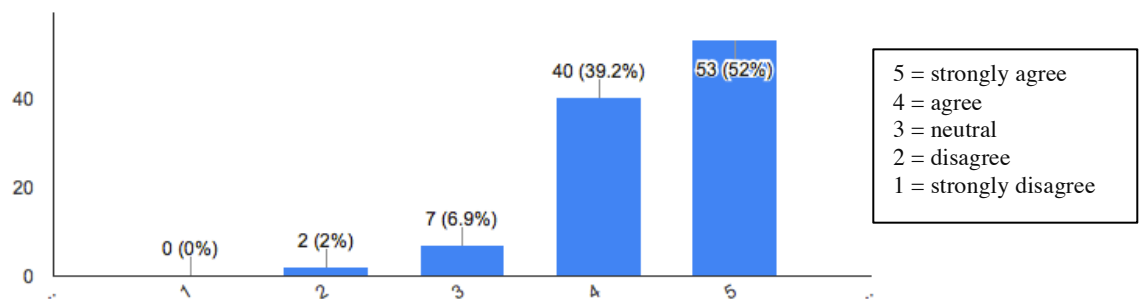
In addition, the technology usage issue was also examined in order to compare Thai traveler's behavior and characteristics later with the recent academic researches. The author found that most of Thai respondents used their high technology gadgets during their visit to Japan. With respect to the finding result (see table 4.7), the majority of the respondents (94.1%) claimed that they carried smart phone, followed by 74.5%, of them who carried digital camera. The pocket Wi-Fi was also selected by 72.5% of the respondents. The following question was also asked to the respondents that "The gadgets which were mentioned above were useful for you or not?" (see chart number 4.4). Almost all respondents (99%) mentioned that the electronic gadgets which were mentioned earlier were useful during their trip to Japan.

Table 4.7: The technology use while traveling

The technology use while travelling	Percentage
1. Laptop	16.7%
2. Smart phone	94.1%
3. Ipad, tablet	28.4%
4. Digital camera	74.5%
5. Pocket wifi	72.5%
6. Other	2.9%
7. Never carry any electronic devices	0%

Chart number 4.4: The gadgets which were mentioned above were useful for you or not?
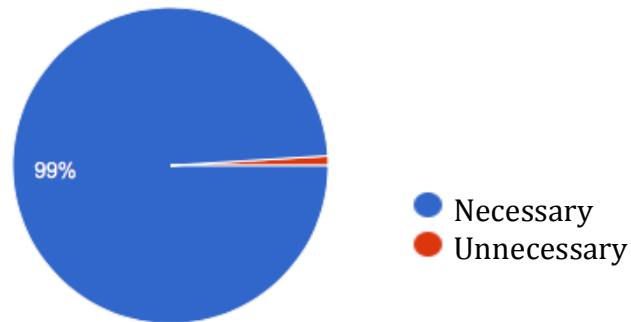
Overall, it can be stated that Thai travelers presently are tech savvy since they always carry their high technology gadgets during their trip. Furthermore, the emergence of online community also influenced the motivation and behavior of Thai travelers. In order to study this issue in more detail, the online-based-survey seems not enough for researcher. We need to gather more specific data. In-depth-interview process is needed.

4.3 Interview result

As was mentioned in the previous part, it is clear that the characteristics of Thai travelers need more specific detail. Having examined how to gain more profound detail from the respondents, the final process of the data collection was in-depth-interview. This process made the researcher gather more specific data from the selected interviewees. What follows is a transcript from the audio-record word by

word. It was divided into four sub-groups: 1) demographic profiles of interviewees; 2) trip preparation process; 3) during trip process; and 4) post-trip.

4.3.1. The demographic profiles of interviewees

The demographic characteristics of the interviewees have been taken from the in-depth-interview through face-to-face interview and online interview via Facebook call. The participants were three male and seven female. The majority of interviewees were aged between 25-30 years (80%), followed by 31-35 years (10%) and more than 35 years (10%). The monthly income of participants income per month were 20,000-30,000 baht (30%), 30,001-50,000 baht (20%) and more than 50,001 baht (50%). Regarding to their work status, 9 persons are employees. Only 1 interviewee is a master degree student.

Table 4.8: Demographic profiles of interviewees

Demographic background	Quantity (n=10)
Gender	
Male	3
Female	7
Age	
25-30 years	8
31-35 years	1
More than 35 years	1

Income per month	
20,000 -30,000 baht	3
30,001- 50,000 baht	2
More than 50,001 baht	5

4.3.2. Trip preparation process

During the trip preparation process, the researcher asked questions to the interviewees about their motivation to travel in Japan. As explained earlier, the push and pull factors are needed to categorize their motivation. To begin with the push motivations, five people mentioned about discover new places and things as their push motivation. Two examples from respondents stated that:

" I want to discover new things in Japan that I haven't seen it before in my life. So that why I decided to travel here."

(Panitnun, female traveler)

" There are many places in Japan that I want to discover. It is quite interesting for me to plan my trip to discover it."

(Srirung, female traveler)

Other four people stated about learn Japanese culture and meet Japanese local people as their push motivation. Here is some examples from interviewees:

" I'd like to visit Japan because I want to learn Japanese culture. I heard that in Kyoto there are some places that I can experience it."

(Nuchapa, female traveler)

" Japanese culture is very interesting so it is the reason why I want to travel in this country. I really like to learn Japanese."

