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數位游牧民族國際遷移動機研究：以清邁為例
“Digital Nomad” decision making regarding the destination
country: work and travel in Chiang Mai”

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Abstract

With increasing prevalence of internet connection and the arrival of new economy, more and more people work outside of fixed offices as ‘nomads’. Remote work nowadays becomes increasingly popular among corporations and employees. It has widely decreased the budget of companies. This study examines the phenomenon of Digital Nomads by focusing on those who migrate to Chiang Mai, Thailand to live while working for firms based abroad. More specifically, it explores two major themes in Digital Nomadism: the decision-making process before arrival and consequences after arrival. Online interview with 10 experienced Digital Nomads based in Chiang Mai were conducted. The findings indicate the reasons underlying their relocation to Chiang Mai: economy, escape from original countries, and interpersonal connections online and offline. Compared to expatriates, Digital Nomads create a chill and relaxing working atmosphere. This new type of lifestyle has also changed the local community in Chiang Mai both positively and negatively.

Keywords: nomadism; backpacking; Digital Nomads; global nomads; expatriate
flashpackers; mobilities

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Research Background

1.1.1 Digital Nomadic Work in the World

Digital Nomads are characterized by their remote, web-based work. They are typically employed in fields such as; programming, tutoring, consulting, marketing, design, and business. Utilizing the advantage of remote work, Digital Nomads demonstrates a new concept of employment where workers have the freedom to live in any country of their choice. Unlike traditional office-based jobs as instead of being assigned a place to work, one can enjoy the freedom of travel and location variety. This study focuses on Digital Nomads' location preferences when choosing places to work and live. A primary focus is on Digital Nomads who live and work in Chang Mai for employers based abroad. This study explores Digital Nomads' accounts and experiences by conducting online interviews.

There are many factors that contribute to a person's decision to work in the digital industries. However, there are even more factors underlying people's decisions with regard to becoming a Digital Nomads. Over the past decade the job market has changed drastically due to expansions and advancements in high-speed internet. Digital Nomads, location-independent entrepreneurs, or freelancers have all been at the forefront of this change. Outsourcing is becoming more and more popular among corporations and throughout all types of industries. Freelancers have become trendy due to the modern ease of international communication. Moreover, the internet has also changed the way of people live and management their daily lives. More and more people are considering their personal time and freedom as top priorities of a healthy life. As a result of these changes, company's human resource departments are modifying policies and are more inclusive of non-traditional work practices. Digital Nomads prefer this trend of life and

work balance and flexible time schedule. The flexibility of deciding one's own working hours, working location and environment appeal to many in professions such as freelancer, blogger and YouTuber. This new life aspect has been slowly allowed people more flexibility to be able to choose where to settle or choose their countries for identification (Ashforth, 2008).

Digital work has become is the new norm, resulting in contemporary human resourcing and work practices. Digital work is emerging as a new type of location-independent employment that can easily and effectively mesh with modern businesses. It is easiest seen in modern western culture (Orlikowski & Scott 2016). Clearly, digital technologies play an important role in managing Nomad's lives. Digital Nomads are certainly pushing this virtual and remote way of working to the extreme. Work-related contact with employees, colleagues and clients are also all available online. With online communication tools, it leads to the "relativization of geographical distance" (Pries, 2010, pp.14). For Digital Nomads, this extreme mobility and convenient network pose new challenges to making sense of what work means to them. Scholars have started to do research on the role of new technologies and their effect on Digital Nomads' work practices or identification (Carter, 2015). However, more research still needs to be done to better understand their background and reasoning for choosing location-independence work practices

1. The Rise of Gig Economy and Sharing Economy

"The idea of gig economy has been used in academic and business fields referring to micro-entrepreneurship, self-employment, and computer-mediated, peer-like exchanges that start with individual" (Naylor, 2003, pp.379). The term "Gig economy," has grown more popular over the past several decades, especially after an idea of "slash workers," has gained popularity. "Slash workers," are employees who choose to have

multiple jobs within the “gig economy.” This gives them more opportunities for income through side businesses or additional gig work. These exchanges are enabled by a great number of companies, organizations or online platforms that quickly match workers to employers. Corporations have slowly cut down their spending on employees. Instead of permanent employment, short-term workers and project-based employment are preferred in order to cut company costs and maximize profit. In addition to reduced billable hours, part-time workers aren’t always afforded the same company-sponsored benefits such as healthcare or a retirement savings plan.

Since the essential advantages of the gig economy system provided many advantages to employers, it also stimulated another trend of economy, the sharing economy. With high-speed internet as a digital mediator, it creates a lot of new business models that utilize already existing personal property. Some specific examples are Uber, Lyft, and Airbnb where the gig worker take their personal car or apartment and provides a service. These companies like conduct their entire core business through workers who decide their own work hours and location. These popular businesses also inspired other freelancers to create their own businesses online. Platforms like TASKS from Taiwan and TaskRabbit from United States, offer a platform for employer and employees to match their job opportunities and needs. These new types of firms exist to meet specific requirements that a cooperation has by matching employers with a freelancer who has the required skills to complete the job. This employment is often limited to a specific project and ends upon its completion as opposed to being hired as a fulltime member of the corporation.

Technology is transforming business organization in a new way. A peer-like exchange system has also linked to digital ear that has linked to new life-style (Florida, 2002). This gig economy trend has created an increasing number of Digital Nomads to take up project-based, short-term jobs, live and travel around the world, and fulfill them

online. In the lower-budget gig economy model, business networking is more important than it is for most traditional workers, because gig workers are defined by shorter-term and higher turnover type jobs. These gig workers need to have more contacts in their field to ensure a consistent job and revenue stream. Moreover, in some studies (Aruun, 2016; Barsness, 2005; Brown, 2003) researchers also found that people involved in self-employment or micro-entrepreneurship are more willing to enjoy their liberty and match their businesses to the needs of their community. Digital Nomads, match perfectly in this new economy trend, their unique lifestyle adopts various digital applications and platforms which support their work.

2. Remote Work

Another trend intimately linked with Digital Nomads is remote work. “Remote work refers to work that is performed outside of the normal organizational confines of space and time” (Olson, 1983). It also stimulates different kinds of working styles and labors like digital labors (Mark & Su 2010; Su & Mark 2008). Employers are no longer required to pay the expenses for office space, electricity, and healthcare. Remote working is also used by a company as a welfare to people to take back their control of working environment and way of working. Especially in nowadays, work from home is already a new trend among many fields of companies (Barsness & Seidel, 2005).

Moreover, it also increases many people’s type of work to receive different “Task-based” works at home. For most of companies, they take the advantage of remote work to outsource work loading while the center can make a better process of essential decision making and management. (Hislop and Axtell, 2007, pp.36).

With the rapid speed and change in digital technologies over these years, many work practices are being reconfigured for digital work (Colbert, 2016). Technologies like smartphones, laptops, and coding promise workplace flexibility through location-

independent working arrangements (Ens, 2018). Digital Nomads are those who take these great advantages to work and travel at the same time. They are able to have their global adventures while supported by contingent work. It also shows the extremely different levels and styles of work life.

1.2 Conceptualizing Digital Nomads

To conceptualize Digital Nomads, there are several similar concepts that need to be distinguished. Digital Nomads should not be mistaken for expatriates. They are two distinct groups in terms of the geography of work, incentive of movement, and types of employment. Compared to Digital Nomads, expatriate's freedom in choosing locations are largely limited.

Furthermore, the two groups of workers tend to have different socioeconomic compositions. Expatriates form the post-societies are even now are still very common in some modern western countries. Companies also aim to develop more business opportunities utilizing expatriates. In many countries, expatriates fill many leading elite roles in the economy and work in the management teams for corporations. They often take positions as high managers and play an essential role as connection representatives to their home countries or companies. However, while belonging to a certain company, expatriates are often regarding as "guests" in local communities. They are often thought of as voluntary temporary migrants in that they are often deprived by their work freedom and movement flexibility. Some scholars also regard expatriates as semi-permanent immigrants, (Erik, 1997).

Compared to Digital Nomads, expatriates have less location choices as their place of work are determined by their employers. Their work performance is evaluated by

how successfully they fit into the local environment. An expatriate however knows to fit into different culture and combine their benefits with local advantages, (Harzing, 2004). Furthermore, there are more uncertainties that might change quickly during overseas periods. The burdens on expatriates are usually higher than that on other locally born employees. Corporations tend to focus on the benefits that an expatriate brings to the organization but don't often give as much thought to the things that are difficult for the individual; such as cultural differences, language barriers, or family differences. In summary, expatriates are required to be justified more before going overseas which is also what limits expatriates in making their own decisions (Causin, 2011, pp.795-802).

Another group of people who should be distinguished from Digital Nomads are tourists. Unlike expatriates, tourists and Digital Nomads both enjoy relatively more freedom in choosing their destination and both of their transnational movements are highlighted by leisure purposes. Like Digital Nomads, the recent convergence of information technology and physical travel has facilitated tourists. When choosing destinations, tourists consider affordability, safety, and friendliness important. However, compared to tourists, Digital Nomads may be further required to take into account work-related factors and long-term adjustment issues when choosing a destination, such as internet infrastructure and their willingness and ability to live in the location for a longer term.

While both the literature on expatriates and that on tourists have examined the rationale of destination choice, (Frederick, 1978) existing studies on Digital Nomads have rarely explored what factors contributes to their choice of destination. If expatriates' purpose of movement is linked to work, and tourist's purpose of movement is associated with leisure, Digital Nomads combine work and pleasure. Compared to expatriates, Digital Nomads' location choice may have more to do with leisure purposes.

Compared to tourists, the factors Digital Nomads consider may be deeper and broader, including long-term life considerations, economic considerations, and most importantly, network activity considerations.

1.3 Research purpose

Although Digital Nomads has been widely discussed in the past decades, there is little to no research focusing on motivations for choosing certain destinations during their decision-making process. I would like to interview to these Digital Nomad to better understand the circumstances of Digital Nomads' life, and compare against their pre-imagination lifestyle. This research will conduct a more depth discussion on their decision-making and country selection process.

