

TOURISM BEHAVIOR FACTORS AFFECT THE DECISION TO CHOOSE TOURIST ATTRACTIONS IN PATHUM THANI PROVINCE THROUGH THE USER GENERATED CONTENT FACTOR

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research were 1) the demographic characteristics of the population who visit tourist attractions. 2) Study tourism behavior, and 3) Analyze the factors affecting the decision to choose tourist attractions in Pathum Thani Province. The researcher used a convenient sample selection method. The data were collected from 400 samplings who had visit tourist attractions in Pathum Thani province, aged 18 years and over. Questionnaires were used as the research instrument and passed the content validity test and the reliability. The statistics used in the data analysis consisted of percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test, one-way analysis of variance, model analysis, and multiple indicators through the analysis of structural equations model (SEM). The research results showed that the demographic factors affecting the decision to choose tourist attractions in Pathum Thani province in all aspects as gender, age, occupation, and income. Only the income factor that affects the decision to choose a tourist attraction in Pathum Thani province through the user generated content. Tourism behavior in travel activity affects decision-making in choosing tourist attractions in Pathum Thani province through user generated data at statistically significant level. Research shows that the use of traveler-generated content plays an important role in travelers' decision-making to travel in all forms. Tour operators should use tourist-generated content to promote tourism in each location.

Keywords: E-Tourism, User-Generated Contents, Smart Tourism, Mobile Social Tourism

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Introduction

Taking advantage of Smart Mobile Devices (SMDs) is one of the key guidelines. The Ministry of Digital will push all sectors to adjust the paradigm (Paradigm Shift) to make Thailand step into the development of a society of wisdom or Smart Thailand for the tourism sector. The concept of Smart Tourism has been introduced, which will make information linking to present tourists effectively. The focus is on presenting information in a format that is appropriate in accordance with the Bring Your Own Device or BYOD concept and the installation of a wireless connection (Wi-Fi) in various tourist spots (Chaowu, Jiangchi, & Morrison, 2022). Tourism industry is the main source of income for most of the country and is a catalyst for economic growth because tourism is associated with many sectors. Both businesses that directly or indirectly receive benefits such as hotels, restaurants, souvenir shops, transportation and many more in the service business. Tourism activities that occur in the area will be a by-product of the arrival of tourists which generate income enabling people to have jobs and produce good results in terms of economy and society. Therefore, to upgrade the development of tourist attractions for the competitiveness of the tourism business, it is necessary to develop continuously and to meet the needs of tourists to provide services that are ready in many aspects such as impression, safety, convenience.

Studying tourism behavior, characteristics, and user-generated content is crucial for understanding the dynamics of the tourism industry and its impact on destinations, businesses, and travelers. In today's digital age, user-generated content, such as reviews, photos, and videos shared by travelers, has become an influential factor in destination choice and decision-making. Analyzing UGC provides valuable insights into tourists' perceptions, experiences, and preferences. Destination marketers can leverage UGC to enhance their promotional efforts, engage with travelers, and build trust and credibility among potential visitors. The studying is vital for informing decision-making, shaping marketing strategies, promoting sustainability, and enhancing the overall visitor experience in the tourism industry.

The research proposed an idea to study the factors affecting the choice of tourist attractions in Pathum Thani Province. The interstitial variable was studied in the presentation of information from travel service users via the Internet. To allow tourists to access, share and present information from the point of view of tourists themselves. This will be a part of promoting sustainable tourism. Operators can use the information to improve tourist attractions and present information to meet the needs of users. Government agencies involved in tourism promotion can use the information to plan for tourism promotion in Pathum Thani Province.

Research objectives

1. Study the demographic characteristics of the population who visit tourist attractions in Pathum Thani province.
2. Study tourism behavior in Pathum Thani province.

