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## **A Study of Tourist Motivation toward Destination Loyalty: Targeting European Tourists Travelling to Phuket**

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### **Abstract**

This quantitative research aimed to study tourist motivation toward destination loyalty by focusing on European tourists who travel to Phuket, where is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Thailand. A questionnaire survey was conducted with 200 respondents to collect the primary data, while multiple regression and path analyses were employed to test the research hypotheses. The results of the survey revealed that push and pull factors had directly positive influences on destination loyalty to Phuket. Additionally, the study also proved that push and pull factors were indirectly affected by destination loyalty via tourist satisfaction.

To maintain and retrieve European tourists to Phuket, safety and security systems and the quality of tourist attractions and infrastructures in Phuket should be well-maintained. Moreover, tourism stakeholders in Phuket should focus on the important aspects of push and pull factors, so they can attract not only European tourists, but also other markets to boost tourist satisfaction.

### **Keywords**

Push and Pull Factors, Tourist Satisfaction, Destination Loyalty, European Tourists, Phuket

## **Introduction**

Thailand is recognized as one of the best tourist destinations in the world. Tourism in Thailand has been growing quickly since the Vietnam War (1955-1975) when the country was one of the major destinations for Rest and Recreation (R&R) visits of the American GIs (Chanin et al., 2015). This caused an increased number of foreigners and also changed in the tourism image of Thailand (Liu, Li & Parkpian, 2018).

Apart from Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, Phuket ranks the second most popular destination among domestic and inbound tourists as it is recognized as one of the tourist attractions for sea, sand, and sun (Chavarria & Phakdee-auksorn, 2017). Martin and Assenov (2015) emphasized that Phuket's beaches are well-known among international tourists and treated as a destination that the tourists should not miss. Moreover, the Phuket Provincial Administrative Organization has issued a policy to boost tourism and has implemented a tourism development plan for Phuket productively aiming to promote Phuket to be a world-class center of tourism which would help to increase revenue locally and nationally (Chanin et al., 2015). Each year around 9 million visitors travel to Phuket (Krasae-in & Rodjanathum, 2018) making it as one of the top tourist destinations in Thailand (Sangpikul et al., 2017).

European tourists are considered one of the major groups of international tourists visiting Phuket and most of them visit Phuket during their first time visit to Thailand (Sangpikul, 2017). Among all regions, only the number of European tourists travelling to Phuket has decreased from 2017-2019 (Sastre & Phakdee-Auksorn, 2017). Many factors have caused European tourists to feel unsatisfied with the tourism management in Phuket. These include cleanliness, hygiene of tourist attractions, traffic, public transportation, and the language barrier (Bu-lud, 2017). The author realizes that European tourists have a strong potential to bring income to Thailand. Unfortunately, there are few studies analyzing destination loyalty in Phuket. Hence, to maintain European tourists as a potential market for Phuket and Thailand, as study focused on the factors influencing their destination loyalty to Phuket is needed.

Therefore, a researcher would like to study factors of tourist motivation which create tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty of European tourists who travel to Phuket. A study will integrate marketing concepts to develop research tools to enhance the tourism competitiveness and effectiveness.

## **Research Objective**

To study the impact of tourist motivations which affect tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty of European tourists travelling to Phuket.

## Literature Review

### Push and Pull Factors

Push and pull factors; sometimes called push and pull motivations (Dean & Suhartanto, 2019), are proposed as a key concept to explain tourist behavior and the reasons individuals decide to travel (Chen & Chen, 2015). Push and pull factors begin when they realize the reason to travel to the place where can attract to their needs (Wong et al., 2017). As outlined by Yousefi and Marzuki (2015), push factors are internal and emotional attributes leading to decisions. Caber and Albayrak (2016) described push factors as including the feeling of wanting to escape from daily life, relax, explore new things, and interact socially. Pull factors are related to the qualities of the places or destinations attracting the tourists to visit (Giddy & Webb, 2018). Pull factors have to do with the destination's attractiveness including both tangible resources such as museums, monuments, and beaches as well as perceptions and expectations of the tourists such as novelty (Naidoo et al., 2015).

Generally push factors are used for explaining the desire to travel while pull factors are used to explain the choice of destination (Seebaluck et al., 2015). Nikjoo and Ketabi (2015) stated that the pull factors are arisen by the fascinations of the destination encouraging the tourists to travel to places such as mountains, waterfalls, beaches, and cultural sites. Sato et al. (2018) stated that tourism planners must think not only about why tourists travel and what they would like to do during their vacation which related to their internal push factors but also the factors related to tourist destinations. Dolinting et al. (2015) pointed out that pull factors are a driving force motivating people to travel to a destination. Also, tourism infrastructures, safety, and environmental equity are major factors that tourists are attracted to (Quintal et al., 2017).

