
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Destination City for Digital Nomad's in Thailand: A Case Study of Digital Nomad Community in Chiang Mai

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| ABSTRACT

The popularity of moving abroad for working and travelling at the same time has started to become a lifestyle that gradually breaks the traditional way of working as salaried workers or being known as a Digital Nomad (Müller, 2016). In Thailand, Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Phuket are the top destinations, especially Chiang Mai, which was once chosen as the world's number 1 destination for digital nomads to move to (Chiangmai buddy, 2017). This study aims to understand the factors of nomads' migration (Pofeldt, 2017). Qualitative research collected data and in-depth interviews with 11 key informants through a digital nomad community in Chiang Mai. Data analysis was performed through the method of content analysis. The results of the research showed that there were three factors supporting a decision of selecting Chiang Mai as a destination city. The first factor is natural and cultural capital, such as its unique culture, various tourist attractions, food, and diverse nature. The second factor is access to work and communication infrastructures through the internet, cafés, internet prices, and services. The third factor is information exchange networks are built, integrating networks of a digital nomad community in Chiang Mai where opinions are exchanged, and activities are performed constantly. This has led to exchange networks that have made Chiang Mai become a top destination for nomads around the world.

| KEYWORDS

Digital Nomad, Destination City, Decision, Chiang Mai, Thailand

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1. Introduction

Chiang Mai is one of the top tourist destinations in Thailand and Asia. There are both Chinese tourists and Western groups who continuously travel to Chiang Mai long before the outbreak of novel coronavirus (COVID-19). It was expected that Chiang Mai's tourism would be back again after the pandemic (Prachachat Business, 2021) as there is a pull factor from tourism resources, landscape, location, facilities and interesting traditions and cultures, as well as the cost of living and worth spending choices according to the needs combined. According to the US Travel and Leisure magazine's website on the rankings of the Top 20 Attractive Cities in the World to Visit in 2016 based on responses given by readers and tourists around the world, the Chiang Mai province of Thailand was selected as the second most attractive city in the world after Charleston, South Carolina in the US (Travel and Leisure, 2016).

This then has made Chiang Mai, with its outstanding culture and nature (Truong, 1990), a domestic and international destination for people to visit. However, one thing Chiang Mai is very famous for is that it is a suitable place for freelancers. Green (2019) identifies interesting statistical data on these freelancers who work independently or the so-called Gig Economy that they are driven by technological changes. This tends to happen around the world, as well as in Thailand and the Asia-Pacific region, especially among Gen Y who have wanted to work more as freelancers in the past 5 years (McElroy, 2019). The world's interesting statistics in 2015 showed that nearly 54 million Americans are freelancers or more than 33% of the US workforce, and this will increase more than last year by 700,000 (Cohen, Duncan, & Thulemark, 2015). It is estimated that more than half of the working-age population in England will work as self-employed in the next five years. In 2012-2013, in The European Union, there was a 45%

increase rate of freelance workers. As for Thailand, the freelancers in the above definition are accounted as part of the 21.3 million informal workers according to the recent survey by The National Statistical Office of Thailand, accounted for 55.6% of the country's employed workforce (Buathong, 2017).

Digital nomads are people who primarily use technology to perform their jobs and like changing their workplaces (Cohen, 1973), i.e., working at home, cafes, or public places that offer WIFI services (Fuchs & Sandoval, 2014). Freelancers like to come to Chiang Mai to work because it is easy to gain access to information technology (Green, 2020a) for both Thais and foreigners. Even though you are a foreigner, you can have access to the communication system. Thailand offers a convenient system of prepaid mobile phones. There is no hassle registration process. You can buy a SIM card and choose the desired package at any convenience store (Green, 2020b). There are also places suitable for working in Chiang Mai, such as co-working spaces that provide Wi-Fi for this group of workers. Besides, the cost of living in Chiang Mai is very low compared to other big cities in Thailand.

The researcher is interested in conducting this research to bring the 'Think Global, Act Local' way of thinking, the universal principles of management, to analyze the research that is beneficial to local communities (Wey, 2019). Thus, this research objectives examines the factors supporting digital nomads' decision of selecting Chiang Mai as a destination city and study information exchange networks of digital nomads in selecting Chiang Mai as a destination city, making the researcher understand the factors of choosing to live in Chiang Mai by digital nomads and what Chiang Mai will receive from these digital nomads who play a role in the world both today and future, especially after the coronavirus outbreak ends; where people will start adopting more a new normal way of life (Sutherland & Jarrahi, 2017). Therefore, various factors mentioned above should be focused on during policy implementation for the development of this northern city to promote businesses that can be a source of income and maintain a source of income that is consistent with locality into the future (Gandini, 2016).

