INFLUENCES OF PARASOCIAL INTERACTION BETWEEN

MARK WIENS'S TRAVEL VLOGS AND INDONESIAN VIEWERS

ON THEIR TRAVEL INTENTIONS TO THAILAND

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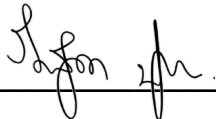Advisor of Thesis: Assoc.Prof.Ratanasuda Punnahitanond, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

This research aimed to explore the potential influences of YouTube travel vlogs about Thailand by American vlogger, Mark Wiens, on his Indonesian viewers. The study examined causal relationship between vlogger's parasocial interaction, his viewers' vlogger-viewer imagery fit, perceived country image of Thailand, and travel intentions to Thailand. Using purposive and snowball sampling, an online survey was conducted with 153 Indonesians living outside Thailand who watched at least five videos about Thailand by Mark Wiens. Simple Linear Regression and Multiple Linear Regression were used to test the proposed research hypotheses. Analysis results supported all seven hypotheses such that Mark Wiens's social and physical attractiveness along with attitude homophily significantly influenced his parasocial interaction with Indonesian viewers, his parasocial interaction significantly influenced his viewers' vlogger-viewer imagery fit and perceived country image of Thailand, which further significantly influenced their travel intentions to Thailand. Implications were given for both academic and business sector regarding on how travel vlogs can be used to promote travel intention via vloggers' parasocial interaction and their viewers.

Keywords: Parasocial Interaction, YouTube, Vlogger-viewer Imagery Fit, Country

Image, Travel Intentions

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This first chapter of the research serves as an introduction of the study.
It describes background of the study and explains objectives, research questions,
scope of study, and significance of the study, together with definition of terms.

1.1 Rationale and Problem Statement

The development of information technology has changed the way of how
people communicate. McLuhan (1964) provided four distinct periods of human
communication history, namely the tribal era, the literate era, the print era, and the
electronic era. Now, human communication enters the fifth phase or period that
emphasizes more interactive communication characterized by Internet-based
technology and the use of computer (Brody, 1990).

The presence of the Internet in life makes it easier for people to access the
information they need. Undoubtedly, the Internet is very useful in various areas of
development. One of them is tourism industry both for country as a travel destination
and for tourists as visitors. The Internet has become a necessity in sharing and seeking
information related to planning, decision making, and all the needs for travel. This is
because the Internet is the main source of information that has a high level of
interactivity and customization, so that it can provide experience according to the
needs of its users (Gonzalo, 2012).

The Internet has become a platform to facilitate continuous technological
innovations, encourage new business practices, and change the competitive

landscape of numerous industry sectors. As the Internet connectivity spreads, and cell phone usage spreads even further, innovation continues with the emergence of social media. Defined by its interactive nature and user-generated content, social media has largelybeen a tool used by people, companies, even organizations to share thoughts, information, messages, photos, and videos (Highfield, 2015).

The importance of utilizing social media in developing tourism is an opportunity for a country to attract tourists because contents that are available on social media can act as reference sources. Thailand, as the focus of this study for travel destination, has an official government unit called the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) which supplies information and data on tourist attractions to the public and encourages both Thai and international tourists to travel in and around Thailand.

According to the TAT's policy and marketing plan (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2019), the Internet is being base to accelerate the development of a tourism technological system for accommodating business activities information and carrying out of electronic commerce as well as applying information technology in marketing. Nowadays, the TAT focuses on the use of social media to communicate to its target audience and those interested in tourism because social media is an emerging technology that is beginning to have a significant influence on how people communicate (Andrade & Mason, 2009).

On the economic front, particularly tourism sector, Thailand has enjoyed longand close bilateral relations with Indonesia as the tourism between two countries has been steadily rising (Royal Thai Embassy, 2017). In 2019, roughly 706,908 Indonesian tourists visited Thailand (Ministry of Tourism & Sports, 2020) and about

136,699 Thai tourists visited Indonesia (Statistics Indonesia, 2020). Both countries arepopular tourist destinations in Southeast Asia.

Thailand is a wondrous kingdom, featuring Buddhist temples, exotic wildlife, and spectacular islands. Along with a fascinating history and a unique culture that includes delectable Thai food and massage. Thailand features a modern capital city and friendly people who epitomize Thailand's "land of smiles" reputation. Moreover, Thailand has been perceived as a destination with beautiful beaches, various attractions, marvelous architecture, reasonable costs, friendly people and easy access (Rittichainuwat, Qu & Brown, 2001).

Country image is an important thing that a tourist looks for before choosing adestination. Tourists may have a good or bad perception about a country which resultsin the success or failure of a destination. Most tourists would rather select a destination or country because of its positive image, perception, or impression (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993). Tourists usually choose a destination with the most favorable image (Gartner, 1989). Hunt (1975) suggested that image was a critical factor in a country's tourism success.

Rittichainuwat, et al. (2001) found some negative images of Thailand associated with prostitution, AIDS, crowding, a gap between the rich and the poor, and traffic jams. In addition, there were bad incidents in Thailand that contributed negative impact in terms of political instability, safety, and security. Amnatcharoenrit (2013) on The Nation News stated that the Centre's survey of Thailand found 29 percent of tourism-sector participants were worried most about politics, followed by an economic crisis at 24 percent, natural disaster at 23 percent and an outbreak of epidemic and new diseases at 22 percent.

Despite of these negative images, Thailand is considered by Indonesian Tourism Minister, Arief Yahya, as great at managing its tourism. During a meeting with Indonesian Ambassador for Thailand, Ahmad Rusdi, on 28th of September 2017,the Tourism Minister asked the Indonesian Embassy in Thailand to learn about the way Thailand manages its tourism and to understand how Thailand handles security, culinary, street food, and homestay ("Tourism minister wants to learn", 2017). In addition, he mentioned that the culinary and street food of Thailand is very famousin the world, there is always a Thai restaurant in almost every country around the world and it is always crowded with foreign clients. In addition, Thailand offers dishes that are suitable for Asian, European, Australian and American taste buds.

Undoubtedly, Thailand offers many tourist attractions and travel activities such as natural attractions, cultural tourism, health tourism, shopping, and entertainment. Thailand seems suitable with the characteristics or traits of Indonesiantourists which likely influence their travel intentions to Thailand. According to the Tourism Training Center founder, Tedjo Iskandar, as reported by kompas.com ("Four common traits of Indonesian tourists", 2017) four common traits of Indonesiantourists were identified.

First, Indonesian tourists are rarely on time or too relaxed. Thai people are perceived as friendly. They are also flexible, compromising, happy, relaxed and content with their lives. This laid-back Thai mentality is expressed with the term '*sabai sabai*,' which is a positive quality that eases up tension ("Thai culture and relationships", 2019). However, being too relaxed may cause drawback. For example,being late or not on time, just like Indonesian tourists who tend to be too relaxed.

Second, Indonesian tourists are avid shoppers. Shopping in Thailand is hands-down one of the premier activities for visitors to the Kingdom (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2020). For Indonesian tourists, Thailand obviously becomes pleasing destination to indulge in shopping activities. Thailand offers various shopping sites from cheap local street vendors, floating market, night markets, to fancy stores and high-end shopping malls. The TAT also provides useful tips on its website to guide tourists to get satisfying shopping experience (Tourism Authority ofThailand, 2021).

Third, in term of tours, Indonesian tourists prefer simple explanations instead of convoluted descriptions. Nowadays, tourists need to know by means of reliable sources how their experience is going to be like in order to reduce uncertainty and create some expectations of what they are going to find at a destination (Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler, 2016). Modern tourists have more trust in other travelers' opinions using social media rather than official marketing advices. According to the new information technology trends, people started being more adaptive and flexible (Buhalis & Jun, 2011). With social media, they can find simple explanations related totravel from travel vloggers, reviews, or simply from peers' personal experiences.

Fourth, they are selfie enthusiasts. Indonesian tourists of all ages love to take selfies. Selfies are images that include oneself or often with another person or as part of a group that are taken by oneself using a digital camera or smartphone especially for posting on social media (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Thai tourism presents experiences and environments that are truly different from Indonesia which encourages Indonesian tourists even more to take selfies. Above all, these four

common traits are important to this study. This aims to find out if the country image of Thailand has things to offer to Indonesian tourists with these traits that related totheir travel intentions to Thailand.

Since the Internet and social media are evolving into an inevitable information source in various purchase decisions in people's daily life, this study is seeking to identify parasocial interaction in social media, particularly YouTube and find out the extent of interaction between vlogger and viewers in sharing information and communicating with each other. Related to tourism industry, the tourists used to collect information from travel agencies or tour operators. However nowadays, they become more critical and tend to compare prices, check reviews and useful information available online via social media and form their opinion on various offers. It found that the information and targeted communication efforts on social media have a substantial influence on people's intention and decision to travel to certain destinations (Gretzel & Fesenmaier, 2009).

It is therefore expected, with regard to parasocial interaction in YouTube, the attractiveness of the vlogger both socially and physically would contribute to more engaged audiences with the vlogs. Respectively, there would be more exposure to travel vlogs with more contribution to people's travel intentions accompanied by established country image. As a result, this study desires to explore the potential influences of parasocial interaction between a vlogger and viewers on their travel intentions.

1.2 Objectives of Study

Based on the rationale above, this study is conducted to achieve five

objectives:

1.2.1 To investigate the potential influences of travel vlogs on Indonesian

viewers' parasocial interaction.

1.2.2 To investigate the potential influences of parasocial interaction on

Indonesian viewers' country image of Thailand.

1.2.3 To investigate the potential influences of parasocial interaction on

Indonesian viewers' vlogger-viewer imagery fit.

1.2.4 To investigate the potential influences of Indonesian viewers'

countryimage of Thailand on their travel intentions to Thailand.

1.2.5 To investigate the potential influences of Indonesian viewers'

vlogger-viewer imagery fit on their travel intentions to Thailand.

1.3 Research Questions

According to the objectives of the research mentioned above, the following

research questions of this current research are developed:

RQ#1: Does travel vlogs have influences on Indonesian viewers' parasocial

interaction?

RQ#2: Does Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction have influences

on their perceived country image of Thailand?

RQ#3: Does Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction have influences

ontheir vlogger-viewer imagery fit?

RQ#4: Does Indonesian viewers' perceived country image of Thailand have influences on their travel intentions to Thailand?

RQ#5: Does Indonesian viewers' vlogger-viewer imagery fit have influences on their travel intentions to Thailand?

1.4 Scope of the Study

The specific social media which becomes the focus of this study is YouTube. YouTube which was founded in 2005 is a popular video site that is free to use for users to watch, like, share, comment, and upload their own videos. YouTube users are allowed to create and upload videos that are viewed and shared by hundreds of millions of viewers (Freeman & Chapman, 2007). Anyone with the Internet connection is able to share content on YouTube, whether they are organizations with large budgets or an individual with a video camera (Collins, 2018).

This study aims to examine how video blogs (vlogs) influence Indonesian viewers' country image, which in turn affects their travel intentions to Thailand. It focuses only the vlogs created by famous video blogger named Mark Wiens who ispassionate about food and travel shared on his YouTube channel called Migrationology. His YouTube channel has more than four million subscribers from around the world. Mark Wiens is based in Bangkok, Thailand, therefore creating a lotof contents that cover the story and his food adventure in Thailand as well. He mentioned on his YouTube channel that food is the reason you should travel (Wiens, 2009). Therefore, this study seeks to understand the interaction between Mark Wiens as vlogger and Indonesian viewers, and also the potential to influence viewers' country image of Thailand and their travel intentions to Thailand. So, three

hundred of Indonesian people who live in Indonesia will be needed as the samples or

participants in this study.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to give better understanding of perceived country

image of Thailand through Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction and will benefit

service providers, travel agencies, vloggers as content creators, scholars in marketing

communication and tourism, and also the tourism organizations in Thailand specially

the TAT to develop effective promotional campaigns for foreign tourists. Marketing

communication campaign using social media and famous celebrity or public figure as

tourism ambassador has ever been done before by the TAT to attract specific targets

through celebrity's influence because a lot of fans or followers will pay attention

(Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2016). Similarly, Mark Wiens whose YouTube

channel has earned more than five million subscribers from around the world may

generate positive influences on his viewers' perceived country image of Thailand,

vlogger-viewer imagery fit, and their travel intentions to Thailand.

The rise of social media gives benefit to travel agencies, accommodation

services, and airlines in a way they can use social networks to reach a huge number of

audiences to intake travel contents directly from their social media profiles because

there is free flow of information there. With this benefit, the marketing team of these

services can integrate social media into their strategies and create the conversations

between potential customers by themselves.

The vloggers are expected to get benefit in accumulating number of followers

and establishing credibility by understanding that the influence can be achieved from

their engagement with their followers which is developed through parasocial interaction that the vloggers provide in what they post on their social media profiles. In the study of parasocial interaction, the vloggers are seen as someone approachable, natural, and real compared to celebrities whose image and public appeal are more attached to a brand or a campaign.

This study intends to benefit digital marketing practitioners in adding the knowledge about social media marketing field that expands its coverage in businesses. Social media influencers, such as vloggers, can be the source of credibility and attractiveness in regard to endorsement that can shape viewers' attitudes through theircontents on social media. This also shares benefit to the policymakers related to the tourism in order to advance knowledge on the relevance of vloggers through which they influence viewers' country image and their travel intentions to the country andboost the tourism sector.