(Paranee, female traveler)

However, there is only one person who stated that visit Japanese museum as his motivation:

"I'd like to visit Japanese museum such as Ghibli museum, Kyoto International Manga museum, and the Museum of Contemporary Art and the National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation in Tokyo."

(Supasek, male traveler)

So far this part has focused on the push motivations, the following section will discuss the pull motivations. Six people mentioned about natural beauty as their pull motivation. Here are two samples from six interviewees: one female traveler said that " I really want to see the cheery blossom in Japan because it's beautiful" other female traveler stated that "The natural beauty of Japan is one of my reason to discover this country. I want to see the mountain covered with snow in Hokkaido and to see autumn leaf color as well." The convenient transportation in Japan were also mentioned by four respondents.

Free visas policy was also mentioned as the pull motivations by two interviewees. Since Thai people can be able to travel in Japan without apply for visa for 15 days. " I decide to travel in Japan because there is the exception of visa for Thai people." said Thai male traveler. Other pull motivation such as the local product was also mentioned:

"Japanese local products are unique and the packaging is very beautiful and classy."

(Pharani, female traveler)

In addition, the increasing of low price airplane ticket from Thailand to Japan is also motivated Thai traveler to discover this country as well.

" There are many low-cost airlines from Thailand to Japan. The price is very cheap.

You can come to Japan easily. This is one of the reasons why I always plan my trip in

Japan."

(Arthid, male traveler)

It is important to ask the interviewees about "how did they seek the travel information before boarding to Japan". Seven of interviewees who are the majority stated that they seek the information from the review on the Internet and the word of mouth by their friends or family.

" I always follow some travel review from the Internet. It's easy and useful for my

trip in Japan."

(Panitnun, female traveler)

" My friends recommended me to travel here. They said that Japan is interesting

country and there are many things to discover. I read some other review from the

Internet as well before planning my trip to Japan."

(Patarapon, female traveler)

However five respondents stated that they are not only gather travel information from the Internet but there also read the guidebook. One respondent said:

" I also read guidebooks before planning my trip. You know nowadays the

guidebooks in Thai version are increasing. However, I read only few guidebooks

because sometimes the information inside is not updated."

<div align="right">(Srirung, female traveler)</div>

Others said about the provided information from official website was a travel source:

" Sometime I seek the information from official website because the information on

this source is true. However, there are not too many Japanese official website

provide English version. Sometime it's quite difficult for me to translate from

Japanese to English."

<div align="right">(Pharani, female traveler)</div>

As discussed above, seven of participators preferred to find information from the other travelers' review on the Internet. The following question was asked to them "Where did they get the review from". The majority of the interviewees responded that they seek the reviews from Pantip.com:

" Pantip.com provides many review about Japan, just only type "place name" then

type "pantip" on Google search engine, you can find tons of reviews about this

country."

<div align="right">(Nuchapha, female traveler)</div>

" Before I had decided to travel in Japan, I need some information about restaurant. So, I just access to Pantip.com and type "Eating in Japan" or "Recommend restaurant in Japan" on Pantip search engine. Then, I can find some useful information including the direction."

(Panida, female traveler)

In addition, the other factors, which were concerned in the trip preparation process, were also asked to the participators. Eight interviewees preferred to travel with 2-3 persons during their trip. Only two respondents travelled with 4-5 persons and more than 5 persons.

" I've never travel alone in Japan because it's difficult to understand Japanese and it maybe easy to get lost. So, I prefer to travel with my friends because we can share and help together when we have problem in Japan. Anyway, my last trip in Kansai, I travelled with 4 persons."

(Nuchapa, female traveler)

Regarding to the duration of stay in Japan, four interviewees who are the majority answered that they have been in Japan for 2-3 weeks, followed by four people preferred to stay for 1 week. Only one stayed in Japan 3-6 days.

" I actually stay in Japan for 1 weeks. But my last trip I spent 16 days in Japan.

Because I want to discover other cities."

(Srirung, female traveler)

The accommodation choices are also beneficial to researcher in order to learn the characteristics of Thai travelers. The following interview question was asked to the interviewees "What are your preferred accommodation?" five of those who were interviewed indicated that they stayed at a hotel, while three of the interviewees chose an apartment for rent as their accommodation. Only two people stayed at a hostel. Regarding to the result which was mentioned earlier, the interviewees preferred to stay at the hotel than cheap accommodation such as capsule hotel or dormitory. However, price and privacy condition were their priority:

" I prefer to save my budget during my trip in Japan, so I booked the hostel for my

last trip in Japan with my friends. It was kind the dormitory with share toilet and

bathroom with other travelers but I booked private dormitory room for 4 persons.

I want to save my money but I still need privacy. I don't want to share room with

other travelers."

(Nuchapha, female traveler)

"I had never stayed at the capsule hotel or booked kind of share room before,

because I'm worry about my belonging. My last trip in Osaka, I had booked one

single room and the price was similar to the capsule hotel."

(Arthid, male traveler)

"I preferred cheap accommodation, but I need my own room and toilet. I also booked

hotel where is not far from the train station by walk."

(Ekkapong, male traveler)

In this interview the researcher also asked respondents about their budget during trip in Japan. Eight people mentioned that they carried budget from 10,000 to 50,000 baht per trip. However, if they have found that it was not enough during trip, they will use their credit card. Only two person carried more than 50,000 baht per trip.

