



Cultural Interaction and Tourist Destination Loyalty: A Case Study of Phuket, Thailand

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ABSTRACT

The interaction between cultural factors and tourists' destination loyalty has not yet been widely observed among research scholars. However, the knowledge of the interaction is necessary for understanding how culture is becoming a central factor of attraction in tourism. The objective of this study was therefore to find the possible linkages between cultural interaction factors and the destination loyalty of tourists by using Phuket, Thailand, as a case study. The study employed the satisfaction-loyalty theory in the examination of the role of cultural interactions and destination loyalty. A sample of 378 respondents of international tourists who visited Phuket responded to the questionnaires. The study used the structural equation model (SEM) to observe the relationship among the various variables. The results of the study revealed that cultural interaction was statistically positive toward the destination attitudes and destination loyalty of international tourists. Moreover, the implication of this study can contribute to cultural studies in the field of the tourism industry, as well as management implications for tourism operators and policymakers.

1. INTRODUCTION

Culture has become a major product among various tourism markets. According to international data, the number of tourists engaged in cultural activities accounted for almost 40 percent of international tourist arrivals in 2016 [1]. Destinations build on cultural supplies to conform their tourism offerings, given visitors' interest in cultural attractions [2]. The world of globalization creates a free world, a cultural society without borders and connects the world, but this settlement comes with cultural diversity. Specifically, the growth in cultural differences or the inevitable movement of cultures arises from the development of technological innovation. Note that although city tourism relies on culture as a major product [3], heritage-based tourism provides benefits not only for interested visitors, but also for members of the resident population who are able to preserve their memories while improving cultural opportunities at the local level [4]. In addition, international mobility creates a relationship between the macro and micro levels. The macro level involves the political situation, laws, and evacuations, including economic conditions. Meanwhile, the micro level is associated with the knowledge capital of those who move [5]. Each dimension of the modern world has to be involved in cultural interaction, whether it is business, tourism, education, or many others. This leads to diversity

and cultural differences, which enable a quicker and easier exchange of cultural interactions.

Each country has its own unique culture and social way of life. Both the culture and the social way of life are concrete, expressing the living nature of the people there, the languages spoken, festivals, traditions, religious rituals, arts, crafts, dress, play and entertainment, household conditions, etc. They are also abstract, expressing ideas, beliefs, attitudes, wisdom, villagers, etc. These are total tourism resources because they can satisfy tourists' curiosity about given country [6]. Culture in particular is one of the most important concepts for understanding society, as it also determines the patterns of human behavior in each society. As a result, each society has a different cultural context due to geographical features, location, social organization, economy, and politics, as well as beliefs and social values. Different societies reflect different levels of culture, such as national culture, sub-culture, and corporate culture in the workplace. Many levels of education can explain cultural differences, especially the study of national culture, which is the regular culture group of the people in each nation, also known as the main cultural group of the nation that represents the national character. Therefore, national cultural issues are of constant interest to related scholars.

The tourism industry is considered to be one of the most significant industries for Thailand. The industry itself is

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comprised of many activities such as travel, food, camping, and tour guide services, which are provided with the hope of generating a profit, require a lot of labor and investment. Thailand in particular is a famous travel destination for tourists around the world. Due to the economic cost of tourism in Thailand, which is scattered in every region of the country, tourism as an industry plays a very important role in driving Thailand's economy and society. Even though Thailand has to face political instability and problems, the domestic tourism industry has grown satisfactorily [7]. Therefore, it is vital to understand the various components of the tourism industry as it is an important role in the country's development. As well as the need to understand Thailand's tourism industry, we must also recognize that the nature of tourists is diverse and complex, and the forms of tourism are more diverse than that of the past. Therefore, understanding the rationale which can make Thailand a tourist destination is also quite important. Thailand is a country with a lot of strengths, which motivates groups of tourists to travel to Thailand due to its attractiveness in both geography and cultural diversity. International travelers now have several purposes for traveling to Thailand including for the country's natural, agricultural, industrial, commercial, cultural, religious, medical, health, or sports tourism.

The main objective of this study was to find the possible linkages between cultural interaction factors and tourists' destination loyalty by using Phuket, Thailand, as a case study. The goal of this study was to explore the cultural interaction patterns of tourists and people at the tourist destinations by studying the relationship among attitudes, destination trust, and destination satisfaction, which affect tourists' destination loyalty to Phuket attractions. The study is also very important as the means to understand how to improve the quality of tourism services which is necessary to create loyal tourists and to persuade the people around them to travel like them. To date, cultural tourism is one of the largest and fastest-growing global tourism markets. Culture and creative industries are increasingly being used to promote destinations and to enhance their competitiveness and attractiveness. Many locations are now actively developing tangible and intangible cultural assets as a means of developing comparative advantages in an increasingly competitive tourism marketplace. They are also doing this to create local distinctiveness in the face of globalization [2].

2. LITERATURE REVIEWS

2.1. Study context: Phuket, Thailand

Phuket is a province in the southern part of Thailand. It is the only province with an island landscape, an important source of income in the country. With the name of "Pearl of Andaman", Phuket is a beautiful province; it features white sandy beaches that contrast clearly with the color of

the sea. At the same time, Phuket is regarded as a city with its own distinctive culture and architecture, especially its Sino-Portuguese architecture, also known as "East Meet West." It is a modern and international city, although it maintains its own unique arts and culture. It is also a world-famous maritime tourism center with a wide variety of attractions and tourism activities. An announcement from UNESCO mentioned that Phuket is a city with creativity in food science, as well as a city of gastronomy 2015 one of 18 cities worldwide. It is the first one of its kind in Thailand and ASEAN.