Understanding the influence of vloggers may benefit the government as well in managing tourism through collaboration with them. TAT, for example, can seek collaboration with vloggers who are knowledgeable about Thailand and have strong influence. The popularity of a vlogger mostly becomes the key that makes tourism business want to work with them. However, the number of followers is not necessarily the best indication of the success of the vlogger. According to The Realtime Report, the engagement of followers is seen as a far better indicator of how much influence does a vlogger has. The higher engagement between vlogger and viewers or followers, the stronger loyalty they have because the viewers are not only consuming the contents, but often feel a true connection and allegiance to the vlogger.As a result, viewers feel like a part of a community and take the content

much closer to them ("Power middle influencer", 2013).

1.6 Definition of Terms

 1.6.1 Parasocial Interaction

 Parasocial interaction is conceptualized by Rubin, Perse & Powell (1985, pp. 156-157) as "interpersonal involvement of the media user with what he or she consumes." The involvement includes "seeking guidance from a media persona, seeing media personalities as friends, imagining being part of a favorite program's social world, and desiring to meet media performers." First introduced by Horton & Wohl (1956), just like social relationships, this interaction develops over time and enhanced when media presentations resemble interpersonal interaction. This study aimed to explore the parasocial interaction between Mark Wiens and his Indonesian viewers.

 1.6.2 Social Attractiveness

 Social attractiveness refers to attraction towards media personality, which inthis study refers to the vlogger or YouTuber. Rubin & McHugh (1987) found media personalities who were attractive as social or work partners provided a better contextfor parasocial interaction. Social attractiveness can be described as a persona's personality that makes him or her likable. It is about how they speak, how they think,how they behave in social interaction. It is a predictor of parasocial interaction.

 1.6.3 Physical Attractiveness

 Physical attractiveness refers to vlogger's physical appearance whether the vlogger is seen as pretty, handsome, or good-looking with attractive facial features or

an attractive physical appearance. Along with social attractiveness, it is also a predictor of parasocial interaction. The perceived attractiveness both on social and physical aspects influence the development of parasocial interaction relationships.

1.6.4 Attitude Homophily

According to Eyal & Rubin (2003, p. 80), the definition of homophily is the degree to which people who interact are similar in beliefs, education, social status, and the like. In terms of parasocial interaction, the more viewers perceive similaritiesbetween their beliefs and the vlogger, the more likely the interaction between one andanother happens. Attitude homophily is an antecedent of parasocial interaction.

1.6.5 Perceived Country Image

According to Martin and Eroglu (1993), country image refers to "the total ofall descriptive, inferential and informational beliefs one has about a particular country". It is also suggested that "country image is the sum of beliefs and impressions people hold about places" (Rein, Kotler & Haider, 1993, p. 141). Perceived country image is formed in mind and can be heavily influenced by conscious communication. This study focuses on the country image of Thailand asperceived by Indonesian viewers.

1.6.6 Vlogger-Viewer Imagery Fit

Vlogger-viewer imagery fit is the overall assessment of the compatibility or match between vlogger and viewers, in which the term is developed from Miller & Mills (2012, p. 1474) study about luxury brand that is called brand-user imagery fit and it is described as the more a consumer assesses one's self to be similar to the typical brand-user, the more likely the individual consumer assesses the brand to be

ofvalue. Therefore, vlogger-viewer imagery fit is the viewers' overall assessment of the compatibility or match between themselves and other viewers of Mark Wiens's YouTube channel.

1.6.7 Travel Intention

Travel intention refers to individual's intention to travel or commitment to travel to a particular destination. This also serves as an outcome of a mental process that leads to an action and transforms motivation into behavior. The intention is an important mediator that connects motivation to future travel behavior (Jang, Bai, Hu & Wu, 2016). In the travel and tourism literature, travel intention is articulated in the scope of trip planning behavior involving dynamic decision-making and behavioral process. This study serves to examine whether Indonesian viewers' perceived countryimage of Thailand and vlogger-viewer imagery fit of Mark Wiens influence their travel intentions to Thailand.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter serves as a review on relevant literature of the study. It begins with a background information about vlogs, vloggers, and vlogger activities. This will also give other relevant literature includes parasocial interaction, perceived country image, behavioral intention, and Parasocial Interaction Theory to be applied as the theoretical framework of the study.

2.1 Vlogs, Vloggers and Vlogger Activities

The word "Vlog" is basically a video blog. A blog contains web pages with information, articles, images, news and other things that interest the uploaders. It is also often referred to as blog post (Chaffey, Ellis-Chadwick, Mayer & Johnston, 2009). According to Tang (2016), blogs help people to upload things that interest them and offer a platform for interaction, commenting, sharing ideas and online social activities, which dissolves physical and social barriers. Therefore, a video blog can be explained as a blog post in the form of a video.

The most well-known platform for vlogs is YouTube.com. Founded in 2005,it has over 1.9 Billion logged-in users visiting YouTube each month, and everyday viewers watch over a billion hours of video and this generates billions of views (YouTube, 2019). As vlogs are uploaded to YouTube by the users, this makes the vlogs become conversational videos that allows for conversations, invites participation and interaction between the uploader and the audience resulted from comments of the audience and responses by the uploader (Burgess, Green, Jenkins &

Hartley, 2009). According to Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht & Swartz (2004), most vlogs are authored by individuals and focus on personal themes. People who upload vlogs is also known as vlogger.

Molyneaux, O'Donnell, Gibson & Singer (2008) created five categories of vlog on their research: 1) personal vlogs, 2) entertainment vlogs, 3) YouTube vlogs, 4) public vlogs, and 5) technological vlogs. They explained that "personal vlogs" cover vloggers' personal lives and updates on their lives, "entertainment vlogs" include contents of comedy, movies, music or combination of these elements, "YouTube vlogs" are videos where people either ask questions for others to answer, respond to questions asked by other vloggers, or discuss other vlogs on YouTube, "public vlogs" are those that cover news or politics, and 'technological vlogs' are videos that cover discussion and/or reviews about technology.

Most people who are making vlogs are ordinary people who get likes and recognition from audience. The audience who finds the vlogs covering similar interests will subscribe to vlogger's channel on YouTube and this is making the vloggers YouTube stars. Since most vloggers are uploading their vlogs on YouTube, they are also called YouTubers or content creators (Zanatta, 2017). According to Turner (2010), vloggers on YouTube have been seen and recognized because they are associated with the mass medium and it makes them become part of the demotic turn. Nowadays, what people most search on YouTube is not just for entertainment, but also for information and instructions because the media and the world of ordinary people are merged by vloggers.
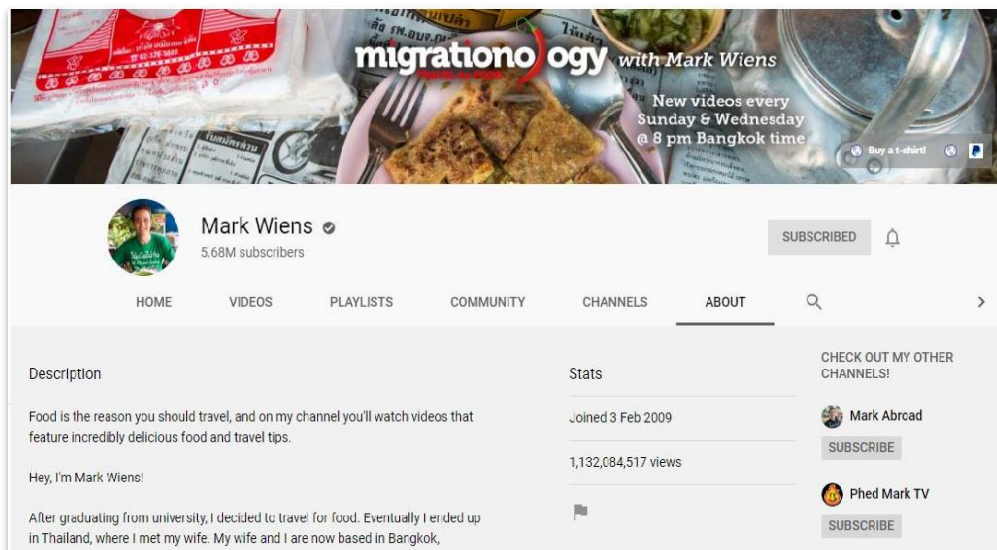
Figure 2.1: Mark Wiens's channel on YouTube

Source: *Mark Wiens*. (2020). Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/user/

migrationology/ about.

Mark Wiens, a vlogger from the United States started vlogging in 2009.

He came into vlogging as average person who used to work as an English teacher in

Thailand and thought that teaching is not his passion. He then set a personal goal to

find a way to make a living on the Internet so that he could do what he is passionate

about which are traveling, eating, and earning money at the same time. According to

Adami (2009), YouTube vlogs should have the element of interaction between the

vloggers for what they upload and the responses from their audiences. This helps

the vloggers to know what the audiences think about their vlogs, which pushes

the vloggers to be more creative about their contents along the way. Since started

vlogging in 2009, Mark Wiens has gained 4.2 million of subscribers with 787 million

of views for his vlogs on his channel (Figure 2.1).

On YouTube, vloggers should produce captivating contents in order to keep their audience engaged by making them relate to the things they see on videos (Smith, 2014). Mark Wiens (as written on his blog, Migrationology) once questioned himself, "photographs of food are great, but how can I share more of the atmosphere and the emotion of eating?"

From there, Mark Wiens started making simple street food videos with no ideaabout what he was doing. However, his vlogs have been gaining more views and this earns him a lot of subscribers to his YouTube channel. Since then, making food videos on YouTube is one of the main things he does. According to Lindblad (2013), having natural setting and relating with the audience in an authentic manner can make the audiences pay a little more attention to the contents which are things that are done or said by the vloggers. This creates interaction and brings the audience closer and also benefits both vloggers and audiences.

According to Burgess, et al. (2009), vloggers who make a constant effort of responding to comments of the audiences and acknowledge the suggestions of their audiences, and keep their interactions active are successful vloggers on YouTube. In addition, vloggers must not only concentrate on the message of the vlogs but they must pay attention to their persona, body language, the tone of their voices and facial expression that must go along with what they are saying (Aran, Biel & Gatica-Perez, 2014). It is also important to pay attention on quality and editing of the videos.

2.2 Social Attractiveness

Attraction has been known as an important part of interpersonal relationships. According to McCroskey & McCain (1974), the more attractive another individual is,

the more an individual will communicate with that person. Previous works point some connection between interpersonal relationship and parasocial interaction. One form of interpersonal relationship is friendship. Friendship is based on voluntary interaction and it involves personal focus (Wright, 1978). This is similar to parasocial interaction in which the interaction is also voluntary.

Particular interpersonal friendship rules also enhance understanding of parasocial interaction (Argyle & Henderson, 1984). The qualities of friendship are the focus used to measure parasocial interaction, such as seeing media personalities as humble person, feeling comfortable with them, and even feeling sorry for them when they make mistake (Rubin, et al., 1985). Koenig & Lessan (1985) added the term for television personalities as "quasi-friends" because viewers felt closer to them than to interpersonal acquaintances, even though the relationship was incomplete.

Rubin & McHugh (1987) found that social attraction appears to be a precursor to parasocial relationship development. For example, how some media personalities establish nonverbal gestures during conversations with the viewers that allow them to create a two-sided relationship through reactions to anticipated viewer comments. Social attractiveness is also interesting because even with a lack of physical cues, levels of high attraction based on social attraction can be found towards radio hosts (Rubin & Step, 2000).

2.3 Physical Attractiveness

Parasocial interaction is linked to certain responses from viewers to the media personalities. The interaction is enhanced if there is viewer involvement in it. Past research about parasocial interaction between soap opera characters and viewers suggested that a form

of affective program involvement associated with a personal focus on the physical attraction of the characters. Viewers give higher levels of attention to the program when the characters are physically attractive. Viewers attraction to media personalities, especially in form of physical attraction, contributesto popularity and success of the media personalities. Seeing them who are physically attractive, the viewers will be more likely to spend more time interacting with them because of the liking that is felt for them (Rubin & Perse, 1987).

Attraction to media personalities, especially physical attraction, contributes totheir popularity and success (Rubin et al., 2000). In product endorsement, attractiveness could be persuasive when the media personalities and media users wereof the same and opposite sex even if they had no involvement with the product they were endorsing (Praxmarer, 2011). Seeing the way that physical attraction can cause more liking in another individual, this also will relate to if and how people engage in parasocial interaction.

Olson & Marschuetz (2005) found that physical attractiveness is primarily determined by a person's facial attractiveness and is automatically and rapidly evaluated "at a glance" gives very powerful influence on the person's ability to persuade others, even when the person is not trying deliberately to persuade. Based on this research, Praxmarer (2011) found that liking of the presenter could therefore transfer directly to a favorable evaluation of the brand, which should increase brand purchase interest. The process would therefore be physical attractiveness of the presenter makes viewers liking of the presenter, and then creates their attitude toward the brand which leads to brand purchase interest.