Understating people's motivation and purposes for moving to Chiang Mai is essential for studying the factors that influenced their move. Ogbu (1991) claims that immigrant minorities may have advantages over communities that involuntarily immigrated to Chiang Mai. However, Gobo's analysis was concerned with only one particular type of immigrant minority, namely individuals who migrated voluntarily to a new country in search of better life opportunities and those who sought permission for long-term residence. Generally, such individuals are dedicated to changing their lives by pursuing a better economic environment. However, in my study, the majority of the interviewees came from highly developed countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and European countries. These individuals worked for their home countries while residing overseas. Their reasons for moving were mostly concerned with their desire for a relaxed lifestyle and in search of freedom.

Digital Nomad are often regard themselves as different than tourists. There are several differences symbolizing their unique lifestyle. In most of developed countries,

there are even several Digital Nomads' groups among these people. Therefore, choosing a certain location might also affect Digital Nomads' lifestyles (Putra & Agirachman, 2016). To discover the motivations of their decision making, understanding their location preference is a starting point. This will help with research conducted in the future and give a greater understanding about their motivation for staying overseas. For example, Digital Nomads' segregation from the local population issue, how do Digital Nomads networking with other Digital Nomads in order to build up a community, and dating culture among similar demographics of Digital Nomads. To analyze the topic of local preference, I address with my research questions in this study.

1.4 Research question

1. What are the factors that shape Digital Nomads 'choice of location'?^{[1][SEP]}

There are many processes during decisions making. Before Digital Nomads make their preference lists on location. What are factors that affect their decisions. I would like to do depth research on the topic of location preference.

2. What are their perceptions of the destination before travel? What are their experiences of the destination after they arrive? Are there any difference?

Focusing in Chang Maim, I will like to discover more depth motivation study of how did they imagine the destination before they travel? Any culture shock that change their mind staying/leaving Chang Mai? What is their future location preference considering their current or past experience staying in Chang Mai?

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Previous studies

2.1.1 Dimension of Global Nomadic

Increasingly, more and more people are choosing a type of work that can allow them to control their time and freedom. According to the biggest community website of Digital nomads (Nomadlist.com), there will be around 40% of people who work remotely by 2020. “Digital nomads” was first coined because of revolutionary lifestyle changes by Makimoto and Manners (1997). Müller made a statement about Digital Nomad saying that these people are groups of people who want to take back their life control. Instead of quitting their work, they chose to move frequently and being nowhere based in the world. (Müller, 1987). He argues that the term “Digital nomads” has already become well established as a self-description. Mikimoto and Manners (1997) use the term to describe their manifesto on the revolutionary lifestyle that has been changed with the advance of the internet. In the very early decades, nomads were people who lived in opposition to state power and wanted to find their individual freedom. These workers have a picture of their ideal lives that similar to over sea travelers but make their time balanced with work and travel. It seems to live in holidays all time. Today, it has a new definition for those groups that live with the flexibility of the internet.

Current literature has various terms to distinguish people who do travel or work overseas. For example, a backpacker is conceptualized as an individual who is only abroad for a short term and usually has a specific travel schedule or destination (O’Brien, 2011). Or expatriates, a certain group of people who are given missions to accomplish their work overseas in a given period of time. There are several studies that have implied essential information about nomadic manners. Most of the studies on

Digital Nomadism relate to its flexibility with job mobility, using frames such as “job nomads,” “professional nomads,” “posted workers,” “expatriates,” or “flexpatriates” (O’Brien, 2011).

Table 1 Definition of remote workers

	Definition	Article	Author
New tribalism	Describing state power and individual freedom, with the latter being personified as the ultimate antagonist to the power of the state.	“Nomad ology: The War Machine”	Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1986)
Digital Nomad	The hypothesis of long-distance working seemed distant, albeit possible, with the advent of the millennium.	Makimoto, T., & Manners, D.	Makimoto & Manners(1997)
Freelancers	Using access to the internet as a catalyst that enables them to pursue their professional activities on the move, Digital Nomads are not confined to specific localities.	Neo-Nomadism: A Theory of Post-Identitarian Mobility in the Global Age. Mobilities	D’Andrea(2006)
Job nomads, Professional nomad, Expatriates, Flexpatriates	Employees and managers become nomads because they manage projects abroad on behalf of companies or as managers who routinely commute between several offices at different locations.	Finding a home for the “Digital Nomad.”	O’Brien(2011)

	Definition	Article	Author
Remote workers	This group of location-independent people represents a growing number of individuals that “that leverage digital technologies to perform their work duties, and more generally conduct their lifestyle in a nomadic manner”	How To Succeed At Becoming A Digital Nomad.	Mohn, T (2014)

Table 1(see **Table 1**) reveals that while there have been several adopted social terms to characterize the digital noamds, it is hard to describe the phenomenon in a general term. “New tribalism” indicates an individual traveler and their comfort activities and particular travel schedule. Term of backpackers highlights the new trend of “flashpacking,” which, in essence, references people who rely on the internet and smart devices and that no longer use traditional methods to travel like maps, notebooks or a compasses (Mouratidis, 2018). Instead, flashpackers are the product of a technology-reliant generation that often travels with equipment like smart phones, digital cameras, filming equipment and laptops. However, to target a certain group of people in order to prioritize in-depth research, I will only focus on people who have been working remotely for more than a year with technology devices like mobiles and laptop. At the same time, these groups of people don’t belong to any local companies but work from their home countries or being as freelancers. They frequently change their locations and not willing to settle for years. Different from travelers, they don’t plan for touring all the time. The live like back in their home countries, but they have more freedom to manage their time.

Table 2 Twelve Factor of Choosing Travel Destinations. Lundberg (1979)

	Factor
Most important	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Warm, friendly people2. Comfortable accommodation3. Beautiful, natural scenery4. Reasonable prices
Secondary	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Attractive customs and way of life2. Good climate3. Beautiful creations of man4. Outstanding food
Tertiary	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Good shopping2. Exotic environment3. Historical or family ties4. Exceptional recreational facilities

Table 3 Definition of Tourists of decision-making factors

Scholars	Year	Definition
Harris, Driver & Bergensen	1984	Tourist's consumption decision-making process will be based on experience, characteristics, preference, motivations, attitude and attribute perception of tourism destination, senior first factor (time, money, physical strength) and many others factors, which in turn affect tourism behavior.
Woodside & Sherrell	1977	Tourists usually test their past experience and their knowledge to make decision, and the evaluation process usually only consider 4 available tourist locations.
Woodside & Lysonski	1989	Tourists' choice of tourist's location will be affected by tourists' perception and related situational factors. Perception is affected by the characteristics of tourists and the marketing strategies of the operators.

2.2 Tourism in travel destination making

The travel destination is defined by Coltman (1989) as "a sightseeing area with different natural attributes, characteristics, or attractions that can attract non-local tourists to visit." To become a tourist destination, a country or region must meet three conditions: compelling tourist items, developed transportation and equipment, and entertainment facilities for tourists. Morrstin (1989) put forward the concept of destination mix, thinking that destinations are attractions and events, facilities, and transportation amenities and hospitality resources. Composed of four elements, attraction and festivals are the central tenants of travel purpose. Thus, explains why people choose to travel on certain holidays or during festivals.

According to the basic model of human motivation, from having a travel motivation to actual travel, an individual goes through a psychological journey of "travel decision." When a person is making travel decisions, Morrison (1989) believes that travelers themselves will be affected by two sets of factors: personal factors (needs, motivations, perception, learning, personality, lifestyle, and self- concept) and factors of interpersonal relationships (culture and subculture, participating groups, social class, opinion leaders, and family). He also explains that personal factors are more essential than interpersonal relationships since the second is unpredictable. Most people rely on their personal knowledge when it comes to the final decision making. Lundberg (1979) proposed twelve important factors for choosing travel destinations and divided them into three groups according to importance (see **Table 2**).

According to Crompton and Um (1990), there are two directions for the choice of travel destinations. One direction is more concerned about the relationship between the attitude and preference for the destination or its impression in the early days, but the research is limited to preference and not to the real travel destination selection behavior. The other direction that some scholars try to explore is how individuals form a feasible combination of travel destinations and make a final choice from them. Um and Crompton (1990) believe that with limited knowledge of travel destination, potentially travelers are not easily able to express their interests. It also shows their decreased possibility of making a decision. Therefore, the impression and attitude of the travel destination may be an important element in the destination selection process, regardless of whether or not the impression and attitude truly represent the destination. To sum up, as with most consumer decisions, tourism destination decisions involve many factors. The decision of a tourist to visit a certain destination is a series of psychological activities, and attention should be paid to the entire consumption model. Mathieson, A. and Wall, G. (1982) recognize that the socio-economic background of travelers will

affect their attitudes, needs and motives for tourism decision-making (social status). The following summary is the definition provided by each expert to define travel destinations:

Overall, most definitions (See **Table 3**) of making a travel destination are highly related to a tourist's personal experience and social status. In reality, there are limits that are considered in the selection of destinations, and constraints of distance and available time and money during traveling are the most important (Harris, Driver, and Bergersen, 1984). However, among all these constraints that have affected people and their trips, the primary emphasis has been placed on individual experience. They found that choice of a final decision was influenced both by attributes. It means that people's motives for pleasure travel and experience might emerge from interaction of and individual's belief. This could be also interestingly be implied to Digital Nomad while they make their destination choices thinking of their personal pleasure while traveling.

2.3 Reasons to Stay for Foreign Residence

In this section, I will emphasize most of the studies that discuss overseas foreigners, including expatriate bubbles and cosmopolitans, community and identity as an overseas resident, and cross-cultural romance. Thompson (2018) mentioned, "privilege and inequality will provide a critical view of points to analyze the Digital Nomad demographics since their relative global privilege and its impact on interpersonal relationships" (pp.28). Whereas community could give a different aspect, including expats' families, friends, peers and locals. These studies have focused on foreigners who have moved abroad over years. These studies have also given a great view point on what issues overseas foreigners might have in reality, a consequence that has been widely discussed in multiples papers. Also, it is necessary to consider whether these

factors will affect people who want to move overseas when they decide their location preference or perform decision making.