Strong cultural interaction will lead tourists to visit a given destination, as it will make the destination seem like tourist attraction. Having a satisfying experience there will make the tourists them want to return to that place again. Fostering more destination loyalty will also help the tourism industry in Thailand to be efficient, create more jobs, generate more income, and drive the country's economy to continuously improve.[8] However, as a result of various documented research studies related to the cultural interaction that affects tourists' destination loyalty, no research has been conducted on this topic. Most studies regard tourists' cultural interaction or destination loyalty from one side. In this business, the private sector does not have sufficient knowledge, and the relevant government agencies do not have concrete policies for promoting tourist groups' destination loyalty in Thailand. The reason for this may be because destination loyalty is usually abstract in nature and thus difficult to understand and implement in policy. Therefore, relatively few research studies have been carried out on tourists' destination loyalty that could be utilized in policy. This is especially true in the case of Phuket, one of the most outstanding tourist destinations in Thailand, along with the diversity of tourists and cultural interactions there [9].

2.2. Satisfaction Theory - Loyalty

This research employed the satisfaction theory, which is the theory developed to discover the reasons for customer loyalty toward specific services. It has been widely applied in a variety of fields within the satisfaction-loyalty theory standards.

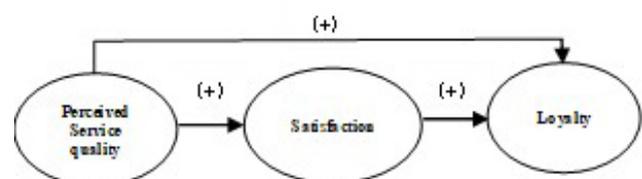


Fig. 1. Satisfaction-Loyalty Theory (Jen et al., 2011).

The determination of the quality of the products or services that customers receive (perceived quality) is an assessment of the effectiveness of the product or service based on the actual experience of the customer. The quality can be compared between the quality that the customer

receives and what the customer expected. For the purpose of measuring the quality of the product or service, customers are asked questions in three areas: the overall product or service quality, the product or service quality in terms of meeting the customer's individual needs, and the quality of the product or service in terms of reliability.

Loyalty, on the other hand, is the deep intention of making a repeat service or product purchase and supporting a satisfactory product. In this situation, the service will be used regularly and continuously in the future. Loyalty also relates to customers' attitudes toward a product or service. When customers have positive attitudes toward products and services, their feelings will be maintained. The good relationship between the customers and the organization will result in more product purchases or the repeated use of a given service on a regular basis. The examination of cultural tourism perspective, therefore, needs to examine destination loyalty from the perspective of tourism.

In light of the above, loyalty is of great importance to the business's long-term profitability. Maintaining loyalty with customers for a long time can result in more sales and market dominance over one's competitors. Therefore, marketers use it as a marketing strategy beat their business competitors. Loyalty shows that repeat purchases and/or repeat visits is often desirable, as companies believe that the marketing cost used to attract repeat customers is lower than the cost that must be applied to first-time tourists [10, 11]. Maintaining customers at 5 percent can lead to 25-95 percent profit growth in a variety of industries. In addition, loyal customers tend to advertise via word of mouth at no cost and also increase the potential of the company's network of customers, as both their relatives and their friends can use the business's products and services [12]. Many studies have been done on what loyalty means for consumer behavior in the context of travel and tourism in particular [13]. Gamble et al. [14] explained that the meaning of customer loyalty can be compared to an image of unquestioning commitment that arises from a variety of factors. These factors include satisfaction with products and services, the recognition of the value received with the invested money, images of the products and services, and the quality of the products and services. A similar concept of loyalty also can be applied in the tourism industry. Monica & Lena [15] emphasized that loyalty is of great importance to the tourism industry. Studies are needed to determine what drives the loyalty of tourists to such attractions. The driving factors may be the physical condition of the attraction as well as other internal factors. If loyalty can be achieved with tourists, government agencies can significantly reduce the cost of public relations by utilizing the same group of tourists who have been impressed with their past travels, relying on them as their assistants to encourage the people around them to visit more places [16, 17]. All in all, it has been pointed out that loyalty can influence the long-term success of the

tourism business. Loyalty can reduce the costs needed to continue operations because tourists who are loyal to tourist attractions will be the ones who will help to maintain the cleanliness, environment, and integrity of a tourist attraction. Government agencies and other people in the community will do this as well.

3. RESEARCH CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

Culture is one of the most important concepts for understanding society. Culture determines human behavior patterns in each society. As a result, each society has a different cultural context due to geographical features, settlement, the social organization, the economy, and politics, as well as beliefs and social values. Societies reflect various levels of culture, such as national culture, sub-culture, and corporate culture in the workplace, coupled with education to explain cultural differences. Cultural interaction is a matter of influencing the behaviors or actions of individuals from one racial culture or organization to affect another person from another racial culture or organization [18]. Tartaron [19] said that culture is a form of social recognition that allows us to educate others. In terms of cultural elements, it is the interaction of past human cultures with present humans or between humans today, as well as the transmission of culture to the future [20]. Cultural interaction is the study of the mutual cultural actions of tourists who visit a tourist attraction and the people of that tourism community. Cultural tourism is a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience, and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination. The products are including arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries, and the living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions. Communicating by using one of the symbolic systems is necessary to convey ideas and understanding; these systems include language, cultural cooperation, traditions, rituals, family ties, kinship and co-education, etc. The interpersonal communication style often uses language, gestures, or media. Keep in mind that forms of interaction in communication through media affect the level of understanding between both parties, with conflict having the potential to arise. As a whole, culture can be considered to be an important issue that cannot be ignored because intercultural communication is the interaction between individuals from cultures that are diverse, unfamiliar to the other party, and different [21].