3. Analyze the factors affecting the decision to choose tourist attractions in Pathum Thani Province.

Literature Review

Tourism means temporary travel of a person from his or her place of residence to another place. The trip is not for direct occupation but with the purpose of relaxation. There are factors driving tourism such as income, opportunities, time, interests and desire for new experiences. Swarbrooke (2007) outlined the following objectives of tourism as visiting friends and relatives, business, religious, health, social, educational, cultural, scenic, hedonistic, activity, and special Interest Tourism.

By examining the conceptual constructs of “Post-visit Destination Image” and “Perceived Meaningfulness,” this study investigated the cognitive and affective components of destination image in the perception of international visitors visiting Indian places. A multi-dimensional structure was confirmed by the exploratory factor analysis of responses from foreign tourists ($n = 242$) to items relating to the main constructs important to tourist behavior, such as destination quality, perceived meaningfulness, and post-visit destination image. Furthermore, the theoretical framework based on the principles of the stimulus-organism-response paradigm and the constructs was empirically validated using structural equation modeling, which established substantial linkages useful to comprehend many new travel motivations (Rejikumar, Ajitha, Jose, & Mathew et.al., 2021).

Tourism user-generated content (UGC) refers to any form of content related to tourism experiences, opinions, recommendations, or feedback that is created and shared by individual travelers or tourists. This content can take various forms, including written reviews, ratings, photos, videos, blog posts, social media posts, and online discussions. UGC has gained significant importance in the tourism industry due to the widespread use of social media platforms, travel review websites, and online booking platforms. Travelers now have the ability to easily share their personal experiences and opinions with a wide audience, influencing the decisions of other potential travelers. UGC provides an authentic and firsthand perspective on destinations, accommodations, attractions, activities, and other aspects of the tourism experience. It offers valuable insights into the quality, value, and overall satisfaction of a particular tourism product or service (Boksberger, 2018).

The importance of tourism user-generated content (UGC) lies in its influence on traveler decision-making, destination marketing, and the overall tourism experience. The importance of user-generated content are as follows. Trust and authenticity: UGC is perceived as more authentic and trustworthy compared to traditional marketing messages. Travelers often rely on the experiences and opinions shared by fellow travelers in UGC to make informed decisions about destinations, accommodations, attractions, and activities. UGC provides real-life perspectives, increasing trust and credibility in the eyes of potential tourists. Social proof and influence: UGC serves as social proof, demonstrating that others have had positive experiences at a particular destination or with a specific tourism product. People tend to be influenced by the experiences and recommendations of others, and

UGC provides a platform for travelers to share their positive experiences, which can motivate and inspire others to visit a destination or try a particular experience. Engagement and interaction: UGC encourages engagement and interaction between tourists and destination marketing organizations, businesses, and fellow travelers. Travelers actively participate in sharing their experiences, asking questions, and seeking advice from others. This engagement fosters a sense of community and facilitates the exchange of information and recommendations (Xiang, Du, Ma, & Fan, 2017; Buhalis & Foerste, 2015).

Tourism behavior refers to the actions, decision-making processes, and patterns of behavior exhibited by individuals or groups of people in the context of tourism activities. It encompasses the various aspects of how tourists interact with destinations, engage in travel-related experiences, and make choices throughout their journey. Tourism behavior can be studied from different perspectives, including the motivations behind travel, decision-making processes, travel preferences, destination choice, information-seeking behavior, consumption patterns, and post-travel behavior. Understanding tourism behavior is crucial for tourism researchers, destination managers, and businesses to effectively meet the needs and expectations of travelers (Pizam, & Mansfeld, 2017).

Tourism activities encompass a wide range of experiences and engagements that tourists can participate in during their travels. Here are some common types of tourism activities (Weaver & Lawton, 2014; Hall & Page, 2014).

1. **Sightseeing and Cultural Exploration:** Sightseeing involves visiting landmarks, monuments, historical sites, natural wonders, and cultural attractions in a destination. Cultural exploration involves engaging with local traditions, customs, art, music, festivals, and cuisine to gain insights into the local culture and heritage.

