

## Comparison of Foreign Tourists' Motivation Factors:

### Does cultural background matter?

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### Abstracts

This study aims to examine motivation of foreign tourists using “push and pull” motivation factors between tourists from western and Asian countries. A sample of 400 people was drawn from foreign tourists who visited Chiang Mai. Results from exploratory factor analysis reveal two push motivation dimensions, *culture & relaxation* and *shopping & various activities*, and two pull motivation dimensions, *accessibility & comfort* and *culture & diverse attractions*. We used t-test to examine the degree of importance of each dimension by the two groups of tourists. The most important push motivation is *culture & relaxation* and that *culture & relaxation* is perceived to be equally important by western and Asian tourists. However, *shopping & various activities* is a more important push factor for Asian tourists. In addition, we also found that the most important pull motivation is *culture & diverse attractions* which is perceived to be equally important by both group of tourists.

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When it comes to *accessibility & comfort*, however, Asian tourists perceive it to be more important than their western counterparts do. In conclusion, discussion and management implications are provided.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Motivation, Push and Pull factors, Cross-cultural.

## Introduction

In many countries, tourism plays a critical role in boosting economic development. According to the 2016 UNWTO tourism highlights, an ever-increasing number of destinations worldwide have opened up to and invested in tourism, turning it into a key driver of socio-economic progress through the creation of jobs and enterprises, export revenues, and infrastructure development (UNWTO, 2016). In tourism, many factors such as richness and variety of natural resources, tourism infrastructure, interesting tourism activities and hospitality of local people influence a tourist's decision to visit a certain destination. These factors affect a tourist's motivation to choose a certain place as a travel destination. The study of factors influencing tourists to choose their destinations should provide useful insights to many parties in tourism. In particular, such information enables them to launch suitable marketing strategies to attract potential tourists to visit target destinations.

From our review of prior research, we found that many researchers studied motivation factors for general tourists (see Gilbert & Terrata, 2001; Jang & Wu, 2006; Hsieh & Chang, 2006), which provided results in a generic view. Some studies investigated tourist's motivation factors based on demographic factors such as income, age, gender, or education levels (see Hanqin & Lam, 1999; Kim, Borger, & Chon, 2006) or identified tourist segmentations by motivation (see Beh & Bruyere, 2007; Park & Yoon, 2009; Devesa, Laguna, & Palacios, 2010), which provide more insightful results to understand the needs of tourists in different groups. However, tourists visiting some places may be quite culturally diverse because they come from different countries and cultures. As a consequence, tourists from different countries might not be attracted by the same factors. Indeed, some existing researches suggested that people with different cultural backgrounds might have different motivations (Park, Lee, & Miller, 2015). Therefore, our study intends to examine motivation factors of tourists from different cultures. To comparatively examine the motivation of tourists from different cultural backgrounds, the place of study or the destination should be popular and attract tourists from around the world.

Chiang Mai is a center of the Northern region of Thailand, especially tourism. It is a well-known destination for both Thai and foreign tourists. Due to its beautiful mountainous landscape, fascinating arts and cultures, local people hospitality, as well as a wide variety of accommodations and tourism services, Chiang Mai can attract over millions of tourists per year (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2012). Chiang Mai's tourism industry consists of two segments which are domestic tourism and international tourism. On average foreign tourists accounted for approximately 35% of the total tourists visiting Chiang Mai. Nevertheless, they have more spending and longer length of stay than domestic tourists. The number of foreign tourists has been increasing during the past five years as well (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2017).

Chiang Mai has long been a very popular destination for international travelers. Hence, the city makes it possible to study the motivation of foreign tourists with diverse cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, since motivation for international tourists to visit a particular destination might not be the same (Devesa et al., 2010) and top 10 of international tourists to visit Chiang Mai were from Asian and Western countries (Chiang Mai Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports, 2017), our study intends to investigate the differences in motivations between tourists from Asian and Western cultures toward the same destination and to provide useful suggestions for developing marketing strategies to increase tourist's satisfaction.