Chen & Rahman [22] studied cultural tourism and found four key factors influence cultural tourism: 1. participation, 2. memorable tourism experience (MTE), 3. cultural interaction, and 4. destination loyalty. These four factors must be coherent, meaning they can create an impressive experience from the visitor participation process. For

instance, while visiting, tourists join in activities with the locals and forge relationships with the area or community. All of this leads to tourists' revisiting. Therefore, this research study presented the first hypothesis as follows:

H1: Cultural interaction is positively related to tourists' destination loyalty.

Pardo-García [23] studied cultural attitudes and tourist destination prescription, by analyzing the impact of tourists' cultural attitudes, cognition, and credibility. The author found that tourists are not only very satisfied with given destinations but also recommend others to visit the attractions that interested them the most. Tourists' attitudes at tourist destinations influence cultural interaction and experience expectations that can be generated from external sources. Furthermore, Mariani [24] found that the influence of cultural differences affects tourist behaviors, travel-related factors, and tourists' attitudes toward the tourist destination attractions. According to the above literature, we proposed the second hypothesis as follows:

H2: Cultural interaction is positively related to tourists' destination attitudes.

The next relation is between cultural interaction and trust. Okada [25] studied the cultural transmission of trust and trustworthiness. This research study is aimed at exploring the cultural transmission and cultural interaction of parents as they seek to transmit their own values to their children. The study will also explore how the trust and trustworthiness between both parties coevolve via changing the system of educational costs. It was found that cultural interactions and family intimacy create trust and trustworthiness through the influence of cultural transmission. Similar results were also derived from Póvoa [26], who studied trust and social preferences. This author reported the result of a cross-cultural interaction experiment. The study result has shown that cross-cultural interaction affects the reliability and satisfaction of the sample group. Therefore, for our next hypothesis, we proposed the following:

H3: Cultural interaction is positively related to tourists' destination trust.

The following hypothesis observes the interaction between cultural interaction and destination satisfaction. It is derived from the study of Songshan [27], where relationships were said to exist between Hofstede's cultural dimensions and tourist satisfaction. A cross-country cross-sample examination was performed and assumed that culture has an influence on tourism behavior. Hofstede's cultural interaction was found to be positively correlated with visitor satisfaction. The research result will be

checked with additional tests related to cultural concepts. The results of the above study are in line with the study of Susan [28], which focused on cross-cultural tourists who think and behave differently due to having different cultural backgrounds. The study revealed that correctly understanding the cultural differences can help tour managers to generate greater customer satisfaction and increase business revenue. From the above literature, we proposed our next hypothesis as follows:

H4: Cultural interaction is positively related to tourists' destination satisfaction.

Now, we will examine the relationship between destination satisfaction and trust. Ika et al., [29] studied the tourism industry and services at Trenggalek Regency Beach, Indonesia, and found that tourist experience and destination image are important factors in tourist satisfaction. Tourists expect enjoyment, which will cause satisfaction. The building of trust at beach destinations occurs through the transmission of satisfaction. Therefore, tourist satisfaction affects tourist trust. This research therefore proves that more tourist satisfaction increases tourist trust. As for the fifth hypothesis, we proposed that:

H5: Destination satisfaction is positively related to tourists' destination trust.

Nimit and Sasiwemon [30] studied the causal relationships among destination image, place attachment, overall satisfaction, and behavioral intention of Western tourists in Phuket. They performed a data analysis via structural equation modeling on the behavioral intention of Western tourists in Phuket. This analysis revealed that overall satisfaction is a transmission variable that influences behavioral intentions of tourism. Behavioral intention in this study is the feeling and the acting that arise from attitude. Therefore, it can be concluded that satisfaction affects the tourism attitudes of Western tourists in Phuket. As with Chen and Chen [31], the result of the research experience, value recognition, and satisfaction. Therefore, satisfaction is a key factor in sustainable heritage tourism management. Tourist satisfaction affects attitude and behavioral intention. Therefore, we proposed the following hypothesis as follows:

H6: Destination satisfaction is positively related to tourists' destination attitudes.

The next proposed hypothesis is derived from the study of Su and Fan [32], which found that trust is an important component of the travel and hospitality industry. This research revealed that trust affects attitudes toward destination travel intention. Therefore, the greater the destination trust, the more positive the attitude toward the

destination travel intention. Tourists’ trust creates attachment and positive attitudes. An individual’s attitude determines behavioral intention, and this is manifested in an action or in decision-making. Moreover, Eny et al., [33] observed similar research. The result of this study suggested that tourist experience is related to trust and leads to behavioral intentional attitude. Therefore, trust plays an important role in directly affecting tourism behavioral intention. Therefore, for our next hypothesis, we proposed the following:

H7: Tourists’ destination trust is positively related to tourists’ destination attitudes.