2. **Nature-Based and Adventure Tourism:** Nature-based tourism involves activities centered around natural environments, such as hiking, wildlife safaris, birdwatching, camping, and nature photography. Adventure tourism includes thrilling activities like rafting, zip-lining, bungee jumping, rock climbing, and trekking in challenging terrains.

3. **Beach and Coastal Tourism:** Beach and coastal tourism revolves around enjoying seaside destinations, including swimming, sunbathing, snorkeling, scuba diving, surfing, sailing, and relaxing on sandy beaches. Coastal tourism also involves exploring coastal ecosystems and marine wildlife.

4. **Wellness and Health Tourism:** Wellness tourism focuses on promoting relaxation, rejuvenation, and well-being. It includes activities like spa treatments, yoga retreats, meditation, wellness workshops, holistic therapies, and wellness-focused vacations.

5. **Cultural and Heritage Tourism:** Cultural and heritage tourism emphasizes immersing oneself in the history, traditions, and arts of a destination. It involves visiting museums, heritage sites, archaeological sites, cultural festivals, and engaging in cultural experiences like traditional music and dance performances.

6. Culinary and Food Tourism: Culinary tourism involves experiencing local and regional cuisine, food markets, cooking classes, food and wine tours, and dining at renowned restaurants to explore the culinary traditions and flavors of a destination.

7. Sports and Event Tourism: Sports tourism involves participating in or spectating sporting events, such as attending major tournaments, marathons, golf tournaments, or engaging in adventure sports like skiing, snowboarding, or fishing. Event tourism encompasses attending festivals, concerts, conferences, exhibitions, and other special events in a destination.

8. Educational and Learning Tourism: Educational tourism focuses on gaining knowledge and learning experiences in a destination. It includes activities like visiting educational institutions, attending workshops, cultural exchange programs, and language immersion courses.

From the review of all literature can be used to create a conceptual framework as follows.