2. Literature Review

This section aims to review a concept of the destination city, urban development and quality of life in order to explore the factors supporting a choice as a destination city and information exchange networks in selecting a destination city.

2.1 Destination City

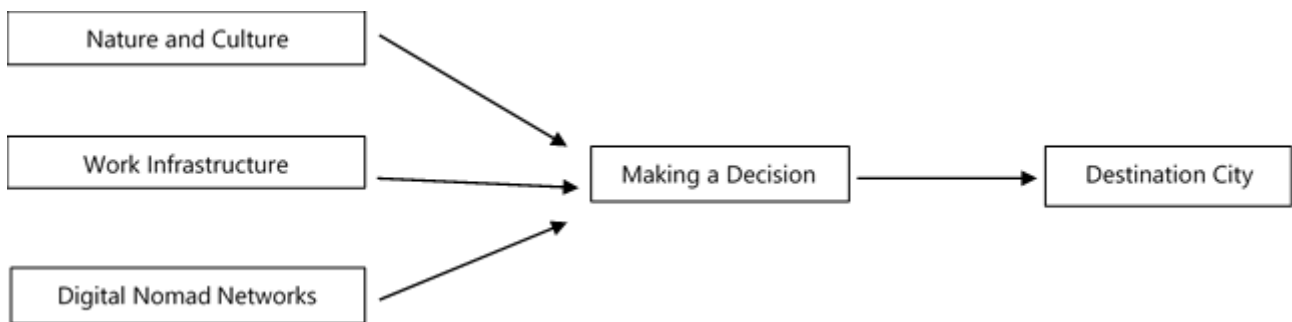
According to building a destination city to attract tourists to visit, the rankings of this type of city have been arranged by many organizations, whether the Top Asia City Destinations or Top 100 City Destinations reported by Euromonitor International, a British market research company and is the world's leading and trusted data collection and analysis agency. The world's top 100 tourist destinations are ranked each year. In Thailand, Bangkok, Phuket, Pattaya, Chiang Mai, and Krabi are the five cities of Thailand ranked in the top 100 most popular destinations, with Bangkok ranked second in the world for the most international visitors after Hong Kong (Euromonitor International, 2018). Another organization is Mastercard (GDCI) which conducts a region-specific survey: The Asia-Pacific Destinations Survey Index or APDI. This organization has ranked the cities in terms of the number of travellers worldwide who come to stay and shop during their travels and other interesting information. It can be seen that 10 cities in Asia with the highest number of tourists each year tend to be the cities in the Asia-Pacific region, such as Hong Kong, Bangkok, Singapore, Macao, Dubai, Kuala Lumpur, Shenzhen, Phuket, Delhi and Tokyo (Hedrick-Wong & Choong, 2015). Overall, the criteria of destination surveys are measured by analyzing data from secondary data such as from the World Travel & Tourism Council WTTTC, the International Air Transport Association IATA, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), IMF and tourism committees of various countries. Emissions making the urban environment uninhabitable is also included in the criteria (Douglas, 1966). Government data has been used to analyze the number of travellers staying and their spending in destination cities in different countries. Forecasting is based on each country-specific tourism forecast (Basu, 2006) and the actual number of each month of the year from target cities. This data can be collected in the last month prior to the announcement of the survey results. In ranking destination cities for digital nomads, there are various organizations doing so. They provide quality criteria of the cities that can be used as a decision-making indicator for these digital nomads to decide. Digital nomads can gain access to this data in order to prepare themselves in moving places, help assess their suitability for which city they can move to or even network for jobs. Nomad List is the popular platform for finding nomad destinations. It includes an overall and specific ranking and recommendations for moving to those destination cities (Rickly, 2016).