" I carried around 30,000 to 40,000 baht for my budget in Japan. However,

if my money was not enough, I used my credit card."

(Pharani, female traveler)

" My previous trip in Japan I carried 100,000 baht. I think it's enough for

one week in Japan."

(Srirung, female traveler)

4.3.3. During trip process

Returning briefly to the technology usage of Thai travelers which were mentioned in the online-survey data collection process, it seems like Thai travelers carried their high technology gadgets during the trip in Japan. In order to gain more specific details on this issue, the questions related to the technology use during the trip were asked to ten interviewees (see table 4.9). The first question was "What kind of electronic gadgets have you carried during trip in Japan?". The majority of participators addressed that they carry digital camera and smart phone (90%), followed by Pocket-Wi-Fi (60%). Since the Wi-Fi is also necessary for the travelers, the following question "why did you use pocket-Wi-Fi or free Wi-Fi at your accommodation" has been asked. All of the participants used Wi-Fi to upload their pictures on their personal Facebook account and Instagram. 80% of the interviewees indicated that they used Wi-Fi for contacting their family and friends via social media such as Facebook, Line, and Skype. In addition, they also used Wi-Fi for finding the direction and train's timetable via Hyperdia.com (80%). Thai travelers prefer to share their travel memory and upload their pictures via social media. The following question "Where have you frequency shared your travel memory on social media" was asked. 90% of those who were interviewed said that they always share their story on Facebook, while by 40% of them sometimes share it on Instagram and Pantip.com.

Table 4.9: The summary of technology use of interviewees during trip in Japan

List of questions	Frequency percent (%)
1. What kind of electronic gadgets have you carried during your trip in Japan?	
Digital camera	90%
Smart phone	90%
Laptop	40%
Tablet, Ipad	10%
Pocket-Wi-Fi	60%
2. Why did you use pocket Wi-Fi or free Wi-Fi?	
To contact family and friends via social network	80%
To upload picture on Facebook or Instagram	100%
To share travel memory on online blog	20%
To find tourist attraction's direction during trip	80%
To book more further accommodation	20%
To find train or bus' time table	80%
To contact workplace	30%
To find more review on the online community	30%
4. Where have you shared your travel memory on the social media?	
Facebook	90%

Instagram	40%
Pantip.com	40%
Personal blog	10%

* Note: one interviewee responds more than one choice.

4.3.4. The post-trip

In this section, the researcher presents some of the findings of the post-trip process. Firstly, the problems after traveling in Japan has been asked to the interviewees. Fortunately, half of the respondents (50%) addressed that they haven't have any problem during trip in Japan. However, 20% of them addressed that their problem was the lack of English sign whereas three interviewees stated their problem during last trip in Japan as follows:

"I used to lent a car but there are no instruction in English on the GPS. I can't read

Japanese. It would be better if a car rental company provided

the GPS in English version for foreigners"

(Pharani, female traveler)

"My problem is to make a contract with Japanese people. Since the language barrier

became the long distance between me and local people,

it was the problem during my trip"

(Panitnun, female traveler)

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"The problem during my last trip in Japan was the cultural problem. It was difficult

for me to find restaurant for only non-smoking person."

(Nuchapha, female traveler)

4.4. Discussion

4.4.1 Are Thai travelers in Japan presently backpackers?

As pointed out in the introduction to this paper, there many reviews about traveling in Japan as a backpacker on the Thai online community (Pantip.com). Many writers posted their topic related to "Backpack in Japan". However, a comparison of the two results from a content analysis on Pantip.com and the literature review about backpacker's characteristics in chapter two reveals that most of those Thai travelers who shared their topic on this online community are not exactly backpacker as they called themselves. The researcher found that the trip duration, budget, and accommodation type are not similar with the recent studies on backpackers. The literature review about this issue clearly illustrated the difference between Thai traveler and backpacker. Firstly, Thai travelers stayed in Japan for only a short period from 5 days to less than 3 weeks, whereas the backpacker stayed at the host destination for 2.5 months or longer (Hampton, 2013; Sørensen, 2003). The travel expenditure was also the condition that makes them different. Several studies revealed that the backpackers travel on low budget for food, accommodation, transportation etc.(Hampton, 2013; Bradt, 1995; Peace, 1990; Welk, 2004). In contrast, Thai travelers tend to spend more for their travel. However, they preferred to

stay at the cheap accommodation in order to save their travel cost like backpacker do. But, the privacy and convenience at the accommodation separated them from backpacker. In fact, Thai travelers need privacy and convenience during their journey while backpacker has never cared about these conditions. In overall, the literature review on backpacker characteristics from recent researches can clearly state that Thai travelers presently are not similar to backpacker even though they are called or claim themselves as backpackers. So what is their travel status presently? This question is interesting for this researcher to discover the characteristic of Thai traveler in Japan. In seeking to identify the status of Thai traveler in Japan presently, the observation was needed. The data from online survey and in-depth interview can illustrate this point clearly. The researcher found that the characteristic of Thai travelers is similar to the new travel lifestyle namely "flashpacker" than backpacker. One outstanding point is the nature of the tech savvy. As mentioned earlier on the literature review about the characteristics of flashpacker, Javis and Peel (2010) claimed that flashpackers are a technology expert and they are as same as Thai travelers. Thai travelers always carried their high technology stuffs such as smart phone or pocket Wi-Fi during their trip in Japan. They stated that Wi-Fi was needful for their trip. They always used Wi-Fi for sharing their pictures and brief reviews about their trip on Facebook account, Instagram or travel blog. They also used it for finding the direction, timetable, or contacting to their fellows via social media such as Facebook message, Line or Skype etc. Furthermore, the term of privacy condition is

also similar between Thai traveler and flashpacker's characteristic. Recent research suggested that flashpacker needs privacy during their stay so that they do not share space with other travelers (Miles, 2004). Although Thai travelers need the low-budget accommodation, they also need private and comfortable accommodation as much as they can find. For example, a respondent said:

" I prefer to stay at the cheap accommodation but I need my own room

without sharing with other travelers."

