

## Research Paper

# **The Effects of Motivation and Satisfaction on Destination Loyalty at the Thailand -Laos (PDR) Border**

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**Abstract:** Over the past few decades, the influence of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) program and Asian Economic Community (AEC) framework of ASEAN has led to an increasing number of tourists visiting Thailand and Laos (PDR) border sites. Accordingly, the Thailand-Laos (PDR) border destination appears to have a high tourism market potential as it is seen as an important tourist attraction, nationally and internationally. The investigation of cross-border tourism in this area will benefit the development of the tourism industry along Thailand and Laos (PDR). Consequently, the current study aims to investigate a structural model explaining destination loyalty and its inter-relationship with push and pull motivation, and satisfaction, in the context of Thai revisits to the Thailand-Laos (PDR) border destination. A total of 400 questionnaires were collected and analysed by a Structural Equation Modeling software called Mplus version 6.12. Findings of this study reveal that push motivation and satisfaction are both determinants of Thai visitors' destination loyalty for the Thailand-Laos border. Implications for Thailand and Laos (PDR) border destination managers are also discussed.

**Keywords:** Motivation, push factors, pull factors, satisfaction, destination loyalty, Thailand -Laos (PDR) border

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## Introduction

In recent decades, requirements for crossing the border in many regions has seen a lot of relaxation, for example, in visa policies (Blasco, Guia & Prats, 2014). For instance, since the adoption of the Schengen agreement by most European Union (EU) countries, which covers visa on arrival in ASEAN countries, borders have been developed to be more functional than its traditional role and concept (Timothy, 1995). The function of an international border can significantly influence the tourist experience (Timothy & Tosun, 2003). In the context of tourism at a border destination, it has been defined as the area where tourists make day trips, and is a form of tourism if they cross an international border (Timothy & Butler, 1995). Thus, border tourism has become an emerging market in many countries. Likewise, the Thailand and Laos (PDR) border has gained much attention from academics and business practitioners. Considerably, over the past few decades, the influence of the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) program and Asian Economic Community (AEC) framework of ASEAN has led to an increasing number of tourists visiting Thailand and Laos (PDR) border sites. These two countries are considered as safe and interesting in terms of culture, ethnicity, heritage and natural resources. As mentioned above, the Thailand-Laos (PDR) border destination appears to be an important tourism attraction nationally and internationally, hence has high tourism market potential. This investigation of cross-border tourism will contribute to the development of the tourism industry along the border of Thailand and Laos (PDR). Consequently, the present study was conducted in the Nong Khai and Mukdahan provinces, well-known border destinations along the Thailand and Laos (PDR) border situated in Thailand's north-east.

Nong Khai is the main gateway to Vientiane, the capital of Laos (PDR) which is located about 20 kilometers away. Mukdahan is the gateway to Indochina countries, since it connects to Savannakhet in Laos (PDR) and links directly to Da Nang of Vietnam in a one day bus trip (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2014).

In tourism, destination loyalty is viewed as an important research topic both for academics and the tourism industry (Jang & Feng, 2007). To understand why tourists make repeat visits, many previous studies have focused on the determinants of destination loyalty. Yoon and Uysal (2005) suggested that successful destination marketing should be guided by a thorough analysis of tourist motivation and its interplay with tourist satisfaction and loyalty. It is useful to understand how motivation actually occurs and how those needs may be satisfied, as satisfaction with travel experiences contributes to destination loyalty (Chi & Qu, 2008; Chen & Chen, 2010). The degree of tourists' loyalty to a destination is reflected in their intention to revisit the destination and in their recommendations to others (Oppermann, 2000). The causal relationships among these variables have been established by previous studies in different tourism contexts (Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Mechinda, Serirat,

& Gulid, 2009). However, findings remain ambiguous. Furthermore, the causal relationships among these variables at the Thailand-Laos (PDR) border destination has yet to be examined, rendering it an interesting proposition.

The present study offers an integrated approach in understanding tourist motivation and attempts to extend theoretical and empirical evidence on the causal relationships among push and pull motivations, satisfaction, and destination loyalty. The research model that was proposed and tested in this study investigated the relevant relationships among the constructs using a structural equation modeling approach. In order to provide a theoretical background for the proposed model, we first reviewed literature on tourist motivation and discussed the concepts of push and pull motivations as well as tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty, followed by the development of the hypotheses and research model to be tested. The findings derived from this study can serve as a guideline for tourism development at the Thai-Laos (PDR) border.