2.3.1 Expatriate bubble and cosmopolitans

“Expatriates” is a term that is widely used to capture the category of international migrants who are a group that is between the tourist and the semi-permanent or permanent immigrant. These groups of people have clear schedules of when to leave and where to go. They have also been called “transnational participants.” The number and variety of expatriates has greatly increased during the past centuries due to the increasing economic and cultural complexity of international relations. Moreover, the interdependence between nations around the world has also change how people view these international workers. Expatriates are viewed as global citizens who move frequently and whose boundaries of identity are fuzzy. They are usually people who have various overseas experiences and take high positions in their industries. Finding a specific community has been important for these people to maintain their social connection (Cohen, 1977).

Cohen argues that “expatriates are not a disinterested group of complete outsiders; they are more like an output of imperialism.” In host societies with increasing numbers of expatriates, there has been created a completely new community in the local context. It enhances the strength of global expatriates to fit into groups with exotic senses of international connection. However, internal composition of the foreign community and its relationship with the host society has an invisible wall, meaning that expatriates might feel less of a connection with local people. This same phenomenon also happens when expatriates are temporary migrants and accompanying partners and associates are more easily found living in a local expat bubble (Cohen, 1977). Cohen explained that expatriates prefer to hang on to the homogeneous lifestyle instead of spending time to

get closer to the local communities. It also can be seen in some of the top 10 best countries for expatriates, like Bangkok, Thailand and Hanoi, Vietnam, both of which have certain areas to for foreigners to live, like condos or mansion communities. Banchove (2012) finds that some of the expats identify themselves as cosmopolitans and that many of these people prefer to possess fewer interests in long-term integration with the host society. Staying in an expat bubble also helps people to find a group that can easily be interacted with. Since expatriates are mostly in short transit, who come with job missions or other purposes, they have little motivation to learn about or acknowledge the host society and build intimate relations with locals. In essence, they are a type of “tourists” that has only interest in traveling.

2.3.2 Identity between location and self-awareness

Albert and Whetten have published many studies of how work shapes people’s identity with work- related activities, occupational, and organizational identities. With many new types of work, like individual employees, recent scholars also mention about identity change and how individuals engage in overseas activities to construct, maintain, or give up identities (Schultz, 2013). In this new world, individuals would be able to freely choose between being a nomad or being a settler. Shaping their own identity that fit their personalities is not a difficult task. People can easily move overseas to choose their life goal or places where it is suitable for them because of globalization. Andrea describes neo-nomads as “displaced people with displaced minds. “Digital Nomadism is much more than a pattern of movement: it’s a mindset that embraces freedom, independence and self-reliance. Though Digital Nomad choose to live overseas with more liberty but with less language skills and cultural knowledge, it is hard for them to actually fit into local culture. They will probably seek out Digital Nomads’ groups via online platforms. Andrea argues that people are more ready to use their own cultural

knowledge to adopt a new culture. This means that removing bias with one's own background is difficult. People are more easily able to pursue a social community which can somehow fit their culture background and personalities. Identity is dependent on location and self-awareness, and therefore has a related connection.

2.3.3 Work and Leisure Balance

Cohen (2013) brings up a concept of "lifestyle mobility" that digital nomads are groups of people who rely on voluntary and continuous mobility. Stebbins' (2001) demonstrates a theory of "serious leisure," saying that Digital Nomads prioritize their free time over employment-based locations. Stebbins categorizes "serious leisure" concepts to include six defining characteristics: perseverance, leisure career, personal effort, tangible reward, identity and unique ethos. This theory will contribute to an in-depth analysis of Digital Nomadism, as groups of people have shown priorities in travel leisure while also taking more effort to find their balance in life and work.

Digital Nomads often regard themselves as more unique or authentic than traditional tourists. Kaplan (1996) argues that their actual habits show little distinction between tourists and expatriates. He suggests Digital Nomads as foreigners abroad, try to distance themselves from "tourists." They are trying to manage a lifestyle between their work and leisure together. However, from their selection of region or spot to stay, Kaplan concludes that it is hard to distinguish Digital Nomads from normal tourists or ex-pats who also follow similar demographics.

Other theorists make points that leisure concepts focus on leisure activity and lifestyle practice which will discuss more about off-line activities. Blackshaw's (2018) concept of "devotional leisure" indicates that leisure is so important that it is the "the motor that sustains modern life" (pp.79). He claims that with leisure, people perceive themselves to be honest in a radical way which also helps them to find out who they

are. Blackshaw is pursuing a turn from an identity-based approach to individual employment, to one based on one's certain leisure pursuits. In his points of view, Digital Nomads' often defines themselves with multiple enjoyments and interests rather than focusing on a single identify that is based on a specific type of remote work that supports their lifestyle. To find a balance between work and leisure, Blackshaw suggests that it is not based on location, but self-wellness.

2.4 Digital Nomads as practices in reality

“The Digital Nomads' lifestyle is an important topic for sociological consideration, especially as it signals a shift in employment practices for the Millennial and subsequent generations” (Cohen, 2014, pp.172). Global nomads display innovatory understanding of transitional studies, they are either tourists or expatriates or between these two categories. Many of the Digital Nomads' abandoned urban hubs where they used to have their comfort zones or statuses like stable income and consequently migrated to alien locations with a pleasure lifestyle. However, more and more people yearn to be able to control their working hours. In today's technology, international mobility is no longer just an advantage for a small number of people. Technological advances also help with these individual workers. Yet, while so many people admire the Digital Nomad' lifestyle, there are still many factors that might affect decision making.

The changes in social patterns have also led to different changes in work trends. In many advanced countries, Digital Nomad have become a new generation of work styles. The global population movement is also increasing with the change of generations. When the gig economy and self-media prevail, Digital Nomad look like a group of people who treat work as play. At the same time, when the global economy is

turbulent due to external factors, such as viruses, these Digital Nomad have also become another group of actual “nomads”. Therefore, by understanding the motivation behind the decision, you can gain a better understanding of the Digital Nomad, the new generation of working culture and the background of international population migration. In this study, I will especially focus on location preference by comparing interviewees with their before after of decision-making process.



Chap 3 Methodology

3.1. Chiang Mai

In this section, I will explain why I chose Chang Mai as my research target. In order to better understand the decision-making process on location of Digital Nomads, (DNs) I focus on one location to conduct the study. There are several rankings of most popular locations for Digital Nomads, most of which are in south east Asia. Many of these rankings name Chiang Mai, Thailand as the most popular place (see Table 4). Thailand is also a place that has been recognized as having great networks and low living spending cost. It is also well-known for being a holiday destination on most of travel websites.

According to a private Facebook group “Chiang Mai Digital Nomads”, there are more than 35,000 members in the group; among the biggest group on Facebook “Digital Nomads around the world”, Chiang Mai has been highly mentioned in the discussion. Moreover, there are weekly off line meet- ups held in café in the city town in Chiang Mai in the Facebook group “Chiang Mai Digital Nomads.” Since 2017, Chiang Mai has been selected by multiple Digital Nomad websites as one of the most suitable places to live for Digital Nomad. Many Digital Nomad also recommend Chiang Mai as one of the cities suitable for living on major social networks. In addition to the scenery, cultural background, infrastructure and other facilities, Chiang Mai has gradually become an international city. To sum up, collecting data from Chiang Mai has people that are from global with different aspects and background. It contributes many great views of points in consideration. Also, with various groups on social network, it helps to build up a wide connection with Digital Nomads.

Table 4 DM location preference

Years/ Ranking	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3
2017	Chiang Mai, Thailand	Bali, Indonesia	Bangkok, Thailand
2018	Chiang Mai, Thailand	Taipei, Taiwan	Ubub, Indonesia
2019	Barcelona, Spain	Buenos Aires, Argentina	Chiang Mai, Thailand
2020	Taipei, Taiwan	Barcelona, Spain	Chiang Mai, Thailand

Resource: <https://geeksaroundglobe.com/category/digital-nomads/>

3.2. Online interview and analysis method

The material used for this thesis comes from a semi-structured interview with 15 active Digital Nomads. I advertised this research by attending several major Digital Nomads groups on social media, “Digital Nomad around the World group”, “Digital Nomad around the world”, “Chiang Mai Digital Nomads”, “Global Digital Nomads Network”, finding most of interviewees in the group by Snow Ball method. I started with a post describing my research aim and request participants joining my interview by volunteering. I adopted an interpretivist epistemological approach by doing online video calls. During interviews, I asked participants to describe their typical workday, recount their personal trajectory of becoming a DN, and explain their previous experience as being a DN in different countries. Mostly, I collected their response from different point of views.

The next section Analytical Methods is about how that material was analyzed. This analysis has two goals. The first is to identifying potential participants for the interviews and to understand why they have decided to move to Chang Mai for at least half year or longer stay.

Table 5 Different platforms of Thailand Digital Nomad

Name	Members/Years	Platform
Digital Nomad around the World group	68,000	Facebook
Digital Nomad around the world	84,000	Facebook
Digital Nomads Jobs-Remote Work from Anywhere	72,000	Facebook
Chiang Mai Digital Nomads Network	48,000	Facebook
Chiang Mai Digital Nomads Network	35,000	Facebook
Digitalnomadsforum.com	Established in 2014	Web
The remote trip in Chiang Mai	Established in 2017	Web

In this research, I analyzed responses from 10 interviewees. My goal is to find more details about the reasons back to Digital Nomad' location decision making especially focus in Chang Mai. To better understand the content, I recorded all contents. Through all the replies, I applied the respondent's answers to different categories through the categories I created. To sum up, there are some limitation finding proper interviewees.

3.3 Interview Guideline

By soliciting interviews with interviewees on most social media, I asked about the background of the past as a Digital Nomad. Through a simple understanding of the background of each interviewee, it is possible to determine whether the past experience is consistent with this research background setting and related criteria. The interview was held around 1-2 hours by online video calls. It is also needing their admission before doing recording. The primary research material collected in the form of a semi-structured interview guideline that also served as a basis for the interviews. The interview continued with participants' answering. In order to discover more possibility factors that affect Digital Nomads' decision making, the interview will not focus on certain discussion.

