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International Tourists' Travel Motivation by Push-Pull Factors and the Decision Making for Selecting Thailand as Destination Choice

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Abstract**—**This research paper aims to identify travel motivation by push and pull factors that affected decision making of international tourists in selecting Thailand as their destination choice. A total of 200 international tourists who traveled to Thailand during January and February, 2014 were used as the sample in this study. A questionnaire was employed as a tool in collecting the data, conducted in Bangkok. The list consisted of 30 attributes representing both psychological factors as "push- based factors" and destination factors as "pull-based factors". Mean and standard deviation were used in order to find the top ten travel motives that were important determinants in the respondents' decision making process to select Thailand as their destination choice. The finding revealed the top ten travel motivations influencing international tourists to select Thailand as their destination choice included [i] getting experience in foreign land; [ii] Thai food; [iii] learning new culture; [iv] relaxing in foreign land; [v] wanting to learn new things; [vi] being interested in Thai culture, and traditional markets; [vii] escaping from same daily life; [viii] enjoying activities; [ix] adventure; and [x] good weather. Classification of push- based and pull- based motives suggested that getting experience in foreign land was the most important push motive for international tourists to travel, while Thai food portrayed its highest significance as pull motive. Discussion and suggestions were also made for tourism industry of Thailand.

Keywords**—**Decision Making, Destination Choice, International Tourist, Pull Factor, Push Factor, Thailand, Travel Motivation.

I. Introduction

TOURISM is characterized as service and experience product of which destination attributes are very important in attracting international tourists to make their first time and repeat visits. Currently, more countries in Southeast Asia have an "Open Door Policy" to invite tourists into their country, in an effort to embrace tourism as a revenue- driving industry. Many countries in Southeast Asia share common characteristics in terms of geography, society and culture. Globalization and development of ICT have made the world become accessible in terms of information. Moreover, with the presence of globalization, individuals have increased demands in consumption, including tourism consumption. Each country with tourism as its main source of national income has been forced to differentiate their tourism products. Destination marketers have put extensive efforts in marketing cities and retaining tourists to maintain their position in the market place [1]. Consumers in the tourism industry are not homogenous in their demands, resulting in different expectations. Urban tourism has brought up an issue of stereotyping demands and expectations due to an influence of capitalism and the globalized world's mass media. Tourist places simply become products to be exchanged within the confines of advanced capitalism; the resulting process inevitably means that "tourism is the chance to go and see what has been made trite". Tourist attractions, as tourism products, nowadays possess a peculiar characteristic shared with theatrical productions [2]. Uniqueness and authenticity have been fading due to mass media of the globalized world, and commoditization that changes environmental and cultural values into economic. Moreover, the tourism industry has been driven today by changes in terms of values and expectation; tourists are increasingly seeking more experiences than products [3]. Thailand is among the countries in Southeast Asia and Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), that has its tourism industry entering into a maturity stage [4]. While other countries are hurriedly developing more infrastructures to welcome more tourists such as Vietnam, or those entering the tourism industry such as Myanmar, therefore Thailand requires a clearer positioning as trends are changing along with higher competitiveness. General information of travel motives is not sufficient in directing alternative ways for product development and marketing. Thus, this study aimed to identify what push and pull motives were the determinant factors of international tourists in making decision to select Thailand as their destination choice.

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II. Literature Review

Push and pull motives have been studied and discussed in a wide range of travel motivation studies. Some studies were reviewed in this paper in order to provide an introductory view on motives behind international travel and significance of destination factors.

A. Push Motives

Iso-Ahola [5] explained push factors as the mental preparation for human activities and linked to an individual level of optimal arousal. Some common push factors in traveling found in many studies include escape from routine everyday life, relaxation, exploration, social interaction, relationship enhancement and prestige [6]. The study of Danish travelers' motivation [6] found that the Danish

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travelers perceived social relationship with family and friends as the most important travel motive, followed by escape/ relaxation, appreciating natural resources, exploration, appreciating famous sites and heritages, and prestige and impression. However, the motive with the lowest mean score was prestige and impression. A study of Japanese tourists motivation and expected benefits from outbound travel to the UK [7] unveiled that they traveled to find a new or unusual experience, different culture, and refresh or escape from daily life. To gain broader view of understanding or a sense of value was also common in the younger Japanese, while seeking for novelty was important for both older and younger Japanese. It was surprising that shopping was less important motivator due to the lower yen exchange rate, even though the young Japanese females were believed to be enthusiastic shoppers. The decision to take a holiday was based on time and expense. In a study of travel motivation and perception of Indian tourists towards Bangkok [1], the findings revealed both push and pull factors. Push factors consisted of having fun, seeing and experiencing new destination (s), doing something exciting, reducing stress, escaping from the routine of work and life and learning new things. A local online Thai newspaper reported that British and Australian tourists traveled to Thailand based on their interest in foreign land [8].