## Literature Review

### Motivation

Tourism is always related back to human beings and human nature, thus one of the common questions in tourism is why people travel and what they want to enjoy. Motivation is one of the popular approaches used to address this question and is defined as psychological/biological needs and wants, including integral forces that arouse, direct, and integrate a person's behavior and activities (Dann, 1981; Pearce, 1982).

Tourist motivation rarely results from a single motive for tourism. Instead, tourist motivation is generally complex and multifaceted (Crompton, 1979). In 1979, Crompton developed the push and pull model of tourist motivation, which identified specific push and pull effects on tourist destination choices and experiences (Lee & Hsu, 2013). Uysal and Hagan (1993) described how individuals are pushed by motivation variables into making travel decisions and how they are pulled or attracted by destination attributes. Push motivations are more related to internal or emotional aspects, for example, the desire for escape, rest and relaxation, prestige, health and fitness, adventure and social interaction, family togetherness, and excitement (Crompton, 1979). Pull motivations, on the other hand, are connected to external, situational, or cognitive aspects (Jang & Cai, 2002), which are inspired by a destination's attractiveness, such as beaches, recreation facilities, cultural attractions, entertainment, natural scenery, shopping and parks.

In the context of tourism at border destinations, a review of the literature on tourist motivation revealed that the findings are quite similar. For example, in the

case of Mainland China tourists who traveled to Hong Kong, Huang and Hsu (2009) found that the tourist motivations are novelty, knowledge, relaxation, and shopping. Similarly, a study by Hanqin and Lam (1999) found that push motivations are knowledge, prestige, enhancement of human relationships, relaxation, and novelty, while pull motivations are hi-tech images, expenditure, accessibility, service attitude and quality, sightseeing variety, and cultural links.

Several prior studies have been conducted using these perspectives (Kim, Lee & Klenosky, 2003; Jang & Cai, 2002; Kao, Patterson, Scott & Li, 2008; Jang & Wu, 2006; Correia, Valle, & Moco, 2007). The push and pull model is the most appropriate approach for researchers who explored tourist motivation via exploratory factor analysis (EFA), then examined the causal relationships between (among) motivation and other variables (Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Jang & Cai, 2002; Jang & Wu, 2006; Huang & Hsu, 2009). Moreover, the push and pull motivation concept can be examined within the context of a tourism system representing two major components of the market place, namely, demand (tourist) and supply (tourism attractions) (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Thus, the push and pull model was accepted as the most practically adequate approach for the present study.

### **Satisfaction**

Satisfaction is another important term that has been widely examined in the disciplines of general consumer behavior and tourism because satisfaction brings positive behavioral outcomes and its understanding provides managerial guidance in the industry (Kozak, 2001a; Jang & Feng, 2007). Nevertheless, despite the relevance of satisfaction in tourism, and its crucial role in tourism marketing research, the literature remains to be somewhat ambiguous on its nature and definition (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Kozak, 2001b). Various frameworks and theories have been developed to explain satisfaction: 1) the expectation/disconfirmation theory, 2) the equity theory, 3) the norm theory, and 4) the perceived performance theory. Of these theories, the expectation/disconfirmation theory and the perceived overall performance theory are the most frequently used (Kozak, 2001a; Chen & Chen, 2010). The expectation/disconfirmation theory, which was proposed by Oliver (1980), postulates that satisfaction is the result of discrepancy between expectations and perceived performance. When the performance of a tourism destination, as perceived by the tourist, is higher (lower) than his/her expectations, a positive (negative) disconfirmation will result in satisfaction (dissatisfaction). However, despite its dominance, one of the problems with this theory that is often highlighted is the mutual influence between the scores of both scales (expectations and perceived performance) if measures are taken at the same time. Therefore, it is very difficult to measure the expectation before the visit and the perceived performance after the visit (Kozak, 2001a; Eusebio & Vieira, 2013).

Some researchers have adopted the perceived performance theory to assess tourist satisfaction (Kozak, 2001b; Um, Chon & Ro, 2006). According to this theory, “regardless of the existence of any previous expectations, the customer is likely to be satisfied when a product or service performs at a desired level” (Kozak, 2001a, p.179); the performance-only approach has higher reliability and validity values than other approaches such as expectation versus performance and disconfirmation.