By the definition, the interviewees are required to stay or have been stayed in Chiang Mai for more than six months or people who are currently staying in Chiang Mai. The questions are related to their daily lives, their motivations, sociability, challenges, and comparison to standard work/life practices. The participants were given a choice to use their pseudonym if they wish, in order to protect their personal data. As a researcher, this research use anonymity or nickname to present the interviews of each respondent to ensure that the information of each respondent is protected.

3.4 Ethics of Qualitative Research

Constantly, confidentiality and trust are often arising in qualitative research (Ryen, 2011). It is requested to obtain informed consent and require the information that interviewees are being studies. In this research, I disseminate online consent form since the limitation of online-video call, which included and invitation and a brief statement of the purpose of the research, how it would be conducted, and for how long. Since all

interviews were asked to be done by video call interview. It was sent as online document before all interviews. Second, I outlined the steps taken to ensure confidentiality as I am obligated to protect the participants' identity by using pseudonyms and concealing personal information.

3.5 Coding

After coding the interview transcripts of interviewees' responses, 11 keywords relevant to the research topic were obtained on the basis of the interview questions. The keywords were as follows: reason, economy, culture, local chain, geography, relationship, perception before arriving, leisure, relaxed lifestyle, stress, and arrival. I particularly focused on data pertaining to the following four primary themes: pull and push factors responsible for migration from home countries, reality after arrival, negative effects in response to the local community, and uncontrolled factors pertaining to the life of a Digital Nomad. The themes and corresponding explanatory phrases and descriptions were consistent with the current study's research objective to examine the push-pull factors governing Digital Nomads in Chiang Mai.

Before presenting my findings pertaining to the interviewees' responses, providing an overview of the respondents is essential. To conduct this research, 10 individuals (five men and five women) between the ages of 24 and 50 were interviewed. The interviewees' shortest duration of stay at Chiang Mai was half a year, and the longest period was 10 years. All interviewees shared their stories starting from the time they decided to move to Chiang Mai. I categorized their responses into four sections to conduct in-depth analysis. Moreover, to find the sharing from both gender sides, I

eventually found 5 female and 5 male interviewees in the research. It has given a better understating from a different perspective. At the same time, I include interviewees from a wide range of age since the Digital Nomad in Chiang Mai have a long history for decades.

Table 6 List of all interviewees.

Name	Gender	Nationality	Age	Job description	Times in CM
Ning	Male	U.S.	60	Online tutor	10 years
Isabela	Female	U.S.	24	Business developer	1.5 years
Cindy	Female	TW	26	Online Sales	1 year
Richard	Male	HK	35	Engineer/Blogger	1.5 years
Simon	Male	Austria	28	Engineer	3 years
Luna	Female	China	28	Photographer	1 year
Michael	Male	Slovakia	29	Online business owner	4 years
Runa	Female	U.S.	24	Business developer	3 years
Lena	Female	U.S.	26	Startup owner	3.5 years
Leo	Male	China	26	Blogger	3 years

Chapter 4 Before Arrival

4.1 Digital Nomad decision making process

In past studies, poverty has been the most discussed topic in research on migration. In order to clarify different reasons affecting Digital Nomad' decisions, I also categorized their response into different categories. In the early 1990s, Tapinos (1990) recognized that most of the poorest people in the world can rarely choose where to stay or move overseas since resources are needed to do so, especially for global immigrants. However, the group of Digital Nomads I studied represent the opposite in the spectrum. Some people move to developing countries that have a low cost of living, and some people originally belonged to high income groups of white-collar workers. Therefore, these people have more choice than many other people. Therefore, regarding Digital Nomad, there may be a relationship between poverty as economy and motivation for moving, and economy itself may not be a main reason for moving and maintaining a lifestyle as a Digital Nomad.

4.2 Escape

The desire to look for a better way of life, which seems no different to the ideal held by all Digital Nomad, is reflective of the broader range of lifestyle choices that individuals in the post-modern world make. Everyone dreams of their utopia with their personalized quests. Due to globalization and individualization, people have more choices now than in the past. Moreover, with the ease of travel and mobility technologies, there are more opportunities to make a “better lifestyle.” Whereas in the past people only focused on migration to well-developed countries like the United States or Germany, nowadays, with more flexible networks and Virtual connections, people have more options. More people, especially those with middle-class professions

in developed countries, have considered reverting to a rural lifestyle to escape the drudgery of capital living in their early age instead of retirement age.

I like how I tried to make my life, you know, like every two or three months I need to change to different region. I can schedule my life easily and I get much more freedom and less pressure. - Michael (Slovakia)

I came to Chiang Mai only because of my boyfriend. I know nothing before I come. If not him, I might choose a city that I like the most line to be in Turkey. - Lena (China)

My wife follows me wherever I go. It is like “You jump, I will jump too.” - Richard (Hong Kong)

4.2.1 Escaping to Chiang Mai for a Better Lifestyle

A “better life” takes on many shapes and forms; some might prefer peaceful lifestyles in the rural countryside, and others might prefer individual freedom and control of one’ life. People try to leave from somewhere and something while simultaneously finding an escape to ensure self-fulfillment. Escape is needed to ensure the recreation, restoration, or rediscovery of oneself. Sometimes, some sick of pressure or politics or those seeking their “true” desires from the depth of their hearts may be those triggered to change and act on these needs. A meaningful way of life is often described in terms of authenticity; for example, the majority of interviewees who talked about their life in Chiang Mai sought authenticity.

I just quit my job because I wasn't happy. We had like a really hard project and we were working like 10 hours a day like six days a week, and I was really, I was really tired and I had a girlfriend back then, and when I came back home, I just wasn't in the mood even told her you know I was just so tired. And I said like, I need to quit right now, like something you know like something enlightened me I can't explain it sometimes. And so, I did okay. I needed to quit right now because when I go back home and I take asleep morning you know I changed my mind. - Michael (Slovakia)

I'm thinking about the life of retirement. In Hong Kong the living standard is super high. There are so many people and very, very crowded. The living standard is getting extremely high. I couldn't make a choice to live at where or make a better plan for my future with my wife. - Richard (Hong Kong)

Richard from Hong Kong described his reason for moving to Chiang Mai as a need to escape his own nation. With all recent the political protests and disagreements, he claimed that Hong Kong has limited him and his wife from choosing a better lifestyle because of lack of space and freedom. With the population density of Hong Kong, he could not afford his own house and living space. Moreover, an unstable political situation made him feel unsafe, so he reconsidered his future in Hong Kong. After being an engineer for over 10 years, he decided to move to Chiang Mai to live a retirement lifestyle. As a remote worker, he can maintain his income and live a decent lifestyle in Thailand.

At the time, I still had an apartment in Hong Kong. However, over 30 to 40% of my income was used to pay the rent or daily spending. The living expenses

in Hong Kong is getting higher and higher. It's very difficult to get more balance. Live in Hong Kong seems like in a desert. That's the reason I start to think about how I can move to a better retirement life. - Richard (Hong Kong)

Some people make changes while going through some big changes in life or becoming less motivated in their home countries. Going to a new environment seems like a better choice to escape their original lifestyles. Staying abroad gives people new motivation to find their energy and motivation in life. Michael from Slovakia shared his journey of leaving the extremely different country of Slovakia in Eastern Europe to emigrate to the Southeast Asian country of Thailand. He mentioned his powerlessness and depression after being an engineer for years. He was looking for a new start and a reason to escape from his home country. Struggling with quitting his usual job, he needed a new start in a completely different environment. He became a freelancer because he desired freedom; however, he found traveling as a Digital Nomads to be the best way for him to escape from his own comfort zone. Concurrently, he started his own YouTube channel to help more Hong Kong people take action.

I did no research at all before I moved to Chang Mai. I think some people just keep thinking and doing no actual actions. I want freedom and I just want to leave Slovakia. I grew up for years but I dislike cold weather very much. It is hard to believe but it is true. I love out nature there but the weather sucks. I started to try to find a better place to live. If it works for me then it works. I started my own business and I earned money that could afford my spending so I stayed longer. – Michael (Slovakia)

In contrast, there are also some people who have left their comfort zones to look for greater challenges in life. Especially in well-developed countries like the United States, people have begun wanting to get back to a “pure” lifestyle. Many of the Digital Nomad expressed an entrepreneurial spirit and established their adventurous spirit while demonstrating their flexibility within the global market. However, some scholars regard minority nomads who choose to live their own lifestyles as engaging in anti-economy development. Ning from the United Kingdom sold all his properties and moved to Chiang Mai chasing to embark on a real adventurous life. He expressed that his idea of being a real explorer is a goal in his life. After working hard as an IT engineer, he accumulated some savings and lived a wealthy life for years. However, there was always something missing from his life. He mentioned he had a lot money, but he still wanted to discover more for the rest of his life.

For me staying in Chiang Mai is only because of its different culture. I can still do another work. So, at the beginning, I did search some schools here. I was living in America I had a big house, but it's much more reduced living. I used to have a big library of books that I had to sell off when I moved nothings like firearms So yeah, it was big change. So now I live in a very small space. And I realized I don't need a big house. again, I do want adventures, always stayed young. So, for me adventure is worth the risk. The worst thing is for a very comfortable position, right. – Ning (U.S.)

Ning claimed to be an adventurous spirit and rejoiced in making such a move away from his comfort zone. He called himself a risk-taker. In Ning’s case, he explained that he wanted to have a simple life as he realized that he does not need many material things in his life. For Ning and many of Digital Nomad, establishing a more favorable work–

life balance was a key feature of their imagined ideal future lives. Instead being a middle-class employee, he chose to live a more “meaningful” life. Ning’s escape was to go back to a simple and easy lifestyle. Although, it was not as easy as he had planned at the beginning, he was willing to put effort into making a better life. Among all interviewees, he has stayed in Chiang Mai the longest.