2.4 Attitude Homophily

In interpersonal relationships, communication increases and becomes more effective when the two individuals are possessing similarities (McCroskey, Richmond & Daly, 1975). Accordingly, the interaction between viewers and media personalities or vloggers who are similar to the viewers will also help to fulfill particular needs they may have. For example, when viewers see that the vlogger is similar to them, it will fulfill a need for information seeking, socialization, personal identity, affiliation, and consistency. Information seeking and personal identity are much easier to satisfy when interacting with a similar vlogger since they confirm self-concept and the information gained can be more easily applied to personal situations. Meanwhile, the interaction itself contributes to socialization, affiliation, and consistency which is more frequent with similar vlogger.

Turner (1993) also found that attitude homophily was a predictor of parasocialinteraction. Parasocial interaction is more likely to occur when viewers perceive the vlogger to be similar to themselves and others in their interpersonal network. In socialmedia era, Frederick, Lim, Clavio & Walsh (2012) tried to apply these constructs to examine the interaction between professional athletes and their fans on Twitter. Their research gave results which indicated perceived realism, viewing frequency, attractiveness, and attitude homophily were significantly correlated with parasocialinteraction. Being similar to another person helps one predict the actions and interactions of that person. Homophily helps to satisfy social and identification needs,as well as provides vicarious verification of how to act in interpersonal settings (Bandura, 2001).

2.5 Parasocial Interaction

Parasocial interaction theory is one of the earliest theoretical approaches that connects mass communication and interpersonal social settings. The concept of parasocial interaction was introduced by Horton & Wohl (1956). The concept was known ahead of ubiquitous interactive computer technology. Consequently, Horton & Wohl (1956) concept of parasocial interaction focused primarily on nonfictional mass media performers, such as newscasters, that were typical in 1950s. For example, when the audience intuitively feels a sense of mutual awareness and attention towards a newscaster of news show who looks into the camera to greet the audience. According to Giles (2002), many have studied parasocial interaction using television personalities such as newscasters or characters from soap opera. People or fans who follow them on the media grow to know them through observation of their life. Some suggest that parasocial interaction may be a functional alternative to interpersonal relationships for certain people (Rubin & McHugh, 1987).

Frederick, et al. (2012) found that parasocial interaction explains the relationship between media personalities and media users. There is also interpersonal involvement of the media users with what they consume. The involvement includes seeking guidance from media personalities, seeing them as friends, imagining being part of a show or program, and then desiring to meet these media personalities (Rubin,et al., 1985). In the digital era, the relationships between media personalities and media users have been increased with the appearance of social media that provide easy interactions (Stever & Lawson, 2013).

Figure 2.2: Interaction between Mark Wiens and viewer on his YouTube channel

Source: Wiens, M. (2012a). *Klong Toey Market-Bangkok's breadbasket (*ตลาดคลองเตย*.)*

Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ru9qYqD7yul.

Consequently, this makes media users relate with media figures as friends justas they relate with their friends in real world. According to research conducted by Lee & Watkins (2016), media users sometimes want to associate with the media personalities and assume that they belong to the same social world and try sharing information to each other as seen in Figure 2.2.

They further explained that the relationship which exists on YouTube betweenthe vloggers and their audiences can be explained by the parasocial interaction theorybecause they share an aspect of their lives that "normal celebrities" do not normally share with their fans under normal circumstances (Lee & Watkins, 2016). O'Neil-Hart& Blumenstein (2016) reported that YouTube vloggers are more influential than traditional celebrities because of their friendly nature and how they

communicate withtheir viewers. Furthermore, in term of endorsement for example, about seventy percent (70%) of the young population felt they had a better relation with these YouTube vloggers than the traditional celebrities because it was easier to believe endorsements from the vloggers.

Mostly, the relaxed nature of the vlogs on YouTube and how the vloggers share their experiences, personal stories and encounters with their viewers, make the viewers feel relaxed and feel like they were a part of the vlogger's life (Colliander & Erlandsson, 2015). This develops an imaginary friendship between the vloggers and their viewers, or better known as fans. Moreover, this supports the building of trust and connection, as well as a sense of similarity that their viewers have towards the vloggers. The similarities in terms of many things such as interests, belief, hobbies, education, background, or physique are giving the viewers a positive perception towards the vloggers.

According to Stever & Lawson (2013), the emergence of connecting with media personalities through social media has sparked a new area of academic research on parasocial interaction. YouTube for instance, allows two-way communication and a more balanced relationship between vloggers and viewers. However, they also argued that to date research has indicated that interactions are still mostly one-way.

Although, YouTube gives the viewers more exposure or access to vloggers' personal life, the vloggers still control reciprocation in the relationship. With repeated exposureto vloggers, the relationship between both is developed to the higher level where viewers start to see the vloggers as a trusted source of information and see out theiradvice (Rubin, et al., 1985), as can be seen in Figure 2.3.
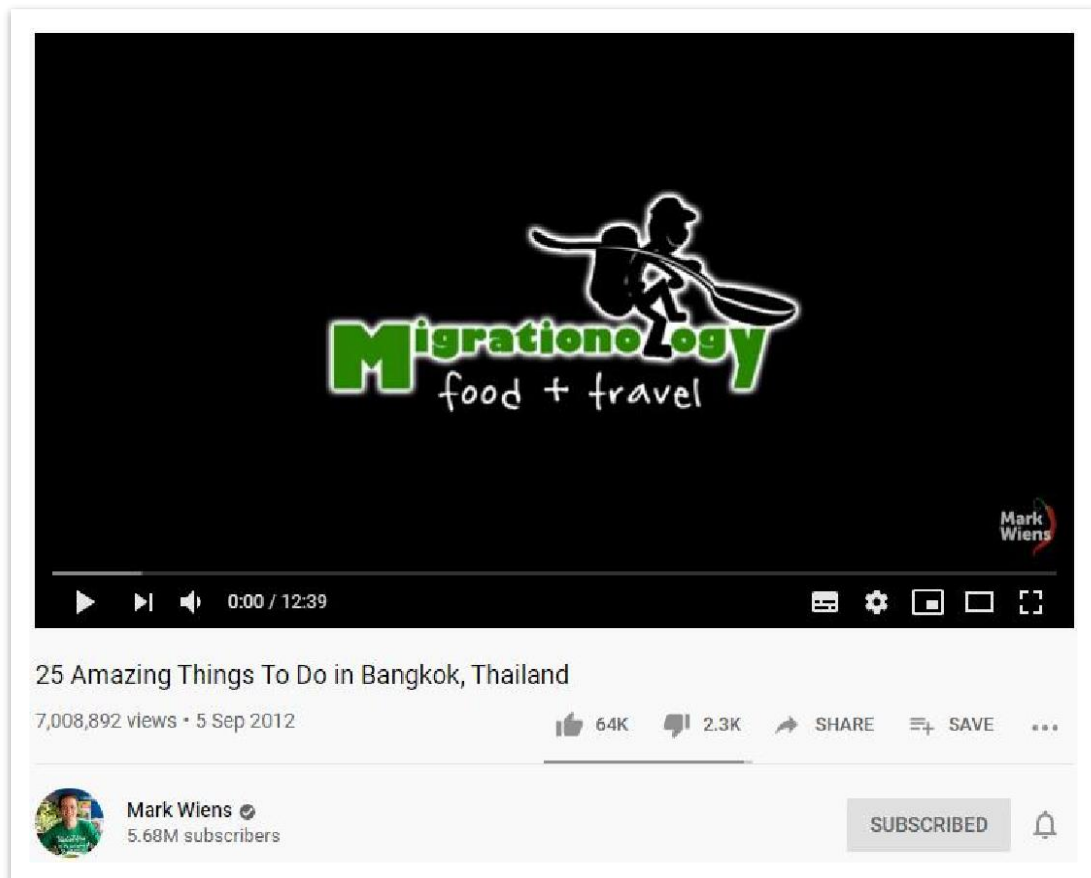
Figure 2.3: Vlog of what Mark Wiens thinks are the absolute best things to do

in Bangkok

Source: Wiens, M. (2012b). *25 Amazing Things to Do in Bangkok, Thailand*.

Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6VQsOvNvy

Q&t=127s.

Parasocial interaction has also been used to examine the influence of theory onconsumer-brand relationships. Labrecque (2014) conducted a research which found out that parasocial interaction enhanced feelings of connectedness with brands and it led to the increase of brand loyalty and willingness to share personal information with the brand. Based on this, in this study, the author tries to find out if parasocial

interaction with vlogger (Mark Wiens) and his vlogs about Thailand give potential influences on Indonesian viewers' country image of Thailand and influence their travel intentions to Thailand.

The literature review above leads to the development of the following three hypotheses:

HP#1: Social attractiveness has influences on Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction.

HP#2: Physical attractiveness has influences on Indonesian Viewers' parasocial interaction.

HP#3: Attitude homophily has influences on Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction.

2.6 Perceived Country Image

According to Martin & Eroglu (1993), country image refers to "the total ofall descriptive, inferential and informational beliefs one has about a particular country". It is also suggested that "country image is the sum of beliefs and impressions people hold about places" (Rein, et al., 1993). Country image is studied as discursive phenomena in personal, organizational, and mass-mediated communication from the perspective of communication science. It has attracted attention in analyses on international communication, on media content and effects, and to a lesser extent on organizational communication and communication management.

Mass-mediated country image has been the main focus on communication science. The dynamics of coverage of countries in the international news show the

strong effect of mass-mediated country images on the formation of public opinion about foreign countries (Wanta, Golan & Lee, 2004). The fact that mass media play role in the formation of country image has enhanced numerous content analyses which evaluate image of certain countries as portrayed in foreign media (Wu, 1997). The concept of the country image is predominantly unidimensional (for instance, covering valence from positive to negative tonality) or based on stereotypes or themes in media content like for example temples, Muay Thai, and elephants for Thailand.

Kunczik (2003) gave definition of country image as the awareness of person about countries or beliefs of person about a nation and its people. A positive country image of a particular country becomes the important thing that needs to be maintained and established. Maher & Carter (2011) offer two components of country image, emotion and cognition, that are independent of one another and that have a causal impact upon country conations (Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009). Based on the conceptual model by Buhmann & Ingenhoff (2015), country image is defined as a multi-dimensional construct, which consists of four dimensions; functional, normative, esthetic, and emotional dimensions.

Buhmann & Ingenhoff (2015) explained that the functional dimension, covers beliefs regarding the competences and competitiveness of a country, is specified with reference to the two country attributes of national economy and political organization. This dimension consists of specific judgments regarding the state of the economy and national businesses, the competitiveness of a country's products and services, its labor markets and educational system, the competences and effectiveness of the political system, as well as the country's performance in research and technology.

Second is the normative dimension, which covers beliefs regarding the integrity of a country, is specified in relation to the country attribute of norms and values. Third, the esthetic dimension, which covers beliefs regarding the esthetic qualities and the attractiveness of a country as a cultural and scenic place, is specified by drawing on the country attributes of public culture, traditions, and territory. It comprises specific judgments regarding the attractiveness of a country's culture and traditions as well as the beauty of its landscapes. Finally, the sympathetic dimension, which refers to the affective component of the country image construct, consists of general feelings of sympathy and fascination for

a country.
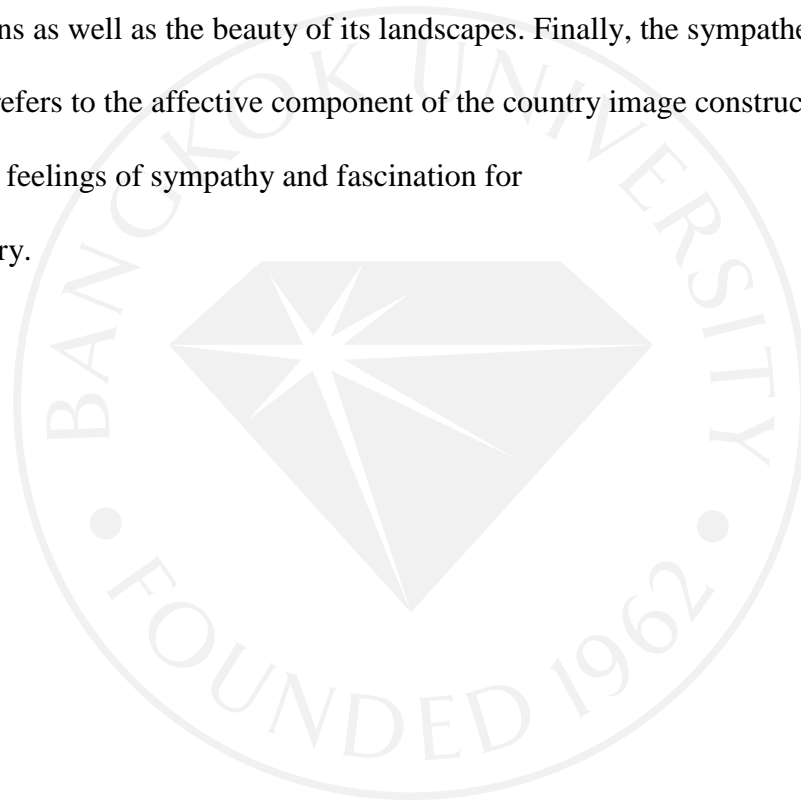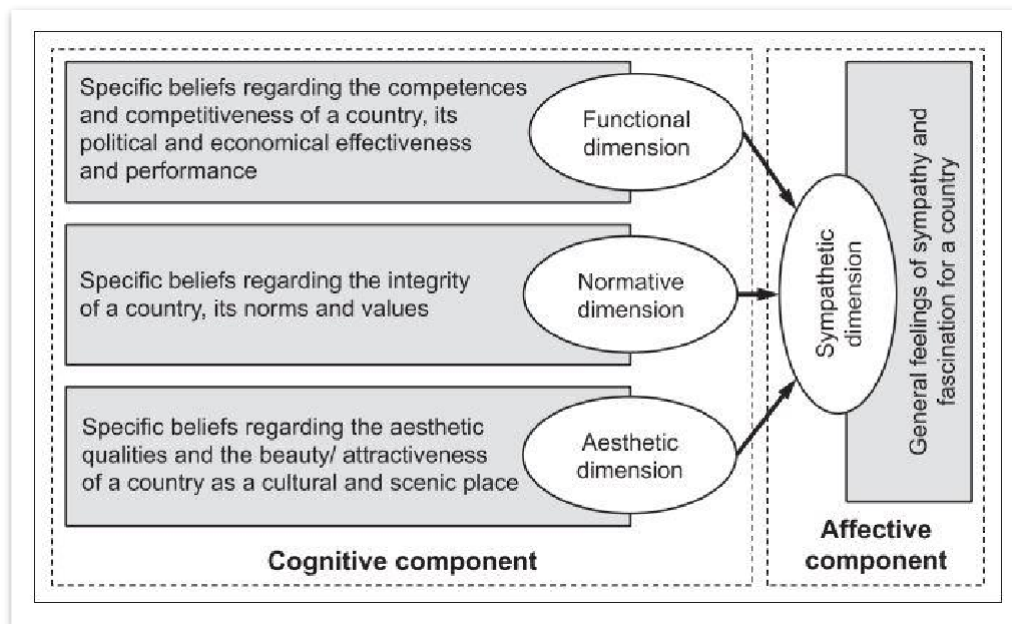
Figure 2.4: The 4D Model of the country image

Source: Buhmann, A., & Ingenhoff, D. (2015). The 4D model of the country image:

An integrative approach from the perspective of communication

management. *The International Communication Gazette, 77*(1), 102-124.