According to Na et al., (2017), pull factors need to be considered to sustainably attract new and repeat tourists. Pull factor characteristics are referred as "a place" or "a destination" (Kanittinsuttitong, 2015). Said and Maryono (2018) classified pull factors as tangible and intangible. Nikjoo and Ketabi (2015) classified pull factors into 2 types. The first is the service infrastructure comprising of transportation and travel services such as travel agents and tour operators, accommodation services such as hotels, food and beverage services, shopping and entertainment services, and tourist attraction services. The second is the environment at the destination focusing on the natural environment, political factors, social factors, economic factors, cultural factors, and technological factors.

Factors attracting foreigners to travel to Thailand include beaches, Thai hospitality, food, accommodation, cultural & historical and attractions (Amonhaemanon & Amornhaymanon, 2015; Hao, 2017; Parasakul, 2017; Sastre & Phakdeeaüksorn, 2017; Thiumsak & Ruangkanjanases, 2016; Tsai & Sakulsinlapakorn, 2016) are summarized in Table 1

**Table 1** Review about factors influencing foreigners to visit Thailand

Authors	Accom- modation	Hospitality and friendliness of Thais	Food	Natural landscapes i.e. beaches	Cultural & Historical attractions	Variety of attractions
Amonhaemanon & Amornhaymanon (2015)				✓	✓	
Hao (2017)				✓	✓	✓
Parasakul (2017)	✓		✓	✓		✓
Sastre & Phakdeeaüksorn (2017)		✓		✓		
Thiumsak & Ruangkanjanases (2016)	✓	✓	✓			
Tsai & Sakulsinlapakorn (2016)		✓	✓			

**Note:** Researcher's review (2019)

To conclude, most visitors are influenced by natural landscapes such as beaches, hospitality and friendliness of Thais, food, and accommodation, cultural & historical attractions, and a variety of attraction respectively.

### **Tourist Satisfaction**

Many tourism studies reveal that satisfaction is an excellent indicator of repurchase intentions (Su et al., 2016). Eid and El-Gohary (2015) summarized that tourist satisfaction is the degree a tourist's believes that an experience brought about positive feelings. Hence, the definition of tourist satisfaction is about the overall emotional response as per the use of tourism services or products (Hultman et al., 2015). Tourists can also establish their expectations of a tourism product/service performance from various sources of communication.

**Table 2** Determinants of tourist satisfaction indicated by various authors

Author	Determinants of tourist satisfaction in beach destination
Carvache-Franco et al. (2018)	Accommodation and catering / Activities / Natural features / Destination aesthetics / Environmental preservation / Safety / Destination marketing
González-Reverté et al. (2018)	Hotel & Lodging / Local transport / Food / Shopping / Local people / Activity / Safety / Attraction / Information service
Author	Determinants of tourist satisfaction in beach destination
Ramseook-Munhurrún et al. (2015)	Accommodation / Transportation / Shopping / Safety / Tourism staff
Sangpikul (2018)	Cleanliness / Safety / Hotel / Local transportation / Food / Travel Agents
Sánchez & López (2015).	Attractions / Hotels / Restaurants / Retail Shops / Transportation

**Note:** Researcher's review (2019)

According to Table 2, it can be summarized that the determinants of tourist satisfaction in beach destinations are as follows: accommodations, transportation, safety, food, shopping, tourism activities, natural resources, cleanliness, tourism staff, local people, travel agents, and so on. Tourist satisfaction is a crucial positive correlation with loyalty (Chiu et al., 2016; Hultman et al., 2015; Le Chi, 2016; Ramseook-Munhurrún et al., 2015). The satisfied tourists will maintain to purchase the products and eventually create word-of-mouth in a positive way.