B. Pull Motives

What makes an individual travel is not only the psychological push factors. Swarbrooke and Horner [9] emphasized the importance of range of motivators related to consumers in the tourism industry, which could be categorized into those motivating a person to take a holiday and those motivating a person to take a particular holiday to a specific destination. It is essential for tourism marketers to investigate not only why individuals travel and what they intend to do on a holiday in relation with their internal drive but also on their motives related to tourist destinations [10]. Pull factors have become significant and require consideration in regards to sustainably attracting new and repeat tourists. It is particular in this era in which there are both higher competitiveness in the industry itself, and various internal and external constraints that may restrict individuals' affordability and demands of traveling. Pull factor characteristics refer to "place" as a tourism product that defines a destination. Pull factors can be classified into tangible and intangible cues of a specific destination that attract individuals to realize their needs of a particular travel experiences [10]. Attractiveness, activities and appreciation offered by tourist destinations are part of the 10 As framework suggested by Morrison [11] as important attributes that enhance tourists' satisfactory experiences in traveling in a destination. Attractiveness attribute of a destination refers to the number and geographic scope of appeal of the destination's attractions. Activities attribute present the extent of the array of activities available to tourists within the destination. The feeling of the levels of welcome and hospitality contribute to the appreciation attribute. The study of travel motivations of tourists visiting Mauritius by Kassean and Gassita [12] revealed the ranking of the first top five attributes offered by Mauritius that influenced the tourists to visit the destination including beaches, climate and weather, landscape and exotic scenery of the island, Mauritian hospitality and accommodation services offered to the travelers. Crouch et al. [in 12] classified tourist destination experience offered to tourists into 2 categories. The first was called service infrastructure category consisting of transportation and travel services, accommodation services, food and beverage services, shopping services and recreation and attraction services. The second was destination environment category that focused more on physical and situational conditions that consisted of natural environment, political and legal factors, economic factors, social factors, cultural factors and technological factors. These categories explained the pull factors of a tourist destination that affect tourists' perceived experience towards particular destination as well as decision making to choose that destination for their holiday. Gilbert and Terrata's study found that in terms of pull factor, destination image of countryside, history, culture and tradition or custom influenced the Japanese to make a decision to travel to UK [7].

A study found that Korean tourists were attracted to Thailand by the wide range of tour packages at very competitive prices with friendly service, and that the real exchange rate was significant factor. [13]. Pull factors of Bangkok that attracted Indian tourists marked on an enjoyment of beautiful environment, scenery and beaches, shows and entertainment and international travel experience [1], while those influencing British and Australian tourists to make a holiday in Thailand included natural tourist attractions, weather and cost of travel. [8]. Moreover, Holiday Trends for 2014 at BIT (Borsa Internazionale del Turismo): Love, Adventure and City Breaks reported worldwide destinations as tourists' preferences and choices. Among these, Thailand was listed as destination presenting some of its lesser-known jewels, such as the combination of incredible beaches and wild, pristine nature of Koh Samet with an unbeatable quality-price ratio [14]. Thairath, the online local newspaper of Thailand also reported that Thailand was the number one tourist destination in Southeast Asia for the British and Australian markets. A local online Thai newspaper reported that what made British and Australian tourists most willing to pay included dining or experiencing Thai foods and different cultures and unique destinations of Thailand such as beaches and seas, and temples [8].

Among many factors reported playing a role of appealing elements for tourists' demand and making choice to travel to particular destination, the food factor seemed to be less discussed, even though it is one of the main implicit factors that tourists consider in choosing destination [15]. Even though tourists do not choose their destination based on the expected food, food still is a key factor in deriving tourists' general satisfaction of a destination [15], as food will become part of their travel memories. By this means, food can enhance attractiveness of a destination, while representing routine variety- seeking behaviour, novelty- seeking behaviour and cultural motives. The study by Enright and Newton [16] to

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find determinants of tourism destination competitiveness in Asia Pacific revealed that food as pull factor was ranked the second attraction in Hong Kong, the fourth in Bangkok and the fifth in Singapore.