(Paranee, female traveler)

Having examined from both literature review and the result from this thesis, it can be suggested that Thai travelers presently are not backpackers but they are flashpackers.

4.4.2 The characteristics of Thai flashpackers and a flashpack trend in Japan

Thai flashpackers in Japan as a topic is interesting to study because there has been no studies conducted on this issue before. Having examined the characteristics of Thai travelers in Japan so far, the researcher found that Thai travelers are likely to be flashpackers. The result from both online survey and interview can be summarized that the Thai flashpackers are persons who spend high budget during their trip (from 10,000 to more than 50,000 baht per trip). They are likely to be 20 years old or older. Most of Thai flashpackers prefer to stay at the place where they can get their own

room without sharing space with other travelers because they need privacy and comfort during their trip. Some interviewees stated their reasons for opting these conditions as follows:

" I'd like to stay at a cheap accommodation like hostel, but I need my own room and my own space such as a bathroom."

<div align="right">(Paranee, female traveler)</div>

"The hotel location is important for me. I prefer hotel near train station because it's comfortable for me to manage my trip."

<div align="right">(Srirung, female traveler)</div>

The travel duration was also examined. Thai flashpackers preferred to stay in Japan just a short period of time from 5 days to less than 3 weeks regarding to their work conditions:

"The duration of my stay in Japan depends on my work holiday. it's usually 10 days."

<div align="right">(Supasek, male traveler)</div>

" I am a business owner, so when I decide to travel in Japan, it depends on my

decision. But the trip duration is not to exceed 2 weeks because

I have to go back to work."

<div align="right">(Paranee, female traveler)</div>

In addition, Thai flashpackers can be characterized as the tech-savvy because they always carry high-technology stuffs such as smartphone, digital camera, laptop and pocket-Wi-Fi. Three interviewees stated their option on the technology usage as follows:

" Japan is a beautiful country so I always carried 3 cameras and

lens during my trip"

<div align="right">(Paranee, female traveler)</div>

" Pocket-Wifi is important to survive in Japan. Since some places there are no sign in

English, you have to access to the Internet for finding a direction"

<div align="right">(Srirung, female traveler)</div>

" I fancy to share my picture on Facebook and Instagram, so I always connect to the

Internet all the time during my trip"

<div align="right">(Nuchapha, female traveler)</div>

As a result, connecting to the Internet all the time is also Thai flashpacker's preference because they always use it in order to contact their friends and family via the social network or find directions during trip. Furthermore, they also want to share their pictures and reviews about their trip immediately through their personal Facebook account, Instagram, or travel blog etc. In overall, the study of Thai flashpacker in Japan is similar to that studied about flashpacker before. According to recent researches, the term "flashpacker" was identified as a person who always travels with high budget for their travel expenditure during short trip duration. In addition, flashpackers have the power to spend for expensive accommodation where they can get privacy and convenience. Furthermore, flashpackers were identified as the tech-savvy travelers who carry some high-technology gadgets such as professional camera, laptop, smartphone etc. during their trip. However, flashpackers also travel as the same route like backpackers do. This means that they prefer to learn about the local culture, buy some local products, visit the villages, and meet other travelers and local people on the way (Hampton, 2013; Paris, 2010; Javis&Peel, 2010; Miles, 2004).

As explained in the literature review about travel lifestyles, it is clear that flashpacker lifestyle is different from the other travel lifestyles. Firstly, in terms of the motivation to travel, each travel life style is different. The Grand Tour of young educated travelers from 17th and 18th century aimed to appreciate the culture and learn the new things during their trip around Europe while the trampings aimed to seek

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their jobs. The hippies needed to escape from their country of origins and experience the exotic culture. Backpackers preferred to explore the authentic local culture. However, the recent flashpackers who are the sub-group of backpacker prefer to explore the new things as same as their ancestor, backpackers, but they are also aimed to seek the destination where they can find a comfortable atmosphere. Secondly, in term of an economic effect to the host countries, it seems that flashpackers have a significant role presently. Compared with the hippies and backpackers, the flashpackers' travel expenditure is much higher. Unlike the hippies and backpackers who always save their budget, the flashpackers spend their money for accommodation, local products and travel activities during their overseas trip. The hippies are a good epitome for the minimum economic benefit to the host destinations. Hampton (2013) described that the hippies preferred to prolong their trip but they still needed to save their budget by finding the free accommodation from local people or temple instead of cheap accommodation and using free transportation. This means that the host countries may not earn the benefit from this form of travel lifestyle. On the other hand, the local communities can benefit from the high budget travelers like the flashpackers. So far this study has focused on Thai flashpackers in Japan. The researcher also found that Thai flashpackers seem to show a growth trend since there are many reviews about traveling in Japan on the online community such as Pantip.com. Most of the respondents stated that they plan their trip after reading the reviews from Pantip.com. Is this online community now performing an important

role as a guide for Thai travelers? In the section that follows, it is examined that how online community influence travelers.