### **Destination Loyalty**

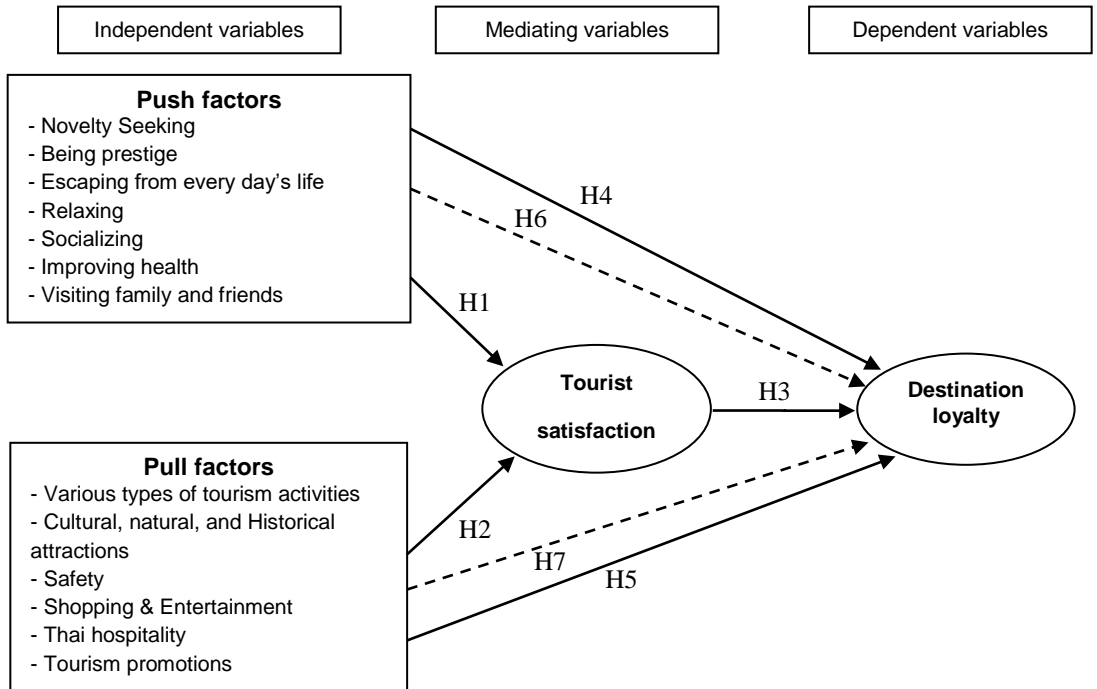
A loyalty is an important factor to lead a company profit from gaining a repeated purchase and helping to save cost of the market by expanding the word-of-mouth. Meleddu et al., (2015) pointed out that research on loyalty has become more and more popular in the tourism field.

To build loyalty, the destination can develop a repeat visit of the faithful tourist from a particular market such as Europe and spread its market share by expanding words from loyal tourists for the sake of developing markets. Jraisat et al., (2015) viewed destination loyalty as a repeat behavior of the tourists in the same products, services, and destinations. While Yolal et al. (2017) also pointed out that loyalty influences satisfaction which was related to two indicators: the intentions to purchase and the word-of-mouth.

As noted by Guzman-Parra et al. (2016), tourist destinations may be judged as the products and tourists or visitors can revisit or recommend them to other possible tourists whom they know and have the potential to visit such as family or friends. It should be recommended or proposed to their friends or family but studies considering revisits as the

key factor of loyalty to the destination are still insufficient because tourists who do not revisit a destination may honestly discover a different travel experience with a new destination while keeping their loyalty to the previous trip.

The researcher conceptualized a loyalty model caused by push and pull factors as the independent variables motivating tourists travelling to Phuket. However, these factors are linked by tourists' satisfaction as the mediating variable to loyalty as the dependent variable conceptualizing a research framework as illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1** Conceptual Framework

### Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Push factors have a positive effect toward tourist satisfaction

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Pull factors have a positive effect toward tourist satisfaction

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Tourist satisfaction has a positive effect toward destination loyalty

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Push factors have a positive effect toward destination loyalty

Hypothesis 5 (H5): Pull factors have a positive effect toward destination loyalty

Hypothesis 6 (H6): Push factors have an indirect effect toward destination loyalty to Phuket via tourist satisfaction

Hypothesis 7 (H7): Pull factors have an indirect effect toward destination loyalty to Phuket via tourist satisfaction

## Methodology

A quantitative approach was used in this study. As summarized by Queirós, Faria, and Almeida (2017), the purpose of qualitative research is to get reliable and exact variable measurements from the collected data. Data are analyzed through statistical methods by SPSS, Stata or R, etc. In addition, a survey questionnaire was used for collecting data (Brace, 2018). The respondents were European tourists visiting Phuket. Around 5.2 million European tourists visited Phuket in 2014 (Polnyotee & Thadaniti, 2015).

G\*Power version 3.1.9.4 was used to compute the sample size of the study because it was commonly used in the multi-disciplinary researches such as health science, social sciences, and business administration (McMahon et al., 2016; Swank & Mullen, 2017). With the power ( $1-\beta$ ) of 0.95, alpha ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.05, number of test predictors of 13, and effect size of 0.15, the obtained results revealed 189 as shown in Figure 2. But this research is in a business field, it should be considered business significant and adjusted to be suitable with the research, the researcher reserved total sample size of 200 for the field survey (Moshagen & Erdfelder, 2016; Sinkovics et al., 2016). Purposive sampling was conducted by distributing surveys to European tourists who were travelling in Phuket from February 2019 to April 2019. This time was chosen because it is considered as a high season in Phuket (Malicky et al., 2019; Vann et al., 2020; Wongwattanakit et al., 2017).