Punnahitanond (2018, pp. 97-98) in her research about how Thailand being

portrayed by international news media that impacts on international audiences' travel

intention on a case study of the Thai Cave Rescue, offered finding of Thailand's

perceived country image on these four dimensions:

In terms of functional dimension, it was shown that the Thai authorities,

especially the Navy seals, have an efficient management for the rescue operations

while collaborating with the U.S. air force rescue specialists, and cave divers from

the U.K., Belgium, Australia, Scandinavia, and many other countries. The search

and rescue were strategically planned by considering multiple rescue options and

calculating the risks to identify perfect conditions for evacuation. In addition, standardized health care services inside and outside the cave were given by qualified health care providers and well-equipped local hospitals. The rescue workers and international volunteers worked together in a constructive way toward a common goal. All who involved also showed positive thinking and never gave up regardless complex operations, and made a miraculously successful rescue effort.

In terms of normative dimension, it was revealed that Thailand strongly holdsBuddhist virtues, which involves mindfulness, tolerance, apology, gratitude, forgiveness, and emotional support. The ability of the lost boys, and divers to keep their minds clear certainly come from the practice of meditation as taught by Buddhism. As a former monk, the coach helped his young football players stay calm during their long wait in the cave.

As for the esthetic dimension, it was shown that Thailand was portrayed as a country with aesthetic qualities, in terms of history and tradition regarding spirituality,where the boys' families shouted for the boys' name and kept vigil for the cape spirit Nangnon at the mouth of the cave, and their classmates held group prayers, sang songs of encouragement into the cave, folded paper cranes, and posted messages of hope on school noticeboards. In term of landscapes and scenery, the usual fare of elephants and beautiful scenery of Chiang Rai and its astonishing landscape of the Tham Luang cave were extensively covered in the international news reports. In addition, there were also coverages on food service for volunteer that served local cuisines such as papaya salad, Padthai, and curry. Finally, the artistic talents were prominently presented by the local artists' huge mural honoring rescue heroes.

As for the sympathetic dimension, it was revealed that Thai people were viewed as possessing amazing characteristics including determination, passion, hard work, heroism, courage, strength, resilience, solidarity, patience, selflessness, generosity, and caring, which impressed global audience.

As a result, the fourth research hypothesis is proposed:

HP#4: Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction has influences on their perceived country image of Thailand.

2.7 Vlogger-Viewer Imagery Fit

This term is developed from Miller & Mills (2012, p. 1474) study about luxury brand. Their study seeks to contribute clarity by examining brand luxury in the fashion market. Miller and Mills provided Brand Luxury Model constructs and their definitions in the research which applied survey method using four-step procedure by Netemeyer, Bearden & Sharma (2003). One construct that is used and developed for this study is brand-user-imagery-fit which is defined as a consumer's overall assessment of the compatibility or match between themselves and users of the brand (Sirgy, Mangleburg, Park, Chan, Claiborne, Johar, et al., 1997).

Miller & Mills (2012) noted that some luxury brand authors discuss the extended self, the image and the status of the luxury of the brand associating with the self-concept as a reason why consumers desire luxury. The consumer's desire is also to enhance the ideal social self, which is a consequence of owning a luxury brand. There is also a link between the self-concept relating to brand value and purchase. According to Sirgy, et al. (1997), the more a consumer assesses one's self to be similarto (or match) the typical brand-user, the more likely the individual consumer

assesses the brand to be of value and or is willing to pay a premium for the brand.

Furthermore, Miller & Mills (2012) developed three hypotheses related to brand-user imagery fit: 1) Luxury brand directly affects brand-user-imagery fit, 2) Brand- user imagery fit directly affects brand value, and 3) Brand-user imagery fit directly affects willingness to pay a premium. Based on this research, brand-user imagery fitconstruct is developed as vlogger-viewer imagery fit for this study and applied on parasocial interaction between vlogger and viewers, and viewers' travel intention toThailand. Therefore, the following two research hypotheses are developed:

HP#5: Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction has influences on their vlogger-viewer imagery fit.

HP#6: Indonesian viewers' vlogger-viewer imagery fit has influences on their intentions to travel to Thailand.

2.8 Behavioral Intention

Behavioral intention comes from the individuals' interests in something that they really want to do. As defined by the Committee on Communication for Behavior (2002), behavioral intention is "as a person's perceived likelihood or subjective probability that he or she will engage in a given behavior." Esper & Rateike (2010) found a cognitive factor, an emotional factor, and an intentional factor in individual's attitude.

The cognitive factor refers to personal knowledge and belief in the attitude targeting, emotional factor which indicates personal feeling or emotion, and intentional factor that presents in personal action or behavioral intention of the

attitude target (Li, 2014). Hsiao, Lu & Lan (2013) regarded cognitive factor and emotional factor as the determinants of attitude which are the overall evaluation determined by belief and feeling, while the behavioral tendency is determined by attitude. It suffices to say that when individuals become interested in a particular destination, they are likely to visit it due to their personal intention.

Punnahitanond (2018, pp. 99-100) research about Thailand's image regardingcountry image suggested that individuals with positive perceived country image in term of cognitive components tend to have a positive perceived country image towardThailand in terms of affective component. A stronger impact of cognitive component of the country image significantly influenced travel intention to a larger extent than affective component. It also suggested that the travel intention is influenced by the exposure to the news about Thailand and country image. Accordingly, the following research hypothesis is proposed:

HP#7: Indonesian viewers' perceived country image of Thailand has influences on their intentions to travel to Thailand.

2.9 Conceptual Framework

Based on the past studies, Figure 2.5 shows the conceptual framework for this research that is developed from Lee & Watkins (2016) research. Both social and physical attractiveness together with attitude homophily are viewed as predictors of parasocial interaction between vlogger (Mark Wiens) and his viewers. Consequently, positive effects of Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction on their perceived country image of Thailand (Punnahitanond, 2018, pp. 97-98) and logger-viewer imagery fit are expected, which in turn influence their travel intentions to Thailand.

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┌──────────────┐
│    Social    │
│ Attractiveness│──H1──┐
│of Mark Wiens │      │
└──────────────┘      ▼
┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐   H5  ┌──────────────┐   H6  ┌──────────────┐
│   Physical   │   │  Parasocial  │──────▶│   Vlogger-   │──────▶│    Travel    │
│ Attractiveness│─H2│  Interaction │       │    Viewer    │       │ Intention to │
│of Mark Wiens │   └──────────────┘       │ Imagery Fit  │       │   Thailand   │
└──────────────┘         │  H4            └──────────────┘       └──────────────┘
┌──────────────┐         ▼                ┌──────────────┐
│   Attitude   │      ┌──────────────┐    │  Perceived   │   H7
│ Homophily of │──H3──│              │    │   Country    │
│ Mark Wiens   │      │              │    │    Image     │
└──────────────┘      └──────────────┘    └──────────────┘
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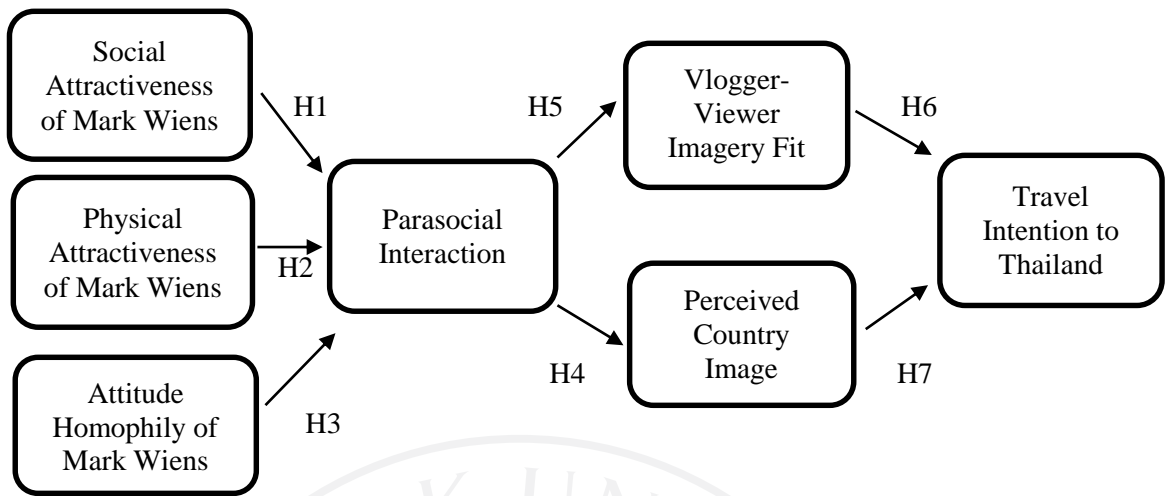
Figure 2.5: Conceptual Framework

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter serves to explain the research design, participants of the study, research instruments, data collection procedure, and data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

This study uses a quantitative approach with survey research method. It is based on the conceptual framework that is developed from two past researches which studied about social media, YouTube vloggers, parasocial interaction, and country image. The first study is from Lee & Watkins (2016) about YouTube vloggers' influence on consumer luxury brand perceptions that leads to their intention to purchase the luxury brand.

Secondly, the study from Punnahitanond (2018) investigates the image of Thailand framed by international news media during the Thai Cave Rescue period in 2018, whether or not it has influences on audiences' intention to visit Thailand after being exposed to the news of the event. Accordingly, these two studies are seen relevant to contribute to the research design of this study.

Survey research was used as an appropriate research method for this study because it is designed to deal more directly with the nature of people's thoughts, opinions, and feelings (Shaughnessy, Zechmeister & Jeanne, 2011, p. 138). The primary instrument of survey research is the questionnaire. Then, the survey data wereanalyzed to find out whether there is the influence of travel vlogger on Indonesian viewers' perceived country image and their travel intentions to Thailand.

3.2 Participants of the Study

      Mark Wiens is chosen as the vlogger in this study because he has 5.68 million of subscribers with 1.13 billion of views for his vlogs on his channel per 20th of March 2020. The language he uses on his vlogs is English which can be understoodby viewers outside Thailand. Viewers can easily find Thailand travel vlogs and plentyof Thai food videos as that is where he is based. According to NoxInfluencer's stats and analytics per 20th of March 2020 on Audience Age and Gender, the viewers are dominated by female with 65% and male 35% aged 13 until 64 years old.
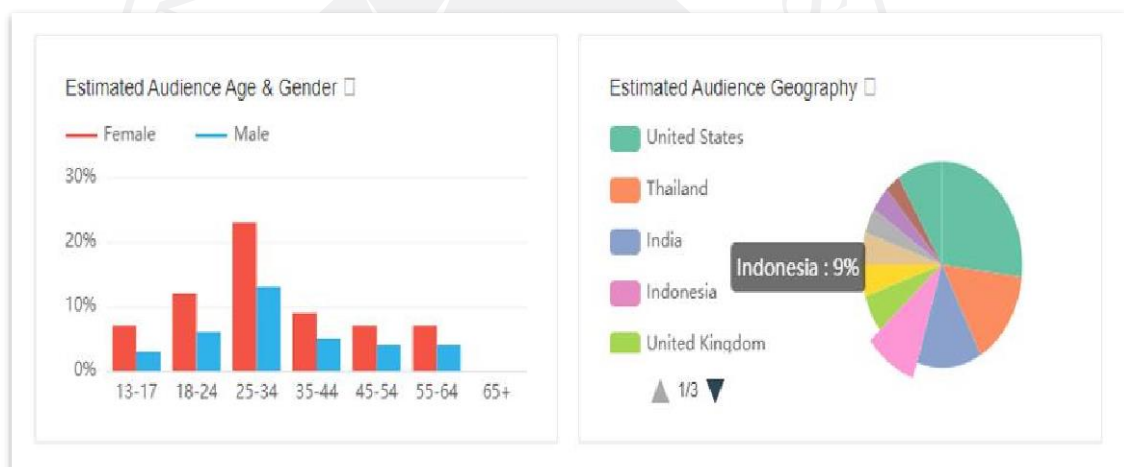

Figure 3.1: Audience Age & Gender of Mark Wiens's YouTube Channel

Source: *Mark Wiens YouTube stats and dashboards.* (2021). Retrieved from

      https://www.noxinfluencer.com/youtube/channel/UCyEd6QBSgat5kkC6

      svyjudA.