4.4.3. Pantip.com, a bible for Thai travelers

The emergence of online communities on the virtual world is now playing an important role in order to make a travel decision. Before discussing about this topic, the term, Web 2.0, is needed to explain. Web 2.0 is a technology on the Internet, which provides a function for connecting one user to other users together. The users can interact and collaborate with each other on the online world namely social media such as Facebook, Twitter, online bulletin board (Pantip.com) etc. In term of tourism industry, the web 2.0 technology provides function that the traveler can give their feedbacks or their review from their trip. Traveler presently uses the social media every time during their trip. They also read and share review on the Internet. Furthermore, this technology also allows traveler to be able to ask their question to other traveler though social network. Regarding to the result on the technology usage from this thesis, it can be identified that social media presently influences most of Thai travelers:

"I prepared my trip by reading reviews from Pantip.com. Pantip became the massive resources for traveler who wants to find the information for traveling in Japan. If you have any question related to your trip in Japan, I recommend you ask the users on this website. You will get a good answer."

(Translated from one reviewer on Pantip.com)

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" I decided to make my first review about my trip in Japan after I've read many review from other traveler's on Pantip.com. Now it's my turn to share my travel memory."

(Translated from one reviewer on Pantip.com)

What follow is a description that how social media like online community Pantip.com performs a significant role among Thai traveler in Japan. Firstly, Thai travelers always gathered travel information from other traveler's review on the online bulletin board before they depart to the host destination. Pantip.com is generally understood to mean the Thai popular online community where almost all respondents stated that they always read the reviews from this website before they prepare their trip to Japan. How Pantip.com plays an important role among Thai travelers such as making a decision to travel to Japan? The literature review on Web 2.0 technology can illustrate this issue more distinctly. This technology provided many features and technique for users in order to gather information and interact with other users from a visual world (McAfee, 2006). Three outstanding functions which make Pantip.com an easy access are "Search", "Tags" and "Authoring". The "Search engine" (see figure 4.1) function provides the blank box where users can type words to find details of what they want to know on Pantip.com. For instance, when they want to look up the information about Tokyo, they just type tags function "Review Travel in Tokyo" on provided box. Then the information about Tokyo will appear

(see figure 4.2). Later, when they select the review, they will find the "authoring" function (see figure 4.3). This function can help them to leave their comment, and discuss with the writer or other users directly. If they have further questions related to the topic, they could also ask to the writer or other users as well. Here is an example:

" When I want to seek some information about a restaurant or a place in Japan, I just type tag "review restaurant in Japan Pantip" on Google search engine."

(Srirung, female traveler)

Furthermore, the users can access to Pantip.com by using tag function "Pantip" to search the review on Pantip.com from other search engine such as Google.com. As mentioned above, the interviewee always searches information on Google search engine by using tag function related to the destination she want to look for by ending with "Pantip". Since Pantip.com provided an easy-to-use function to the users in order to search and share information, the travelers' behaviors are currently changing. The result of this study proves that Thai travelers nowadays follow the reviews from Pantip.com than other guidebooks. 93.1% of online-based-respondents and nine interviewees stated that reviews from Pantip.com is their preferable choice. Thus, it can be clearly seen that Thai travelers presently are influenced by the social media and Pantip.com became a "Bible for Thai travelers".

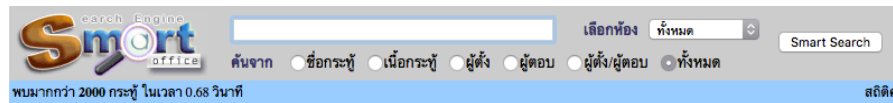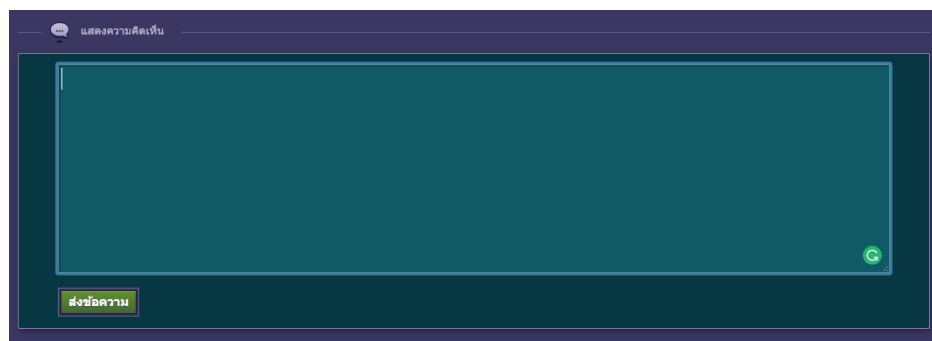**Figure 4.1**: The search engine function on Pantip.com

Figure 4.2: The results after typed tags "Review Travel in Tokyo

Figure 4.3: The authoring function on Pantip.com

CHAPTER V   **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

5.1. Summary

The number of Thai travelers in Japan are now increasing rapidly as same as the growing number of travel reviews in Japan on the Thai famous online community namely Pantip.com. Various travel reviews related to travel in Japan can be found. Thai travelers especially the review writers identified themselves as backpackers. Likewise, they posted their review title as "Backpack in Japan". However, the details on their review such as the accommodation type, travel expenditure, travel duration and other conditions are not similar with the backpacker characteristics which numerous studies have attempted to identify. Thus, this study has also sought to know characteristics of Thai travelers in Japan presently. This study sought to answer three questions:

1. *Are the Thai travelers in Japan backpackers or not?*
2. *What are the characteristics of Thai travelers in Japan?*
3. *How does the social media influence among Thai travelers?*

The main empirical findings are chapter specific and were summarized within the respective empirical chapters: the research finding and discussion. This section

will incorporate the findings to answer three research questions which were mentioned above.