For our final hypothesis, we examine the relationship between attitude and loyalty, according to Losada-Rojas [34]. The result of this study suggested that attitudes toward transport modes for intercity traveling affect loyalty to intercity passenger rails. For example, intercity rails that are close to onboarding amenities, such as luggage storage, motorbikes, and other services, can have a positive impact on service intention and traveler loyalty. In addition, Wu [35] findings from a research sample supported the argument that consumer travel attitude, experience, and destination satisfaction are the key determinants of destination loyalty. Furthermore, consumer attitude and travel experience influence destination satisfaction. The study also discussed the theoretical and managerial implications of research findings for marketing tourism products globally. According to the supporting evidence above, we proposed our final hypothesis as follows:

H8: Tourists’ destination attitudes are positively related to tourists’ destination loyalty.

In conclusion, our research conceptual framework was the following:

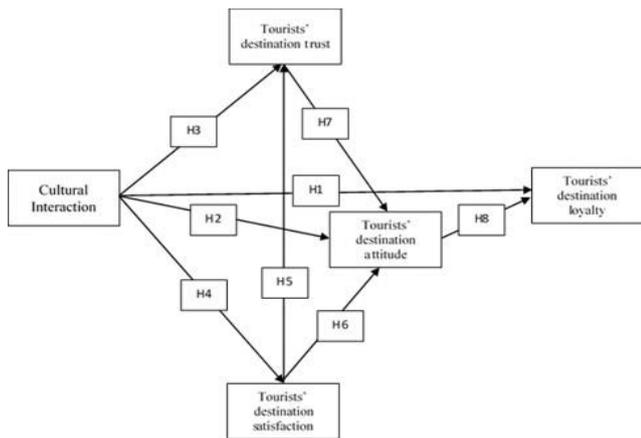


Fig. 2. Research conceptual framework.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Survey Design and Sampling Method

The population used in this study was foreign tourists who had been to Phuket. According to the data in 2019, the number of tourists who arrived in Phuket was 10,632,531 [36]. As for the samples used in this study, we found the number of foreign tourists who visited Phuket tourist attractions in 2019, 4,711,866 people. That represents almost 50 percent of the total number of foreign tourists. Non-probability sampling and purposive sampling was used for the group of all foreign tourists visiting the tourist destinations of Phuket. To consider the suitability of the sample used in this research study, we considered a sample size that was suitable for data analysis using the structural equation model (SEM) technique. We referred to Hair et al., [37] sample sizing method, which suggested that the optimal sample size is 200-300 samples. Comrey and Lee [38] and Hair et al., [39] also suggested that the sample size used in the study should be 10-20 times the number of observed variables in that research. Fifteen observable variables were present, so we chose 20 times the sample size of the variables. The appropriate number of samples was at least 300 people to make the consistency test of the model, the hypothesis, and the empirical data more reliable. We then increased the sample size by 100 people; thus, the sample used for this research was 400 people.

4.2 Measurement of variables

The research tool used was a questionnaire on the patterns of cultural interaction, destination attitudes, destination trust, and the satisfaction of destinations that affect the loyalty of tourists at Phuket tourist destinations. The questionnaire in this study was divided into six parts as follows:

- Part 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents
- Part 2: Tourism behavior in Phuket
- Part 3: Cultural interaction, which consists of four dimensions: concepts (thoughts), beliefs, perceptions, and opinions
- Part 4: Destination loyalty, which consists of three dimensions: attitudinal destination loyalty, behavioral destination loyalty, and composite destination loyalty
- Part 5: Attitude, which consists of three dimensions: the cognitive component, the second dimension, and the action tendency component
- Part 6: Destination trust, which consists of four dimensions: ability, benevolence, and integrity.
- Part 7: The satisfaction of tourists at tourist attractions (destination satisfaction), which consists of five dimensions: attraction, accessibility, accommodation, activities, and amenities.

The questionnaire was issued as a questionnaire, a rating scale, and a closed-ended question.

This was a study of structural relationships of cultural interactions, attitudes, destination trust, and destination satisfaction. Cultural interaction consists of four variables: concept, organization (association), usage, and instrumental and symbolic objects. Concept includes: 1. belief; 2. various ideological values; and 3. feelings, thoughts, and understanding. As for organization (association), the sub-variables are: 1. indigenous culture, 2. local culture, and 3. social culture. For the function of the ceremony (usage), the sub-variables of usage are: 1. traditions, 2. rituals, and 3. dress and objects. Instrumental and symbolic objects' sub-variables are: 1. cultural location, 2. fine arts, and 3. cultural or industrial equipment or tool used in agriculture or industry. All variables were obtained from a literature review related to cultural interactions [40-50].

Destination loyalty has three dimensions: 1. attitudinal loyalty, 2. behavioral loyalty, and 3. composite loyalty. Destination loyalty is loyalty that arises from satisfactorily communicating with others during tourism activities. The measurements were derived from different scholars. [51-79]. For composite loyalty, the scholars were: [80-96].

5. RESULTS

5.1 The demographic characteristics of the respondents

Regarding the demographic characteristics of the online respondents from a total collectable sample of 378, it was found that most of them were female, 206 people, and representing 54.50 percent. One hundred responses were aged from 31-40 years, accounting for 26.50 percent, followed by 90 people aged from 41-50 years, accounting for 23.8 percent. Eighty responses aged from 18-30 years old accounted for 21.2 percent, 63 people aged from 51-60 years accounted for 16.7 percent, 32 people aged over 60 years old accounted for 8.5 percent, and those younger than 18 years accounted for 3.4 percent. The Chinese nationals who responded to the questionnaire totaled 201 people, representing 53.3 percent; the French nationality had 64 responses, representing 16.9 percent; the Australian nationality had 46 responses, representing 12.2 percent; the German nationality had 41 responses, accounting for 10.8 percent; and the British nationality had 26 responses, accounting for 6.9 percent. Most of the respondents (226) were married, representing 59.8 percent of the total, followed by 124 singles (32.8 percent) and 28 divorced/widowed/separated (7.4 percent). Most of them (105) work as corporate employees, accounting for 27.8 percent of the total, followed by 61 government employees (16.1 percent), 54 students (14.3 percent), 52 independent people (13.8 percent), 48 others (12.7 percent), 38 business owners (10.1 percent), and 20 unemployed (5.3 percent). As for educational level, the majority of the respondents had a bachelor's degree (223 responses, accounting for 59 percent), followed by a vocational/diploma degree (96