Most viewers are in the age range of 25–34 years old with 23% female and 13% male, followed by group of 18–24 years old with 6% male and 12% female. Group of 35–44 years has 5% male and 9% of female viewers. The youngest viewer group is 13–17 years old with 7% of female viewers and 3% of male viewers. The last are older viewers divided into two groups of 45–54 years old viewers with 7% female and 4% male, then 55–64 years old viewer with 7% of female viewers and 4% of male viewers.

Most views that Mark Wiens got for his videos are from the United States with 27% of audience, followed by Thailand with 15% of audience, India with 13% of audience, and Indonesia on the 4th place with 9% of audience. The rest are the United Kingdom (6%), the Philippines and Malaysia (5%), Canada and Singapore (4%), Australia (3%), and other countries (9% of total audience).

As for the survey, target population are Indonesian viewers who do not live in Thailand. Audience from Indonesia contribute a lot of views to Mark Wiens's videos, the initial sample size is 300, aged 18 years old to 44 years old following the prominent age range of channel's viewers, male and female who are active on YouTube and interested in travel and food vlogs. In addition to this, the participants also have to be active on YouTube and ever watched at least five videos about Thailand from Mark Wiens's YouTube channel within the last 6 months. If a personis within the 18 to 44-year age range, active on YouTube, actively watch vlogs but never watched Mark Wiens's vlogs, they should not continue answering the survey.

In terms of the sampling method, the non-probability sampling was used because it is cost and time efficient as this research is bounded by time, money, and workforce (target population are not in Thailand). Two methods of non-probability

sampling were used: purposive sampling and snowball sampling. It was started with purposive sampling where the samples were selected on the basis of researcher's judgement about which ones would be the most useful or representative, such as recruiting Indonesian friends to participate as initial participants. Then, it was continued with snowball sampling where the samples were extended by asking the initial participants for referral for possible new participants. With the combination of these two methods, the intended number of samples can be achieved.

3.3 Research Instruments

This research employed the quantitative approach and applied the survey research method. The instrument of this study was a self-administered online questionnaire using SurveyMonkey. It is based and developed from past researches by Lee & Watkins (2016) and Punnahitanond (2018). Some measurements by McCroskey, L. L., McCroskey, J. C., & Richmond (2006) were also utilized.

The questionnaire comprises of eight section as described below:

Section A: Personal Data

Respondents were asked about their gender, age, marital status, occupation, and education.

Section B: YouTube Exposure

Respondents were asked two questions. The first one is how much time spent on YouTube watching travel vlogs with a five point-scale ranging from 1 = short (lessthan 30 minutes/ day), 2 = quite short (30–60 minutes/ day), 3 = moderate (>1 hour –2 hours/ day), 4 = quite long (>2 – 3 hours/ day), to 5 = long (> 3 hours/ day). Anotherquestion is how many Mark Wiens's vlogs they have watched.

Section C: Attitude homophily

This variable was measured using five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree). Eight items measuring attitude homophily for Mark Wiens are shown below (Lee & Watkins, 2016, p. 5756):

1) Mark Wiens thinks like me.

2) Mark Wiens is like me.

3) Mark Wiens is similar to me.

4) Mark Wiens shares my values.

5) Mark Wiens has a lot in common with me.

6) Mark Wiens behaves like me.

7) Mark Wiens expresses attitudes similar like mine.

8) Mark Wiens has thoughts and ideas that are similar to mine.

Section D: Vlogger's Attractiveness

These two variables were measured using five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, and5 = strongly agree).

1) Social attractiveness

Five items (Lee & Watkins, 2016, p. 5756) measuring Mark Wiens's social attractiveness are:

1.1) I think Mark Wiens could be a friend of mine.

1.2) I would love to have a friendly chat with Mark Wiens.

1.3) Mark Wiens is a natural, down-to-earth person.

1.4) Mark Wiens would be pleasant to be with.

1.5) Mark Wiens treats people like I do.

2) Physical attractiveness

Three items (Lee & Watkins, 2016, p. 5756) measuring Mark Wiens's

physical attractiveness are:

2.1) I find Mark Wiens very attractive physically.

2.2) I think Mark Wiens is quite handsome.

2.3) Mark Wiens is very good looking.

Section E: Parasocial interaction

This variable was measured using five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly

disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly

agree). Ten items (Lee & Watkins, 2016, p. 5756) measuring parasocial interactionare

shown below:

1) I look forward to watching Mark Wiens's vlogs on his YouTube channel.

2) If Mark Wiens appeared on another YouTube channel, I would watch that

video.

3) When I am watching Mark Wiens's vlogs, I feel as if I am part of his

group.

4) I think Mark Wiens is like an old friend.

5) I would like to meet Mark Wiens in person.

6) If there were stories about Mark Wiens in a newspaper or magazine,

Iwould read it.

7) Mark Wiens makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.

8) I miss Mark Wiens when I do not see his vlogs for a while.

9) When Mark Wiens shows me how he feels about places he visits in Thailand, it helps me make up my own mind about visiting Thailand.

10) I could rely on Mark Wiens's travel recommendation and advice.

Section F: Vlogger-viewer imagery fit

This variable was measured using five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree). Three items (Lee & Watkins, 2016, p. 5756) measuring vlogger-viewer imagery fit are presented below:

1) I am very much like the typical people who like watching Mark Wiens's YouTube Channel.

2) I see myself similar to people who like watching Mark Wiens's YouTube Channel.

3) People think Mark Wiens's image is more like my image than other vloggers.

Section G: Perceived country image

This variable was measured by 15 items of image attributes derived from the original 30 items of Rittichainuwat, et al. (2001) that are modified into image attributes of normative and aesthetic dimensions only to fit with the country image that can be found on Mark Wiens's vlogs by using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree).

1) Beautiful architecture and buildings (Grand palace, temples).

2) Numerous culture/historical attractions.

3) Interesting customs and cultures (Buddhism, Songkran).

4) A variety of cuisine (i.e., Thai, Chinese, International).

5) Easy to find halal food.

6) Friendly and helpful local residents.

7) Exciting entertainments and night life.

8) Scenic natural beauty (seas, beaches, national parks).

9) Availability of many accommodation choices.

10) Convenient local transportation system (buses, trains, taxis, tuk-tuk,

boats).

11) Opportunity for adventure (jungle tour trekking, rafting, water activities).

12) Restful and relaxing atmosphere.

13) A safe place to travel.

14) Good bargain shopping and value for money (good quality at reasonable

prices).

15) Good vacation place for children and family.

Section H: Travel behavior

Respondents were asked three questions regarding their travel behaviors:

1) "Past visit to Thailand" will be measured by using number of times

the respondents visited Thailand on six different purposes namely vacation, business/

work, academic/training, medical treatment, visiting friends/relatives, and en-route

tosomewhere else by a three-point scale (0 = never, 1 = once, 2 = more than once).

2) "Satisfaction on past visit to Thailand" will be measured by using a

three-point scale (1 = unsatisfied, 2 = neither unsatisfied nor satisfied, 3 = satisfied).

For respondents who never visited Thailand can choose another answer (4 = cannot

answer).

3) "Intention to travel to Thailand" will be measured by using respondents' degree of agreement and disagreement with three statements regarding their intention to travel to Thailand within one year by using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree). These measurements were developed from a research by Lu, Hung, Wang, Schuett & Hu (2016) about examination of seniors' travel behavior and time perspectives.

Question that is measuring travel intention was adjusted to fit in with this health crisis during COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 that made a global impact especially on overseas travel intention where many countries in the world have called for lockdown. With this regard, the respondents were being asked about their intention to travel to Thailand assuming if COVID-19 issues are resolved.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

After the final version of survey questionnaire was approved, it was pretested with 30 persons to assure the validity and reliability of measurement. Then, Indonesian citizens were contacted via social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, LINE, WhatsApp) and requested for their research participation. After the samples accepted to participate, the self-administered questionnaires were distributed through online channels via SurveyMonkey. Two screening questions allow researcher to screen out the participants who are not qualified for this study. The participants were allowed one week to complete the questionnaires. After data collection was completed, data were checked and cleaned. The suitable statistical software was used to analyze the data and tested the proposed research hypotheses.

3.5 Data Analysis

All measurement scales were examined for reliability test. The collected survey data were analyzed using inferential statistics which helped to test causal relationship between all of the variables in the conceptual framework (social attractiveness, physical attractiveness, attitude homophily, perceived country image, vlogger-viewer imagery fit, and travel intention).

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was used to test HP#1, HP#2, HP#3, HP#6, and HP#7 in which these hypotheses consist of more than one independent variable and only a single dependent variable. As for HP#4 and HP#5, Simple Linear Regression was conducted for hypothesis testing separately where each hypothesis has both a single independent variable and a single dependent variable.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of this study. Descriptive statistics of respondents' personal information and the examined variables based on the conceptual model were presented, followed by the inferential statistics used to test the proposed research hypotheses. The survey collected 153 total of respondents which isonly half of the initial samples of 300 participants. This should be noted that one respondent is 51 years old and out of age range for this study. Therefore, one respondent was not counted. Total valid samples are 152 respondents.

4.1 Results of Descriptive Statistics on Respondents' Personal Information

Respondent's personal information including gender, age, marital status, occupation, and education were analyzed in terms of frequency and percentage asshown in the followings:

Table 4.1 below showed that majority of respondents are female, with 94 respondents, accounted for 61.8%. Meanwhile, 58 respondents are male, accountedfor 38.2% of the total.

Table 4.1: Frequency and Percentage of Respondents' Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	58	38.2
Female	94	61.8
Total	152	100

Following the prominent age range of channel's viewers that is 18–44 years old, the result in Table 4.2 showed that majority of respondents are in their mid-20s to early 30s (25–32 years old with total percentage of 70.7%). Mean of the respondents' age is 28 years old. N = 151 (one respondent did not answer the question).

Table 4.2: Frequency and Percentage of Respondents' Age

Age	Frequency	Percent
18	1	0.7
19	3	2.0
20	4	2.6
21	2	1.3
22	3	2.0
23	3	2.0
24	5	3.3
25	8	5.3

(Continued)

Table 4.2 (Continued): Frequency and Percentage of Respondents' Age

Age	Frequency	Percent
26	3	2.0
27	23	15.2
28	13	8.6
29	28	18.5
30	12	7.9
31	12	7.9
32	9	6.0
33	7	4.6
34	1	0.7
35	5	3.3
36	3	2.0
38	1	0.7
39	1	0.7
40	2	1.3
41	1	0.7
43	1	0.7
Total	151	100

For the marital status, as seen in Table 4.3 below, most of respondents are single (84.9%), and the rest are married, accounted for 15.1%. There are no respondents who are widowed or divorced.

Table 4.3: Frequency and Percentage of Respondents' Marital Status

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
Single	129	84.9
Married	23	15.1
Total	152	100

With regard to the occupation, Table 4.4 showed that most respondents are company employee (43.4%), followed by government or public enterprise officer (22.4%), self-employed (11.2%), student (10.5%) teacher/ lecturer (5.9%), and freelancer (4.6%). Meanwhile, those who chose other (2%) are trader, housewife, and volunteer.

Table 4.4: Frequency and Percentage of Respondents' Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percent
Government/ Public Enterprise officer	34	22.4
Company employee	66	43.4
Freelancer	7	4.6
Self-employed	17	11.2
Teacher/ Lecturer	10	5.9
Student	16	10.5
Other	3	2.0
Total	152	100

As for the education, Table 4.5 showed that more than half of respondents have undergraduate degree education (59.2%), followed by graduate degree (31.6%). The rest are high school education (5.3%) and post graduate degree education (3.9%).

Table 4.5: Frequency and Percentage of Respondents' Education

Education	Frequency	Percent
High School	8	5.3
Undergraduate Degree	90	59.2
Graduate Degree	48	31.6
Post Graduate Degree	7	3.9
Total	152	100

4.2 Results of Descriptive Statistics on Respondents' YouTube Usage and Exposure to Mark Wiens's YouTube Channel

The analysis of respondent's YouTube usage and exposure to Mark Wiens's YouTube channel includes how much time spent on YouTube for watching travel vlogs and how many Mark Wiens's video respondents have been watching within the past six months. The frequency and percentage are shown as follows:

In purpose of spending time to watching travel vlogs on YouTube, Table 4.6 showed the most respondents usually spend 30–60 minutes per day, accounted for 48.3%, followed by more than 1–2 hours per day (31.5%), less than 30 minutes per day (16.1%), more than 2–3 hours per day (2.7%), and more than 3 hours per day (1.3%).