5.1.1. Are the Thai travelers in Japan backpackers or not?

Having examined the results, it can be clearly seen that Thai travelers' characteristics in Japan are different from the backpacker. Regarding to their travel expenditure, they always carried a high budget during their trip in order to make their trip more comfortable in contrast with backpackers who always spend a low budget during their trip at the host destination. The Thai travelers also stay in Japan just a only short periods from 5 days to 3 weeks while backpackers always stay much longer. In addition, Thai travelers always care about their privacy for their accommodation; most of them prefer their own room without sharing it with other travelers. These conditions are dissimilar to the backpacker's characteristics which various researchers identified before. It seems that the characteristics of Thai travelers visiting Japan are similar with the sub-group of backpackers namely flashpackers.

5.1.2. What are the characteristics of Thai travelers in Japan?

The Thai travelers' characteristics recently are similar to the flashpackers from this research findings as mentioned on the previous chapter. Thus, Thai travelers in Japan can be identified as the flashpackers. Having examined and compared the results from the previous chapter and the literature reviews about flashpacker, the researcher concludes that Thai flashpackers are concerned with four outstanding characteristics: travel duration; travel expenditure; technology usage; and social

media. Firstly, Thai flashpacker prefers to stay in Japan for a short time from 1 week to 3 weeks. They carried a high budget for one trip to Japan thus they can be able to book an expensive hotel where they can use their own room. However, some of Thai flashpackers may book a cheap accommodation such as hostel or dormitory but they still need their own room in order to make their stay more private. Furthermore, Thai flashpackers always carry high technology gadgets during their trip such as smart phones and pocket-Wifi in order to share their photos, travel reviews, or contact with other people during their trip. In addition, Thai flashpacker fancies to seek the travel information from Pantip.com before making their decision to visit Japan. Regarding to the number of Thai flashpacker who were the respondent of the thesis, most of them stated that they sought their travel information from the review on Pantip.com. So, this researcher examines how the social media like Pantip.com influences Thai flashpackers nowadays. In the section that follows, it will be discussed how the social media influences Thai flashpackers currently.

5.1.3. How does the social media influence Thai travelers?

Having examined the results related to the social media usage among Thai flashpackers from previous chapter, they can be divided into two processes: finding information process; and social media usage during and after trip process. Firstly, the majority of Thai respondents stated that they always seek travel information from online community called "Pantip.com" before they depart to Japan. Pantip.com provided various reviews to which Thai travelers can access tons of travel

information. Furthermore, it provides the web 2.0 technology functions with which people can communicate together.

In addition, the travelers not only gather the travel information but they can also communicate or ask question to the review writers or other travelers directly through web 2.0 functions on Pantip.com. These functions made Pantip.com become an easy-to-access site for travelers. Secondly, regarding to the social media use during and after trip from Japan, most of Thai flashpackers, who were asked about their social media usage, mentioned that they always carry pocket Wi-Fi during trip in order to access the Internet and social media such as Facebook.com, Line, or Instagram for sharing their photos, or review about their trip. Furthermore, they always use the Internet in order to find directions in Japan. As a result, it can be clearly seen that the social media influences Thai flashpacker presently.

5.2. Recommendation

5.2.1 Making the term "flashpacker" to be more recognizable in the daily life

Regarding to the finding results from this study on the characteristics of Thai travelers who claimed themselves as backpackers, the results show that their characteristics are not the same as they said. Their characteristics are more similar with flashpackers. However, it seems like the term flashpacker is not well known among Thai travelers. During the in-depth interview the researcher asked further question to the interviewees that "Do you know what is flashpacker?". Almost of respondents said that they haven't heard this word before. Thus, the researcher

suggests to the other researchers to conduct more on this phenomenon since there have been not many researches on this topic. The researcher hopefully expects that the term "flashpacker" will be renowned in daily life as same as "backpacker".

5.2.2.The creation of travel application on smartphone

Since the emergence of applications on the smart phone such as social media applications (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.) and travel applications (such as Tokyo subway) are increasing nowadays. Traveling in some countries, where we have never known their languages and cultures, is easy. Regarding to the results from both online survey and in-depth interview, it can be clearly seen these applications usage on smart phone among Thai travelers presently is essential for their journey. As mentioned earlier on the table 4.7 that 94.1% of respondents stated that they carried smart phone while travelling. This means that they used it in order to connect to the Internet and some applications on this device. The finding results from in-depth interview illustrate more clearly that Thai travelers used smart phone in order to access to the social media application such as Facebook, Instagram, Line etc. in order to contact to their family and friends, to share their travel memories. Furthermore, they also used some mobile applications in order to find the direction and check train timetable (such as Hyperdia). However, the researcher found that there have been not many applications provided the information of travel direction neither English nor Thai version such as application for finding some recommended restaurants in Japan. The researcher would like to suggest to the mobile phone application developers from

both Thailand and Japan to create some applications, which can help Thai flashpackers in Japan. Since the Thai flashpacker's daily habit is always using the smartphone. In addition, it will be better, if there are some applications provided in Thai version to make their trip more comfortable. The benefit from this creation is not only effect to Thai travelers but also the local communities in Japan and Japanese tourism industry.