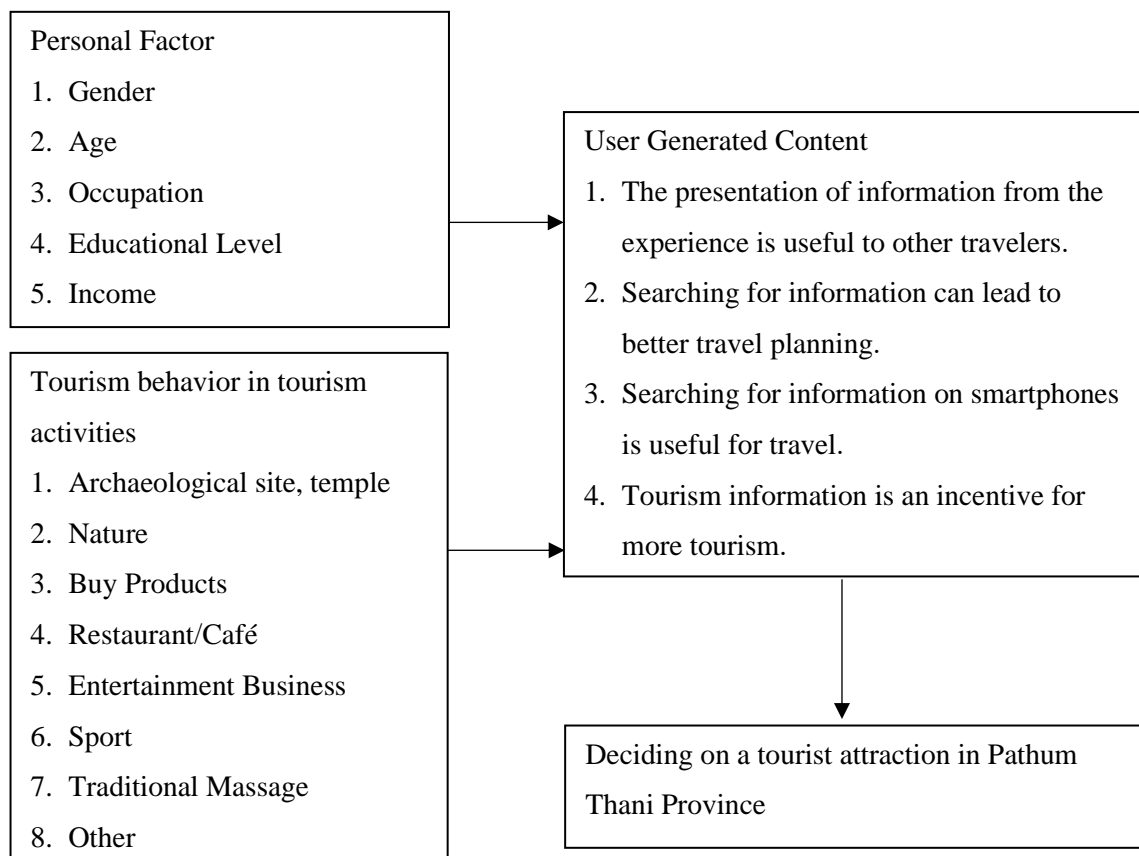


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Research Hypothesis

1. Demographic factors affecting the decision to choose tourist attractions in Pathum Thani province.

Theories: Tourist characteristics encompass a wide range of factors, including age, gender, income, education, personality traits, travel motivations, past travel experiences, and interests. These characteristics influence how individuals perceive and evaluate destination attributes, experiences, and

offerings, ultimately influencing their destination decision-making process. Research has shown that different tourist characteristics can have varying effects on destination decision-making. For example, younger travelers may prioritize destinations with vibrant nightlife and adventure activities, while older travelers may be more interested in cultural attractions and relaxation. Income levels can influence the perceived affordability of a destination and the range of options available for consideration. Psychographic factors, such as personality traits and travel motivations, can also shape destination preferences. For instance, travelers seeking relaxation may prefer beach destinations, while those seeking cultural immersion may lean towards historical cities (Kim & Agrusa, 2018).

2. Demographic factors affect the decision to choose tourist attractions in Pathum Thani province through user generated content.

Theories: The study examines the psychological processes underlying the impact of UGC on destination choice. While not specifically focusing on demographic factors, it sheds light on the overall influence of UGC on travelers' decision-making processes (Hu, Lin, Huang & Li, (2018). This study compares major online review platforms (e.g., TripAdvisor, Yelp, and Google) and examines the influence of user-generated reviews on destination choice. It highlights the significance of UGC in shaping travelers' perceptions and decision-making processes (Xiang et. al., 2017).

3. Tourism behavior factors affect the decision to choose tourist attractions in Pathum Thani province through the user generated content.

Theories: This research investigates the factors that influence travelers' information search behavior, which is a significant aspect of tourism behavior. While it does not directly examine the interaction with UGC, it highlights the factors that may affect the use of UGC in the decision-making process (Gursoy, Chi & Lu, 2013).

Research Methodology

The population used in the study was people who had used different types of tourist attractions. In Pathum Thani Province aged 18 years and over. The mathematical formula for calculating the sample population uses the Cochran formula (Israel, 1992). The calculation formula uses 95% confidence and has an error of $\pm 5\%$ with the Cronbach's alpha value of 0.75. It can be shown as follows:

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2} = \frac{(1.96)^2 (.5).5}{(.05)^2} = 385$$

The result of the calculation was a sample population of 385 people and to prevent errors in data collection. A total of 400 questionnaires will be distributed. In this research, the study tool was a questionnaire. A quantitative method was used which was obtained from the data in all four parts of the questionnaire as follows: The first part of the questionnaire contains demographic factors such as gender, age, occupation, educational level, and income. The second part of the questionnaire is the behavior of tourism in tourism activities such as archaeological site, temples, nature, shopping, restaurants/cafes, entertainment business, sports, and traditional massage using the Likert Scale on 5

scales, starting from 1 meaning the lowest and 5 the highest. The third part of the questionnaire is a question about the information generated by the user. Including the presentation of information from the experience is useful to other travelers, searching for information can lead to better travel planning, searching for information on smartphones is useful for travel and tourism information is an incentive. Using the Likert Scale on 5 scales, 1 is the least opinion and 5 is the most opinion. The fourth part is about deciding where to visit, using the Likert Scale's 5-level scale, starting with 1 meaning the least opinion and 5 being the most opinion.