Neumann and Reichel [10] stated that travel motivation refers to a set of needs that cause a person to participate in a tourist activity. This statement reflects a definition of travel motivation that embarks upon activities to be participated or engaged by tourists in order that they can receive tourism experiences in exchange. Economic benefit of tourism has been increasingly generated from experience values. This stresses the significance of consumers' experiences, which is thus called the experience economic. Tourists as consumers questing for tourism products to serve their needs have created a more complicated paradigm, recognized as the market with "growing quest for immersion into varied experiences" [17]. A tourism product cannot be tested or sampled prior to visit and it is experiential in nature. Tourism experience, as Kozak and Decrop [18] stated, is "subjective, based on sensations, involving participation in activities, and resulting in learning or knowledge acquisition". Besides, as stated by Ahmed that tourism product "is produced and consumed at the time and on site" [19], performance of experience is very crucial to whether tourists will be satisfied with the experience. The stimulus- response model of buyer behaviour suggests that experience has a relationship with perception and attitude, or in other words, how experience received helps tourists construct or even change their perceptions and attitudes towards destination attributes [9]. New term related to tourism experience in order to clarify its role and importance in measuring individual tourist's experience in situ, is called "in-situ experience" that is measured by highlights, disappointments and unexpected events in a vacation experience faced by tourists in the context of automotive travelers [20]. Today tourists are increasingly constructing their experience based on the consumption of products and services during their journeys, both while on traveling and at destinations. By this way, they create a new form of holiday experience, as Buhalis suggested [21]. It means that tourists also have their role in shaping their own travel experience. Beerli and Martin described that one of the factors related to personal experience was the intensity of the visit or the extent of an individual's interaction or involvement with the place [22]. Thailand requires a clearer positioning as trends are changing and higher competitiveness. With an increase of countries opening and turning their head to catch tourism as alternative source of income, it is this today there has been a gradual competitive level in the tourism industry particularly within a regional outlook. General information of travel motives is not sufficient in directing alternative ways to product development and marketing anymore. In this regards, this study has an aim to identify what push and pull motives were the determinant factors of international tourists in making decision to select Thailand as their destination choice.

III. Methodology

This research paper aimed to identify the push and pull travel motivation that affected decision making of international tourists in selecting Thailand as destination choice. A total of 200 international tourists who traveled to Thailand during January and February, 2014 were used as the sample in this study. A questionnaire was employed as a tool for collecting the data, conducted in Bangkok. The questionnaire covered demographic background and trip profile, as well as a list of push and pull motives. This list consisted of 30 attributes representing both psychological factors as "push- based factors" and destination factors as "pull- based factors". Mean and standard deviation were used in order to find the top ten travel determinants. Ranking by mean score for the motives categorized in push and pull-based motives was also presented. Besides, in an attempt to clarify under the set of pull motives, what kind of pull motives were considered important determinant in affecting the respondents' decision making, the set of pull motives were classified into "sightseeing- based pull motives" and "activity-based pull motives" and ranking was made for them to demonstrate their level of importance.

IV. Findings

The top three tourist nationalities were United States of America, United Kingdom and Australia, with 17 percent, 16 percent and 13 percent respectively. German respondents represented 6 percent, while 4.5 percent represented French, Finnish and Canadian respondents. The respondents from the Asian region were reported 13 percent, which included Vietnamese, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Singaporean, Indian, Malaysian and Taiwanese. Other demographic findings presented balanced percentage of male and female respondents, where male respondents taking 51 percent while female taking 49 percent. The majority was between 21- 30 and 31- 40 years old, represented by 36 percent and 34 percent respectively, followed by 14 percent in an age range of 51- 60 years old with only 13 percent for those lower than 21 years old. The marital status revealed that 48.5 percent of the respondents were single, whereas 43.5 percent were married. Five percent of the respondents were divorced. The findings on trip profile unveiled that most of the respondents had been to Thailand before with 52 percent, with the other 48 percent visiting Thailand the first time. Fifty- four percent represented the majority of the respondents who traveled to Thailand mainly for vacation and pleasure, while 16 percent traveled to Thailand to visit friends and relatives. A small number included traveling to Thailand for business and professional, en route to somewhere else and sightseeing purposes. Moreover, most of them traveled with friends for 35.5 percent, in family with no children for 31.5 percent and in family with children for 24.5 percent. Furthermore, most of them or 51.5 percent stayed more than 8 days, followed by 26.5 percent who stayed for 3- 4 days.