The respondents are also being asked about how many Mark Wiens's videos they have been watching within past six months. All of the respondents mentioned more than five videos as the survey informed that respondents are eligible to participate in the survey if only, they have watched at least five videos about Thailand from Mark Wiens's YouTube channel. N = 149 (three respondent did not answer the question).

Table 4.6: Frequency and Percentage of Respondents' YouTube Usage

YouTube Usage	Frequency	Percent
Less than 30 minutes/ day	24	16.1
30–60 minutes/ day	72	48.3
> 1 hour–2 hours/ day	47	31.5
> 2–3 hours/ day	4	2.7
> 3 hours/ day	2	1.3
Total	149	100

4.3 Results of Descriptive Statistics on Examined Variables

Descriptive statistics in terms of frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to analyze the variables of interest. Based on the conceptual model, analysis results of independent variables were presented first, followed by mediating variable, and dependent variable. It is also noted that a couple of respondents did not answer some questions, hence, there was inconsistency on the number of samples for each variable.

Table 4.7 presented the mean and standard deviation along with the measurement of internal consistency between items in each scale. All of the Cronbach's Alpha values are found to be greater than .70 without removal of any items within scales to increase the values which means the survey measurement is reliable. It should be noted that one item in "Intention to Travel to Thailand" that is worded negatively has been reverse-coded in order to achieve consistency of the responses.

Interpreting the mean scores yield that samples have high level of attitude homophily ($\bar{X}$ = 3.78, *S.D.* = 4.19), high level of vlogger's social attractiveness ($\bar{X}$ = 4.27, *S.D.* = 2.42), high level of vlogger's physical attractiveness ($\bar{X}$ = 3.85, *S.D.* = 2.60), high level of parasocial interaction ($\bar{X}$ = 4.11, *S.D.* = 5.14), high level of vlogger-viewer imagery fit ($\bar{X}$ = 3.80, *S.D.* = 1.91), high level of perceived country image of Thailand ($\bar{X}$ = 4.01, *S.D.* = 7.11), and high level of travel intentions to Thailand ($\bar{X}$ = 4.10, *S.D.* = 2.24).

Table 4.7: Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Analysis of Variables

Variable	N	Mean	S.D.	No. of Item	Cronbach's Alpha
Attitude Homophily	149	3.779	4.18672	8	.934
Vlogger's Attractiveness				8	
- Social Attractiveness	148	4.272	2.41878	5	.860
- Physical Attractiveness	148	3.854	2.60357	3	.944
Para-social Interaction	147	4.112	5.13585	10	.924
Vlogger-Viewer Imagery Fit	147	3.800	1.91125	3	.865
Perceived Country Image of Thailand	147	4.014	7.11475	15	.915
Intention to Travel to Thailand	146	4.098	2.24121	3	.833

In term of respondents' travel behavior and satisfaction, Table 4.8 and Table 4.9 showed that almost half of the respondents (43.8%) had visited Thailand at least once for travel. Majority of them have never visited Thailand for other purposes. In terms of satisfaction on past visit to Thailand, almost half of them (43.8%) had satisfied past visit whereas only 2.7% had unsatisfied past visit.

Table 4.8: Frequency and Percentage of Respondents' Travel Behavior

Travel Behavior	Never	Once	More than once
Past Visit to TH: Travel	82 (56.2%)	28 (19.2%)	36 (24.7%)
Past Visit to TH: Business/ Work	118 (80.8%)	12 (8.2%)	16 (11.0%)
Past Visit to TH: Academic/ Training	123 (84.2%)	16 (11.0%)	7 (4.8%)
Past Visit to TH: Medical Treatment	135 (92.5%)	7 (4.8%)	4 (2.7%)
Past Visit to TH: Visiting Friends/ Relatives	109 (74.7%)	22 (15.1%)	15 (10.3%)
Past Visit to TH: En-route to somewhere else	130 (89.0%)	10 (6.8%)	6 (4.1%)

*TH = Thailand

Table 4.9: Frequency and Percentage of Respondents' Satisfaction on their Past

Visitto Thailand

Satisfaction on past visit to Thailand	Frequency	Percent
Unsatisfied	4	2.7
Neither unsatisfied nor satisfied	1	0.7
Satisfied	64	43.8
Cannot answer (I have never been to Thailand)	77	52.7
Total	146	100

4.4 Results of Hypothesis Testing

Multiple Linear Regression was used to test the proposed research

hypotheses particularly HP#1, HP#2, HP#3, HP#6, and HP#7 since they consist of

two and more independent variables and a single dependent variable. Meanwhile,

HP#4 and HP#5 were analyzed by performing Simple Linear Regression model

separately for each hypothesis as both hypotheses have only a single independent

variable and a single dependent variable.

Based on the Multiple Regression Analysis results shown in Table 4.10,

the $R^2 = .51$, taken as a set, the predictors attitude homophily, social attractiveness,

and physical attractiveness account for 51% of the variance in parasocial interaction.

The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 143) = 48.9$, $p < .001$,

$R^2 = .51$. The coefficients table looks at each predictor individually with significant

at .05 level. All predictors were found to significantly and uniquely contribute to

prediction of parasocial interaction. Attitude homophily had a significant effect on

parasocial interaction ($\beta = .318$; $t = 4.593$, $p < .001$), as well as social attractiveness

($\beta = .282$; $t = 3.881$, $p < .001$), and physical attractiveness ($\beta = .282$; $t = 3.998$,

$p < .001$).

Table 4.10: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis on Predictors of Parasocial

Interaction ($n = 146$)

Predictors	B	S.E.	Beta	t
Attitude Homophily	.403	.088	.318	4.593*
Social Attractiveness	.623	.161	.282	3.881*
Physical Attractiveness	.568	.142	.282	3.998*

$R^2 = .51$, df = 3 ($p < .001$); *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Hypothesis #1: Social attractiveness has influences on Indonesian

viewers'parasocial interaction.

Hypothesis #1 suggested an influence of social attractiveness of Mark Wiens

on Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction. This hypothesis was supported based

on the result of the analysis using social attractiveness as the predictor, ($\beta = .282$;

$t = 3.881$, $p < .001$). As hypothesized, the respondents who think that Mark Wiens

is socially attractive tended to have positive parasocial interaction with Mark Wiens.

Hypothesis #2: Physical attractiveness has influences on Indonesian viewers'
parasocial interaction.

Hypothesis #2 suggested an influence of physical attractiveness of Mark
Wiens on Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction. Based on the Regression
Analysis result, physical attractiveness as the predictor, ($\beta = .282$; $t = 3.998$, $p < .001$)
significantly influences the parasocial interaction with Mark Wiens. As hypothesized,
the respondents who think that Mark Wiens is physically attractive tended to have
positive parasocial interaction with Mark Wiens.

Hypothesis #3: Attitude Homophily has influences on Indonesian viewers'
parasocial interaction.

Hypothesis #3 also suggested an influence of attitude homophily of Mark
Wiens and respondents on their parasocial interaction. The result of the analysis using
attitude homophily as the predictor, ($\beta = .318$; $t = 4.593$, $p < .001$) supported this
hypothesis. As hypothesized, the respondents who think they are similar to Mark
Wiens tended to have positive parasocial interaction with Mark Wiens.

Hypothesis #4: Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction has influences on
their perceived country image of Thailand.

Based on the Linear Regression Analysis results shown in Table 4.11,
$F (1, 146) = 10.08$, $p < .002$, $R^2 = .06$. R^2 referred to the amount of variance in country
image explained by parasocial interaction, which is considered small (6%). However,
Hypothesis #4 suggested an influence of Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction on
their perceived country image of Thailand. In other words, parasocial interaction was

a significant predictor of country image, (β = .255; t = 3.176, p < .002).

Table 4.11: Results of Linear Regression Analysis on Predictor of Country Image

(n = 146)

Predictor	B	S.E.	Beta	t
Parasocial Interaction	.353	.111	.255	3.176*

R^2 = .06, df = 1 (p < .002); *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Hypothesis #5: Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction has influences on their vlogger-viewer imagery fit.

Based on the Linear Regression Analysis results shown in Table 4.12, the R^2 = .48, as the predictor, parasocial interaction accounts for 48% of the variance in vlogger-viewer imagery fit. The overall regression model was statistically significant (significant at level .005), ANOVA Table: F (1, 145) = 132.96, p < .005, R^2 = .48 and Coefficients Table: (β = .692; t = 11.531, p < .005). Hypothesis #5 also suggested aninfluence of Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction on their vlogger-viewer imagery fit. As hypothesized, the respondents who engaged more in parasocial interaction with Mark Wiens tended to have more imagery fit where they see themselves similar to other viewers of Mark Wiens's vlogs.

Table 4.12: Results of Linear Regression Analysis on Predictor of Vlogger-viewer

Imagery Fit ($n = 146$)

Predictor	B	S.E.	Beta	t
Parasocial Interaction	.257	.022	.692	11.531*

$R^2 = .48$, df $= 1$ ($p < .001$); *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Based on the Multiple Regression Analysis results shown in Table 4.13, the $R^2 = .30$, taken as a set, the predictors country image of Thailand and vlogger-viewer imagery fit account for 30% of the variance in travel intention. The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(2, 143) = 30.1$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .30$. The coefficients table looks at each predictor individually with significant at .005 level. Country image of Thailand ($\beta = .278$; $t = 3.947$, $p < .001$) and vlogger-viewer imagery fit ($\beta = .442$; $t = 6.265$, $p < .001$) were found to significantly and uniquely influence parasocial interaction.

Table 4.13: Results of Multiple Regression Analysis on Predictors of Travel Intention

($n = 145$)

Predictors	B	S.E.	Beta	t
Vlogger-viewer Imagery Fit	.517	.083	.442	6.265*
Country Image of Thailand	.087	.022	.278	3.947*

$R^2 = .30$, df $= 2$ ($p < .001$); *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Hypothesis #6: Indonesian viewers' vlogger-viewer imagery fit has influences on their intention to travel to Thailand.

Hypothesis #6 suggested an influence of the respondents' vlogger-viewer imagery fit between them and Mark Wiens on their travel intentions to Thailand. This hypothesis was supported based on the result of the analysis using vlogger-viewer imagery fit as the predictor, (β = .442; t = 6.265, p < .001). As hypothesized, the more the respondents think that their image is similar to Mark Wiens's viewer's image, the higher their travel intentions to Thailand.

Hypothesis #7: Indonesian viewers' perceived country image of Thailand has influences on their intentions to travel to Thailand.

Hypothesis #7 suggested the contribution of the respondents' perceived country image of Thailand on their travel intentions to Thailand. Based on the Regression Analysis results shown in Table 4.13, Indonesian viewers' perceived country image of Thailand significantly influenced their intention to travel to Thailand, (β = .278; t = 3.947, p < .001). As hypothesized, the more positive the perceived country image of Thailand, the higher their travel intentions to Thailand.

Beside the results of hypothesis testing, there are additional results that meant to find out the differences about the influence of past visit to Thailand between respondents who have ever visited Thailand and those who have never been to Thailand on their perceived country image and their travel intentions. With this regard, the Independent T-Test Analysis was run and the results showed a significant difference in the reported perceived country image between those who have ever visited Thailand ($\bar{X}$ = 4.21, $S.D.$ = 6.30) and those who have never been to Thailand

($\bar{X}$ = 3.83, *S.D.* = 6.72), *t*(145) = 5.35, *p* < .001. Meanwhile, there was no significant

difference in the reported travel intentions between those who have ever visited

Thailand ($\bar{X}$ = 4.09, *S.D.* = 2.37) and those who have never been to Thailand

($\bar{X}$ = 4.11, *S.D.* = 2.14), *t*(144) = -.171, *p* = .864 (*p* > .05).

4.5 Conclusions

The inferential statistical analyses have been conducted and presented in

this chapter. The results showed significant relations among the examined variables.

The results were also found to support the research hypotheses as proposed in the

conceptual framework of this research. Next chapter is the final chapter of the

research which deals with hypotheses summary, discussions of findings, and

recommendation for further application and future research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a summary and discussion of the findings of this study, including findings related to theory, to previous research, and to the researcher's expectations. It also includes the limitations of the study and recommendations for further applications and future research.

5.1 Summary of Findings

This research explored the parasocial interaction between Mark Wiens and Indonesian viewers who watch his vlogs that are set place in Thailand on his YouTube channel. Specifically, this research investigated if that interaction is enhanced by Mark Wiens's social attractiveness, physical attractiveness, and by theattitude homophily. It also investigated how parasocial interaction corresponds to Indonesian viewers' perceived country image of Thailand and their imagery fit with Mark Wiens, and if these both influence their travel intentions to Thailand.

The online survey was conducted with the Indonesian respondents and collected 153 respondents composing of more females (61.4%) than males (38.6%), and age range of most respondents was between 25 and 32 (70.7%). Respectively, the respondents are mostly company employee (43.1%), government or public enterprise officer (22.2%), self-employed (11.1%), student (10.5%), teacher/ lecturer (6.5%), freelancer (4.6%), and other occupations (2%). They normally spend time watching travel vlogs daily for 30–60 minutes (48.0%), more than 1–2 hours (31.3%), less than 30 minutes (16.7%), 2–3 hours (2.7%), and more than 3 hours (1.3%).