Data analysis

1. Data analysis using descriptive statistics: Frequency distribution and Percentage is used to analyze the general characteristics of the population of the respondents. The analysis of mean and standard deviation was used for tourism behavior factors, user generated contents, and selection of attractions.

2. Data Analysis by Inference Statistics: Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was analyzed using AMOS21 program to test whether demographic factors and tourism behavior affects the decision to choose tourist attractions in Pathum Thani Province through interstitial variables that are data generated by users. Structural equation analysis is a hypothesis analysis technique between multiple latent factors. To assess the harmony of the model with the overall empirical data. The statistical values used to assess the harmony were: Chi-square statistic, Fit index, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation: RMSEA and Root Mean Square Residual: RMR.

Research results

The results showed that most of the respondents were female (65.5%), age between 18-25 yrs. (91.3%), student (91.2%), and income less than 15,000.00 Baht (91.2%).

The analysis of data on tourism behavior in tourism activities can be divided into 7 activities as follows: Archaeological site/temple, Natural, Buy products, Restaurant/Café, Entertainment business, Sports, and Traditional massage. The data analysis results are as follows.

Table 1 Shows the average of Tourism behavior in tourism activities

	\bar{X}	Assessment	Order
Archaeological site/temple	3.28	High	1
Natural	3.26	High	2
Buy products	3.25	High	3
Restaurant/Café	3.20	High	4
Entertainment business	3.20	High	5
Sports	3.17	High	6
Traditional massage	3.04	High	7
Total average	3.20	High	

Table 1, summarizing the tourism behavior in terms of overall tourism activities in each activity, it was found that the overall average score at 3.20. The level of opinion of visiting because various activities were at a high level, especially activities that attract respondents to travel in Pathum Thani province. The first place was archaeological site/ temple, followed by a natural place, and came to buy products, respectively. The activity that the respondents gave the least opinion was to travel because of traditional massage.

Table 2 Shows the average of user generated content

	\bar{X}	Assessment	Order
The presentation of information from the experience is useful to other travelers.	3.27	High	3
Searching for information can lead to better travel planning.	3.36	High	1
Searching for information on smartphones is useful for travel.	3.19	High	4
Tourism information is an incentive for more tourism.	3.28	High	2
Total average	3.27	High	

Table 2, the data factors generated by the overall tourism service users in each data showed that the average score of at 3.27. Indicating the level of opinions about the information generated by the travel service users at a high level. In particular, the search for information has resulted in better travel planning as the first, followed by tourism information as an incentive for more tourism, and the presentation of information from the experience is useful to other tourists, respectively.

Research results for answering research **Hypothesis 1:** Demographic factors affecting the decision to choose tourist attractions in Pathum Thani province. The researcher tested with t-test and one-way analysis of variance. The results are as follows:

Table 3 The decision to choose tourist attractions in Pathum Thani province when classified by personal factors.

	Gender	Age	Occupation	Income
Choose tourist attractions	0.001*	0.02*	0.008*	0.040*

*There is a statistically significant level of 0.05.

Demographic factors affecting the decision to choose tourist attractions in Pathum Thani province was found that there were statistically significant differences by all four factors which are gender, age, occupation, and income at the 0.05 level.

Analysis of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) found the relationship of the variables that can analyze many variables at the same time. The researcher has formulated the following assumptions.

Hypothesis 2: Demographic factors affect the decision to choose tourist attractions in Pathum Thani province through user generated content.

Hypothesis 3: Tourism behavior factors affect the decision to choose tourist attractions in Pathum Thani province through the user generated content.