In relation to the foregoing discussion, in practical terms, the perceived performance theory is often considered the most adequate approach for the present investigation, by means of overall satisfaction measurement of travel experience. Overall satisfaction is defined as an overall evaluation of the tourism destination performance, consistent with several studies (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Um et al., 2006; Eusebio & Vieira, 2013). The performance of a destination is measured based on different components which are characterised as the 4 As (Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert & Wanhill, 2008), classified as follows: 1) **attraction** which consists of artificial as well as natural features or events, 2) **amenity** which includes a range of supporting facilities and services like accommodation, food, entertainment and recreation which are required by tourists, 3) **ancillary service** which is provided to customers and industries at the destination through a local tourist board (e.g. safety, border checkpoint), and 4) **accessibility** in terms of development and transport which provides a link to the tourist destination as well as to the tourist attractions at the destination.

### **Destination loyalty**

Although the investigation of loyalty started as early as 1923 with Copeland’s study of “Brand insistence”, it remains one of the most frequently examined topics (Sun, Chi & Xu, 2013). The concept of brand loyalty has been recognised as a major driving force and one of the most important indicators of success in marketing and tourism literature. In an increasingly aggressive business context, destinations need new marketing strategies that target at retaining loyal visitors to guarantee a sustainable competitive advantage. Hence, there is a growing number of publications that analyse customer loyalty towards tourism products, destinations or leisure recreation activities (Baker & Crompton, 2000; Kozak, 2001a; Um et al., 2006; Hui, Wan, & Ho, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Alegre & Garau, 2010; Eusebio & Vieira, 2013).

The literature on destination loyalty suggests a large number of different approaches and operational definitions (Oppermann, 2000). Generally, according to Jacoby and Chestnut (1978), loyalty is usually measured in one of the following ways: 1) the behavioral approach, 2) the attitudinal approach, and 3) the composite approach (a combination of the former). The behavioral approach has been frequently operationalised as a sequence purchase, a proportion of patronage or probability of

purchase (Alegre & Juaneda, 2006). It has been shown that this approach does not attempt to explain the factors that affect customer loyalty. Namely, tourist loyalty to the destinations may not be enough to explain why and how they are willing to revisit or recommend the destination to others (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

According to the attitudinal approach, based on consumer brand preferences or intention to buy, consumer loyalty is an attempt on the part of the consumer to go beyond overt behavior and express their loyalty in terms of psychological commitment to preferences. Thus, loyalty measures consumers' strength of affection toward a brand or product, as well as explain an additional portion of unexplained variance that the behavioral approach does not address (Backman & Crompton, 1991).

Lastly, the composite approach is an integration of the behavioral and attitudinal dimensions. Oppermann (2000) suggests that to be truly loyal, a customer must not only to purchase the product but also have a positive attitude towards it. Although this approach has been frequently used (Oppermann, 2000), it has some limitations according to Yoon and Uysal (2005, p.48), who stated that "this approach has limitations in that not all the weighting or quantified scores may apply to both the behavior and attitudinal factors and they may have differing measurements".

As explained above, the limitations of the behavioral approach and the composite approach, renders the attitudinal approach as being the most adequate approach for the present study, through two sub-dimensions of loyalty: intentions to return to the same destination in the future (revisiting) and intentions to recommend it to the others (recommendation).

### **Hypothesis Development**

The earlier section has discussed the important roles of motivation, satisfaction, and destination loyalty in the tourism context. According to Yoon and Uysal (2005), the success of marketing destination should be guided by a thorough analysis of tourist motivation and its interplay with tourist satisfaction and loyalty. The causal relationships among these variables have been established by previous studies in different tourism contexts, such as visiting the beaches of Northern Cyprus (Yoon & Uysal, 2005); tourists in Chiang Mai (Thailand) (Mechinda et al., 2009); attendees at aboriginal festivals in Taiwan (Lee & Hsu, 2013). However, the literature remains to be somewhat ambiguous on its findings. Furthermore, the causal relationships among these variables have not yet been examined in the context of the Thailand-Laos (PDR) border destination. Therefore, it is interesting and important to examine the above causal relationships in the behavioral model for Thailand-Laos (PDR) border tourism. Figure 1 presents the proposed research model for the present investigation that corresponds to the hypotheses described next.