5.2.3. Promote tourism in Japan through online community

As mentioned earlier that online community like Pantip.com performs role as the bible for Thai travelers who plan to travel in Japan. With respect to the result on this research, most of the respondents stated that they always read and follow the travel information from other travelers' reviews on Pantip.com rather than paper based guidebooks before deciding their trip in Japan. Therefore, the researcher would like to suggest to Japanese tourism industry to promote tourism in Japan via this online community either Thai language or English language if possible. Moreover, since Thai travelers also share travel reviews after trip from Japan on Pantip.com, the researcher would like to suggest to Japanese tourism firms that they have to ameliorate their services in order to get the positive reviews from those Thai travelers.

5.2.4. Improving foreigner languages for the local staff and Japanese official website.

Among the majority of respondents from both online surveys and in-depth interview, they mentioned that a language barrier is also their problem during their visit in Japan. This problem sometimes makes s feel inconvenient. However, there are some suggestions from the respondents that if there are pamphlets in Thai or English version, it will make their trip in Japan more convenient (see graph 4.1). Furthermore some interviewees mentioned that they also prefer to find travel information through the official website of the tourist attraction in Japan directly before planning their trip. However, the information shows only Japanese version, which makes the difficulty to understand. In addition, the respondents stated that the local staffs couldn't communicate in English, which is also their obstacle. The researcher would like to suggest that it would be better if Japanese tourism enterprises focus also on these problems in order to improve their services, facilities and their local staffs to be able to communicate in English. Regarding to the number of Thai travelers in japan is sharply increasing.

As mentioned earlier that Thai social background is collectivism. Most of Thai travelers prefer to travel with group in order to feel more protected. Regarding to the result gathering from both online survey and in-depth interview from the previous chapter, the majority of respondents claimed that they travelled to Japan as a group. In addition, Thai travelers in Japan can be defined as the "new travelers" who

has the social background as a middle class, and success in their income and education as same as the Thai travelers in European countries. However, there is one difference between Thai new travelers in Japan and in Europe. It is that Thai travelers in Japan prefer to travel without consulting the travel agency like those who travel to Europe. Therefore, they perhaps face some trouble during trip in Japan principally language barrier as mentioned above. However, Thai travelers have power to spend for local services in Japan. As suggested earlier about amelioration of the problem due to the foreigner languages, it could be perhaps the advantage for tourism industry in Japan in order to earn the profit from Thai travelers.

5.2.5. Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research

One major drawback of this study is that the academic research about the flashpacker phenomenon is not many. Thus, it was difficult for the researcher to find conceptual frameworks that guide his thesis about flashpacker. Therefore, this study became an exploratory and descriptive study. We need further studies to understand the flashpacker phenomenon and move to explanatory studies. In addition, this research focused only on Thai flashpackers in Japan. However, it will be more useful if the future research focuses on other nationalities in order to identify other flashpacker's characteristics. In addition, the randomness was also the limitation for researcher since it was not guaranteed. However, the researcher expects to other researchers in order to develop this limitation for their further researches in the future.

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Appendix A

<u>**QUESTIONNAIRE DETAILS**</u>

<u>**Introduction:**</u>
Dear, respondents

This online questionnaire is a part of thesis writing about the Thai travelers in Japan conducted by a student of the graduate school of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University. The purpose of this survey is to explore the characteristics of Thai travelers in Japan. This online questionnaire is divided into three sections: 1) the general information; 2) the trip preparation process; and 3) post-trip from Japan. Your information will be used only for this thesis. The time to complete the questionnaire would be about 10 minutes. I'd like to thank you for your participation.

<u>**Section 1: General information**</u>

1.1   Gender   ☐ Male   ☐Female
1.2   Age   _____
1.3   Education background
         ☐ High-school
         ☐ Vocational certificate
         ☐ Bachelor
         ☐ Higher than bachelor

1.4   Career
         ☐ Student
         ☐ Government employee
         ☐ Private company employee
         ☐ Self-business
         ☐ Other_____

1.5   Income
         ☐ Less than 10,000 baht
         ☐ 10,001 to 30,000 baht
         ☐ 30,001 to 50,000 baht
         ☐ More than 50,000 baht

Section 2: Trip preparation process
This section will ask you about the trip preparation before traveling in Japan.