I often suffer from insomnia and sleep late in Taiwan. I often want to go to bed at 11 o'clock, but I can't sleep, that is, I can't sleep until two o'clock, and then I sleep at about ten o'clock every day. At eleven o'clock, what you call natural wake-up is to be at ten eleven o'clock. After I arrived in Chiang Mai, my circadian clock became different. Sometimes I don't know why it's a little drowsy at eleven o'clock. You want to hold on, but I feel like I'm tired, and then I go to bed, After 7:30, I feel naturally awake. If you want to go back to sleep, you can't go back to sleep. It is a natural physiological clock. I quite like the feeling of making yourself healthier. - Cindy (Taiwan)

To sum up, there are multiple reasons why immigrants escaped. Some people escaped for political reasons, and some people chose to adjust their lifestyles. Traveling abroad means a new start for most people. However, if escape is a trigger, then economy is the most significant consideration for most of these Digital Nomad.

4.3 Economy

Factors motivating immigration are complex and numerous. People move for several reasons, and the economy issue is the most frequently considered. The issue of

the economy is the most direct consideration of everyone's pursuit of quality of life. Explaining immigrants' motivation for moving has inevitably focused on inequality in the conditions between an immigrant's place of origin and destination (Lee, 1966). The push-pull models by Harris and Todaro (1970) also suggests that migrants are pushed by low incomes in their countries or regions and pulled by better prospects in more affluent areas. However, for Digital Nomad who are usually from highly developed countries, economy for them is the ability to spend lot in a low-cost region; as such, these people usually migrate from Western countries to South Asia. They normally earn just enough or a high salary in their home countries, so they are looking for opportunities to spend little while also being able to afford travel or a bigger house.

4.3.1 Low Spending in Chiang Mai

In my research, most of interviewees mentioned that the lower cost of living in Chiang Mai can give them a better quality of life. According to Lena from the United States, she gave an approximate average monthly cost of living in Chiang Mai of around USD 500 per month, which is much lower than the cost of living in the United States. Additionally, the economic considerations are different depending on everyone's pursuit of their values. Richard from Hong Kong explained that with the same budget, he could only buy a studio in Hong Kong. Now, he lives in a two-floor house with a small yard. Most young Digital Nomad mentioned their longing for a lifestyle that balances work and salary. By living in Chiang Mai, they could have the most space and choice.

Low spending is one of the reasons. And I decided to stay here for one year, then I ended up staying longer. – Ning (U.S.)

Chiang Mai also came up as a place that a lot of people recommended, especially women as a place that is, like I said, fun, safe, inexpensive. And so, it would be nice if I could have an income right from the get-go, like from the beginning. - Runa (U.S.)

Most of the Digital Nomad work online to acquire the necessary money for life and expenses. A small number of people may not be able to have a fixed salary because of unstable income opportunities. However, the cost of living in Chiang Mai is low enough for people from highly developed countries to live comfortably. When traveling to Chiang Mai, one can also travel and see other places. Especially for young people, most of the Digital Nomad are between the ages of 20–30 years old. They can afford a greater living capacity in Chiang Mai than in their native countries; as such, they can live more comfortable lives.

During those periods, if you haven't saved up money, and let's say you have 2 months without work, you could be in a really crappy situation if you live somewhere that's expensive because now all of a sudden, you have a certain lifestyle that you were accustomed to and you may not be able to afford it or you may be worried about being able to pay rent because you don't have income. And being somewhere like Chiang Mai where the cost of living is so low, it's very nice. - Runa (U.S.)

It is easier for me to open my own business here in Chiang Mai. I am working as a blogger and YouTube channel. Everything just begins so I need to save most of my budget. Living in Chiang Mai gives me more possibility to start from the beginning. - Leo (China)

Besides, the pursuit of a high income means high pressure and a busy lifestyle. Seven of 10 interviewees mentioned the comfort brought about by living in Chiang Mai and the relaxed attitude towards life in the local area. Moving to another place is also an escape from a high-stress life. The convenience brought about by economic development has become another impetus for these Digital Nomad' desire to migrate. While living in greatly developed country, not everyone can pursue the same lifestyle and goals.

4.3.2. Division of Family Roles as Digital Nomad

In the case of Richard, an interviewee from Hong Kong, he claimed that he wants his wife to not have to work. From his perspective, he regards himself as the main source of income in the family. In the past, and even now, scholars like functionalism believe that the family fulfills the basic function of ensuring the survival of society and its individuals. In other words, family members should all represent different positions to contribute to a family. Although differences between men and women are extensive and undeniable, there is considerable disagreement as to the origins of these differences according to many other scholars. In the following, I also present the interviewees' ideas of idea of family and how this related to their decision making to Chaing Mai.

I can let my wife be free of having to work. Then, she can live in

Chiang Mai and explore other opportunities or explore other things.

But in Hong Kong, you will never have a chance to do that. - Richard

(Hong Kong)

Compared to other immigrants, Digital Nomad seem to have more options in terms of lifestyles. In Richard's case, he requested to become a remote worker so his wife would not have to work. He made a decision not only because of economy, politics, and society. He also considers his wife's role in the family to be different. He indicated that his wife is now much happier than before. Although it seems that his wife had to move with her husband, Richard said that his wife fully supported his decision. Now, they are both involved in their YouTube channel and blog while most of earnings are still coming from Richard's remote work in an IT company.

I can let my wife free form work. Then she can live in Chiang Mai to explore other opportunity or explore other things. But, in Hong Kong you will never have a chance to do that. - Richard (Hong Kong)

To sum up, when it comes to economy, it can be discussed from various aspects. Most people may consider spending while thinking of migration. However, under the special circumstances of Digital Nomad, they have other options like higher spending in low-cost regions. From the perspective of some interviewees, we can see that many still consider the concepts of gender positioning in a family. As a result, economic factors are no doubt a key factor in decision making.

4.4 Relational Bond

Interpersonal relationships can also influence others' decisions. In the interview with Michael from Slovakia, he mentions his friend who used to be a Digital Nomad in Southeast Asia. His relationship with his friend helped him to desire living in Asia for the long term.

So, I have other friends that I've made here. It's very easy to work here.

The internet's very fast. Life is very affordable. So, yeah, that's why I keep coming back. - Michael (Slovakia)

I came here to see if I could stay together with my boyfriend. He is the only reason why I will come to Chiang Mai. I want to know if it works for us. - Lena (China)

I enjoyed very much hanging out with different friends every night. This is a city that you will never feel bored. Well, if you compare to Bangkok, it is much more different. But I just love Chiang Mai. The atmosphere here mixed with everything that you need for life. - Cindy (Taiwan)

In addition to friendship, romantic relationships also serve to bridge transnational movements and motivate Digital Nomads to relocate. Like many long-distance couples, Lena from China chose to follow her boyfriend to Chiang Mai after they dated for half a year. She implied that if it were not for her boyfriend, she would have chosen to stay in Turkey, where she was for the past three years. She also argued that she ended up earning less money in Chiang Mai than before, but she does not regret her decision. For

Lena, Chiang Mai is not her permanent home, but she would like to stay with her boyfriend regardless of where they go. For Lena, her relationship is more important than any economic benefits. To conclude, the visual Virtual connection seems to be more easily acquired for people who are looking for real connections. Compared to the Virtual connection, the visual Virtual connection helps to create stronger and longer relationships.

4.5 Summary

People usually have strong reasons when considering changing their lifestyles. Circumstances in people's home countries are a big factor, such as changing jobs, a breakup, or a big move in life. It is important to note that there are also some people who leave their homes for a better lifestyle. People who travel from one country to a very different place often have diverse motivations. Some people face difficulties back in their home countries, while others choose to live a simple lifestyle by escaping from a high-speed modern city. Escaping a busy life is a common response relied via interviewees who are eager to move, and this factor is usually combined with other factors, such as economic worries. For the majority of people, economic considerations are inevitable when thinking of traveling abroad. However, for most Digital Nomad, they value the low spending in their new countries. In the following section, I will reveal more about the real lifestyles of the Digital Nomad in question.