2.2 Urban and Quality of Life

There are various indicators of important parts for livable cities and livable communities. However, the researcher has summarized them as follows. As for social elements, there should be the following elements: people are educated and able to receive the news wisely, both health services and essential services are adequate and convenient, there is life and property safety, less crime and drug use, everyone in a community is involved in city development, people's rights are protected (Kassim & Zain, 2016). As for environmental elements, the following elements should be included: soil and air contamination can be controlled, and noise pollution can be controlled that is not to make too much noise, people are proud of their history, traditions and local culture, people have standard accommodation, and its prices are affordable. There should be the following elements regarding economic

elements: a good atmosphere for trading and investing, and people have jobs. Concerning the physical aspect, it should include the following elements: being a city which has regulations on the proper use of land; there are government services such as water supply, electricity, roads, telephones that are sufficient to meet people's needs, both travels and transportation are convenient and safe, there is a place to relax, and there is a proper wastewater treatment and waste disposal system. As for the last element that is city management services, this should include the following elements: transparency and fairness, which is effective and take the interests of the people as a priority, and the citizens have engaged in its development (Morrison & Coca-Stefaniak, 2020). This is in line with the report on "Quality of Life in European Cities 2016", conducted according to the request of the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy to obtain an overview of people's opinions on various city issues. The survey was conducted in 79 European cities (De Leeuw, Tsourous, Dyakova, & Green, 2014). This makes it possible to analyze perceptions of quality of life in European cities. The survey mainly focuses on quality of life. People rate quality of services such as facilities in education, culture and sports, as well as public transport services and administration. People are also asked what form of transportation they most often use, either agree or disagree with the messages about city safety, air pollution and noise, etc. All of the four topics are used as the main dependent variables affecting people's satisfaction with working in a city. Satisfaction with the city's infrastructure and facilities consists of 8 sub-factors: public transport, health service, sports facilities, cultural facilities, educational facilities, roads and buildings, public areas and the availability of retail stores. Employment opportunities, accommodation situations, the existence and integration of foreigners, safety and trust, and city administration services are sub-factors in people's view of their own cities for people's satisfaction towards their choice of living (Stuopyte, 2013).

Figure 1. The Conceptual Framework



3. Methodology

The qualitative case study was conducted to understand the phenomenon involved with exploring the factors supporting digital nomads' decision to select Chiang Mai as a destination city and to study information exchange networks of digital nomads in selecting Chiang Mai as a destination city.

3.1 Unit of Analysis

Muang District, Chiang Mai Province, was chosen for this study. The purposive sampling was conducted by selecting a district home to digital nomads. The characteristics are specified by being a district and a province where many foreigners live in and travel to, having supporting information from people involved in doing business related to digital nomads, having a consulting system and information exchange, having the ability to build communities both online and offline in order to drive decision-making in choosing a destination for digital nomads. Therefore, Muang District, Chiang Mai Province, was selected.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population is digital nomads and people involved. Selecting samples or key informants was done by using purposive sampling. This study was based on the qualitative study results for developing a complete understanding of the phenomenon. Therefore, the study focused on key informants who had direct or indirect experiences with these events. Key informants were selected using purposive sampling. They were divided into 2 groups: 1) Key informants: 8 digital nomads in Chiang Mai and 2) Secondary key informants: 2 entrepreneurs in accommodation and cafe businesses and 1 tourism officer. The demographic characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 1. The data given by these informants play an important part in clarifying the phenomenon.

Tab.1 Digital Nomad Population Table

No	Age	Position	Length of stay in Chiangmai (Year)
1	26	Digital Nomad	2.4
2	28	Digital Nomad	1.9
3	31	Digital Nomad	3.1
4	35	Digital Nomad	2.8
5	33	Digital Nomad	4
6	36	Digital Nomad	2
7	28	Digital Nomad	1.5
8	30	Digital Nomad	1.5
9	55	Entrepreneur	-
10	47	Entrepreneur	-
11	28	Tourism Officer	-

Note. The data was collected from June 1st, 2021, to August 31st

3.3 Research Tools

The researcher used a semi-structured interview as a tool to collect data from three groups of key informants. Two experts on quality of life and community development used the research tools to validate the content, and two experts on qualitative research. They contained questions for in-depth interviews. Face-to-face interviews were available at the convenience of the participants. The narrative interview consisted of open-ended questions about the factors supporting a decision of selecting a destination city. An interview lasted between 20 and 40 minutes (30 minutes on average). The data was collected from June 1st, 2021, to August 31st, 2021. As for collecting data through participant observation, this consisted of observing how collaborative work was done as a network through social media networks.

3.4 Data Analysis

This study used data synthesis based on documents along with content analysis and thematic analysis according to the data obtained from in-depth interviews and participant observation.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The study protocol was consistent with the ethical guidelines of the 1975 Declaration of Helsinki, as reflected in a prior approval by the Institution's Human Research Committee.