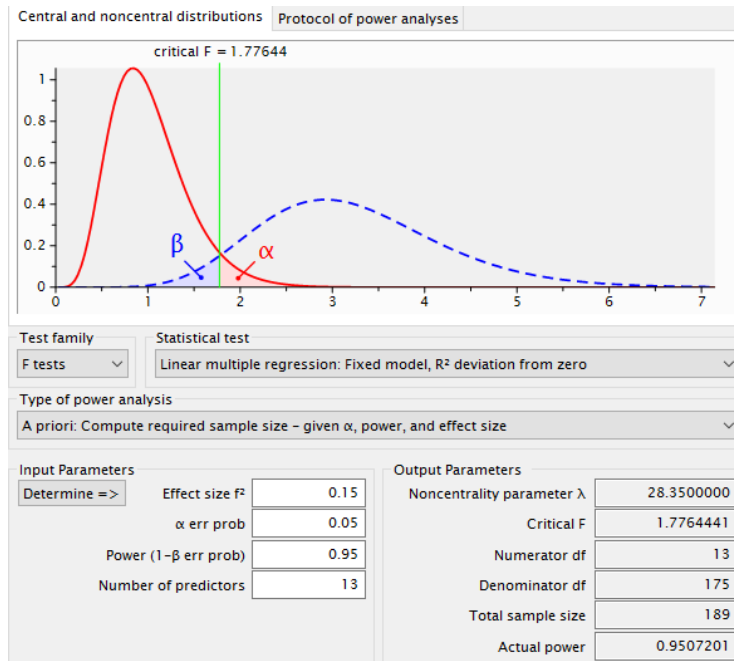


Figure 2 G\*Power version 3.1.9.4 used to compute the sample size of the study

A questionnaire was used as a research tool in this study. It was created from relevant documents, information, concepts, theories, and related research to be a tool in collecting data for analyzing destination loyalty model targeting European tourists in Phuket. There were 4 parts to the survey. Part 1 was a questionnaire about the respondents' personal information with one choice to be selected called closed-ended response questions; gender is a nominal scale, age is a sequential scale, education is a sequential scale, occupation is a sequential scale, and nationality is a nominal scale. Part 2 - 4 are 5-Likert scale questionnaire was used as an instrument to collect the data about the push and pull factors, perceived value, and tourist satisfaction. This sections are designed to evaluate 5 levels as per the criteria score of Likert scale and has been used interval scales to level the information (Level 5 = strongly agree, Level 4 = somewhat agree, Level 3 = neither agree nor disagree, Level 2 = somewhat disagree and Level 1 = strongly disagree).

The researcher submits the questionnaire to 3 experts to recheck the data to have reliability and apply to the demographic considered from Index of Consistency (IOC) and the result of IOC is 0.8, which means the questionnaire is suitable and reliable as confirmed by Rovinelli and Hambleton (1977) who developed IOC used to test the questionnaires. If the result is in excess of 0.5, it is considered acceptable (Jomnonkwao & Ratanavaraha, 2016; Tsaor et al., 2017). The researcher used descriptive statistics (percentage, mean, S.D.) to describe the respondents' demographic profile, mean score of push and pull factors, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty. Multiple regression analysis (inferential statistics) was used to analyze the independent variable on the dependent variable which all statistical tests were performed at the .05 level of significance.

### **Data Analysis**

This research applied SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software version 22.0 to analyze the data. Initially, Reliability Test and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) were conducted to identify the inter-relationships amongst a set of variables and to assure reliability and validity. Subsequently, Multiple Regression and Path Analysis were utilized to explore the causal relationships among variables, then conclude in the research hypotheses.



**Table 3** Descriptive

Variables	N	Mean	S.D.
<b>Push Factor</b>			
Novelty Seeking	200	6.12	1.42
Being prestige	200	6.05	1.47
Escaping from every day's life	200	5.91	1.32
Relaxing	200	5.83	1.35
Socializing	200	5.72	1.41
Improving health	200	5.65	1.32
Visiting family and friends	200	5.60	1.36
<b>Pull Factors</b>			
Various types of tourism activities	200	5.52	1.32
Cultural, natural, and Historical attractions	200	5.41	1.41
Safety	200	5.39	1.47
Shopping & Entertainment	200	5.26	1.42
Thai hospitality	200	5.11	1.48
Tourism promotions	200	4.97	1.37

Table 3 shows the mean, standard deviation of each attribute. Murdy et al. (2018) summarized that normality can be seen with a threshold of up to 3.29 when considering skew and kurtosis, meaning that all data were normally distributed. In this study, two Exploratory Factor Analyses (EFA) were used with Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, and Varimax Rotation of 28 items of independent variables and 57 items of dependent variables because varimax rotation is a statistical technique which is used at a level of the factor analysis as an attempt to clarify the relationship among factors (Masaeli et al., 2016; Munir & Rahman, 2016).