Empirical studies indicate that tourist satisfaction is significantly affected by motivation (Lee, Lee, & Wicks, 2004; Correia et al., 2007). As Gnoth (1997) indicated, motivation is therefore a factor in the formation of satisfaction. Devesa, Laguna and Palacios (2010) investigated the impact of motivation on tourist satisfaction, and found that the instrumental and expressive attributes work in combination to produce overall tourist satisfaction. However, in a study of tourism in Northern Cyprus, Yoon and Uysal (2005) found that the push motivation does not significantly influence satisfaction, but affects destination loyalty, whereas pull motivation directly and negatively affects satisfaction. Thus, empirical results remain unclear regarding whether tourist motivation can exert a significant and positive influence on satisfaction. Consequently, the following hypotheses were developed;

**Hypothesis 1a: Push motivation significantly and directly affects satisfaction.**

**Hypothesis 1b: Pull motivation significantly and directly affects satisfaction.**

In addition, Yoon and Uysal (2005) found that push motivation significantly affects destination loyalty, hence the following hypothesis was proposed.

**Hypothesis 2: Push motivation significantly and directly affects destination loyalty.**

Furthermore, numerous studies have found that satisfaction is a necessary prerequisite for a successful tourist destination because satisfaction is one of the most important predictors of destination loyalty (Alegre & Cladera, 2006; Alegre & Garau, 2010; Chi & Qu, 2008; Chen & Chen, 2010). Satisfied tourists are more likely to revisit and recommend the destination to friends and relatives compared to others (Chi & Qu, 2008). However, the Thai repeat visitors at the Thailand-Laos (PDR) border have yet to be studied to shed light on any linkage between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. Is this contradictory finding sample specific; does it show that Thai tourists are really different from tourists of other countries? To find out the following hypothesis was proposed.

**Hypothesis 3: Tourist satisfaction significantly and directly affects loyalty.**

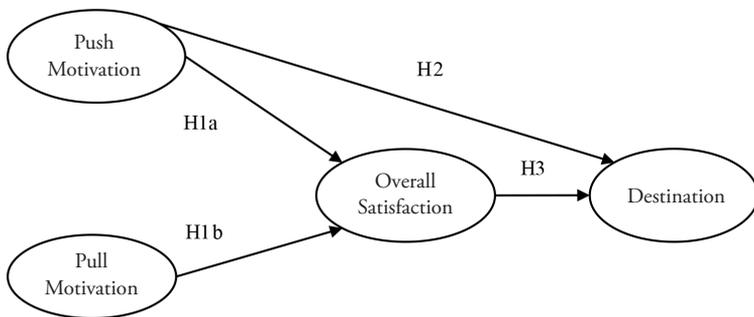


Figure 1. Proposed research model

## **Research Methodology**

### **Sample and Data Collection**

A self-administrated questionnaire survey was conducted to collect empirical data from Thai tourists who re-visited the Thailand-Laos border in the Nong Khai and Mukdahan provinces, from 1 - 31 May, 2012. A total of 426 questionnaires were distributed using the purposive sampling method and 400 valid ones were returned, resulting in a 93.9% response rate.

### **Questionnaire Design**

The questions in the questionnaire were designed based on a review of the literature and specific characteristics of the study site. The questionnaire which was pre-tested and revised to ensure validity consists of four parts.

Part 1 collected respondent information including gender, age, marital status, occupation, income, and origin, measured by a categorical scale.

Part 2 measured tourist motivations specifically push and pull motivation variables (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). The push motivation construct consisted of 10 items, while the pull motivation construct included 17 items. Both the motivation variables were developed based on review of the related literature and were modified to apply to the study site and target population.

Part 3 looked at overall satisfaction, based on an attribute-level conceptualisation of the determinants of satisfaction (Eusebio & Vieira, 2013) and measured using Cooper et al. (2008)'s 4 attributes of tourism destination such as attraction (4 items), amenity (4 items), ancillary service (5 items), and accessibility (3 items).

Part 4 measured destination loyalty (Oppermann, 2000), divided into two variables such as revisiting (4 items) and recommendation (4 items).

All items in Parts 2, 3, and 4 were measured using a five-point Likert-type scale (strongly disagree (=1) to strongly agree (=5)).