To test these hypothesis, SPSS for Windows program and AMOS (Analysis of Moment Structures) for Window program were used to analyze the causal relationship structure. To check the correspondence between the hypothesis model and the empirical data by analyzing the direct influence, indirect influence, and the total influence of the variables. The Maximum Likelihood Estimates (ML) was used to analyze the assumption-based model and there were important statistical values used to verify the coherence of the assumption-based model with the empirical data. The details of the research results are as follows.

(1) A full causal relationship path analysis model (over identified model). The researcher has defined the abbreviations used in the analysis as follows:

- sex means sex
- age means age
- occupation mean occupation
- income mean income
- act_merit means tourism activity on visiting ancient sites / temples
- act_natural means tourism activity on visiting natural site
- act_shopping means tourism activity on shopping behavior
- act_restaurant means tourism activity on restaurant/cafe
- act_entertain means tourism activity in entertainment business
- act_sport means tourism activity in sports
- act_message means tourism activity in traditional massage
- Activity Travel means tourism activity
- ugc_experience means the presentation of information from the experience is useful to other travelers
- ugc_search means searching for information can lead to better travel planning
- ugc_phonesearch means searching for information on smartphones is useful for travel
- ugc_share means tourism information is an incentive for more tourism
- UGC means user generated content
- decision means deciding to choose a tourist attraction in Pathum Thani Province.
- e means the error value

The results of the study factors can be presented as follows.

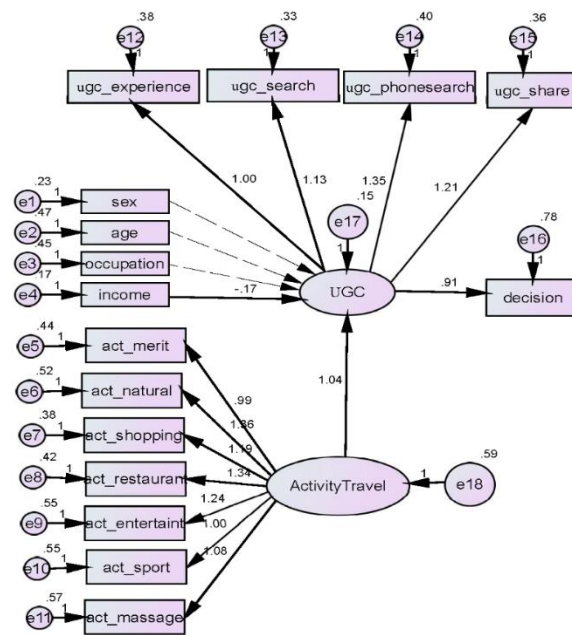


Figure 2 Show correlation paths of statistically significant and insignificant models before adjustment.

From the full causal relationship coefficient analysis, it was found that three path coefficients were statistically insignificant, indicating that the relationship between the variables used in the analysis was inappropriate. As shown in Figure 2, statistically insignificant paths must therefore be removed from the full correlation model in order to refine the correlation model by adjusting the new model.