The top ten push and pull motivation factors were summarized in Table I: (1) get experience in foreign land ($\bar{x}$=

4.28/ SD = .722); (2) Thai food ($\bar{x}$= 4.28/ SD = .826); (3) learn new culture ($\bar{x}$= 4.24); (4) relax in foreign land ($\bar{x}$= 4.21); (5) want to learn new things ($\bar{x}$= 4.18); (6) interested in Thai culture, and traditional markets ($\bar{x}$= 4.15/ SD = .768); (7) escape from same daily life ($\bar{x}$= 4.14); (8) enjoy activities ($\bar{x}$= 4.13/ SD = .750); (9) adventure ($\bar{x}$= 4.13/ SD = .766); and (10) good weather ($\bar{x}$= 4.08/ SD = .868).

TABLE I
THE TOP TEN TRAVEL MOTIVATIONS INFLUENCING INTERNATIONAL TOURISTS TO SELECT THAILAND AS THEIR DESTINATION CHOICE

Items	$\bar{x}$	*S.D.*	*Meaning*
1. Get experience in foreign land	4.28	.722	High
2. Thai food	4.28	.826	High
3. Learn new culture	4.24	.716	High
4. Relax in foreign land	4.21	.741	High
5. Want to learn new things	4.18	.788	High
6. [6.1] Interested in Thai culture	4.15	.768	High
[6.2] Traditional markets	4.15	.768	High
7. Escape from same daily life	4.14	.815	High
8. Enjoy activities	4.13	.750	High
9. Adventure	4.13	.766	High
10. Good weather	4.08	.868	High
Overall	**4.18**	**.775**	**High**

Table II compared the mean score of push- based motives, presenting the factor of getting experience in foreign land with the highest score ($\bar{x}$= 4.28/ SD = .722), followed by learning new culture ($\bar{x}$= 4.24/ SD = .716) and relaxing in foreign land ($\bar{x}$= 4.21/ SD = .741). The factors of wanting to learn new things, interest in Thai culture, escaping from same daily life, enjoying activities and having adventure were revealed within a range of mean score between 4.18 and 4.13.

TABLE II
MEAN SCORE OF PUSH- BASED MOTIVES

Items	$\bar{x}$	*S.D.*	*Meaning*
1. Get experience in foreign land	4.28	.722	
2. Learn new culture	4.24	.716	
3. Relax in foreign land	4.21	.741	
4. Want to learn new things	4.18	.788	
5. Interested in Thai culture	4.15	.768	
6. Escape from same daily life	4.14	.815	
7. Enjoy activities	4.13	.750	
8. Adventure	4.13	.766	
9. Interested in natural resources	3.77	.996	
10. Find Thai partner	2.49	1.530	
Overall	**3.97**	**.859**	**High**

Table III compared mean score of pull- based motives of Thailand ranked in ten orders from a total of selected 20 pull attributes. While all ten factors were ranked as high importance level, the factor with presenting the highest score was Thai food ($\bar{x}$= 4.28/ SD = .826). The three that followed included traditional markets ($\bar{x}$= 4.15/ SD = .768), good weather ($\bar{x}$= 4.08/ SD = .868) and beach and sand ($\bar{x}$= 4.05/ SD = .890). Diversity of tourist destinations was ranked as the lowest importance among the ten destination factors ($\bar{x}$= 3.66/ SD = .974).

TABLE III
MEAN SCORE OF PULL- BASED MOTIVES

Items	$\bar{x}$	*S.D.*	*Meaning*
1. Thai food	4.28	.826	
2. Traditional markets	4.15	.768	
3. Good weather	4.08	.868	
4. Beach and sand	4.05	.890	
5. Good services	3.99	.856	
6. Historical sites	3.90	.885	
7. Inexpensive shopping goods	3.84	.991	
8. Buddhist temples	3.81	.979	
9. Night markets	3.70	1.003	
10. Many kinds of tourist destinations	3.66	.974	
Overall	**3.95**	**.904**	**High**

In an attempt to clarify under the set of pull motives, what kind of pull motives were considered important determinant in affecting the respondents' decision making, the set of 20 pull motives were classified into "sightseeing- based pull motives" and "activity- based pull motives" and ranking was made for them to demonstrate their level of importance in Table IV.