Chapter 5 After arrival

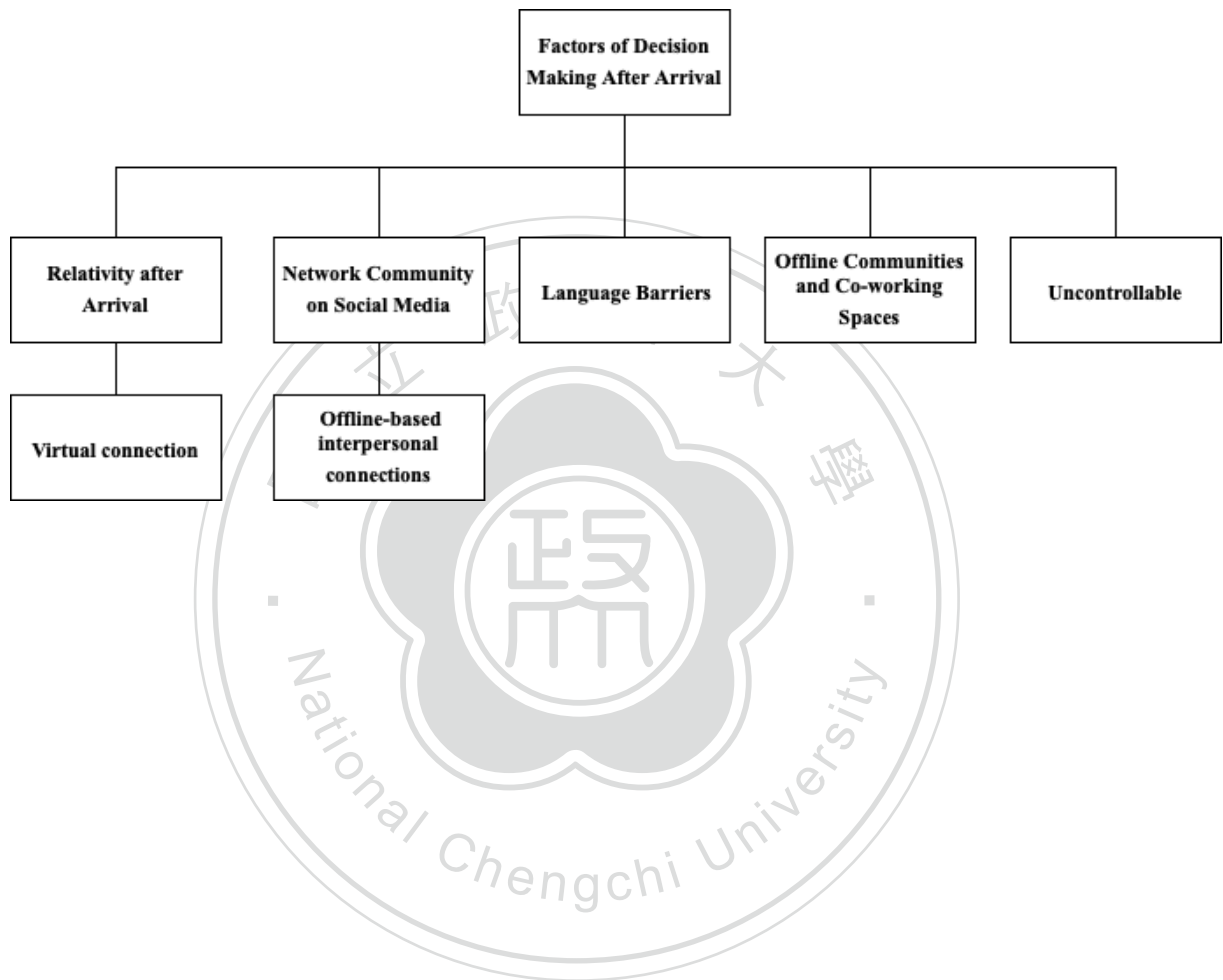
The previous chapter discussed Digital Nomad and their decisions before arrival. Before arrival, people usually have an idea of their dream lifestyles. However, it is difficult to know what the reality is until one actually arrives. Among interviewees in this study, most people had an idea of how their life would be before moving to Chiang Mai; they imagined having a relaxed lifestyle that allows them to live in a simple, rural, and leisurely retirement lifestyle. These imaginations contribute to their decisions and perceptions regarding Chiang Mai. These perceptions may have come from recommendations from friends, information on the Internet, and their own guesses. These beautiful fantasies also encouraged them to find a better solution to escape from their own lives. However, some experienced disappointment after arriving at the destination.

5.1 Relativity after Arrival

The previous chapters discussed Digital Nomad and their decisions before arrival. Before arrival, people usually have an idea of their dream lifestyles. However, it is difficult to know what the reality is until one actually arrives (see Table 9). Among interviewees in this study, most people had an idea of how their life would be before moving to Chiang Mai; they imagined having a relaxed lifestyle that allows them to live in a simple, rural, and leisurely retirement lifestyle. These imaginations contribute to their decisions and perceptions regarding Chiang Mai. These perceptions may have come from recommendations from friends, information on the Internet, and their own guesses. These beautiful fantasies also encouraged them to find a better solution to escape from their own lives. However, there are still some pros and cons after arrival.

Most of people cannot see their future pictures of living in a completely different country. In the following sections, I will analyze more from all interviewee's response.

Table 7 Factors of Decision Making After Arrival



5.1.2 Virtual connection

The Internet explosion of the mid 1990s is a key decade for virtual communities. Internet has changed most of society into a virtual society. Rheingold (1994) defines, “An online community as a social aggregation when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feelings, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace.” He gives a specific definition “virtual community a group of people who may or may not meet one another face to face, and who exchange words and ideas through the mediation of computer bulletin boards and networks” (pp.57-58). Information and convenience greatly affect people’s considerations when moving. For most of the Digital Nomad or people who have a technological knowledge background, these online resources indeed help to increase their trust of people in Chiang Mai. Connections between people, no matter virtual or face-to-face both greatly affect decisions. These strong connections strengthen the motivation of Digital Nomad to choose a destination.

5.2 Network Community on Social Media

It is much easier for people to search for information online nowadays. Technological innovations have significantly influenced travelers. Five of 10 interviewees mentioned using online forums featuring Chiang Mai Digital Nomad. Additionally, these online networks also increased their trust of the final destination. Moreover, with much information on social media platforms, like blogs, vlogs, and

websites, people are more easily learning about places around the world. It is faster than asking a travel agency or borrowing a book from the library. Quick floating information causes people to be more easily influenced by people's opinions and advice. Concurrently, people from this generation are encouraged to share their ideas, experience, and private lives to the public. More personal experiences are even more easily seen, imitated, and followed.

There are many Digital Nomad group on Facebook. All information you need are there. - Luna

Richard from Hong Kong mentioned that he started his Digital Nomads' journey because he was influenced by a Facebook influencer who married to a Thai woman and at the end settled in Chiang Mai. He mentioned how this Facebook page affected him and encouraged him to make some small trips to Chiang Mai. At the beginning, he did what people suggested on the Internet, but now he has also become a blogger and makes vlogs for Hong Kong who might be interested in visiting Chiang Mai.

I heard about Digital Nomad this term about living a better life before we came to Chiang Mai. An influencer called, Leo, he, marries to a Thai wife. He had a Facebook page, he does Facebook Live, and I follow his content and follow his page and learn about Digital Nomads about everything that I need to know before I come. - Richard (Hong Kong)

The average age of interviewees in this study was 20-60. These interviewees belong to Generation Z, which is greatly affected by technology, such as the Internet,

instant messaging, Wi-Fi, mobile phones, and tablet computers. They can be said to be the first generation to have lived in both the virtual and real worlds since childhood. Online communities create a stronger impact on these people who are looking for support while making an important decision in their lives. Isabela from the United States claimed that through a Facebook community, she could easily connect to locals to gather information. As a self-traveler, she considers safety the most important, so she asks for advice to make herself feel better. She decided to settle in Chiang Mai after her first trip visiting the city.

Chiang Mai also came up as a place that a lot of people recommended, especially women as a place that is, like I said, fun, safe, inexpensive. So, I decided to come to Chiang Mai for vacation for a couple of weeks. And then when I went back to the United States, I realized that I kind of needed to move to Thailand because it was just so lovely and such an experience. And I know that it was only my first time traveling abroad by myself, but something about this city just felt warm and welcoming and potentially somewhere that I needed to be for a longer amount of time than 2 weeks. So, and this was 4 years ago. - Rachel (U.S.)

For Rachel, a remote worker working in the states who has never visited Chiang Mai, she hired an online agency that it is a virtual company that helps foreigners get their visas. Through the agency, she easily went through the process and settled in Chiang Mai. She also indicated that she found this agency in a Facebook group others recommended.

At the beginning, I have found some agency to help me with the working visa. There are actually many agency helping you to get a company hiring foreigners nominally. Of course, you will need to pay them at some points, but I am not going to tell you how much it is. - Isabela (U.S.)

To sum up, online resources help most Chiang Mai Digital Nomads build relationships and find resources in Chiang Mai. With the strong support online, it gives people access to good information delivered by locals. However, there is still something lack among online information providing. All interviewees did mention having good online experiences while others mentioned difficulties verifying the authenticity of all information. In Elliot's (2013) study, he claimed that virtual communities usually provide people with a sense of satisfaction and trust. These communities are based on member's behaviors, like sharing positive information or optimistic feelings. As more and more stores and businesses learn the value of virtual platforms, some influencers have started using virtual communities as advertising platforms to share discounts and deals for hotels or provide traveling tips with recommended programs. Virtual communities like Facebook fan pages have not only become platforms to share information but a marketing strategy. Though there are administrators that supervise all posts or shared information, these administrators are usually volunteers with high replaceability and fluidity. Users or people who are looking for more information need to be wiser when selecting the information, they trust. Therefore, some people will consider not only the Virtual connection but the visual Virtual connection and trust real connections from friends, partners, or the local community. It is much more transparent and trustworthy than the Virtual connection.

5.2.1 Offline-based interpersonal connections

When it comes to the offline-based interpersonal connections, I define it as real connections to life that people usually make from their friendships or face-to-face communications. This is in direct opposition to the virtual connection, which is usually based on online interactions. In this section, I will focus more on offline connections. Besides, from based on the number of co-working spaces in Chiang Mai, we can see the strong local connection to the local. According to a website (coworker.com), there are more than 10 co-working spaces in Chiang Mai, and Chiang Mai is regarded as the second-biggest coworking community next to Bangkok. These kinds of fields provide Digital Nomad with a strong connection to better resources from locals. As a Digital Nomad, high speed internet is essential. Co-working spaces provide these kinds of benefits to the majority of people.

I really did like where I lived and I didn't leave there because I didn't like the city. I left because I felt myself growing into a pattern of every day was kind of the same. Even if I was going and doing different things, I just, I felt like while I'm still young, I need to experience more. I need to try living somewhere else. There is a friend who was in Chiang Mai that she recommended me to visit here. - Runa (U.S.)

5.3 Language Barriers

Most people underestimated risks and difficulties related to working and living overseas. Most Digital Nomad enjoy challenges, and most of them are willing to take

risks in life. Some Digital Nomad find language barriers to not be a big problem because most of the interviewees did not see a need to learn Thai. Staying overseas is optional for Digital Nomad since they move frequently, and it is not really necessary to build a long-term relationship with the locals. Moreover, most Digital Nomad work online. There is no need for them to meet locals or do local business. For Digital Nomad, choosing a comfortable place is much more essential than finding a local connection. Nine of 10 interviewees indicated their interest in learning about the local culture; however, only a few of them mentioned that they have local friends.