4. Results

The researcher divided the presentation of the findings into three parts according to the research objectives: the factors supporting a decision of selecting Chiang Mai as a destination city and digital nomad networks. In order to get a clearer picture, there will be sub-headings under each topic and details as follows:

4.1 The factors supporting a decision of selecting Chiang Mai as a destination city:

It was found that diversity of utilization of nature and cultural capital and readiness of available infrastructure to be an attraction for tourists and residents are remarkable features of Chiang Mai. Regarding the nature aspect, Chiang Mai has beautiful nature and is easily accessible for sightseeing, including both ancient and contemporary cultures and traditions, building architecture, cultural and creative activities. The city is also full of restaurants, bars and cafes. In addition, according to its infrastructure, travelling by bicycles and walking can be achieved. Communication technology is also easily accessible at an affordable price, resulting in a mix of culture and residence, trade, overlapping of activities, local culture and new culture. This gives Chiang Mai a city with features that combine people's culture. These factors have been divided into 1) Natural and cultural capital, 2) Access to work infrastructure and communication 3) Digital Nomad Networks. The details are as follows:

1. Nature and Culture

According to the study and data collection, it was found that Chiang Mai has a unique natural and cultural capital. There is a perfect blend of nature, distinctive culture and contemporary lifestyle. This makes the city a top destination for digital nomads when deciding to move to work here. The details are as follows:

a. Culture: Chiang Mai has a different history from Thai history. It has a uniqueness of locality. You will find that culture is very valuable in Chiang Mai because Chiang Mai is known as one of the cities with the most remarkable and beautiful traditions and cultures as well as being a unique city. This is due to the fact that Chiang Mai has a long history. Besides, it used to be a royal capital and was the center of prosperity in all aspects of the Lan Na Kingdom. As a result, Chiang Mai has adopted culture from

different localities and mixed with its own culture. Moreover, Buddhist culture has been brought in; Chiang Mai then has the blending of cultures to create something new and becomes unique.

“A temple is a must-see place in Chiang Mai. If you come here, you need to take pictures of golden statues. Buddhist monks performing Buddhist rituals is something that has not been seen in my country and in the west. Especially during religious festivals, you can see many Buddhist monks come out collecting elms. It is so impressive.” (Digital Nomad No. 3)

“Since I moved to Chiang Mai before the outbreak of coronavirus disease, I like the traditions here. Chiang Mai has a vibrant culture and is often celebrated. Festivals and public holidays are the times when locals, foreigners and tourists can relax, especially Songkran and Loy Krathong Day. These are two festivals that I love because I can see people keeping the traditions together with modernity.” (Digital Nomad No. 2)

b. Weather: It is also the factor that leads digital nomads to move to Chiang Mai. In general, the weather from November to February in Chiang Mai has a temperature similar to that of western countries. Humidity is low during the day, and temperature is lower at night. The temperature starts to get hotter around March, but as Chiang Mai is located in the mountains, the temperature is always lower than anywhere else in Thailand.

“At first, I was not used to the hot and muggy weather, but generally, most of my work is in an air-conditioned room. In winter, I think it is not much different from my country. But I like the rainy season here. The rain usually occurs once or twice a day for 30-60 minutes. During the rainy season, the surrounding area of Chiang Mai is beautiful. You can do a day trip and a ride to see the tourist spots or just to go on an adventure. Because it does not rain all day here, the weather will cool down a few hours later. You can ride a motorcycle up the hills to see the scenery or get some fresh air or bring a camera to take photos and sell them on the website.” (Digital Nomad No. 1)

“The weather is pretty good compared to Bangkok or any city in South America. However, it must be under the condition that there is no toxic fume which is a very serious situation causing many of my friends to temporarily move to Bangkok or to neighboring countries of Thailand. However, when everything returns to normal, I especially like winter here when it is not too cold like in western countries, and it is also still warm during the day. But in summer, it may be different according to the experience and familiarity of each person. Anyway, for me and many friends who choose to stay in Chiang Mai, the hot weather is not a problem, but it is rather on what makes people decide to move here.” (Digital Nomad No. 3)

c. Nature: Chiang Mai is located in the northern part of Thailand. It is a city in valleys, with river basins and foothill plains, forests and mountains. Doi Inthanon, the highest mountain in Thailand, is also located in Chiang Mai. It is about 2565 meters high. As for the watershed areas and foothill plains spreading out between valleys, they are abundant and suitable for agriculture and also famous for natural tourism, making them popular with tourists.