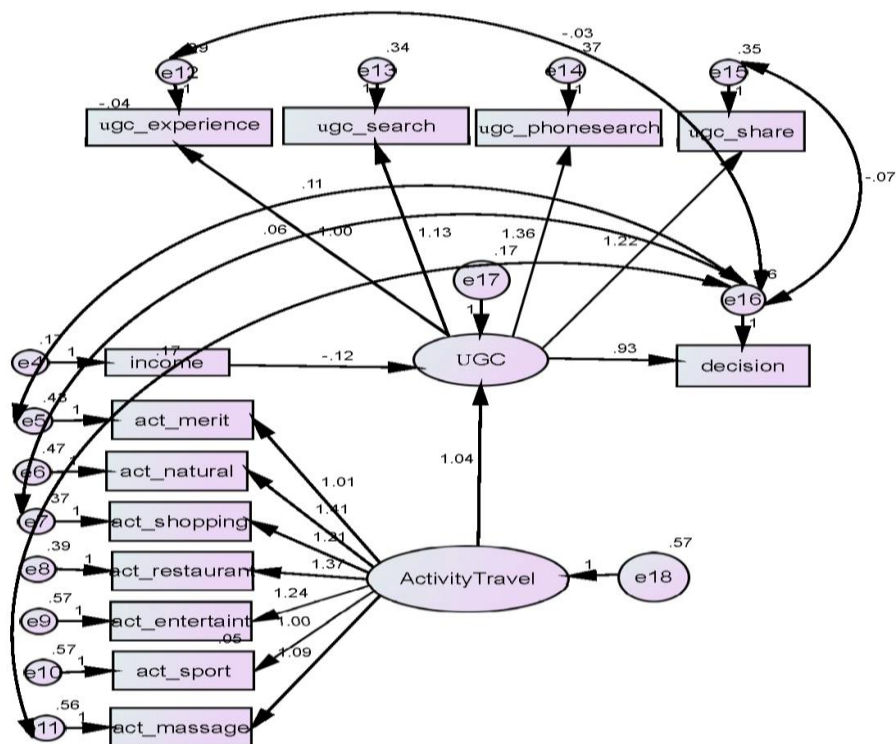


Figure 3 Display model parameter estimation results of various coefficients after model adjustment.

Developing a model to be consistent with empirical data is called “Model fit”. This is an analysis of whether the empirical prototype model is consistent with the theoretical model. By checking the coherence of the model, the relationship between the variables is checked whether they are consistent or not. If consistent, it can be analyzed. But if not consistent, the model will be adjusted until it is complete and reliable. Therefore, in the research, the model was adjusted based on the hypothesis test results and based on the modification indices until the model was complete, reliable, and consistent. The model evaluation criteria are as follows:

- 1) Relative Chi-square: CMIN/df is 2.950.
- 2) Goodness of Fit Index: GFI is .946
- 3) Root Mean Square Error of Approximation: RMSEA is 0.036.
- 4) Adjusted Goodness of Fit index is .904
- 5) Root Mean Square Error of Approximation: RMSEA equals .070
- 6) Comparative Fit Index is 0.974
- 7) Hoelter is 206

Based on the research results obtained, the consistency of the prototype model was examined with empirical data which is consistent. There is a conformity value through the criteria, so it can be considered that the relationship between the variables is the most appropriate relationship. Therefore, the modified correlation model is used to calculate direct effect, indirect effect, and total effect as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Show the results of the analysis of direct influence, indirect influence, and the sum of the influences between variables.

Dependent Variable	Effects	Independent Variable		
		Income	Activity Travel	UGC
UGC	Direct	-.123	1.041	.000
	Indirect	.000	.000	.000
	Total	-.123	1.041	.000
decision	Direct	.000	.000	.933
	Indirect	-.114	.971	.000
	Total	-.114	.971	.933
ugc_share	Direct	.000	.000	1.216
	Indirect	-.149	1.266	.000
	Total	-.149	1.266	1.216
ugc_phonesearch	Direct	.000	.000	1.358
	Indirect	-.167	1.413	.000
	Total	-.167	1.413	1.358

Table 4 Show the results of the analysis of direct influence, indirect influence, and the sum of the influences between variables. (Cont.)

Dependent Variable	Effects	Independent Variable		
		Income	Activity Travel	UGC
ugc_search	Direct	.000	.000	1.131
	Indirect	-.167	1.413	.000
	Total	-.139	1.177	1.131
ugc_experience	Direct	.000	.000	1.000
	Indirect	-.123	1.041	.000
	Total	-.123	1.041	1.000
act_message	Direct	.000	1.086	.000
	Indirect	.000	.000	.000
	Total	.000	1.086	.000
act_merit	Direct	.000	1.008	.000
	Indirect	.000	.000	.000
	Total	.000	1.008	.000
act_natural	Direct	.000	1.407	.000
	Indirect	.000	.000	.000
	Total	.000	1.407	.000
act_shopping	Direct	.000	1.213	.000
	Indirect	.000	.000	.000
	Total	.000	1.213	.000
act_restaurant	Direct	.000	1.374	.000
	Indirect	.000	.000	.000
	Total	.000	1.374	.000
act_entertain	Direct	.000	1.242	.000
	Indirect	.000	.000	.000
	Total	.000	1.242	.000
act_sport	Direct	.000	1.000	.000
	Indirect	.000	.000	.000
	Total	.000	1.000	.000