## Review of Literature

### Tourist Motivation

Motivation refers to a need that drives an individual to act in a certain way to achieve the desired satisfaction. When individuals take the decision, they do so for different reasons or motives, which is understood as forces that reduce the state of tension (Beerli & Martin, 2004). Tourist motivation can be defined as the need of each individual to visit a specific destination (Isa & Ramil, 2014). Push and pull motivation are very important determinants of travel and tourism studies, due to the fact that the two factors directly influence tourist's decision making. Push factor initiate the drive of individual to travel. Pull factor particularly focuses on attractions of a destination.

Push and pull motivation has been widely used to study tourist's motivation in many researches (Prayag & Hosany, 2014). A push factor is internal and emotional, arising from the drive or feeling of tourists (Kim & Lee, 2002; Jang & Wu, 2006; Park & Yoon, 2009). A pull factor,

on the other hand, is external and cognition-based. It is knowledge or a belief of tourists toward a specific place (Gnoth, 1997). In other words, pull factors are related to tourist destinations, and can be viewed as attributes of the destinations (Pesonen & Komppula, 2010). In summary, a push factor drives tourists to make a decision to travel while a pull factor attracts tourists toward a specific destination (Kim & Lee, 2002; Jang & Wu, 2006; Devesa et al., 2010; Isa & Ramil, 2014; Nikjoo & Ketabi, 2015).

To determine which factors influence tourist's motivation, several studies used the averages of the important rating scores of factors and ranked them to identify the most important factors. Ranking of push and pull factors varied in prior researches. This might be due to the fact that these studies were conducted in various countries and respondents had different backgrounds (Hanqin & Lam, 1999; Gilbert & Terrata, 2001). According to previous studies, some examples of the most important push factors were to see something different/novelty (Hanqin & Lam, 1999; Hsieh & Chang, 2006; Jang & Wu, 2006; Mehmetoglu & Normann, 2013; Nikjoo & Ketabi, 2015), cultural curiosity (Gilbert & Terrata, 2001), to escape from routine (Correia, Oom do Valle, & Moço, 2007; Nikjoo & Ketabi, 2015; Park et al., 2015), to seek relaxation (Park & Yoon, 2009; Park et al., 2015), and to see some beautiful attractions and scenery (Prayag & Hosany, 2014). In addition, the most important pull factors were positive attitudes of local people and service staff at the destinations (Hanqin & Lam, 1999), tradition/custom (Gilbert & Terrata, 2001; Park et al., 2015), safety and security (Jang & Wu, 2006), foods (Hsieh & Chang, 2006), natural environments (Correia et al., 2007; Mehmetoglu & Normann, 2013), luxury accommodation (Prayag & Hosany, 2014), accessibility and entertainment (Nikjoo & Ketabi, 2015).

### Factors Influencing Tourist Motivation

In addition to examining tourist motivation, some previous researches attempted to identify factors that influenced tourist's motivation. These studies revealed that tourist's motivations differed by many demographic variables such as incomes (Hanqin & Lam, 1999), age groups (Hanqin & Lam, 1999; Gilbert & Terrata, 2001; Kim et al., 2006), genders (Hanqin & Lam, 1999), or travel frequencies (Hanqin & Lam, 1999). Other researches argued that tourists of diverse cultural backgrounds might not be motivated by similar factors. Therefore, tourist's motivation should vary among countries (Gilbert & Terrata, 2001; Correia, Kozak, & Ferradeira, 2012). In addition, behavior of people from a collective society such as Asia tends to be more influenced by other members in the society, which is contrary to an individualistic society in

the West (Hsu, Cai & Wong, 2007; Kim, Wan & Pan, 2015). Thus, for any destination with tourists from diverse backgrounds, it is even more crucial to differentiate their motivations. Understanding motivations of tourists from different nations or cultural backgrounds enables many parties in tourism businesses to customize and offer appropriate services and products to their target customers (Rosenbaum & Spears, 2009, Li, 2014; Kim et al., 2015).