### **Data Analysis**

Descriptive analyses such as means and frequencies were used to examine the respondents' demographic profile. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to identify the underlying dimensions of push and pull travel motivations at the Thailand-Laos border. Finally, a structural equation modeling (SEM) was utilised to test the proposed model using Mplus version 6.12 (Muthen & Muthen, 2009). We carried out a two-stage process. First, a confirmatory measurement model was tested. This measurement model specified the posited relations of the observed variables to the underlying constructs which were allowed to inter-correlate freely. Afterwards, the structural model was examined. The structural portion of the SEM allows for

testing of multiple equations with multiple dependent variables (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006).

## Results

### Respondents' Profile

The demographic profile revealed 54.5% of the respondents were male visitors and about 27% were aged between 26 and 35, while 50.3% respondents were single. In terms of occupation, government officers accounted for 32.5% of the sample, while 31.7% of the sample had a monthly income of approximately 1–10,000 THB, and most respondents live in Thailand's north-east (64.3%).

### Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

To reduce the number of variables in both the push and pull travel motivation constructs, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed. The Varimax rotation and a factor loading of 0.40 was used as the benchmark to include items in a factor (Hair et al., 2006). Then, the included items within the factor were calculated to create a composite factor. This procedure decreases multicollinearity among indicators in the confirmatory factor analysis of the measurement model (Hair et al., 2006).

The results of the EFA determined significantly-correlated factors, including two push motivations (Table 1), and three pull motivations (Table 2). Table 1 shows that these two push factors explained 55.4% of the variance in push motivation. The first factor entailed five items and was labeled *socialisation* (M=3.822). The second factor included five items with respect to *relaxation & novelty* (M=4.164).

**Table 1.** The results of EFA (push motivations)

Push factors	Factor loading	Explained variance (%)	Composite mean	Cronbach alpha
<i>Factor 1: Socialisation</i>				
Enhancement of kinship relationships	0.844	42.803	3.822	0.783
Visiting relatives & friends	0.763			
Learning the local culture	0.763			
Familiarity	0.681			
Family togetherness	0.665			
<i>Factor 2: Relaxation &amp; novelty</i>				
Relaxation	0.771	12.595	4.164	0.752
Finding thrills and excitement	0.706			

**Table 1** (con't)

Experiencing new/different styles	0.705
Study the tourist attractions	0.704
Escaping from everyday routine	0.687
Total variance explained	55.4

1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree. Kaiser-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy=0.851. Bartlett's test of sphericity, p<0.000.

Table 2 shows that the three pull factors explained 60% of the variance in pull motivation. The first factor comprised six items and was labeled *natural scenery & value for money* (M=4.423). The second factor included five items with respect to *convenient to travel* (M=3.822) and the third factor entailed six items and labeled *religious & culture* (M=4.232). Consequently, the Cronbach alpha for all the five factors (two push and three pull factors) was above the cut-off score of 0.7 recommended by Nunnally (1978), which indicates high reliability. A summary of the scale for each factor was created for subsequent analyses.

**Table 2.** The results of EFA (pull motivations)

Pull factors	Factor loading	Explained variance	Composite mean	Cronbach alpha
<i>Factor 1: Natural scenery &amp; value for money</i>		43.672	4.423	0.881
Natural scenery	0.846			
Fresh air	0.837			
Value for money	0.814			
Inexpensive	0.811			
Cleanliness	0.763			
Shopping	0.605			
<i>Factor 2: Convenient to travel</i>		10.313	3.822	0.778
Easy to access	0.801			
Passing to the other province	0.791			
Crossing border to Laos(PDR)	0.701			
Meeting & Seminar	0.698			
Safety	0.568			
<i>Factor 3: Religious &amp; culture</i>		6.016	4.232	0.836
Paying respect to Buddha	0.854			
Historic environment	0.845			
Variety of cultural attraction	0.635			
Friendliness of local people	0.616			
Festival	0.543			

Local food 0.473

Total variance explained 60

1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree. Kaiser-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy=0.925. Bartlett's test of sphericity,  $p < 0.000$ .

**Measurement Model**

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was first used to confirm the factor loadings of four constructs (i.e. push motivation, pull motivation, satisfaction, and destination loyalty) and to assess the model fit. The results are provided in Table 3 and indicate that all the standardised factor loadings of items are found to be significant ( $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, the hypothesised measurement model is appropriate to test the structural relationships among the constructs.