I am thinking of a retire life. A life that I can spend the rest of my life that I can find a better life quality. I want to find a place that I will be able to have a less stress life. I don't see any difficulties living in Chiang Mai. It is 21 centuries now and people use google to fix the problems. For me, the same. Even now, I use google to make local friends. Well, let's say, I am an IT guy, I also don't like to be very sociable. -Richard (Hong Kong)

I want to live my life. Even when I'm 60, I want freedom. It doesn't mean I live the same exact life that I'm currently living now, but I don't want to have a wife and family and kids and everything. I don't mind settling down somewhere and living like this, but still, I don't want to live the life of a normal person who only can travel like two weeks in a year. - Michael (Slovakia)

With language barriers, most Digital Nomad chose to stay within Digital Nomads groups. It is easier to find points of connection with people from similar backgrounds.

However, many people choose to ignore the language barrier. There are also Digital Nomad who hoped to make more connections through deeper connections. Learning the local language is definitely an excellent way to integrate within the culture.

Like that was the only thing I was really worried about because I knew that the people were going to be friendly because of my research. I knew that it wasn't going to be hard to find the things that I need or to find healthy food because of my research. The only thing that I wasn't sure about was how difficult it would be to communicate with the local people. And there's definitely a difference between when you live on one side of town versus the other. Like the closer you live to the neon area, the more flounder they are, so the more white people and the more, the Thai people around here will know English. But if you live, you know, say like, I don't know, like maybe in Siang Chiang or something, which is, you know, more south or east, like it would be harder. - Racheal (U.S.)

Many Digital Nomad do not believe that the language barrier poses a problem. It is more important for Digital Nomad to find a way to sustain their lives happily than to integrate into the local culture. However, for the local residents of Chiang Mai, the addition of outsiders has brought more changes to local life.

I used to move a lot. I moved from England to the United States, but basically just repeating a pattern. Life was too comfortable in America. I realized that I was kind of stupid that I moved from one English speaking country to another. If you're trying to move somewhere where they didn't speak English. In that case, I would know another language

by that. So that's what I did to Chiang Mai. I used to have a Thai girlfriend, I am not goanna lie, this is the fast way of learning and speaking language. So, part of the reason I came to Thailand is to learn about everything here. - Ning (U.S.)

5.3.1 Influence on the Local Community

Choosing a place of residence is very difficult for many people, but it is not so difficult for Digital Nomad. Due to the particularity of the work, play and work need to balance each other, so choosing a region that can meet this need is extremely important. According to Ning, in the past few years, Chiang Mai has changed a lot. When he first arrived in Chiang Mai, there were deserted fields everywhere, but in the past 10 years, many tourists and outsiders have lived there, causing the city to change a lot.

Many interviewees mentioned that Chiang Mai has had a very big impact on them. Among the top places that many Digital Nomad like- cities such as Bali and Hanoi- Chiang Mai is a modern and rustic city. For many, Chiang Mai is the best of both worlds as it is very internationalized while also more simplistic and with a slower pace of life that attracts many outsiders escaping large cities. Consequently, these Digital Nomad' decisions to settle and outsiders have greatly impacted and changed the local community.

Just my immediate surrounding community, I know individuals, but I'm not like part of a group. I speak a little Thai, just enough to kind of get by. But honestly, most things can either be helped by sort of just sign language of Google translate. So, I don't...I mean, I do miss out. I would like more exposure to the Thai culture, but it's not hard to get along without speaking Thai. -Michael (Slovakia)

Many relationships in Chiang Mai are between local Thai women and Caucasian men. This has led many people to talk about the inequality of male and female ratios in Thailand. In Thai culture, many men traditionally become Buddhist monks for a few years and even for life in some cases. Interviewees mentioned that because Thailand has more women than men, foreigners offer Thai women more opportunities for relationships.

Thai girls really like to look for white or Chinese people, and my friends have met some Thai girls who really ask where there are many foreigners and bars, because one of my friends has her own family who runs the bar over there, so she really knows Thai friends and chats. She really asked those Thai girls why you would want to socialize with white people because we think we would say they are for money. - Cindy (Taiwan)

Of course, partying is a big part of Western culture-the nightlife culture brought by outsiders has led to the opening of many bars and nightclubs in Chiang Mai. Of course, not all participants are Digital Nomad, but this kind of nightlife has become a significant attraction for Digital Nomad. Due to the rise of immigration to Chiang Mai, Western-style partying has now become a part of the local society.

I kind of avoid. I avoid like the tourist areas or the foreign areas. So, there's one area, in Chiang Mai that mostly Digital Nomad lives. I never go there. there's a lot of people that. It's kind of like a lifestyle, they're just like, let college, they're very idealistic, and a bit naive plan thing

out terribly well, they didn't really think it through. And they don't realize it's a lot more difficult than it sounds. - Ning (U.S.)

In addition to the impact on the locals, the change in the city has also driven more Digital Nomad to come to Chiang Mai. Many people enjoy the simplicity of life in Chiang Mai but also highlight differences between Chiang Mai and other regions. For Digital Nomad, the speed of the Internet and the constant flow of information are the most important aspects of their working lives. However, these changes to accommodate foreigners have also resulted in many sacrifices made by rural cities.

I am quite surprised when I first came here. There are many international markets here. Thing that you cannot buy from Taiwan might be possible to find them in Chiang Mai. Sometime I don't feel like living in Thailand, I feel no difficulties finding my favorite food like cheese here in Chiang Mai is it weird. - Simon (Austria)

The gradual internationalization of cities has also helped cities to develop to a high level. However, local society has not kept up. It is undeniable that, compared to Digital Nomad, most of the local residents still belong to the group of people with a lower salary. Because more and more international populations have moved in, local consumption levels have also increased. Although Chiang Mai is still a low-consumption city compared to the capital, the local people still cannot afford a great expenditure.

There are many bars and night clubs here in Chiang Mai. There are also some certain are that you can always find white people there. I am not

going to denied. Nights life in Chiang Mai is not as fun as in Bangkok, but I think it is pretty enough if you want to grab some drink in the late night. - Racheal (U.S.)

5.4 Offline Communities and Co-working Spaces

From the majority of interviewees, they consider making friends as a part of their lives. There are many methods that Digital Nomad take to build new connections with people. Although working as digital workers, they cannot deny the need to communicate with others. Most interviewees hang out with friends or meet up with different people. For most Digital Nomad, remote work not only gives them opportunities to know about the world but also to study various lives from diverse perspectives.

Runa, who is in her early 20s, dreamed about living in a different city for a long period of time. She said Chiang Mai is a really friendly place even with language barriers. She had no difficulties settling down in Chiang Mai after one and half years. She organizes lunch with female Digital Nomad every Wednesday to socialize and share stories about living in Chiang Mai; Simon from Austria said that because of his job as an engineer, he needs to work most of the time at his computer. Going to coworking spaces seems unwise for him, but he enjoys hanging out there to meet more different people. He also replied that that is the most enjoyable time for him as a Digital Nomads.

We have reunion once for a while. There are multiple kinds of groups here in Chaing Mei. - Luna (U.S.)

My friend in Chiang Mai, he actually originally started the company here. The company doesn't exist anymore, but that was sort of the reason I came here. I sometime go to coworking space, but it is not often. But cannot be denied that it is a great place to know more people. - Simon (Austria)

Although some Digital Nomad want to meet more people from all over the world, there are still some people who want to build connections with locals. Ning, who is much older and is an experienced nomad, refuses to hang out with young people in Chiang Mai. He prefers seeing Thai locals instead of young travelers. From his point of view, he consider the younger generations to be immature travelers. He has spent more than 10 years building local connections with the local community, and he even mentioned that the Thai people offered him much help even when he was bankrupt and homeless for a while.

When you have when you do adventure, always stayed young. So, for me adventure is worth the risk. The worst thing is for a very comfortable position, right. So, yeah. I like those young tourists. I like them, they're okay. But, again, I'm not, I'm a lot older than most. You're more experienced that's different. You have so many stories to tell. And so the things that I can share with them that everybody wants to hear. It may sound negative, plan for what might happen you know have a backup plan. - Ning (U.S.)

5.5 Uncontrollable Factors

However, there are still many uncontrollable factors that make it impossible for Digital Nomad to live in Chiang Mai. These factors often cannot be controlled in advance, leading to the need for Digital Nomad to be prepared to move from time to time. Many interviewees discussed the local natural scenery and the countryside in Chiang Mai. However, Chiang Mai, and Thailand in general, has serious air pollution problems. Many Digital Nomad from highly developed countries cannot adapt to this environment and often move to other places after a short time. In addition, there are also many policy issues, such as visas, which have gradually prevented Digital Nomad from having freedom. Therefore, although Digital Nomad seem to be free, every country restricts the development of these Digital Nomad.

The air pollution in Chiang Mai is crazy. It was foggy all the time and you go out during the season. I think it is around Mar to April. Some people will leave for air pollution. I am fine with it though - Isabela (U.S)

There are not too many dislike reasons of Chiang Mai for me. If I was going to leave some day, that is probably because of Chiang Mai Visa.

There are so many unreasonable policies that we do not get them. - Michael (Slovakia)

5.6 Summary

To sum up, just a few people have mentioned their imagination of life in Chiang Mai. For most of Digital Nomads, having a perception of Digital Nomads' lifestyle is not the most essential of their adventures. Most of them concern about life experience

to be different and adventurous. With many uncertainty, Digital Nomads are groups of people that are familiar with change. Only a few people have ever worried about the various maladjustment problems that may occur when moving to Chiang Mai. Most people worry about visas, language barriers and security issues. It is also oblivious to see that economy is still the issue of most of Digital Nomads. Same as most of migrations in the world, people concern about economic factor the most. Additionally, focus on Chiang Mai, most of people are curious of its culture, food and history. Whereas with lack of language ability, most of people can hardly connect with local community. However, the convenience of technology can solve the problems in daily life, such as going out shopping and simply interacting with local people. Only one to two Digital Nomads try to communicate deeply with the locals, and most of them choose to find a balance of life in the life circle they have established. This has also caused many Digital Nomad to report that they have less contact with local people in their daily lives. In the age division, the older Digital Nomad have less contact with the younger Digital Nomad. It also shows that the Digital Nomad groups are very separated. According the response from different age of Digital Nomad, they have admitted that they prefer to approach to same age group in order to exchange more information.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1 Concluding Remarks

The rise of new media has promoted the previous chapter discussed Digital Nomad and their decisions before arrival. Before arrival, people usually have an idea of their dream lifestyles. However, it is difficult to know what the reality is until one actually arrives. Among interviewees in this study, most people had an idea of how their life would be before moving to Chiang Mai; they imagined having a relaxed lifestyle that allows them to live in a simple, rural, and leisurely retirement lifestyle. These imaginations contribute to their decisions and perceptions regarding Chiang Mai. These perceptions may have come from recommendations from friends, information on the Internet, and their own guesses. These beautiful fantasies also encouraged them to find a better solution to escape from their own lives.