In existing literature a few studies of tourist motivations have been done comparatively. Rosenbaum & Spears (2009) explored a proposed structural model between Japanese and American tourists in Honolulu, Hawaii. Park et al. (2015) examined cross-cultural differences in push and pull motivations, participating activities, and overall satisfaction level of traveling to Macau for mainland Chinese, Hongkongese, Taiwanese, and westerners. With respect to visiting Korea, Kim et al. (2015) investigated differences in tourist attitude and behavior between mainland Chinese and Taiwanese tourists. When a comparative study of tourists visiting a Thai tourist attraction is considered, Rittichainuwat (2007) explored travel motivations in visiting a destination recovering from a natural disaster in Phuket, Thailand. In addition to Rittichainuwat's study, Suttikun et al. (2018) studied socio-demographic and travel characteristics affecting the purpose of selecting Bangkok as a tourist destination between Asian, European, American, New Zealand, and Australian tourists.

Our rationales to conduct this research are as follows. First, comparative studies of motivations of tourists from different cultural backgrounds are rare and none uses Chiang Mai as a tourist destination. Second, Chiang Mai was voted as one of the top destinations to visit in Asia (Tripadvisor, 2017; Tripsavvy, 2017). Third, top 10 nationalities of international tourists to visit Chiang Mai were from Asian and Western countries (Chiang Mai Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports, 2017). Finally, because Chiang Mai was the capital city of the Lanna Kingdom comprising Chiang Mai, Lamphun, Lampang, Chiang Rai, Payao, Phrae, Nan, and Mae Hong Son (Thailand travel bag, 2019), all of these provinces share a similar culture as well as tourism characteristics and results from our study can hopefully be applied to tourism in these provinces.

## Research Methodology

### Population and Sample

In this study the population was foreign tourists who visited Chiang Mai. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to foreign tourists visiting famous tourist attractions in Chiang Mai, namely, Wat Pra Tat Doi Suthep, Ta Pae Gate, Night Bazaar, and shopping areas on Nimman Road. The questionnaires were equally distributed to two groups of tourists: Western and Asian. The first group, the Western, consisted of tourists from countries in Europe, America, Australia, and New Zealand. We included Australia in this group because the 2018 Australian demographics group comprises mainly English (25.9%), Australian (25.4%), Irish (7.5%), Scottish (6.4%), Italian (3.3%), and German (3.2%) (Index mundi, 2018). Similarly, New Zealand is included because the major ethnic group in New Zealand is European (74%) (Wikipedia, 2019). Moreover, according to Hofstede's cultural index, people in Australia and New Zealand possessed many cultural characteristics similar to Western countries such as low power distant, high individualism, high uncertainty avoidance, and high indulgence (Hofstede Insights, 2019). The second group, the Asian, consisted of tourists from countries in Asia. Questionnaires were distributed to foreign tourists at convenience. However, they were initially asked whether they were tourists before filling the questionnaires. When the number of legitimate questionnaires from each group reached 200, the survey was completed, resulting in 400 usable questionnaires.

### Instruments

The measurement scale was developed using push and pull motivation factors in tourism as research framework. Motivation factors from prior studies in tourism were summarized and classified as push and pull factors, resulting in a total of 28 motivation factors. The 28 motivation factors were further divided into 14 items for push factors and 14 items for pull factors as shown in Table 1.

A five-point rating scale was used, ranging from the least importance (1) to the most importance (5). The questionnaire was initially developed in Thai and the translation was later made into three languages: English, Chinese, and Japanese. A back translation was also made to ensure language integrity.

## Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS version 17. The method of factor analysis was performed to identify underlying dimensions of push and pull motivation factors. Additionally, an independent sample t-test was performed to examine the differences in motivation factors between the two groups of tourists.