responses, accounting for 25.4 percent), high school education (47 responses, accounting for 12.4 percent), a high school diploma (10 responses, accounting for 2.6 percent), and a master's degree or higher (two responses, accounting for 0.5 percent). Most of the sample group had an average monthly income of about 701-1,700 USD (122 responses, accounting for 32.3 percent of the sample), followed by more than 2,700 USD (95 responses, or 25.1 percent), 1,701-2,700 USD (85 responses, accounting for 32.3 percent) and less than 700 USD (76 people, accounting for 20.1 percent).

Table 1. The demographic characteristics of the respondents

Demographics	f	%	Demographics	f	%
1. Gender			5. Occupation		
1) male	172	45.5	1) Student	54	14.3
2) female	206	54.5	2) Company Employee	105	27.8
2. Age			3) Government Employee/ State Enterprises	61	16.1
1) ≤ 18 years	13	3.4	4) Business owner	38	10.1
2) 18-30 years	80	21.2	5) Self-employed	52	13.8
3) 31-40 years	100	26.5	6) Unemployed	20	5.3
4) 41-50 years	90	23.8	7) Others, please specify	48	12.7
5) 51-60 years	63	16.7	6. Education		
6) ≥ 60 years	32	8.5	1) primary school	10	2.6
3. Nationality			2) high school	47	12.4
1) Chinese	201	53.2	3) vocational / diploma degree	96	25.4
2) French	64	16.9	4) bachelor's degree	223	59.0
3) Australian	46	12.2	5) master's degree or higher	2	.5
4) German	41	10.8	7. Monthly Income		
5) British	26	6.9	1) Less than 700 USD	76	20.1
4. Status			2) 701-1,700 USD	122	32.3
1) Single	124	32.8	3) 1,701-2,700 USD	85	22.5
2) Married	226	59.8	4) More than 2,700 USD	95	25.1
3) Divorced / Widowed / Separated				28	7.4

Table 2. Tourism Behavior

Tourism Behavior	f	%	Tourism Behavior	f	%
1. How many times you visited Phuket?			4. What is the main purpose of your visit to Phuket?		
1) 1 time	145	38.4	1) Relax	258	68.3
2) 2 times	78	20.6	2) Experience new cultures	34	9.0
3) 3 times	41	10.8	3) Business	32	8.5
4) More than 3 times	71	18.8	4) Visiting friends and relatives	41	10.8
5) Other, specify	43	11.4	5) Other, specify	13	3.4
2. When was the last time you visited Phuket?			5. Duration of your visit to Phuket?		
1) 1 year ago	124	32.8	1) 1-3 days	84	22.2
2) 2 years ago	93	24.6	2) 4-5 days	109	28.8
3) More than 3 years ago	161	42.6	3) 6-7 days	58	15.3
3. How did you come to Phuket?			4) More than 7 days	127	33.6
1) Solo				49	13.0
2) Couple				67	17.7
3) With friends				126	33.3
4) With family				70	18.5
5) Team / Company				40	10.6
6) Group tour				23	6.1
7) Others specify				3	.8

The majority of the respondents surveyed (145 people) had visited Phuket once, representing 38.4 percent of the sample, followed by 78 people who had visited Phuket twice, representing 20.6 percent; 71 people who had visited Phuket more than three times, accounting for 18.8 percent; 43 people who chose “other,” accounting for 11.4 percent; and 41 people who had visited three times, accounting for 10.8 percent. Most of them had visited Phuket within the past three years (161 people, which is 42.6 percent), followed by those who had visited within the past year (124 people, 32.8 percent) and those who had visited within the past two years (93 people, 24.6 percent). More information regarding the respondents’ demographic and travel behavior, see table 1: The demographic characteristics of the respondents and table 2: Tourism Behavior below.

5.2 Data Screening

In the main hypothesis testing of structural equation modeling, we examined the data distribution of each analyzed variable by checking the Skewness and Kurtosis values of each variable. The acceptable skewness needed to be between -3.0 and 3.0, and the acceptable skew need to be between -8.0 and 8.0.

Table 3. Univariate Normality Test. (n=378)

Univariate Normality				
Items	Skewness	Kurtosis	Descriptive statistics	
			Mean	SD
Cultural Interaction	1.599	2.703	36.17	14.063
Destination Attitude	1.458	2.318	28.85	12.014
Destination Trust	1.412	2.369	32.36	12.735
Destination Satisfaction	1.091	1.917	50.42	16.803
Destination Loyalty	1.468	2.059	27.04	11.293

The table 1 shows the data distribution test and single-variable value test. The test results are normal and have acceptable values. The assumptions of multiple variables from the data distribution test, considering the skewness and kurtosis values of single variables below 3.0, were acceptable.