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used to measure the adequacy of the sampling, which is suggested to verify the case to the variable-ratio for the study. Especially in academic and business studies, the test by KMO & Bartlett plays a significant role in sample adequacy. The KMO varies from 0 to 1, but the general index of acceptance reaches 0.6 (Biasutti & Frate, 2017; Hadi et al., 2016; Hoque & Awang, 2016).

Consequently, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy for both groups of independent (KMO=.765) and dependent variables (KMO=.812) was greater than the minimum value for a good factor analysis .60 (Tabachnick, Fidell, & Ullman, 2007). Additionally, Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant (Sig.=.000), indicating the sufficient correlation between the variables.

**Table 4** Factor analysis and reliability coefficients of independent variables

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Factor Loadings</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Initial eigenvalue</b>	<b>Variance explained %</b>
<b>Push Factor</b>		<b>.709</b>	<b>6.115</b>	<b>15.089</b>
Novelty Seeking	.786	.704		
Being prestige	.771	.710		
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Factor Loadings</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Initial eigenvalue</b>	<b>Variance explained %</b>
Escaping from every day's life	.696	.715		
Relaxing	.673	.712		
Socializing	.634	.704		
Improving health	.547	.702		
Visiting family and friends	.496	.713		
<b>Pull Factors</b>		<b>.704</b>	<b>2.914</b>	<b>14.143</b>
Various types of tourism activitie	.718	.703		
Cultural, natural, and Historical attractions	.694	.706		
Safety	.638	.705		
Shopping & Entertainment	.585	.703		
Thai hospitality	.532	.703		
Tourism promotions	.496	.702		

Table 4 above shows the result of independent variables, which were grouped into 2 components (push factors and pull factors). All of the factor loadings of the remaining items meet the minimum requirement (.40) (Pituch & Stevens, 2015) ranging from .496 to .786. The Cronbach's alpha values used to estimate the internal consistency between items in each factor were .709 and .704. According to Pallant and Manual (2007), the Cronbach's

coefficient alpha value above .60 is considered acceptable, while the more acceptable value should exceed .70 (Cronk, 2019).

Skewness and kurtosis will be in the range from -2 to +2 in social sciences for data to be naturally distributed (Moon et al., 2017). In this case, the fact that the Z values for most of these parameters are large (greater than 1.96 or less than = 1.96) imply that the parameters are significant (at  $p < .05$ ) and support this interpretation of the data (Field, 2013), the value 1.96 is the precision coefficient needed for an interval estimate with 95% confidence (Supino & Borer, 2012). Thus, this is considered acceptable to prove normal univariate distribution (George & Mallery, 2010).

Similarly, the factor loadings of remaining dependent items ranged from .478 to .789, divided into 2 groups (tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty). The Cronbach's coefficient alpha values were .784 and .742, as shown in Table 4.

Cronbach's alpha-coefficient measured the reliability of multi-item scales. Cronbach's alpha coefficient value was greater than 0.70 for all scales and was used to operationalize the investigated constructs. A value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered acceptable (Peterson, 1994; Taber, 2018; Wantara, 2017), and indicates that the measurement scale tested is reliable. The measurement scales utilized in this study are therefore reliable.

The correlation coefficient is an essential statistical technique for evaluating breeding programs for high yield to test the direct and indirect contribution of the yield variables (Nakagawa et al., 2017). Stepwise multiple linear regressions are demonstrated in determining the predictive equation for yield (Zhang et al., 2016). Additionally, stepwise regression is a technique used to estimate a quantitative variable's value concerning its relationship with one or more other quantitative variables. This relation is such that one variable can be used to predict other changes (Nazarpour et al., 2016).