**Table 1** Measurement items in scale development

Measurement items	References
<b>Push factors</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Need to gain new experiences</li> <li>2. Need to learn different cultures</li> <li>3. Need to escape from daily routines</li> <li>4. Need to Relax Your Mind</li> <li>5. Need to Learn New Things, such as Cooking, Massage, and Meditation</li> <li>6. Need to Engage in Adventuring/Physical Activities</li> <li>7. Need to Experience Local People Way of Life</li> <li>8. Need to go shopping</li> <li>9. Need to Visit Relatives and Friends</li> <li>10. Need to Visit Natural Tourist Attractions</li> <li>11. Awarding Yourself</li> <li>12. Need to Promote Good Physical and Mental Health</li> <li>13. Need to Buy Local Handicrafts</li> <li>14. Need to Experience Exotic Cuisine</li> </ol> <b>Pull factors</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Natural Attractions</li> <li>2. Historical Sites</li> <li>3. Cultures and Traditions</li> <li>4. Affordable Budgets</li> <li>5. Closeness to Hometown</li> <li>6. Weather</li> <li>7. Safety and Cleanliness</li> <li>8. Comfort</li> <li>9. Local Food</li> <li>10. Closeness to Relatives or Friends</li> <li>11. Appealing Festivals</li> <li>12. Accessibility</li> <li>13. Diverse Tourist Attractions</li> <li>14. Local People Hospitalities</li> </ol>	Adapted from Gilbert & Terrata (2001), Hsieha & Chang (2006), Kim et al. (2006), Beh & Bruyere (2007), Hsu et al. (2007), MÖLLER et al. (2007), Park & Yoon (2009), Rosenbaum & Spears (2009), Pesonen & Komppula (2010), Mehmetoglu & Normann (2013), Isa & Ramli (2014)
	Adapted from Hanqin & Lam (1999), Gilbert & Terrata (2001), Jang & Wu (2006), Kim et al. (2006), Beh & Bruyere (2007), MÖLLER et al. (2007), Devesa et al. (2010), Isa & Ramli (2014), Prayag & Hosany (2014)

## Results

In the analysis, data were classified into two groups. Group 1 comprised tourists from countries in Europe, America, Australia, and New Zealand and group 2 comprised tourists from countries in Asia. A profile of the respondents is depicted in Table 2.

**Table 2** Profiles of the respondents

Profile	Western	Asian
Gender	Male (51.5%)	Female (59%)
Education	Bachelor degree (33%)	Bachelor degree (49%)
Occupation	Corporate employee (31.5%)	Government/State enterprise officer (27%)
Resident Country	1. Europe (75%) - UK (17%) 2. America (19%) - USA (13.5%) 3. Australia & NZ (6%)	China (52.5%)
Frequency of visits	First time (69%)	First time (70%)
Major reason to visit	Leisure/Travel (79.5%)	Leisure/Travel (85%)
Travel companion	Friends (35.5%)	Friends (53%)
Travel source of information	1. Friends/family/relatives (43%) <b>2. Travel website (37%)</b> 3. Travel magazine (29%)	1. Friends/family/relatives (36%) 2. Travel magazine (29%) <b>3. Social media (26%)</b>
Accommodation	Hotel (47%)	Hotel (66.5%)
Decision-making period	1-4 weeks (62%)	1-4 weeks (70.5%)
Travel arrangement method	Self-Arrangement (76%)	Self-Arrangement (56.5%)
Duration of stay	<b>1-3 days (37.5%)</b>	<b>4-6 days (45.5%)</b>
Intention to revisit Chiang Mai	Yes (87.5%)	Yes (93.5%)
Recommendation to the others	Yes (96.5%)	Yes (96%)

From Table 2, we find that most respondents from Western and Asian countries were first-timers. They shared some similar traveling behaviors such as the reason to visit Chiang Mai, travel companions, types of accommodation, decision-making periods, and travel arrangement methods. Their major sources of travel information were friends, family, relatives, and travel magazines. However, there is a difference between the two groups when searching online travel information. The result reveals that Western tourists preferred searching travel

websites while Asian tourists obtained travel information through social media. Moreover, most Asian tourists had a longer duration of stay.

To identify the underlying dimensions of push and pull motivation, the method of factor analysis with VARIMAX rotation was performed. A factor with eigenvalue higher than 1 and measurement items with factor loading higher than 0.5 were included. Subsequently, the Cronbach's alpha of each dimension was examined and its coefficient value must exceed 0.7 to ensure reliability (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2005). Results are presented in Table 3 and Table 4.

From Table 3, two push motivation dimensions were identified, namely *culture & relaxation* and *shopping & various activities*, which accounted for 63.75% of the explained variance. The first dimension, *culture & relaxation*, consisted of 7 items while the second dimension, *shopping & various activities*, consisted of 6 items. With its higher mean of 3.78, *culture and relaxation* is the most important push motivation factor among the tourists. Observe that the item the need to visit natural tourist attractions is not included in both dimensions, implying that the need to visit natural tourist attractions is not associated with the two factors.