The tourism behavior in travel activity has an indirect influence on the decision to choose a tourist attraction in Pathum Thani Province with sum of influence equal to .971. The income factor had no influence, both directly and indirectly, with the decision to choose a tourist attraction. Total Influence

value is -.114 and User Generated Content (UGC) has direct influence on tourist attractions decision with a sum of influence equal to .933.

The results of this research reflect that tourism behavior in travel activity has an indirect influence through the data generated by users (UGC) on the decision to choose a tourist attraction in Pathum Thani province. The user generated content on searching for information on smartphones is useful for travel (ugc_phonesearch) had a direct influence on the decision to choose a tourist attraction with a sum of influence equal to 1.358, followed by tourism information is an incentive for more tourism (ugc_share) had a direct influence on the decision to choose a tourist attraction with a sum of influence equal to 1.216, and searching for information can lead to better travel planning (ugc_search) had a direct influence on the tourist attractions decision with the sum of influence equal to 1.131, respectively.

Summary and Discussion

Summary of research results based on hypothesis was found that:

Hypothesis 1: Analysis of different demographic factors affecting decision-making in choosing tourist attractions in Pathum Thani province using t-test and One-Way ANOVA statistics found that

- Male and female decided to choose a tourist attraction in Pathum Thani province significant differently.

- Different ages have different decisions about tourist attractions in Pathum Thani. The sample aged between 18-25 years old, 26-35 years old, 36-45 years old, aged between 36-45 years old and over 60 years old were decided to choose a tourist destination with statistically significant difference at the .05 level.

- Different occupations have different decision-making on tourist attractions in Pathum Thani province. From the sample group that are students, officer in government or state enterprises, and employees of private companies. It was decided to choose a tourist attraction in Pathum Thani province with statistically significant at the .05 level.

- Different incomes have different choices of tourist attractions. The respondents with incomes less than 15,000 baht and those with incomes ranging from 15,001 to 25,000 baht decided to choose a tourist destination in Pathum Thani province with statistically significant at the .05 level.

The demographic factors affecting the decision to choose tourist attractions in Pathum Thani province in all aspects as gender, age, occupation, and income.

The analysis of tourism behavior in tourism activities positively correlated with decision to choose tourist attractions in Pathum Thani province using Pearson Correlation. It was found that tourism behavior was positively correlated with decision to choose tourist attractions in Pathum Thani Province. Tourism behavior in all aspects of activities have relationship in the same direction at moderate relationship with the decision to choose tourist attractions in Pathum Thani province.

Hypothesis 2: Demographic factors affect the decision to choose tourist attractions in Pathum Thani province through user generated content. The analyzing the structural equation model (SEM), it was found that

- Gender, age, and occupation do not affect the decision to choose a tourist attraction in Pathum Thani province through user generated content.

- Income significantly affects the decision to choose tourist attractions in Pathum Thani province through user generated content.

The result can be concluded that only the income factor that affects the decision to choose a tourist attraction in Pathum Thani province through the user generated content. Tourism operators can take advantage of content creation by tourists. Content may be classified in order to reach target groups with different income, which may make it possible to increase tourism in that place.

Hypothesis 3: Tourism behavior factors affect the decision to choose tourist attractions in Pathum Thani province through the user generated content. The analyzing of the structural equation model (SEM) found that: Tourism behavior in travel activity affects decision-making in choosing tourist attractions in Pathum Thani province through user generated data at statistically significant level.

Research shows that the use of traveler-generated content plays an important role in travelers' decision-making to travel in all forms. Tour operators should use tourist-generated content to promote tourism in each location. This is consistent with research by Marchiori and Cantoni (2015) that travelers use information found online about other travelers' travel experiences in deciding on a tourist destination.

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