“As for me, though there are no beaches here, there are lush forests, mountains, old villages, rice fields, elephants, gardens, lakes, caves, temples, national parks and other extremely beautiful places and things. Many foreigners tend to go on motorcycle tours around Thailand, which takes several days to do so. However, in Chiang Mai, you can rent a motorcycle to visit Chiang Mai's natural attractions in just a few hours. That is the charm of this city.” (Digital Nomad No. 5)

“Being a digital nomad, life is more than just working. Also, there is a lot to do in Chiang Mai in your downtime. You will go on a nature trip and experience tropical nature, along with making a Vlog or YouTube. Getting to experience nature is not difficult at all; you can get out of the city to experience nature on the mountains' waterfalls or simply go for zip lining in just half an hour. It is very easy to be with nature or even to do yoga in rice fields in different districts. You will not be able to imagine these experiences when you are in the city that other digital nomads choose to live in, like Berlin or Talinn in Estonia.” (Digital Nomad No. 7)

2. Work Infrastructure

It was found that work infrastructure is important when choosing Chiang Mai as a digital nomad workplace because it has all facilities and reasonable prices for services. The factors supporting such decision include internet speed, Wi-Fi, co-working spaces and various cafes and specific services for digital nomads as well as accommodation, transportation and medical expenses. The details of these factors are as follows:

a. Internet and Wi-Fi: As one of Asia's main digital nomad destinations, a high-speed internet network is very important for working and communicating for nomads, especially download speed. The internet speed in Chiang Mai is at a standard speed in most cafes and workspaces.

"In fact, in many places, the internet speed is above 25 Mbps, and some coworking spaces in Chiang Mai offer the speed of 100 Mbps. Currently, there are additional services for these digital nomads because they have a high purchasing power. When comparing the speed of the internet like this with the value of money in their home country, it is not expensive at all. Whoever rents our room will also be charged for the Internet at \$25/month, which most of them appreciate as they need to work, especially for graphic design, video editing, which requires high-speed internet." (Entrepreneur No. 1)

"I am not going to lie that in your accommodation, if you are sharing the internet, it can be slow 2-10 mbps down. However, getting your own internet is easy and cheap. You can get the internet speed at 10-25 mbps unlimited starting from 550 baht per month. At the current co-working space that I rent monthly, I have internet speed over 30 mbps for less than six hundred baht per month which I think is a great value for my online working speed." (Digital Nomad No. 2)

b. Coworking Spaces and Cafes: In addition to having the internet for working, coworking spaces and cafés is another factor that makes Chiang Mai stand out from other destinations around the world. There are many places for digital nomads in Chiang Mai today, and there are now 5 or 6 major coworking spaces, several smaller ones, and new places opening all the time. All cafes offer free Wi-Fi and have no problems with customers spending hours at a time sitting and working from within.

"Generally, they know it is a good manner to make a purchase every a few hours, or we do not mind for some people come to work all day because we understand which group of our customers is. It is also a word-of-mouth strategy that they will tell their friends to come and work at our shop." (Entrepreneur No. 2)

"Cafes and co-working spaces here enable more efficient work. I visited many cafes and restaurants in my early days of living here, and each location had free Wi-Fi. I could walk around and always be connected automatically on my phone without having to worry about having no Wi-Fi. I have been everywhere for almost two years, I have never found any shop that does not have it. It is like the internet is the main component of a shop. There are also many shops in various styles to change your working atmosphere. You will go to a shop that has only digital nomads or a shop that is just opened where people come to take pictures. It is one of the charms of Chiang Mai where new cafes open every month even during the past COVID outbreak." (Digital Nomad No. 6)

"It can be seen that there are many Co-Working Spaces in Chiang Mai. When these groups of tourists come to ask for information, we have collected the data from a preliminary survey because Chiang Mai is voted top in the world for digital nomads. Especially in the city, there are more than 10 co-working spaces around the city, such as Punspace, which is one of the most popular places, or Makerspace, the famous co-working space within a speciality line of artisans as there are 3D Printing, Laser Cutter and various electronic equipment. In addition, if you want to see nature or the view along the Ping River, you can move yourself to the Co-Working or Cafe. You can choose any working atmosphere to meet your own tastes, lifestyles or business guidelines." (Tourism Officer)

c. Living Infrastructure: Even though Chiang Mai is not as large and highly developed as Bangkok, Thailand's capital, it is considered an important city in the north and regarded as the center of development, making public utilities, medical treatments, road networks are convenient. In addition, with not being such a large and overpopulated city like any other digital nomad destination, Chiang Mai then is not a busy city, and it has a high level of safety. The details are as follows :

d. Convenient Transportation and Accommodation: The road network system in Chiang Mai is quite convenient if you have your own car. Digital nomads usually rent a motorcycle to ride to cafes or to travel around other districts in Chiang Mai. The roads are found to be made of concrete, and they are wide. Additionally, there are various prices for accommodations, but they are still reasonable. This gives digital nomads a choice in choosing accommodation from general rental rooms, condominiums or single houses.