**Table 5** Factor analysis and reliability coefficients of dependent variables

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Factor Loadings</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Initial eigenvalue</b>	<b>Variance explained %</b>
<b>Tourists' Satisfaction</b>		<b>.784</b>	<b>2.198</b>	<b>13.194</b>
I am satisfied with accommodation in Phuket.	.775	.763		
I am satisfied with activities in Phuket	.752	.791		
I am satisfied with cleanliness in Phuket.	.736	.794		
I am satisfied with destination marketing in Phuket.	.708	.842		
I am satisfied with environmental preservation in Phuket.	.685	.810		
I am satisfied with food in Phuket.	.653	.801		
I am satisfied with natural features in Phuket.	.631	.736		
I am satisfied with safety in Phuket.	.596	.742		
I am satisfied with shopping in Phuket.	.574	.821		
I am satisfied with transportation in Phuket.	.559	.794		
I am satisfied with travel Agents in Phuket.	.532	.741		
I am satisfied with tourism staff in Phuket.	.478	.769		

**Table 5** Factor analysis and reliability coefficients of dependent variables (Continued)

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Factor Loadings</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Initial eigenvalue</b>	<b>Variance explained %</b>
<b>Destination Loyalty</b>		<b>.742</b>	<b>2.929</b>	<b>12.675</b>
I will recommend my friends, relatives, family to visit Phuket.	.789	.752		
I will visit Phuket again in the future.	.756	.739		
I will remain Phuket as my first choice if I travel to Thailand again.	.732	.735		

From table 4 and table 5, an exploratory factor analysis of the transformed data was carried out to extract the underlying motivational dimensions. A varimax-rotating main component method was used. A minimum peculiar value of one was used to regulate the number of factors extracted. Objects with low factor loads (almost .40), high cross loads (> .40), or low group loads (< 0.50) have been removed one at a time (Kang and Kim, 2013). This process continued until the deletion of no more objects. One item of the 28 items was removed due to a low loading factor. A four-factor solution resulting from two rounds of factor analysis was performed (Table 3 and Table 4). The four factors were identified as the pull factor, the push factor, the happiness of visitors, and the loyalty to the destination. To test the reliability of the factors, the alpha reliability test of a Cronbach was performed, and all factors showed reasonable reliability levels.

## **Research Findings**

### **Factors Affecting Tourist Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty**

Linear Regression Analysis and Pearson's Correlation Analysis were applied to explore the relationship among variables.

Table 6 illustrates that there were positive correlations between two independent variables (push and pull), the mediate variable (tourist satisfaction), and the dependent variable (destination loyalty). This means that the stronger push and pull travel motivations the travelers has, the higher tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty degree to Phuket in the future.

**Table 6** Correlations between variables

	Correlations	1	2	3	4
1. Push Factors	.358**				
2. Pull Factors	.464**	.395**			
3. Tourist Satisfaction	.485**	.492**	.582**		
4. Destination Loyalty	.489**	.497**	.614**	.684**	
<b>Mean</b>	<b>3.71</b>	<b>4.21</b>	<b>3.82</b>	<b>4.36</b>	<b>4.48</b>
<b>S.D.</b>	<b>.792</b>	<b>.732</b>	<b>.594</b>	<b>.541</b>	<b>5.12</b>

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

**Hypothesis 1 (H1): Push factors have positive effect toward tourist satisfaction**

**Hypothesis 2 (H2): Pull factors have positive effect toward tourist satisfaction**

The result of the data revealed that there were significant positive relationships between the mediate variable of tourist satisfaction and the independent variables: push factor ( $r=.492$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and pull factor ( $r=.582$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The regression coefficient of push and pull factors were  $\beta=.235$ ,  $p=.000$  and  $\beta=.382$ ,  $p=.000$  respectively. This implied that push and pull factors had positive effects on tourist satisfaction at the 99% confidence level. Furthermore, push and pull factors could explain 39.2% the variation of tourist satisfaction ( $R^2=.392$ ).

**Hypothesis 3 (H3): Tourist satisfaction has positive effect toward destination loyalty**

There was a positive correlation between the mediate variable (tourist satisfaction) and the dependent variable (destination loyalty) with  $r=.485$ ,  $p<.01$ . The coefficient of determination ( $\beta=.738$ ,  $p=.000$ ) indicated the relatively strong influence of tourist satisfaction on destination loyalty at the 99% confidence level. The R squared value was .237, which means 23.7% the variation of destination loyalty can be explained by tourist satisfaction.

**Hypothesis 4 (H4): Push factors have positive effect toward destination loyalty**

**Hypothesis 5 (H5): Pull factors have positive effect toward destination loyalty**

The Pearson correlation analysis results also showed the positive correlations between two independent variables (push factors and pull factors) and the dependent variable (destination loyalty), with  $r=.358$ ,  $p<.01$  and  $r=.464$ ,  $p<.01$  respectively. Return

intention is directly affected by push factor ( $\beta=.173$ ,  $p=.001$ ) and pull factor ( $\beta=.548$ ,  $p=.000$ ) in the positive direction and at the 99% confidence level. The  $R^2=.241$  implied that the push and pull factors can explain 24.1% the variation of destination loyalty.