5.3 Variable Confidence Scale Test

Data reliability concerns the extent to which the measuring indicators at different measurement points are generated in the same way [97] for the measurement reliability test. Nunnally [97] suggested that the Cronbach test is the most popular method for assessing the reliability of a measurement because of its high accuracy. Nunnally [98] suggested that the intersection of the coefficients is 0.50, and greater than 0.50 is a good indication of confidence building. In general, a minimum coefficient of 0.60 is considered to be acceptable for a research study. In conclusion, per the results of the variable reliability test for all of the data as shown in Table 2, the items measured are considered to have an acceptable level of reliability with a coefficient between 0.620 and 0.966. These variables are used as educational tools for the process of collecting large samples of data.

Table 4: The Item-Total Correlation, Alpha-Coefficient, Construct Reliability & Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of ach Variable

Dimension	Item-Total correlation	Alpha Coefficient	Construct Reliability	AVE
Cultural Interaction			.955	.843
Concept	.807 - .835	.923		
Organization	.785 - .876	.937		
Ceremony	.820 - .865	.939		
instrumental	.815 - .853	.920		
Destination Loyalty			.970	.916
Attitudinal	.802 - .870	.944		
Behavioral	.860 - .900	.948		
Composite	.839 - .874	.948		
Destination Trust			.922	.747
Ability	.864 - .932	.967		
Benevolence Trust	.876 - .905	.960		
Integrity	.854 - .888	.954		
Destination Satisfaction			.956	.884
Attraction	.828 - .890	.951		
Accessibility	.620 - .767	.855		
Accommodation	.758 - .858	.920		
Activities	.624 - .687	.830		
Amenities	.759 - .870	.919		

From the table, it can be seen that the values of the confidence coefficients of the variables of all dimensions range from .620 to .932. In all dimensions of the cultural interaction variables, the value is between .807 and .876., the fidelity value is between .755 to .876, the attitude value is between .802 to .900, the destination trust value is between .854 and .932, and the destination satisfaction value is between .620 and .890.

5.4 Hypothesis testing

A structural model was used to examine the causal relationship of the competitiveness of the destination, the travel experience, the destination trust of the tourists, and their destination satisfaction.

Table 5: Structural Model of Destination Loyalty. (n = 378)

Variables	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.
Trust <- Interaction (Beta = .438)	.396	.029	13.841**
Loyalty <- Interaction (Beta = .245)	.197	.030	6.603**
Attitude <- Interaction (Beta = .297)	.253	.033	7.740**
Satisfaction <- Interaction (Beta = .821)	.981	.035	27.879**
Trust <- Satisfaction (Beta = .543)	.412	.024	17.171**
Attitude <- Satisfaction (Beta = .141)	.101	.030	3.378**
Attitude <- Trust (Beta = .536)	.505	.048	10.540**
Loyalty <- Attitude (Beta = .719)	.676	.035	19.398**
$R^2 = 0.89$			
Absolute Model Fit Indices			

The above Table 3 shows the destination loyalty structural model. The relative value (R^2) is 89 percent of the variation. It is described by the t-value model greater than 1.96 Four variables were found to have a significant impact on endpoint support at level $p < 0.05$. These important factors are the interaction affecting the confidence equals .438 SE equals .029 CR equals 13.841; the interaction affecting the destination loyalty equals .245 SE equals .030 CR equals 6.603; the interaction affecting the attitude equals .297 SE equals .033 CR equals 7.740; the interaction affecting the destination satisfaction equals .821 SE equals .035 CR equals 27.879; the destination satisfaction affecting the confidence equals .543 SE equals .024 CR equals 17.171; the destination satisfaction affecting the attitude equals .141 SE equals .030 CR equals 3.378; the confidence affecting the destination attitude equals .536 SE equals .048 CR equals 10.540; and the destination attitude affecting the destination loyalty equals .719 SE equals .035 CR equals 19.398. The sum model is good. Most indices indicated that the model is suitable for data χ^2 equals .341, χ^2/df equals .170, df equals 2, the p-value equals 0.843, the good fit index (GFI) equals 1.000, the comparative fit index (CFI) equals 1.000, and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) equals .000. All indexes expressed a good fit of the model. Overall, it is acceptable.

Table 6: Correlation Matrix of Variables in Model.

Variables	Interaction	Trust	Satisfaction	Attitude	Loyalty
Interaction	1.000	.876*	.821**	.879**	.881**
Trust		1.000	.891**	.899**	.861**
Satisfaction			1.000	.861**	.824**
Attitude				1.000	.931**
Loyalty					1.000

** Statistically significant at level .001.

From Table 4, it can be seen that all of the studied variables have a statistically significant linear correlation at level .001, with the independent variables being correlated. The independent variable refers to cultural interaction, destination trust, destination satisfaction, and destination attitude. Each is statistically significantly correlated with the dependent variable of destination loyalty at level .001.

According to the model estimation, the cultural interaction patterns, destination attitude, destination trust, and destination satisfaction that affect tourists' destination loyalty make up a full model. The result is shown in Figure 3.