"I usually rent a condo in the Nimman area. This is a neighbourhood with many cafes that is perfect for a change of atmosphere. You can rent a condo for less than ten thousand baht per month, but you are in the heart of the city. It's really worth it." (Digital Nomad No. 2)

"Access to private vehicles at a low cost makes it a highlight here. If you choose other cities, you will definitely need to travel by public transport. But here you have your own motorcycle. You can go anywhere at any time. Also, with not many cars here, you can drive out of town in less than 20 minutes." (Digital Nomad No. 7)

e. Reasonable Medical Expenses: Thailand already has a reputation for a medical tourism destination, and with its affordable price, many digital nomads have trust in the country's healthcare system when compared to other countries in the ASEAN region. Besides, it is easy to use international health insurance, not complicated, making it a highlight.

"Here you can pay for tooth extraction, tooth filling and dental braces only half the price compared to my country. The cost of dental treatments, plastic surgery is much cheaper than in my country." (Digital Nomad No. 7)

"Health checkups here, especially at private hospitals, are performed with luxury services like a 5-star hotel. I am not surprised why so many tourists around the world love to come to Thailand for medical tourism." (Digital Nomad No. 5)

f. Safety: Safety is an important factor to be considered when selecting where to live. It was found that Chiang Mai is a relatively low crime city despite being a tourist destination, and its friendly people make it very much more attractive to digital nomads.

"Chiang Mai is rated as one of the safest cities in the world. Crimes against foreigners are extremely rare, and apart from riding a motorcycle, you will never feel intimidated or afraid for your safety. You can walk around freely and comfortably during the day or at night and feel totally safe even if you are a single woman alone." (Digital Nomad No. 1)

"Chiang Mai does not have the image of a dangerous city or a night city, but it is a city focused on culture. It is a traditional city with many migrants from rural areas of Thailand. These people have traditional and noble values, making this place look safe." (Digital Nomad No. 3)

3. Digital Nomad Networks

Finding information is essential for digital nomads. According to the research and data collection, it was found that many people had full-time jobs before becoming digital nomads. This makes migration important to life changes, making it easy to find information before migration. Integration of digital nomad's networks when fully becoming a digital nomad is also important because it is an information exchange for living, working, or even joining together to drive benefits. The details of these points are as follows :

a. Building a Digital Community in Chiang Mai: Chiang Mai has a digital nomad community with a strong and active social network. The highlights that make Chiang Mai unique and outstanding is that there are so many open social networks that new digital nomads come in for information, to inquire and exchange life and work styles here before actually travelling. These platforms are created by collecting data from digital nomads who provide guidance for every city, every country around the world, and recommended platforms only for digital nomads who want to come to Chiang Mai. This gives enough data for the digital nomads to make their decision.

"I think a digital community here is very strong compared to the one in Bali or Taipei that I have been to. There are usually training seminars, dinners, meetings and networking opportunities that make us know about digital nomad networks in Chiang Mai. There are also regular seminars for nomads, such as Nomads List, \$49 fee to join. This provides you with a platform where you can see the work-and-life ideas of successful people and how they do it. It seems like studying another shortcut." (Digital Nomad No. 2)

"A digital nomad community in Chiang Mai provides information about opportunities for hiring and selling the services of each other, having constant social events, training seminars by visiting experts and free workshops hosted by local digital nomads who want to network and promoting their services. It leads Chiang Mai to have speciality digital nomad communities, especially in forwarding jobs or working together when there is a large project that cannot be done alone. It is amazing to have the personnel, colleagues with similar lifestyles gathering together." (Digital Nomad No.7)

In addition to having academic activities, seminars, forwarding jobs or working together, we regularly have other outdoor activities. Before being known by digital nomads, I understood that Chiang Mai was (and it still is) a retirement haven for many expats from around the world, especially Japan, where I came from. However, over the years, they have built a lot of social and entertainment networks. This made me know digital nomads from my country and many other countries. In

the past events that I participated in, such as cricket, we used Gymkhana Stadium as a meeting place. There are also other sports such as tennis, golf and other sporting and social events. (Digital Nomad No. 6)

b. Having a Comprehensive Coaching and Mentoring Service System: Having a system like this makes it easy for digital nomads to adapt, especially for a new group who has never had experience working abroad. There are both paid and open platforms with no fees. This is not only building knowledge within a digital nomad community; it is also strengthening a quality exchange system to make Chiang Mai a true destination city for digital nomads.