**Hypothesis 6 (H6): Push factors have indirect effect toward destination loyalty to Phuket via tourist satisfaction**

**Hypothesis 7 (H7): Pull factors have indirect effect toward destination loyalty to Phuket via tourist satisfaction**

According to Khalaila (2015) the negative effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable via the mediate one is the total product of the effect of that the independent variable on the mediate variable and the effect of the mediate variable on the dependent variable.

As described above, tourist satisfaction was positively affected by push factors ( $\beta=.235$ ,  $p=.000$ ) and pull factors ( $\beta=.382$ ,  $p=.000$ ). These two factors directly influenced the mediate variable of tourist satisfaction (H1 and H2) and then tourist satisfaction directly caused an effect on destination loyalty with  $\beta=.738$ ,  $p=.000$  (H3). Consequently, via the mediate variable of tourist satisfaction, push and pull factors created indirect effects on destination loyalty. Therefore, this study concluded that stronger push and pull motivations would lead to higher tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty.

#### **Significance of the Indirect Effects**

Table 6 shows the results of the bootstrapping method summarized by Khalaila (2015), to test the significance of indirect effects or mediations. The output provided the bootstrapped confidence intervals (at 95%). If there are ZERO lies within the interval range between the lower boundary (LL) and the upper boundary (UL), then it can be reported that, with 95% confidence, there is no mediation or indirect effect.

On the other hand, if zero does not occur between LL and UL, then it can be concluded that, with 95% confidence, the mediation or indirect effect is significant (Hayes & Rockwood, 2017).

As illustrated in Table 7, the indirect effects of push factors and pull factors on destination loyalty through the mediation of tourist satisfaction were estimated to lie with 95% confidence, respectively. Because zero is not in the 95% confidence interval, it can be reported that the indirect effects of push factors and pull factors on destination loyalty were truly significantly different from zero at  $p < .05$  (two-tailed) and the mediation of Tourist Satisfaction in this study was true.

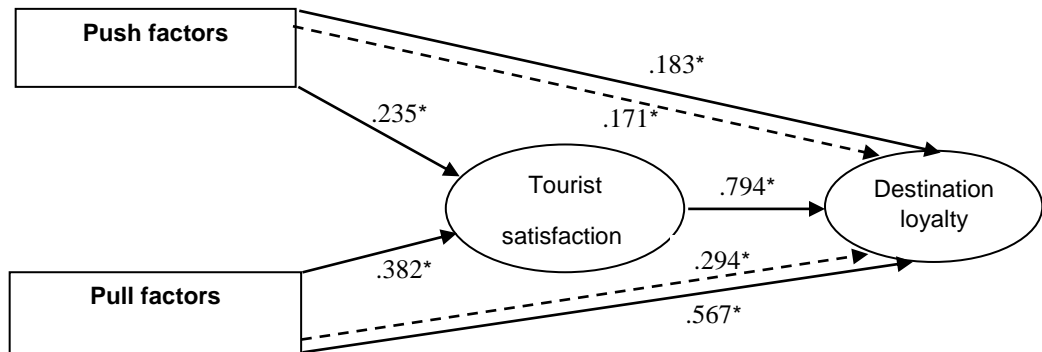
**Table 7** Direct, Indirect and Total Casual Effects

Variables	Casual Effects		
	Direct	Indirect	Total
Push Factors	.183***	.171***	.354***
Pull Factors	.567***	.294***	.861***
Tourist Satisfaction	.794***	-	.794***

\*p < .05 \*\*p < .01 \*\*\*p < .001, two-tailed test

**The Causal Effects of Return Intention**

Table 7 shown the total effects of independent variables, including direct and indirect effects, and mediate variable on destination loyalty. Concerning the total effects were shown, pull factor had the strongest impact on destination loyalty ( $\beta=.861$ ), followed by tourist satisfaction ( $\beta=.794$ ). Push factor had the weakest effect on destination loyalty to Phuket with  $\beta=.354$  only. The total effect of these factors on destination loyalty was 2.009, in which direct effects of push and pull factors and tourist satisfaction accounted for more than 75% while indirect effects made up nearly 25%.