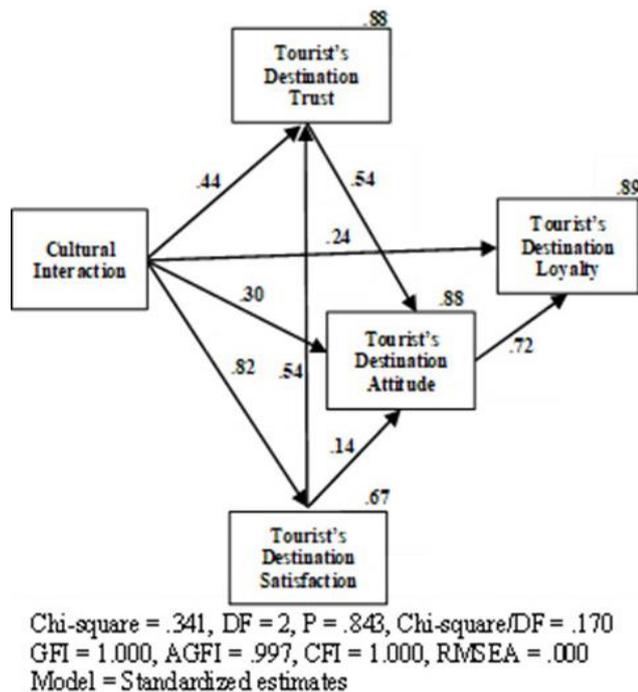


Fig 3. Full Model of Cultural Interaction and Tourist Destination Loyalty.

Table 7: Statistical Values Showing Conformity of Research Conceptual Model.

Model	χ^2	χ^2/df	df	p-value	GFI	CFI	AGFI	RMSEA
	.341	.170	2	0.843	1.000	1.000	.997	.000

From Figure 3 and Table 5, it can be seen that the overall statistical value of the ratio of chi-square and degree freedom (χ^2/df) is .170, the p-value is .843, the CFI is 1.000, and the RMSEA is .000. When one compares the statistical values with the criteria for consideration, noting that the ratio of chi-square and degree of freedom (χ^2/df) should be less than 3, the p-value must be statistically significant $\geq .05$, the GFI and CFI values should be greater than .95, and the RMSEA statistic should be less than .07. As a result, the scale model is consistent (model fit) with the theoretical model [99]. It can thus be concluded that the cultural interaction scale model is consistent with the determined theoretical model at an acceptable level.

From the path analysis, it can be seen that the source of variation from the causal variable or the factor affecting the dependent variable is the destination loyalty. We distinguished the direct influence, indirect influence and total influence of the factor variables transmitted to the dependent variable in the studied model as shown in Table 6.

Table 6 shows that cultural interaction positively affects tourists' destination loyalty. It has a direct effect with a coefficient of influence at 0.24 ($p < .001$), and it is indirectly influenced through the variables of destination trust, destination satisfaction, and destination attitude with a coefficient of influence at 0.47 ($p < .001$). The total coefficient of influence is 0.71 ($p < .001$), which is based on hypothesis 1. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is supported.

Cultural interaction positively affects the destination attitudes of tourists, both directly and indirectly. It is directly influenced with a magnitude coefficient at 0.30 ($p < .001$) and indirectly affected through the destination trust and destination satisfaction variables with a magnitude coefficient at 0.35 ($p < .001$). The total influence coefficient is 0.65 ($p < .001$), which is based on hypothesis 2. Therefore, hypothesis 2 is supported.

Cultural interaction positively affects the destination satisfaction of tourists. The direct effect is with a magnitude coefficient at 0.82 ($p < .001$), and no indirect influence can be found. This is based on hypothesis 3. Therefore, hypothesis 3 is supported.

Table 8: Path Coefficient, Factors Affecting Tourists' Destination Loyalty

Variables	Trust			Satisfaction			Attitude			Loyalty		
	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE	DE	IE	TE
Interaction	0.44**	0.44**	0.88**	0.82**	-	0.82**	0.30**	0.35**	0.65**	0.24**	0.47**	0.71**
Trust	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.54**	-	0.54**	-	0.39**	0.39**
Satisfaction	0.54**	-	0.54**	-	-	-	0.14**	0.29**	0.43**	-	0.31**	0.31**
Attitude	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.72**	-	0.72**

** Statistically significant at level .001

Cultural interaction positively affects the destination trust of tourists, both directly and indirectly. The direct effect is the influence size coefficient at 0.44 ($p < .001$), and the indirect effect is via the destination satisfaction variable with a coefficient of influence at 0.44 ($p < .001$). The total influence size is 0.88 ($p < .001$), which is based on hypothesis 4. Therefore, hypothesis 4 is supported.

Destination satisfaction positively affects the loyalty of tourists by indirectly affecting loyalty through destination attitude with an indirect influence value at 0.31 ($p < .001$). This is based on the hypothesis 5. Therefore, hypothesis 5 is supported.

Destination satisfaction positively affects the destination attitudes of tourists, both directly and indirectly. The direct influence is 0.14 ($p < .001$), and the indirect positive influence through destination trust is at 0.29 ($p < .001$). The total influence coefficient is 0.43 ($p < .001$), which is based on hypothesis 6. Therefore, hypothesis 6 is supported.

Destination trusts positively affects the destination attitudes of tourists. The direct effect is with a magnitude coefficient at 0.54 ($p < .001$), and the indirect positive influence through destination loyalty is at 0.39 ($p < .001$). This is based on hypothesis 7. Therefore, hypothesis 7 is supported.

Destination attitude positively affects tourists' destination loyalty. It has a direct effect with an influence size at 0.72 ($p < .001$) but no indirect influence. In addition, destination trust has a positive effect on the destination attitudes of tourists with a direct influence value at 0.54 ($p < .001$). The indirect positive influence through destination attitude toward loyalty is at 0.39 ($p < .001$), which is based on hypothesis 8. Therefore, hypothesis 8 is supported.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

From this study, it can be seen that cultural interaction has a direct influence on destination trust and destination satisfaction with coefficients of influence at 0.44 and 0.82, respectively. A direct and an indirect influence on attitude can be found with a total coefficient of influence at 0.65 (DE = 0.30, IE = 0.3). In addition, cultural interaction has a

direct and an indirect influence on loyalty with a total coefficient of influence at 0.71 (DE= 0.24, IE = 0.47).