However, some experienced disappointment after arriving at the destination. gig economy, Uber, delivery, project matchmaking platforms, etc. These platforms have directly and indirectly changed people's living habits. Many people seem to have increased their income, but they have ignored costs to time and struggled. More people are looking for a new way to escape from stress. Becoming nomads has seemed to be a great option. The term "Digital Nomad" cannot be considered new in the 21st century; it is a concept that can be widely applied nowadays with many different ideas. To choose a better destination, there are several factors that might strengthen Digital Nomad's decision making. The following research questions were answered: What are the factors that shape a Digital Nomads' choice of location? What were their perceptions of the destination before travel? What are their experiences of the destination after they arrived? Are there any discrepancies between perception and reality? Findings were categorized on the basis of two main situations: before arrival

and after arrival. These two categories were further divided into five subsections: reasons behind the decision-making process, reality after arrival, response to local community, and uncontrolled factors. Certain factors were difficult to identify. The following sections explain further analyses conducted.

6.1.1 Choosing Chiang Mai

In this research, multiple facts influencing Digital Nomads' decision to immigrate have been explored. Based on the research question "what are the factors that shape Digital Nomads' choice of location?", according to the findings in this study, when most digital workers consider location, personal factors are most significant. In other words, often, the pursuit of self-sustainability and ideal lifestyles play an important role. In addition, apart from personal factors, economic factors are still a major consideration for most Digital Nomads. Chiang Mai's low consumption has become a major advantage in attracting immigrants. Although most Digital Nomads are having good salaries in highly developed countries, in low-consumption countries, these Digital Nomads can generally lead a better life. However, there are still some reasons that behind the stories.

6.1.2 Shattered Dream?

Regarding the research questions "what were their perceptions of the destination before travel? What are their experiences of the destination after they arrive? Are there any discrepancies between perception and reality?", before arriving in Chiang Mai, only a few people actually did research on Chiang Mai. Most people had idealized imageries about the future, but these imageries are often challenged after they arrived. Regarding the influence of Digital Nomads on the local areas in Chiang Mai, many outsiders actually affected the local lifestyle. There are also many uncontrollable factors

such as air pollution and the influence of the external environment that have shattered these Digital Nomads' fantasies. Real freedom is actually subject to many restrictions.

6.1.3 Discussion

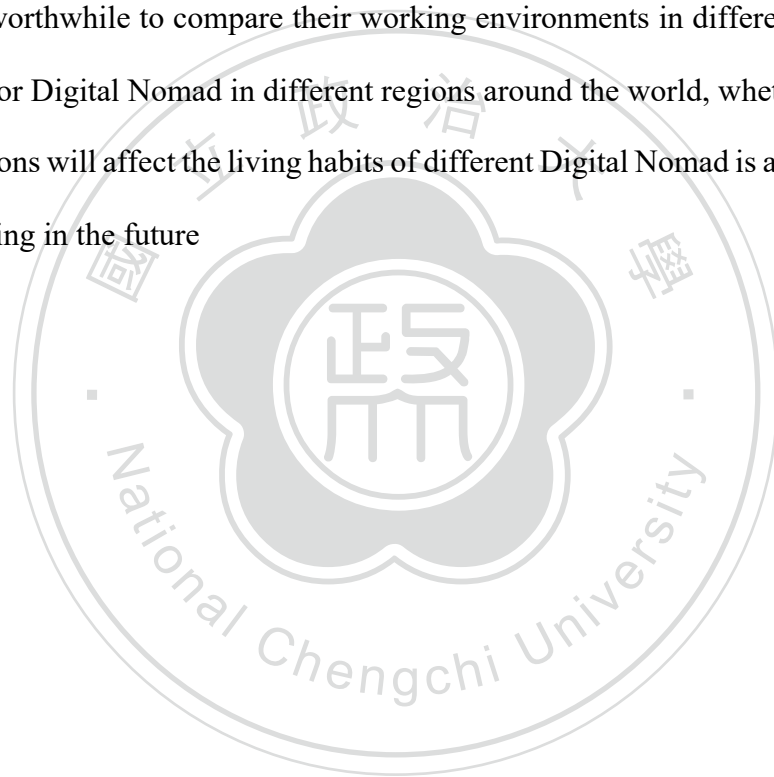
While most studies have discussed remote work and the gig economy, this study attempted to discover the motivation behind Digital Nomad' decision making. Most research has discussed how remote work can decrease cost for employees (Olson; Barsness & Seidel; Hislop and Axtell,2005). This study has yielded multiple findings. First, this paper explored Digital Nomad' original intentions to move. It provides some understanding of the new generation of work styles, especially for those living Chiang Mai, a city recommended by all websites, to analyze the reasons behind Digital Nomad' decisions. Second, many studies have investigated groups of expatriates (Cohen; Banchove; Schultz,2013), but expatriates are usually white-collar workers that live overseas with different work missions. Unlike expatriates, Digital Nomad have more personal determinants. This study gave a different perspective regarding people who are different from expatriates but similar to oversee employees. This research found the fundamental reason for international movement. It helps clarify the different aspects relevant to international mobile populations. Especially in the generation of the Internet, factors that determine mobility are not limited to interactions between people. This study specifically analyzed Digital Nomad, a new trend of online employees who choose to live overseas while working for their home countries. By discussing pros and cons, several concepts have been used to academically understand the motivations of this new generation of transnationals.

6.2 Limitations

With limited resources, it was hard to complete face-to-face interview or a multi-site ethnographic study. It would also be easier to participate in the local community and observe their daily activities given greater funds. Moreover, in the future, it will be required to understand other behavioral models in order to reach a concrete conclusion. Second, because interviews were conducted in English, there were some language issues in retranslation. Future studies should find participants who speak fluent English or have better communications skills to collect a greater diversity of information. Lastly, because of location barriers, interviewees were from all around the world. Most interviews were conducted by online recordings. There is some data that might have been lost while doing transcriptions. The researcher is based in Taiwan. Therefore, it was difficult to do a field survey to describe local difficulties. All information about local communities was only given via the Internet or interviewees since the COVID-19 pandemic disallows the conducting of face-to-face interviews.

6.3 Future Research

The study gives an overview of Chiang Mai's Digital Nomad, and there are still aspects that are worthy to be discussed. Among all interviewees, there was a generation gap between young Digital Nomad and old adventurers. It is worthwhile to study the changes over years as Chiang Mai has turned into an international city. Additionally, female Digital Nomad in Chiang Mai in comparison to male Digital Nomad was also widely mentioned during interviews. To get a better understanding of Digital Nomad, it would be worthwhile to compare their working environments in different countries. In addition, for Digital Nomad in different regions around the world, whether living in different regions will affect the living habits of different Digital Nomad is also an aspect worth exploring in the future



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Appendix-Interview Consent Letter

Dear participant,

Thank you for your interest in being a participant in the study, “Digital Nomad’ decision making regarding the destination country: work and travel in Chiang Mai.” It is a great pleasure to have your experiences shared in this research. The interview will be held for around 1-2 hours. It is an open chat that and you are welcome to share any stories about your personal experience. The interview will be recorded and signed marked anonymous. You can also pause anytime if you want. The research is only for academic purposes and will not be shared publicly. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely appreciating your timely help and looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Chen-Yu Nina, Liu
National Chengchi University
Communication and Media Study

Consent Form

- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I.....voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

Appendix-Semi-structure interview

Focus	Interview Questions
Factors of choosing Chang Mai	
Economy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you think about economy factors while making decision of moving (income, living condition, better social welfare or better environment)? 2. What do you know about Chang Mai economy before your arrival?
Culture	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you think about culture factors while making decision of moving (language, culture difference, local people, education, local festivals, art and religion)? 2. What are other factors that related to society of Chang Mai that affect your decision making?
Geography	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you think about geography advantage while making decision of moving (quick visa application, safety, lack of nature disasters, easy to reach to other countries)? 2. Do you think Chang Mai has more advantages compare to other countries or cities that make you decide to be there/here?
Relationship/Friendship	Do you think your local connection (relationship or any kind of tie up) in Chang Mai which might influence your decision making?
Relaxation	Do you think about relaxation (less crowd, chill lifestyle, night life or tourist spots) in Chang Mai which might influence your decision making?
Other	What other advantage or disadvantage factors that you have thought about while making decision?

Focus	Interview Questions
Perception before Travel	
Background knowledge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What did you know about Chang Mai before arriving? 2. Do you have any consideration that you are worry about your arrival in Chang Mai? 3. Can you imagine yourself fit into a completely new culture as a foreigner?
Work and Life leisure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do you think of your life leisure? 2. Do you think to it is possible to balance a work and leisure?
Pleasure-seeking	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you think will make your happy being as a Digital Nomad? 2. What do you think the most important travel as a Digital Nomad?
Other	What other advantage or disadvantage factors that you have thought about while making decision?

Focus	Interview Questions
Experience after Arriving	
Community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are you in any local community or social groups that help you to fit in society here? 2. Are you in any Digital Nomads' online community? 3. Do you think these groups enhance your willing to stay in Chang Mai?
Work and Life leisure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Could you please describe your life in Chang Mai? What's your personal leisure in Chang Mai? 2. Do you think that you have find your balance between work and lifer leisure?
Pleasure-seeking	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you think of your current lifestyle compare to your previous experience? 2. Are you satisfied with your current lifestyle?
Other	<p>What other advantage or disadvantage factors that you have thought about while making decision?</p>