The Cronbach's Alpha values of every measurement are found to be greater than .70 as .93 for Attitude Homophily, .86 for Social Attractiveness, .94 for Physical Attractiveness, .92 for Parasocial Interaction, .86 for Vlogger-viewer Imagery Fit, .91 for Perceived Country Image of Thailand, and .83 for Intention to Travel to Thailand.

Multiple Linear Regression was conducted to test HP#1, HP#2, HP#3, HP#6, and HP#7. While, HP#4 and HP#5 were analyzed using Simple Linear Regression that was performed separately for each hypothesis. HP#1 suggested a positive influence of social attractiveness of Mark Wiens on Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction ($\beta = .282$; $t = 3.881$, $p < .001$). The respondents who think that Mark Wiens is socially attractive tended to have positive parasocial interaction with Mark Wiens. HP#2 also suggested a significant influence of physical attractiveness of Mark Wiens on Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction ($\beta = .282$; $t = 3.998$, $p < .001$).

The result of the analysis using attitude homophily as the predictor, ($\beta = .318$; $t = 4.593$, $p < .001$) supported HP#3. As hypothesized, the respondents who think they are similar to Mark Wiens tended to have positive parasocial interaction with Mark Wiens. The independent variables in HP#1 (social attractiveness), HP#2 (physical attractiveness), and HP#3 (attitude homophily), taken together as a set of predictors, accounted for 51% of the variance in dependent variable (parasocial interaction) which means they have strong influence in parasocial interaction. HP#4, on the other hand, showed that Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction had the weakest influence on country image, as parasocial interaction only accounted for 6% of the variance in country image ($\beta = .255$; $t = 3.176$, $p < .002$). Even though, it was statistically significant.

HP#5 revealed that Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction had stronger influence on their vlogger-viewer imagery fit, as it accounted for 48% of the variance in vlogger-viewer imagery fit ($\beta = .692$; $t = 11.531$, $p < .005$). As hypothesized, the respondents who engaged more in parasocial interaction with Mark Wiens tended to have more imagery fit where they see themselves similar to other viewers of Mark Wiens's vlogs.

Next, vlogger-viewer imagery fit and country image of Thailand accounted for 30% of the variance in Travel Intention, which suggested a stronger influence. Therefore, HP#6 suggested a positive influence of the respondents' vlogger-viewer imagery fit between them and Mark Wiens on their travel intentions to Thailand ($\beta = .442$; $t = 6.265$, $p < .001$). It explained that the more the respondents think that their image is similar to Mark Wiens's viewer's image, the higher their travel intentions to Thailand is. HP#7 also suggested the significant influence of the respondents' perceived country image of Thailand on their travel intentions to Thailand ($\beta = .278$; $t = 3.947$, $p < .001$). When comparing between vlogger-viewer imagery fit and countryimage of Thailand, vlogger-viewer imagery fit had higher influence than country image of Thailand on Indonesian respondents' travel intention to Thailand.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

This part discusses the relations between the significance of research findings with the previous research, relevant theories, and the researcher's expectations.

The findings in this research are quite consistent with the previous research. The research model that is borrowed and developed from the business research

conducted by Lee & Watkins (2016) is suitable to be applied as conceptual framework on communication research related to the influences of parasocial interaction between Mark Wiens's travel vlogs and Indonesian viewers on their travel intentions to Thailand. Their research examined how vlogs influence consumer perceptions of luxury brands using parasocial interaction. They proposed a model that assessed the influence of physical attractiveness, social attractiveness, and attitude homophily of vlogs on parasocial interaction and parasocial interaction's effects on luxury brand perceptions (such as brand luxury, luxury brand value, and brand-user-imagery fit) and luxury brand purchase intentions.

This model is then applied on parasocial interaction between Mark Wiens (the vlogger) and his Indonesian viewers. Same as Lee's research, through the adjusted model, the influence of physical attractiveness, social attractiveness, and attitude homophily of Mark Wiens on parasocial interaction and that parasocial interaction's effects on imagery fit, country image of Thailand, and travel intention were also assessed accordingly.

Their research findings have indicated social attractiveness/attitude homophily (as one predictor) to have a strong influence on parasocial interaction ($\beta = .84$). This is consistent to Rubin and McHugh's (1987) research which found that the more attractive a media personality is, the more likely the viewer is to think they hold similar beliefs (attitude homophily). In addition, the physical attractiveness was found to have a significant influence on parasocial interaction, but its influence on parasocial interaction was weaker ($\beta = .08$) than social attractiveness/ attitude homophily. This conclusion is consistent with prior studies of parasocial interaction that indicate social attractiveness as more correlated with parasocial interaction than

physical attractiveness (Frederick, et al., 2012). However, in the case on Mark Wiens,

social attractiveness and physical attractiveness both have same level of influence on

parasocial interaction (β = .28) because in this research, attitude homophily and social

attractiveness are set as two different predictors, while attitude homophily has slightly

stronger influence on parasocial interaction (β = .32).

Brand-user-imagery fit that is explained by Miller & Mills (2012, pp. 1474)

as the overall assessment of the compatibility or match between themselves and users

of the brand, was adjusted to be vlogger-viewer imagery fit that refers to the overall

assessment of the compatibility of match between the Indonesian viewers and other

viewers of Mark Wiens's vlogs. As hypothesized, the respondents who engaged

more in parasocial interaction with Mark Wiens tended to have imagery fit of the

respondents as viewers with typical Mark Wiens's viewers. This is consistent with

Lee's research where parasocial interaction has a positive influence on luxury brand

perceptions which include brand value, brand luxury, and brand-user imagery fit.

Furthermore, evaluations of brand perception were examined for influence on

purchase intentions for luxury brands. Brand value, brand-user imagery fit, and brand

luxury were all found to have a significant influence on purchase intentions.

Similarly, the Indonesian viewers' vlogger-viewer imagery fit and perceived country

image of Thailand were all also found to have significant influences on their travel

intentions to Thailand.

With regard to the influence of parasocial interaction on perceived country

image, the findings showed a weak influence. It should be noted that 43.8% of the

samples traveled to Thailand with satisfying visit before. It is consistent with

Punnahitanond (2018, pp. 101) research that found 71.5% of the sample visited

Thailand at least once, and that 67.8% of them were satisfied with their past visit to Thailand. It should be noted that, in her study, although there is a significant influence of audiences' exposure to media portrayal of the Thai cave rescue on their intention to visit Thailand, the majority of the samples had direct positive experiences with Thailand that may influence their travel intentions.

Applying this in the scenario to find out why the influence of Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction with Mark Wiens is weak on their perceived country image of Thailand, the respondents who never traveled to Thailand may not be able to clearly picture how Thailand is, while those who have ever been to Thailand have direct experiences that positively influence their perceived country image of Thailand.It is assumed that samples' travel experiences with Thailand moderate the influence ofparasocial interaction on their perceived country image such that the influence of parasocial interaction on perceived country image among those with travel experiences in Thailand is stronger than its influence on perceived country image among those without travel experiences in Thailand. This assumption is supported by the Independent T-Test Analysis results which showed a significant difference in the reported perceived country image between those who have ever visited Thailand ($\bar{X} = 4.21$, *S.D.* = 6.30) and those who have never been to Thailand ($\bar{X} = 3.83$, *S.D.* = 6.72), *t* (145) = 5.35, *p* < .001.

On the contrary, there was no significant difference in the reported travel intentions between those who have ever visited Thailand ($\bar{X} = 4.09$, *S.D.* = 2.37) and those who have never been to Thailand ($\bar{X} = 4.11$, *S.D.* = 2.14), *t*(144) = -.171, *p* = .864 (*p* > .05). Both groups (those with travel experiences and those without travelexperiences) had high intention to visit Thailand during the next 12 months.

Future study may exclude those with travel experiences in Thailand to see whether parasocial interaction's effects on imagery fit, country image of Thailand, and travel intentionstill remain.

The theoretical framework of this study was based on one of the earliest theoretical approaches that connects mass communication and interpersonal social settings which is parasocial interaction theory. Parasocial interaction's concept was introduced by Horton & Wohl (1956) that focused primarily on nonfictional mass media performers, such as newscasters, that were typical in 1950s. Rubin & McHugh (1987) suggested that parasocial interaction may be a functional alternative to interpersonal relationships for certain people.

This research examined the interaction between Mark Wiens and his viewers on his YouTube channel, specifically the Indonesian viewers. There is diverse array of media technologies that reach a large audience via mass communication today. People do not only get information from broadcast media like watching television or from print media like reading newspaper, but they can easily access and receive information through digital media. With regards to parasocial interaction, in the digital media, the relationships between media personalities and media users have been increased with the appearance of social media that provide easy interactions (Stever & Lawson, 2013). Therefore, parasocial interaction is still applicable and the media personas are not only limited to celebrities, but also ordinary persons who are influential in social media.

The interaction between Indonesian viewers and Mark Wiens (as media personality) is still related to the involvement that includes seeking guidance from media personalities, seeing them as friends, imagining being part of a show or

program, and then desiring to meet these media personalities that was also explained by Rubin & McHugh (1987). Still based on the parasocial interaction theory, from the research conducted by Lee & Watkins (2016), media users sometimes want to associate with the media personalities and assume that they belong to the same social world and try sharing information to each other. In 1956, Horton and Wohl explored the different interactions between mass media users and media figures and determinedthe existence of a parasocial relationship, where the user acts as though they are involved in a typical social relationship interaction.

The theory is consistent with this study where there is a social relationship interaction which certainly exists on YouTube between Mark Wiens and his Indonesian viewers. In fact, the parasocial interaction is even more enhanced where the media personalities are not only limited to celebrities, but also ordinary persons who are influential (influencers) as mentioned earlier. O'Neil-Hart & Blumenstein (2016) also reported that YouTube vloggers are more influential than traditional celebrities because of their friendly nature and how they communicate with their viewers. Furthermore, the relationships between media personalities and media users have been increased with the advent of social media that provides easy interactions. YouTube for instance, allows two-way communication and a more balanced relationship between Mark Wiens and Indonesian viewers. Therefore, findings of this study strengthen the parasocial interaction theory.

With regard to the research hypotheses of this research, the findings have broadly confirmed the researcher's expectations. The first research hypothesis is about the influence of travel vlogs on Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction. The travel vlogs do have influence on Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction with

Mark Wiens. The interaction is built from trust and connection, as well as a sense of similarity that the viewers have towards the vlogger. The similarity involves shared interest in traveling that gives a positive perception towards the vlogger.

The second research hypothesis proposed that the Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction have influence on their perceived country image of Thailand. Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction have significant but weak influence on their perceived country image of Thailand because almost half of them (43.8% of the samples) may be influenced by their past visit to Thailand. Thus, it is possible that other factors beyond parasocial interaction with Mark Wiens also affect perceived country image of Thailand.

Related to the third research hypothesis about the influence of Indonesian viewers' parasocial interaction on their vlogger-viewer imagery fit, the findings confirmed that the respondents tended to see themselves similar with Mark Wiens' typical viewers, the more they engage in interaction with Mark Wiens. Lastly, the findings confirmed the fourth and fifth research hypotheses where both Indonesian viewers' perceived country image of Thailand and vlogger-viewer imagery fit do havesignificant influence on their travel intentions to Thailand.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

The research of this study was conducted quantitatively using survey research with non-probability sampling method consisted of purposive sampling and snowball sampling. The number of respondents unfortunately did not achieve the expected sample size (three hundred respondents). Only half of 152 responses were collected as the sample.

Another limitation that affected the number of samples in results was that the researcher did not make the questions survey required. Therefore, a few respondents had skipped some questions or left them blank. Alas, this caused the inconsistency on the number of samples in the findings of this study.

It should be aware that 43.8% of the samples have traveled to Thailand with satisfying visit and 52.7% of the samples never traveled to Thailand before. With this regard, beside parasocial interaction with Mark Wiens, the direct positive experiences with visits to Thailand can also affect the perceived country image of Thailand.

5.4 Recommendations for Further Application

The findings of this study provide some practical suggestions to digital marketing practitioners, social media influencers, and government offices and/or policymakers.

5.4.1 Digital Marketing Practitioners

The results of this study may benefit digital marketing practitioners by enhancing their knowledge about social media marketing field that expands its coverage in businesses. The ability to understand and manage parasocial interaction between social media influencers and viewers can add the source of credibility and attractiveness of influencers in regard to endorsement that can shape viewers' attitudes towards the products through their contents on social media. Selecting the face for product endorsement can be supported by examining and comparing the influences of the attractiveness and attitude homophily of several media influencers/ media personalities on the parasocial interaction between them and their general audiences.

5.4.2 Social Media Influencers

The results of this study also share benefits to an individual who wishes to be influencer in any of social media platforms by managing parasocial interaction with their audiences on the attractiveness aspects (such as social and physical attractiveness that are key predictors of parasocial interaction). Thus, they can create amore engaged audience that will promote or encourage strong ties with their followersor fans.