The results of this study suggest that tourists who perceive positive cultural interaction have a positive influence on destination satisfaction and destination loyalty. In general, cultural interaction has both positive and negative effects. Traditionally, tourists will be able to encounter and experience a level of local ethnicity that meets their expectations, as they want a touch of authenticity. However, nowadays, and in the future, cultural interaction can be a business that specifically trained professionals propose. Then, they can directly offer services to or arrange services for tourists because they can provide them with comfort and safety, can help a large number of tourists to be immersed in the local experience at the same time, and can respond to requests for individual experiences.

Furthermore, the result of this study found that destination attitude has a direct influence on tourists' destination loyalty with an influence coefficient at 0.72. Destination attitude variables are directly and indirectly influenced by cultural interaction with a total coefficient of influence at 0.65 (DE = 0.30, IE = 0.35). They are also influenced by destination trust and destination satisfaction with coefficients of influence at 0.54 and 0.43, respectively. The result of this study is consistent with Gomez et al., [100], who said that positive destination attitudes lead to repeat purchases of goods or services. This can be considered to be true brand loyalty. Therefore, the positive destination attitudes of tourists will affect their behavior of visiting Phuket in the future, causing them to demonstrate destination loyalty.

In terms of destination trust, it can be seen that destination trust directly affects destination attitude with an influence size at 0.54. In addition, it is indirectly influenced through destination attitude with an influence size at 0.39. The findings are consistent with Marshall [73] and Robbins [78], who said that trust is generally related to destination attitude, motivation, and feelings of safety. Gomez et al., [100] and Enrique et al., [67] also mentioned that trust is the basis of good customer interactions; it makes it possible to provide services to tourists in a way that achieves the business's objectives with politeness, gentleness, and good

manners according to the character of the Thai people. Service providers are able to communicate clearly with the service recipients and reinforce their belief that they will receive the best service. Trust therefore directly affects destination attitude.

In terms of destination satisfaction, from this study, it can be seen that destination satisfaction directly affects destination trust and destination attitude with influence sizes of 0.14 ($p < .001$) and 0.54 ($p < .001$), respectively, and it is indirectly affected through destination attitude with an influence magnitude of 0.43 ($p < .001$). The result of this study is consistent with Stern [101], who mentioned that cultural interaction can create a higher level of customer satisfaction than expected. This is characterized by being impressed and feeling happy, which are the ultimate goals of tourists. This finding is consistent with Spreng et al., (1996) [102][100], who examined the factors influencing the destination loyalty of Chinese tourists in Eastern Province Cluster Thailand. They found that satisfaction has a significantly positive influence on tourists' destination loyalty. Loyalty is directly influenced by cultural interaction with a total influence coefficient of 0.88 (DE = 0.24, IE = 0.64). In addition, loyalty is directly influenced by destination attitude at 0.72, and it is indirectly influenced by destination trust and satisfaction with influence sizes of 0.39 and 0.31, respectively. The result of this study is also consistent with Kamphaengphet et al., [103], who said that loyalty covers behavior and attitude and can be expressed in many ways. The study result is furthermore in line with Roostika [104], who found that destination loyalty shows a positive attitude toward the brand.

The result of this study showed that good cultural interaction has a huge effect on building tourists' destination loyalty at Phuket tourist destinations because cultural interaction is both an adaptation—a cultural gathering or a cultural mix—and a cultural integration. It is the acceptance of cultural diversity and the uniqueness of each culture. It is the simplest initial recognition of respect that can be expressed through gestures, language, symbols, and attitudes toward other people. As Sivadas and Prewitt [105] and Blumer [106] explained, interaction and meaning may be in the form of symbolic interaction or non-symbolic interaction. Tourists who are welcomed with smiles, greetings, creative situations, or experiences that can be delivered in a variety of ways will have positive perceptions, will have open hearts, will feel appreciated, and will share or exchange their experiences. It will be easy to meet their needs, and this will lead to destination trust, satisfaction, and happiness for both the recipient and the giver.

7. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Phuket's cultural diversity may attract many tourists because the context of this diversity responds widely to

both the material and the mental cultures of tourists. The culture is strange and different from what tourists have encountered, so they want to learn about it and have new experiences with it. However, if their interaction is inappropriate, this can negatively affect destination trust, destination attitude, satisfaction, and loyalty. Tourism-related corporations should have good plans or visions for creating new cultural interactions. Without good planning, they may not be able to properly maintain their unique, interesting traditions, or they may not be able to develop cultural interactions that are positive and universal. In responding to the current Phuket Sandbox program, this study also provides an important implication into the process of rebuilding and resuming the nation's tourism industry which had long suffered from the COVID pandemic. This is one of the essential steps to ensure that the Thai tourism industry will remain prosperous in the world post-pandemic.

8. LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In this research study, we studied the definitions of and structurally synthesized the variables of cultural interaction, destination attitude, destination trust, destination satisfaction, and tourists' destination loyalty. Based on the correlation analysis, some of the variables are highly correlated. For future research, if variables are selected using a different model, or if the variables being measured are independent, the variability of the cultural interaction variables may yield a model of the correlation of variables that could explain loyalty differently.

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