2.1. What is the reason why you want to travel in Japan? (You can select more than 1 choice)

       ☐ The low price of airline ticket
       ☐ To find a new experience and things
       ☐ To discover Japanese culture
       ☐ Free visa for Thai traveler
       ☐ Positive recommendation from reviews about Japan on the Internet
       ☐ Convenient transportation
       ☐ The variety of seasons in Japan
       ☐ The natural beauty of Japan
       ☐ Friendliness of local people
       ☐ Shopping in Japan
       ☐ To discover new technology in Japan
       ☐ Other_____

2.2. How many person have you travelled with?

       ☐ I decided to travel alone
       ☐ 1 to 3 persons
       ☐ More than 3 persons

2.3 How long have you decided to stay in Japan?

       ☐ 2-4 days
       ☐ 5-6 days
       ☐ 1 week
       ☐ 2-3 weeks
       ☐ 1 month or more than 1 month

2.4 How much have you decided to spend for your travel expenditure in Japan?

       ☐ Less than 5,000 baht
       ☐ 5,000 to 10,000 baht
       ☐ 10,001 to 50,000 baht
       ☐ More than 50,000 baht

2.5 What's kind of accommodation you used in Japan?

☐ Hotel
☐ Youth hostel
☐ Capsule hotel
☐ Japanese ryokan
☐ Business hotel
☐ Other_____

2.6 Have you ever found the travel information beforehand?

☐ Yes
☐ No

2.7 If you answered "Yes", where have you found the travel information?

☐ Review from other traveler's on Pantip.com or TripAdvisor etc.
☐ Information from tourist attraction's official website
☐ Guidebook such as Lonely planet or Thai guidebook etc.
☐ Recommendation from friends
☐ Television
☐ Japan tourism event
☐ Other _____

2.8 Have you ever carried the electronic devices during trip in Japan?

☐ Yes
☐ No

2.9 What kind of electronic devices have you carried during trip in Japan?

☐ Laptop
☐ Smartphone
☐ Ipad or tablet
☐ Digital camera
☐ Pocket wifi
☐ Other_____

2.10 Do you think that the electronic devices as mentioned above are necessary for your trip in Japan?

   ☐ Yes
   ☐ No

Section 3: Post-trip from Japan
This section will ask you about the post-trip from Japan.

3.1 Have you found any problems during trip in Japan?

   ☐ Culture shock
   ☐ Lack of information in English or Thai
   ☐ Language barrier such as communicate with local people
   ☐ Other _____

3.2 I am satisfied with free visa policy for Thai people?

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

3.2 I am satisfied with low price airline ticket from Thailand to Japan?

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

3.3 I am satisfied with after my trip from Japan?

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

3.4 Do you think that if there are pamphlets in Thai version, it will make your trip in Japan more convenient?

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

3.5 Do you think that language barrier problem make your trip in Japan inconvenient?

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

3.6 Do you think that the review from other travelers on the Internet was useful for you during your trip in Japan?

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

3.7 Do you think that the travel information from guidebook such as Lonely Planet or other travel guidebooks was useful for you during your trip in Japan?

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

3.8 Do you think that the information from the official website of tourist attraction was useful for you during your trip in Japan?

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

3.9 Do you think that the information from the Japan tourism event was useful for you during your trip in Japan?

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

3.10 Do you want to comeback to Japan again?

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

3.11 After your trip from Japan, do you intend to share your travel review on the Internet?

☐ Yes
☐ No

THIS IS THE END OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE,
THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.

Appendix B

**AN EXAMPLE OF FACE-TO-FACE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW'S QUESTION
ON THE THAI TRAVELERS IN JAPAN**

Date (DD/MM/YY) ___/___/___
Interviewee's name:_____
Age _____
Occupation_____
Income_____
Education background_____

<u>Introduction:</u>
Dear, interviewees

My name is Niwat CHALAOPHAKDEE, a graduate student of Ritsumeikan Asia
Pacific University. Firstly, I'd like to thank you very much for agreeing to participate
in this research project about Thai travelers in Japan. The purpose of this research is
to explore the characteristic of Thai travelers in Japan in order to compare with
backpacker and flashpacker's characteristic. The result and information of the
interview will only be used in the personal study of the researcher. The interview is
estimated about 45 minutes.

<u>Section 1:</u> Before the trip in Japan

1.1 What is the reason why you want to travel in Japan?
1.2 Do you think that the free visa policy for Thai people to travel in Japan for 15
     days effects to your decision to travel in Japan?
1.3 Do you think that the low price airline ticket makes you decide to travel in
     Japan?
1.4 Which airline companies have you booked the airplane ticket?
1.5 Have you ever sought some travel information beforehand?
1.6 Where have you got the information?
1.7 Have you ever read some travel reviews from other travelers on the Internet?
1.8 Where have you accessed the online travel review?
1.9 How many person you decided to travel with?
1.10 How long you have decided to stay in Japan?
1.11 How much you have decided to carry for your budget?
1.12 What was your accommodation type?
1.13 Do you think that Free-wifi option at the accommodation in Japan makes your
      decision to reserve room?

1.14   Do you carry some electronic devices during your trip?

Section 2: During trip in Japan

2.1   Have you found any problems during trip in Japan?
2.2   What did you do with free wifi or wifi from pocket wifi?
2.3   Which social media have you used during your trip?
2.4   Why did you use this social media?
2.5   Where did you share your travel memory?
2.6   How often have you used wifi during trip in Japan?
2.7   Do you think that if you have no wifi during trip in Japan, it will be
       inconvenient for you?

Section 3: Post-trip from Japan

3.1   Do you think that language barrier is your problem?
3.2   Do you think that the information you had sought before traveling in Japan
       was useful for you?
3.3   Do you intend to share your travel review?
3.4   Do you plan to travel in Japan again?

THIS IS THE END OF THE INTERVIEW,
THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.