As far as I know, Chiang Mai is the first city with a dedicated concierge service for digital nomads, setting up a system that digital nomads work with entrepreneurs in Thailand and in Chiang Mai. There are services from upstream to downstream, from advice on visas, visa extensions, finding accommodations, finding a job. (Digital Nomad No. 5)

When you are here, an online service of the mentoring system, apart from work but in regards to personal life, is very convenient for moving to a country where English is not the main language of communication. We can call or text to make an appointment with a doctor or dental appointment, prepare a bank account, find child care, get the internet and TV, and everything we need. There are also a number of online communities exchanging information in every aspect of work, living, tourist attractions, or even translating local news so that digital nomads can follow local news like a real local. This gives us a framework for easier living here. (Digital Nomad No. 2)

Actually, now as far as I know, besides government agencies working on promoting tourism, there are also other government agencies that collaborate with educational institutions, private entrepreneurs and a community of digital nomads in Chiang Mai to push other issues related to living in Chiang Mai, such as creating a knowledge forum to a community, visa issues, etc." (Tourism Officer)

5. Discussion

Based on the results, the discussion was divided into two parts according to the research objectives.

5.1 The Factors Supporting a Decision of Selecting Chiang Mai as a Destination City

Basically, Chiang Mai is a city with a landscape and climate suitable for tourism and cultural capital (Uttarat, 2017). It is one of the elements of social capital that is extremely important to the development of Chiang Mai as a destination city for general tourists, especially after this, tourists come to visit Chiang Mai at least two to three million people a year (Farrell, 2016). The city is also popular for digital nomads because of its distinctive and diverse nature spreading throughout all of its areas. Due to the fact that there are many mountain ranges, Chiang Mai is rich in natural attractions such as Doi Inthanon, Doi Luang Chiang Dao, Doi Pui, etc. These mountain ranges are popular with tourists in general because there are a variety of hiking trails covered with a variety of forests, having a lot of precious wood such as teak, redwood, Maka wood, Teng wood. It is the city with the largest teak forests in the country. Combined with the development of cities and residences that cover an infrastructure system for travelling, accommodation, transportation, medical care, and safety of Chiang Mai, they are consistent with the features making a city livable (Papachristou & Rosas-Casals, 2019), where there are 10 important characteristics defined. These consist of the points related to the city's internal and external traffic, namely efficient public transport system, city-to-city mobility system, and the presence of pedestrian shops and organized car parking systems. Regarding the integrated way of using land, it includes having residential areas scattered throughout the city, having public squares and activity areas across the key areas, having cultivated areas near the city or far from the city. Concerning the beauty of Chiang Mai, there is diversity and harmony of buildings, green spaces, big trees, roof gardens, and the city's charms. Evidently, these are consistent with rankings for digital nomads. In 2015, Chiang Mai was ranked No. 5 in the Nomad list, and in 2017, it was ranked No. 1 in the world out of a total of 424 cities that were voted as destination cities. Such results are in line with Amit's work (2007) that identifies the factors for mobility pathways of a new generation of workers who focus on travelling along with working. It was found that internet access in ASEAN countries, such as Thailand, is conveniently provided with prepaid mobile phones. There is no complicated registration process. You can buy a SIM card and choose the desired package immediately at general convenience stores. In Chiang Mai, access to cafes and co-working spaces is also all over the city. This is an important factor in working for nomads who need to use these places to create their work (Fuzi, 2015) and Chiang Mai's infrastructure systems that enable digital nomads to work efficiently (Thompson, 2018). Although a public transport system is still the weak point of Chiang Mai, different places are in close proximity to each other for easy work meetings and activities with others. In conclusion, these factors, including natural and cultural capital, work infrastructure and living infrastructure, support each other (Vinodrai, 2017) in terms of tangible physical structures. This makes Chiang Mai stand out from other destinations and will sustainably make Chiang Mai famous for digital nomads (Marans, 2015).