**Table 3.** Overall CFA for the measurement model (N=400)

Construct	Items	Standardised factor loadings	Standard errors	p-Value	Residual Variances	R <sup>2</sup>
Push motivation	F1	0.779	0.029	0.000	0.177	0.607
	F2	0.704	0.032	0.000	0.355	0.495
Pull motivation	F3	0.715	0.030	0.000	0.277	0.511
	F4	0.852	0.023	0.000	0.107	0.726
	F5	0.703	0.032	0.000	0.321	0.494
Satisfaction	X1	0.733	0.026	0.000	0.169	0.537
	X2	0.785	0.023	0.000	0.144	0.616
	X3	0.826	0.020	0.000	0.135	0.683
	X4	0.763	0.024	0.000	0.160	0.582
Destination loyalty	Y1	0.949	0.009	0.000	0.091	0.901
	Y2	0.956	0.008	0.000	0.052	0.914

The structural equation modeling (SEM) using Mplus (Muthen & Muthen, 2009), which is a feature of this software, can accommodate missing data. To interpret the fit of the model to the data, the goodness-of-fit Chi-square, the root mean square residual (RMSEA), the standardised root mean square residual (SRMR), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) were calculated. Table 4 summarises the fit indices of the structural model. The overall model indicates that  $\chi^2 = 215.96$ , d.f.=39, and is significant at  $p < 0.0001$ . Technically, the p-value should be greater than 0.05, i.e. statistically insignificant, to indicate that the model is compatible with the empirical data. Since the Chi-square is heavily influenced by the sample size, other goodness of fit indices were utilised to help evaluate the model

(Bentler, 1990) (RMSEA=0.10, SRMR=0.05, CFI=0.94, and TLI=0.92). These fit indices indicated an acceptable level, thus confirming that the hypothesised model fits the empirical data.

**Table 4.** Goodness of fit (N=400)

Fit statistics	Indicators	Recommended value
$\chi^2$	215.96	
$\chi^2/df$	215.96/39 = 5.5	<5 (Chen & Chen, 2010)
RMSEA	0.10	<0.10 (Sharma, Mukherfec, Kumar & Dillon, 2005)
SRMR	0.05	<0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1995)
CFI	0.94	>0.90 (Hu & Bentler, 1995)
TLI	0.92	>0.90 (Hu & Bentler, 1995)

### Structural Equation Model

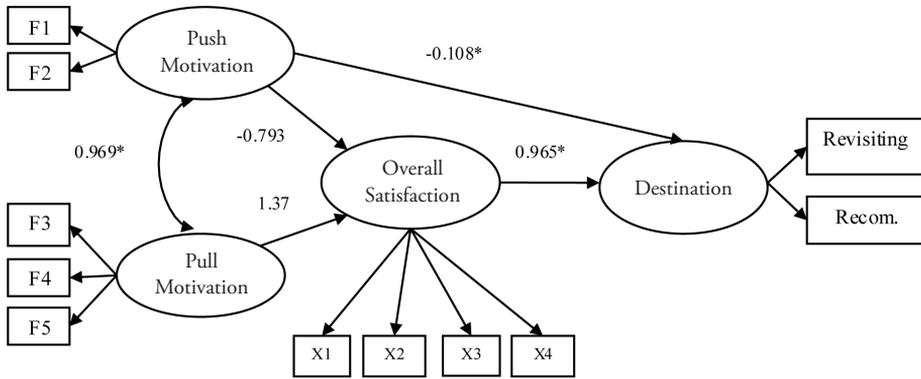
Within the overall model, the estimates of the structural coefficients provided the basis for testing the proposed hypotheses. This study examined the structural model with two exogenous constructs (push and pull motivation) and two endogenous constructs (satisfaction and destination loyalty). Figure 2 provides details about the parameter estimates for the model, and Table 5 reports the results of the hypotheses tests. Altogether, two out of four hypotheses were supported. The results of the hypotheses testing indicate that destination loyalty was influenced by push motivation ( $\beta = -0.108$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.965$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Thus, hypothesis 2 and 3 were supported. Whereas, hypothesis 1a, which proposed a relationship between push motivation and satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.793$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), and hypothesis 1b, which proposed a relationship between pull motivation and satisfaction ( $\beta = 1.370$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) were rejected by the empirical data.

Using the direct effects of push and pull motivation, 40.0% of the total variance in satisfaction was explained, while 83.2% of the variance in destination loyalty was explained by the direct effects of satisfaction and push motivation.