TABLE IV
MEAN SCORE OF CLASSIFIED PULL- BASED MOTIVES

Motive Sets		$\bar{x}$	*S.D.*	*Meaning*
Pull Motives I (Sightseeing-based Attributes)	1. Traditional markets	4.15	.768	
	2. Good weather	4.08	.868	
	3. Beach and sand	4.05	.890	
	4. Historical sites	3.90	.885	
	5. Buddhist temples	3.81	.979	
	6. Night markets	3.70	1.003	
	7. Many kinds of tourist destinations	3.66	.974	
	8. Mountain and waterfall	3.48	1.089	
	9. Floating markets	3.41	1.057	
	Overall	**3.80**	**.946**	**High**
Pull Motives II (Activity- based Attributes)	1. Thai foods	4.28	.826	
	2. Good services	3.99	.856	
	3. Inexpensive shopping goods	3.84	.991	
	4. Thai festivals	3.58	1.025	
	5. Spa and massage	3.58	1.175	
	6. Shopping malls	3.56	1.101	
	7. Nightlife and entertainment	3.50	1.169	
	8. Souvenir and crafts	3.44	1.054	
	9. Foreigners' meeting points	3.21	1.265	
	10. Sport and competitions	2.96	1.350	
	11. Muay Thai (Thai boxing)	2.93	1.395	
	Overall	**3.53**	**1.110**	**Medium**

V. DISCUSSION

As shown in the top ten important motives that provided the reason for traveling to Thailand for international tourists, the push motive with the highest mean score was getting experience in the foreign land. This finding implied that visiting foreign countries or foreign lands which individuals are not familiar with but would like to "experience" always gave an element of excitement. Yet, "experience" as defined

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as an activity engagement has brought an important implication to this paper. Moreover, Thai food and traditional markets were the only two pull motives that appeared to have an importance in the tourists' decision making. Surprisingly the good weather factor was reported the least with the lowest mean score. Thai food has become famous among international tourists and the finding revealed it as the most important pull factor when international tourists make choice to travel to Thailand. This may help the national tourism authority to realize that one of strengths of national tourism attractiveness is Thai food. Thus, Thai tourism should be presented with background that lays an image of diversity and charms of Thai food when designing a strategy emphasizing gastronomy tourism to help tourists emotionally engage in various food- related activities. This will pave ways for other retailed businesses to grow, while promising small but long-lasting memories. Also, Thai tourism needs to improve in promoting souvenir and crafts in terms of creativity, as this can draw more visitors, especially ASEAN tourist markets. Shopping markets should remain unique as this would emphasize Thailand's unique selling proposition. Moreover, if Thailand projects to be the hub of ASEAN tourism, more infrastructure in cities, more activities and events, and connectivity between regional parts of the country should be in concerned in order to increase the seasonal mentality.

Good weather was reported as the factor with the lowest mean score among the top ten motives that influenced the tourists' decision making to select Thailand as their destination choice. Apparently this may imply that good weather is not a clear image of Thai tourism in the tourists' mind, particularly in this changing world. This may come with a limitation of this study in that it was conducted in Bangkok, where the respondents may be influenced by the tourism geography and the weather of Bangkok. Research to be conducted in other parts of Thailand such as the north or the south, or in other seasons may produce different findings. In another way, the finding on good weather may reflect a position of Thailand in that it has been increasingly changing an urbanized society.

The top ten pull motivations of tourists in making a decision to select Thailand as their destination choice found no presence of Thai spa and massage service. This emphasizes the situation that spa and massage service has still not become widely recognized in terms of quality and creditability and it has been limited only in hotels and resorts for high- end market, in spite of the fact that Tourism Authority of Thailand has presented this image during tourism road show campaigns abroad [23]. Thus spa and massage retailed service should be more highly developed.

The finding that showed the diversity of tourist destinations (many kinds of tourist destinations) ranked as the lowest importance among the ten destination factors implied that Thailand may now be competing with new entrants of tourist destinations in regional tourism industry such as Vietnam and Myanmar, and other countries such as Malaysia with its emerging tourism products that eventually increases its tourism diversity.

VI. Limitation and Future Studies

Limitations of this research concerned the site of data collection, Bangkok, and the small sample size, which may not be able to give concrete findings of which push and pull motives concern international tourists during the decision making process and thus it cannot be generalized. However, this paper provided interesting findings which inspired the author to conduct in- depth research in the future. Therefore, for future research suggested in this paper, apart from quantitative technique, qualitative technique may be adopted in investigating tourists' physical and emotional engagement in activity experiences to elicit more in depth findings. The study site may be increased throughout Thailand by selecting major cities in each part of the country.

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