**Figure 3** Path coefficients of the structural equation for hypothesis testing

**Discussions and Recommendations**

**Discussions**

The results of this research supported the proposed model which gave a good quality of the research conceptual framework to positively explain and predict the destination loyalty to re-visit Phuket of European tourists. The findings revealed that push and pull factors did not only directly affect destination loyalty, but had indirect impacts on destination loyalty via tourist satisfaction too. It means when tourists have stronger desires to be on holiday and perception towards the attractions, features, or attributes of a unique destination,



they may have higher satisfaction about this destination as well as higher intention to re-visit it in the future.

The finding of this study was supported by Baniya et al., 2017; Nilplub et al., 2016; Ramseook-Munhurrun et al., 2015; Sato et al., 2018. They agreed that travel motivation (push & pull factors) positively affected tourist satisfaction to the destination, together with the intention to revisit.

Lastly, destination loyalty which consisted of re-visitation and recommendation (Meleddu et al., 2015) was directly and positively influenced by push factors, while there was no relationship with pull factors. Additionally, this study revealed that push factors had a more significant effect on tourist satisfaction and their intention to re-visit than pull factors. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that pull factors of Phuket are more important than push factors in boosting satisfaction and destination loyalty. Simply put, tourist satisfaction and the intention to revisit a destination rely on their perception about the destination image, rather than their needs.

In conclusion, the study is summed up in Table 8 hereunder. The research hypotheses were accepted and supported; thus, they gave defensible evidence that the conceptual framework of this study was statistically acceptable.

**Table 8** Results of the Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Beta	Sig.	Results
H1: Push Factors → Tourist Satisfaction	.235*	.000	Accepted
H2: Push Factors → Tourist Satisfaction	.382*	.000	Accepted
H3: Tourist Satisfaction → Destination Loyalty	.794*	.000	Accepted
H4: Push Factors → Destination Loyalty	.183*	.001	Accepted
H5: Push Factors → Destination Loyalty	.567*	.000	Accepted
H6: Push Factors → Tourist Satisfaction → Destination Loyalty	.171*	.000	Accepted
H7: Push Factors → Tourist Satisfaction → Destination Loyalty	.294*	.000	Accepted

\* It is statistically significant

### **Recommendation for Tourism Stakeholders in Phuket**

The findings of this study offer some useful and practical suggestions for tourism stakeholders in Phuket specifically and Thailand generally.

First, this research showed evidence for the possible casual relationship between push factors, pull factors, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty to Phuket. It is important

to increase the awareness of tourist stakeholders regarding the importance of push and pull factors and the positive influence they have on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty to Phuket. They should consider the reasons why tourists decide to travel. Consequently, the destination marketers in Phuket can initiate productive marketing strategies to attract more tourists. Besides tourism campaigns and advertisements, promotions should be further applied to boost the motivation of potential tourists. Social media such as video blogs (Vlogs), Instagram, and Facebook provide attractive images and useful information that will additionally help to promote the “Andaman – The World Experience” of Phuket for tourists. Second, travel agents and tour operators should design holiday packages to be more diversified to the trends and behaviors of tourists such as free and easy packages which are more flexible to the demands of the tourists. On top of that, the service providers in Phuket should realize how to provide effective skills of service, memorable experiences, and personalized services to create customer loyalty.

Tourists are also concerned with safety and security. This should be brought to the attention of both private and public sectors. Furthermore, the quality of tourist attractions and infrastructure in Phuket should be well-maintained and ready to serve tourists throughout the year. Importantly, the public sector should specially focus on tourism development and promotion in Phuket. Support with effective policies will help to attract more tourists

## **Conclusion**

This research aimed to study the factors of tourist motivations in creating tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty targeting European tourists travelling to Phuket. Moreover, it emphasized the marketing concept in developing research tools to enhance the tourism competitiveness and effectiveness. Based on the literature review, the research hypotheses and conceptual framework were constructed. After analyzing the data, all proposed models and hypotheses were accepted and the objective of the research was gained.

This study found that both push and pull factors had a positive and significant influence on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. Both push and pull factors help to explain and forecast tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. Accordingly, tourism stakeholders in Phuket should focus on the important aspects of push and pull factors in order to respond to the demands of the tourists. However, until such time, it can safely be assumed that the most influential and accurate determinants of intention to visit were push and pull motivation.

On the side of the destination attributes, the first top three ranking attributes of Phuket were: various types of tourism activities, various tourist attractions and safety. These factors may be considered as the core products and services viewed from the perspective of European tourists. This result was similar to the findings of Sangpikul et al. (2017) who found

that European tourists favored Phuket for its local accommodation/culture, leisure activities, and natural attraction.

Hence, the results of the study can function as helpful sources of information for Phuket tourism stakeholders and assist them in executing strong tourism plans and strategies not only to maintain the existing tourists but to gain more potential tourists to Phuket and other destinations in Thailand.

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