**Table 5.** Standardised structural estimates and tests of the hypotheses

Hypothesis	Path	$\beta$ coefficient	p-value	Test results
H1a	Push $\rightarrow$ satisfaction	-0.793	0.503	Not supported
H1b	Pull $\rightarrow$ satisfaction	1.370	0.246	Not supported
H2	Push $\rightarrow$ destination loyalty	-0.108	0.000	Supported
H3	Satisfaction $\rightarrow$ destination loyalty	0.965	0.014	Supported
	$R^2$			
	Satisfaction	0.400		
	Destination loyalty	0.832		

Note:  $R^2$  = coefficient of determination (variance explained)



**Figure 2.** Estimated results of model

Note: F1=socialisation, F2=relaxation & novelty, F3=natural scenery & value for money, F4=convenient to travel, F5=religious & culture, X1= satisfaction for attraction, X2= satisfaction for amenity, X3= satisfaction for ancillary service, X4= satisfaction for accessibility, \*= $p < 0.05$

### Discussion and Implications

The study aimed to investigate empirically a structural model to explain destination loyalty and its interrelationship with push and pull motivations, and satisfaction. In the context of Thai repeat visitors to the Thailand-Laos (PDR) border, push motivations were found to have two underlying factors (i.e. socialization, and relaxation & novelty) while pull motivation had three underlying factors (i.e. natural scenery & value for money, convenient to travel, and religious & culture). In regard to the structural relations among the research constructs, the study results indicate that push motivation and satisfaction are both determinants of Thai repeat visitors' destination loyalty.

The results affirm the relationship between push motivation and destination loyalty and are consistent with past research (Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Alegre & Juaneda, 2006; Jang & Feng, 2007; Mechinda et al., 2009; Huang & Hsu, 2009) which show motivation is only one of many variables that explains tourist behavior. Interestingly, this study found a negative direct relationship ( $\beta = -0.108$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), whereby the lower the push motivation, the higher the loyalty towards a destination. One of the important push motivation factors in tourism decision making is novelty because seeking novelty is innate in travelers (Cohen, 1979). Seeking novelty is the opposite of seeking familiarity (Jang & Feng, 2007) while Crompton (1979) referred to novelty as a new experience but not necessarily new knowledge, Lee and Crompton (1992) further proposed the novel sources of pleasure travel as thrill, adventure and surprise, and alleviating boredom. In addition, Alegre and Juaneda (2006) noted that some tourism motivations could inhibit destination loyalty, for example, the desire

to break away from the monotony of daily life, the wish to get to know new places, people, and different cultures, or the search for new experiences. Tourists whose main preferences include novelty or change would not be very interested in revisiting a destination. Thus, destination managers need to find ways to lure novelty seekers who have already visited the destination. They can develop new attractions or use new natural resources to attract past visitors to revisit.

Overall, satisfaction is an important element that influences the decision to revisit or to recommend to others the Thailand-Laos border destination. This is similar to findings from several previous studies conducted in different cultures, which indicates that this relationship can be generalised in various contexts. A review of literature in travel and tourism reveals an abundance of studies on tourist satisfaction (Alegre & Cladera, 2006; Alegre & Garau, 2010; Chi & Qu, 2008; Chen & Chen, 2010). According to these studies, satisfaction is a necessary prerequisite for a successful tourist destination because satisfaction is one of the most important predictors of destination loyalty (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Satisfied tourists are more likely to revisit and recommend the destination to friends and relatives (Chi & Qu, 2008). Consequently, destination managers should establish a higher tourist satisfaction level to create positive post-purchase tourist behavior, in order to improve and sustain the development of a destination.

Moreover, the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) showed that Thai tourists pursue two different push motivations (enhancement of kinship relationships, and relaxation & knowledge) and three different pull motivations (natural scenery & value for money, convenient to travel, and religious & culture). Therefore, it is suggested that destination managers should consider the practical implications of these variables because they are important factors that motivate tourists who want to travel to the Thailand-Laos (PDR) border. Similarly, according to Timothy (1995), the level of attractiveness of border areas for tourists depends on a number of factors, including the natural, social and cultural environment, the degree of freedom or difficulty in crossing it, and cross border shopping.

For future studies, we suggest a generalisation of the model by replicating this study in other border areas such as Thailand-Myanmar, Thailand-Cambodia, and Thailand-Malaysia, for a more conclusive model of destination loyalty of border destinations in Thailand.

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