Chiang Mai's exchange networks is another highlight that leads digital nomads to choose Chiang Mai as their destination. According to the study, it was found that there are global network platforms for exchanging and guiding ways to become a digital

nomad in Chiang Mai, such as Nomad list, Nomad summit, Goats on the road, or specific Chiang Mai's platforms that include more than 15 networks such as I Love Chiang Mai, Chiang Mai Events, What's Happening Chang Mai, What, Where, When Chiang Mai, Digital Nomads in Chiang Mai, Chiang Mai Happy Hour Nomads, Farang Community Chiang Mai (The Whole World Or Nothing, 2016). Based on these digital nomad networks built, they are both formal and informal knowledge driven by urban and economic development through creativity. 4 key elements of building a creative city are required: "culture, activities, people and city" (Turkoglu, 2015). In the context of "creativity" at the national or urban level requires "culture" as part of the economy and society. There are cultural "activities" and mechanisms driven on culture base to incur industries and income distribution. "People" are creative workers and creative entrepreneurs, and they come together to drive the economy. There is also a "city" with an environment that facilitates investment, production, and distribution. It is full of quality spaces for creative activities (Geobey, 2018) through communications and exchanges, resulting in the development of a creative economy city. In this regard, the development of a creative city is not merely the presence of all 4 elements, but it is also necessary to take the "quality" of those elements into account. Chiang Mai has to create networks of these creative groups to be in line with the rankings for being a world-class destination city (Liu & Lin, 2017). This is relevant to current rankings by international criteria such as The Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor, referring to cultural vibrancy, the creative economy and the creative environment (Okano & Samson, 2010). Another important criterion is the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, which categorizes creative cities into 7 groups under the key assessment framework, including having space and environment that encourages creative activities, making a city a "source" for thinkers and "creative entrepreneurs" (UNESCO, 2013). The city needs to increase its competitiveness in the creative economy, having organizations that support the creative economy and groups of thinkers or creators and personnel working as a network at any level locally, nationally and internationally with networking (Angel et al., 2005). This will force Chiang Mai to consider benefiting from the integration of digital nomads with an exchange network. These people are obviously high-income earners. Therefore, it will better affect the local economy of Chiang Mai, distributes income to communities, and more service operators will come in to support these people more (Wong, 2017). Thus, as for policy implementation in the development of this northern city, attention should be paid to various factors mentioned above to promote businesses that can be a source of income and maintain a source of income consistent with local conditions in the future (Heilig, 2012).

6. Recommendations

This research provides several recommendations to develop Chiang Mai as a destination city for digital nomads. The first one is that during the latter period, Chiang Mai has experienced haze both within the country and neighboring countries, which is considered a disadvantage for digital nomads in deciding to live here. The government must solve this problem in terms of policy and put the policy into action as quickly and clearly as possible (Hearn, 2017) before it becomes a long-term disadvantage and leads Chiang Mai unable to compete as a destination city for digital nomads. Secondly, even though there is the development of infrastructure for living and working, the process of attracting new digital nomads must be developed in the form of visa granting (Hottola, 2005) that, is now a barrier for digital nomads living in Thailand as they are required to continuously apply for a visa. The system of Thailand visa costs these nomads money to go out of the country to extend their visa in the third country. The Thai government currently needs to find a solution quickly. Thirdly, the government should create a mentoring system within a digital nomad community to create knowledge management that can be further developed and applied to the local context in Chiang Mai since digital nomads are personnel who have specific knowledge, especially in a tech startup. Having a large number of these people in the area is a great opportunity to build a platform for the locality by creating a system of digital nomad mentors and leaders who have strong ties with Thai government agencies. However, there are some limitations to this study. Due to the coronavirus outbreak, data collection was required through an online interview. Nonetheless, since these people are already using an online system, this is not a big obstacle, and this study is also limited to the context of the digital nomad community only in Chiang Mai. The findings of this research are not applicable to the context of other digital nomad communities, which have different contexts. For future studies, they should be broadly extended to other contexts in order to understand the conditions of the digital nomad community in Thailand to synthesize the factor models in choosing a destination city by digital nomads in other cities in Thailand and in other cities in Asia where there are destination cities for a large number of digital nomads for comparison. Finally, this qualitative study was designed to understand the factors involved in selecting a destination city by digital nomads, and so future research should gather data from government officials and relevant agencies to gain further insights regarding the factors involved in selecting a destination city by digital nomads in Chiang Mai (Orlikowski & Scott, 2016).

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