5.4.3 Government Offices and/or Policymakers

Another group of individuals for whom the findings of this research can contribute some applicability are policymakers and/or the government offices and institutions that work in tourism sector through their power and authority to make decisions. Understanding the influence of vloggers may benefit the government as well in promoting tourism through collaboration with vloggers. The Tourism Authority of Thailand, for example, can seek collaboration with foreign vloggers who are knowledgeable about Thailand and have strong connection with their fans through parasocial interaction because the contents related to country's tourism and parasocial interaction can have significant potential influence on viewers' perceived country image and lead to their intentions to visit Thailand.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

The emergence of connecting with media personalities through social media has sparked a new area of academic research on parasocial interaction (Stever & Lawson, 2013). With the development of digital platforms and social media, the relationship and interaction with media personalities will be developing as well. It is

still argued that although YouTube allows two-way communication and a more balanced relationship between vloggers and viewers, there is still indication that interactions are still mostly one-way. This could happen due to loads of comments received from viewers and the vloggers were not able to interact like before when they had less viewers and interactions.

Relationship between parasocial interaction and vloggers may be investigated in other products or services or other business sectors such as restaurant business. Research comparing potential influences of parasocial interaction among different types of influencers such as celebrities, YouTubers, and vloggers on audiences' purchasing behavior should enhance the pool of knowledge in marketing communication. The future research may also use the same topic but with different method such as qualitative method.

Future research may examine further two hypotheses. Firstly, the more engagement in parasocial interaction between viewers and vlogger, the more popular the vlogger will be. Secondly, the more popular the vlogger is, the less engagement from vlogger in parasocial interaction with viewers. The parasocial interaction here is specifically focused only on interaction in comment section related to the statement that argued interactions in YouTube are still mostly one-way, although it allows two-way communication through its comment section feature. Lastly, it is also recommended to study about parasocial interaction between media personalities and viewers on a live-streaming feature where the interaction is real-time such as in onlinesale content, live gaming, or giveaway.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Edwin Handriano Triawan. I am a graduate student of MCA Program in Global Communication at Bangkok University. I am conducting a survey research on how Indonesian viewers respond to the famous travel vlogs about Thailand. This survey contains eight sections and 61 questions. This should take approximately 8 minutes. You can only fill the questionnaire once. All responses will be kept confidential.

Screening questions:

1) During the past six months, have you ever watched at least five video blogs (vlogs) about Thailand from Mark Wiens on his YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/user/migrationology/videos)?

2) Are you aged between 18 and 44 years old?

If your answer is "**no**" for either one or both questions, please leave this survey.

Instruction: Select the answer box that best represents yourself or fill in the blank.

Section A: Personal data

1) Your gender:

□ Male   □ Female

2) Your age: …… years old

3) Your marital status:

□Single

□Married

□Widowed

□Divorced

4) Your occupation:

□Government/ Public Enterprise officer

□ Company employee

□Freelancer

□Self-employed

□Teacher/ Lecturer

□Student

□Retired

□Others (Please specify) ………………….

5) Your education:

□Less than High School

□High School

□Undergraduate Degree

□Graduate Degree □Post Graduate Degree

Instruction: Select the answer box that best describes your YouTube usage and exposure to vlogger's YouTube channel.

Section B: YouTube exposure

6) How much time do you normally spend on YouTube watching travel vlogs?

  ☐ less than 30 minutes/day

  ☐ 30 – 60 minutes/day

  ☐ > 1 hour – 2 hours/day

  ☐ > 2 – 3 hours/day

  ☐ > 3 hours/day

7) How many Mark Wiens's vlogs have you watched during the past six months?

  Please type number of vlogs ____
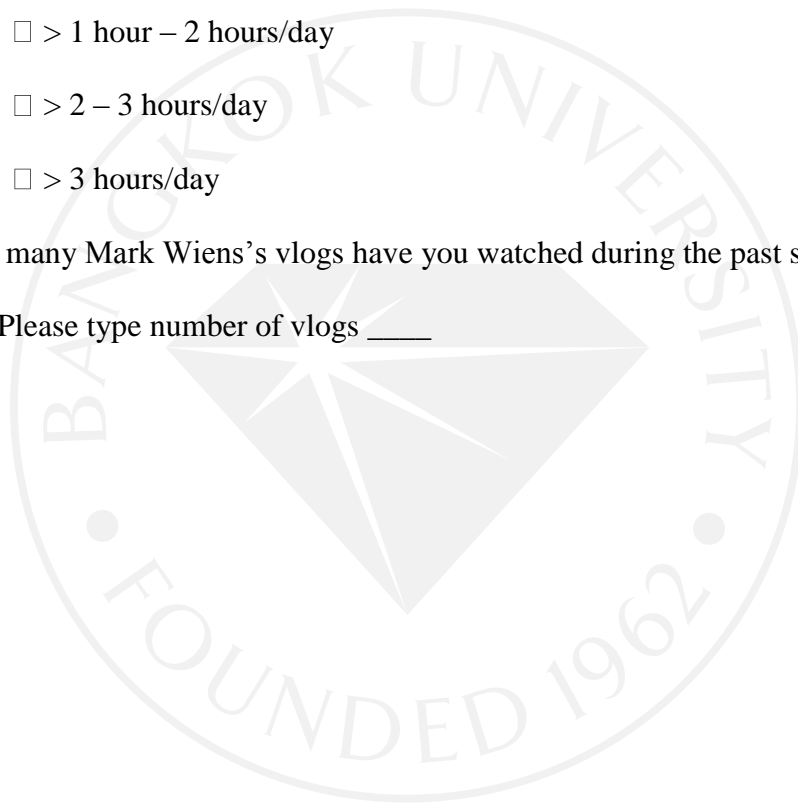
Instruction: Select the answer box that best describes your level of agreement or
disagreement toward the following statements.

Section C: Attitude homophily

Statements	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
8) Mark Wiens thinks like me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9) Mark Wiens is like me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10) Mark Wiens is similar to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11) Mark Wiens shares my values.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12) Mark Wiens has a lot in common with me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13) Mark Wiens behaves like me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14) Mark Wiens expresses attitudes similar like mine.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15) Mark Wiens has thoughts and ideas that are similar to mine.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section D: Vlogger's attractiveness

Statements	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
16) I think Mark Wiens could be a friend of mine.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17) I would love to have a friendly chat with Mark Wiens.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18) Mark Wiens is a natural, down-to-earth person.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19) Mark Wiens would be pleasant to be with.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20) Mark Wiens treats people like I do.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21) I find Mark Wiens very attractive physically.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22) I think Mark Wiens is quite handsome.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23) Mark Wiens is very good looking.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section E: Parasocial Interaction

Statements	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
24) I look forward to watching Mark Wiens's vlogs the on his YouTube channel.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25) If Mark Wiens appeared on another YouTube channel, I would watch that video.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26) When I am watching Mark Wiens's vlogs, I feel as if I am part of his group.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27) I think Mark Wiens is like an old friend.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28) I would like to meet Mark Wiens in person.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Statements	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
29) If there were story about Mark Wiens in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30) Mark Wiens makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with friends.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31) I miss Mark Wiens when I do not see his vlogs for a while.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32) When Mark Wiens shows me how he feels about places he visits in Thailand, it helps me make up my own mind about visiting Thailand.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Statements	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
33) I could rely on Mark Wiens's travel recommendation and advice.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
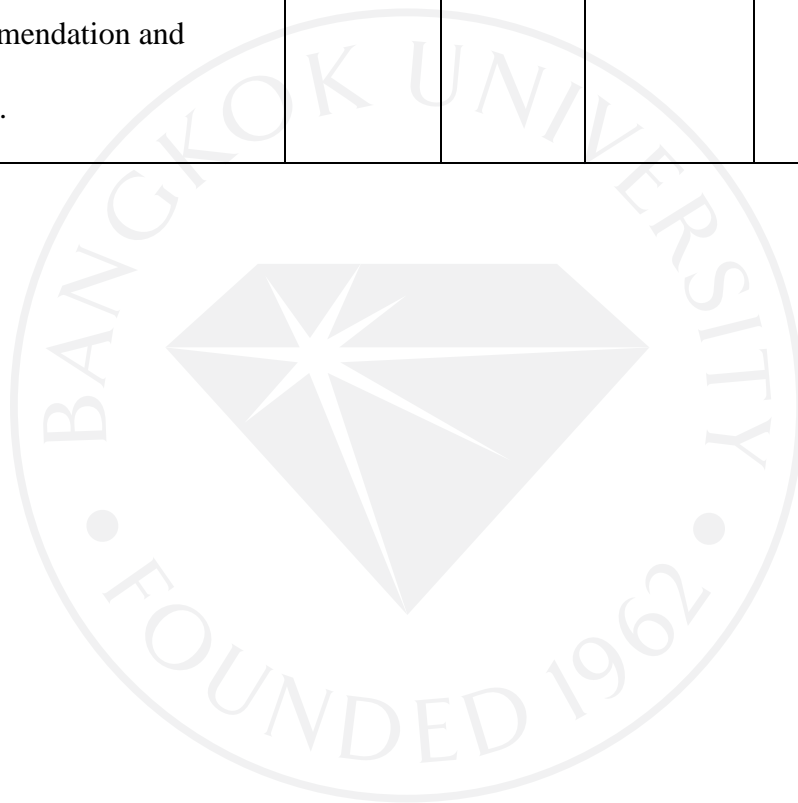
Section F: Vlogger-viewer imagery fit

Statements	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
34) I am very much like the typical people who like watching Mark Wiens's YouTube Channel.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35) I see myself similar to people who like watching Mark Wiens's YouTube Channel.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
36) People think Mark Wiens's image is more like my image than other vloggers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Instruction: Please Select the answer box that best describes your level of agreement or disagreement toward the following statements about Thailand.

Section G: Perceived country image

Statements	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
37) Beautiful architecture and buildings (Grand palace, temples).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
38) Numerous culture/historical attractions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
39) Interesting customs and cultures (Buddhism, Songkran).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
40) A variety of cuisine (i.e. Thai, Chinese, International).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
41) Easy to find halal food.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
42) Friendly and helpful local residents.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
43) Exciting entertainments and night life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Statements	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
44) Scenic natural beauty (seas, beaches, national parks).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
45) Availability of many accommodation choices.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
46) Convenient local transportation system (buses, trains, taxis, tuk-tuk, boats).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
47) Opportunity for adventure (jungle tour trekking, rafting, water activities).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
48) Restful and relaxing atmosphere.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
49) A safe place to travel.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Statements	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
50) Good bargain shopping and value for money (good quality at reasonable prices).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
51) Good vacation place for children and family.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
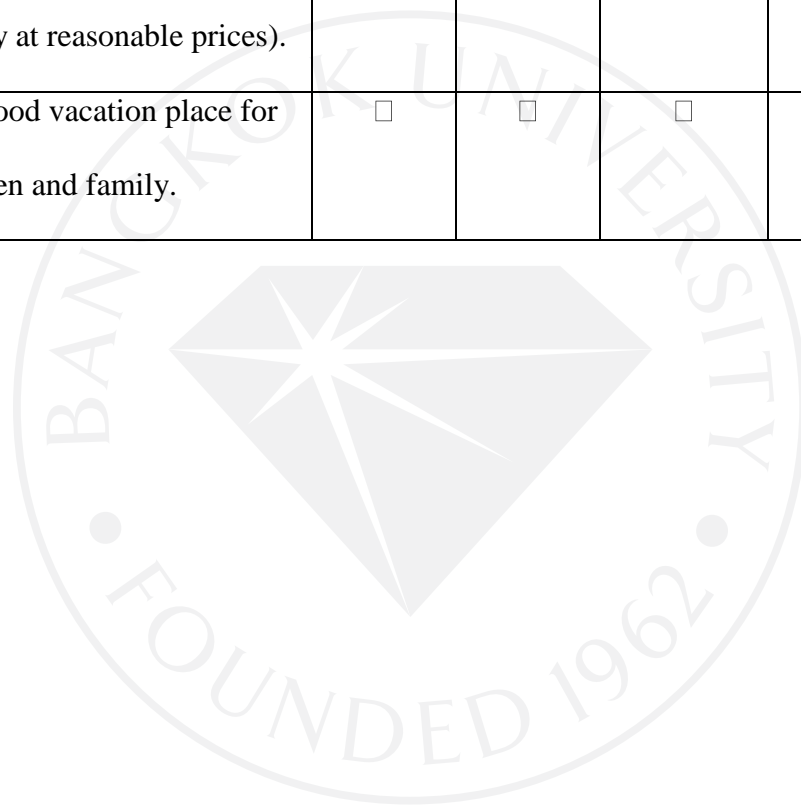
Instruction: Select the answer box that best describes your travel behavior.

Section H: Travel behavior

How many times have you travelled to Thailand for the following purposes?

Travelling Purposes	Never (0)	Once (1)	More Than Once (2)
52) Vacation.	☐	☐	☐
53) Business/Work.	☐	☐	☐
54) Academic/Training.	☐	☐	☐
55) Medical Treatment.	☐	☐	☐
56) Visiting friends/ relatives.	☐	☐	☐
57) En-route to somewhere else.	☐	☐	☐

58) Are you satisfied with your past visit to Thailand?

    ☐ Unsatisfied   ☐ Neither unsatisfied nor satisfied

    ☐ Satisfied   ☐ Cannot answer (I have never been to Thailand)

Statements	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
59) If Covid-19 issues are resolved, I am highly likely to travel to Thailand in the next 12 months.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
60) Even if Covid-19 issues are resolved, I still do not intend travelling to Thailand during the next 12 months.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
61) If Covid-19 issues are resolved, I will plan a trip to Thailand sometime during the next 12 months.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

** Thank you for your collaboration. **

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