**Table 3** Results of EFA on push motivation items

Push items	Factor loadings	Eigenvalue	% Variance explained	Cronbach's alpha	Mean
<b>Dimension 1: Culture &amp; Relaxation</b>		<b>6.432</b>	<b>49.481</b>	<b>0.887</b>	<b>3.777</b>
Need to Learn Different Cultures	0.880				4.003
Need to Gain New Experiences	0.856				3.945
Need to Relax Your Mind	0.761				3.788
Need to Escape from Daily Routines	0.716				3.730
Need to Experience Local People Way of Life	0.662				3.683
Need to Experience Exotic Cuisine	0.638				3.725
Need to Promote Good Physical and Mental Health	0.590				3.565
<b>Dimension 2: Shopping &amp; Various Activities</b>		<b>1.854</b>	<b>14.265</b>	<b>0.878</b>	<b>3.070</b>

Need to Go Shopping	0.877				2.918
Need to Buy Local Handicrafts	0.82				3.020
Need to Visit Relatives and Friends	0.816				2.735
Need to Learn New Things, such as Cooking, Massage, and Meditation	0.658				3.173
Need to Engage in Adventuring/Physical Activities	0.630				3.215
Awarding Yourself	0.608				3.360
<b>Total Variance Explained</b>				<b>63.746</b>	

For pull motivation, two dimensions, *accessibility & comfort* and *culture & diverse attractions*, were extracted as seen in Table 4 and accounted for 63.02% of the explained variance. Each dimension consists of seven measurement items. Of the two dimensions, *culture & diverse attractions* is regarded as the more important pull motivation among the tourists, based on its higher mean.

**Table 4** Results of EFA on pull motivation items

Pull items	Factor loadings	Eigenvalue	% Variance explained	Cronbach's alpha	Mean
<b>Dimension 1: Accessibility &amp; Comfort</b>		<b>7.216</b>	<b>51.543</b>	<b>0.888</b>	<b>3.216</b>
Closeness to Relatives or Friends	0.859				2.798
Closeness to Hometown	0.799				2.865
Accessibility	0.755				3.303
Appealing Festivals	0.750				3.163
Weather	0.624				3.278
Comfort	0.618				3.585
Diverse Tourist Attractions	0.553				3.525
<b>Dimension 2 Culture &amp; Diverse Attractions</b>		<b>1.606</b>	<b>11.475</b>	<b>0.885</b>	<b>3.754</b>
Cultures and Traditions	0.849				3.930
Historical Sites	0.839				3.815
Natural Attractions	0.821				3.753
Local Food	0.677				3.825
Local People Hospitalities	0.600				3.803
Safety and Cleanliness	0.579				3.578
Affordable Budgets	0.516				3.573

Total variance explained	63.017
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Then t-test was separately performed on push and pull motivation factors as well as on each measurement item to identify mean differences between the two groups of respondents. Results are displayed in Table 5 and Table 6.

According to Table 5, although western and Asian tourists do not differ in the *culture & relaxation* dimension, they are significantly different in some push items. For instance, western tourists place more importance on the need to learn different cultures and to experience local people way of life while the Asian counterparts are more interested in the need to relax their mind and the need to promote good physical and mental health. In addition, respondents from Asian countries are different from those from western countries in the *shopping & various activities* dimension. Specifically, the need to go shopping, to buy local handicrafts, to visit relatives and friends and to award themselves are more important for Asian tourists.

**Table 5** Comparison for equality of the mean difference for push factors

Push factors	Western	Asian	t-value
<b>Dimension 1: Culture &amp; Relaxation</b>	<b>3.804</b>	<b>3.749</b>	<b>0.654</b>
Need to Learn Different Cultures	4.175	3.830	3.507*
Need to Gain New Experiences	4.035	3.855	1.770
Need to Relax Your Mind	3.670	3.905	-2.094*
Need to Escape from Daily Routines	3.785	3.675	0.963
Need to Experience Local People Way of Life	3.825	3.540	2.679*
Need to Experience Exotic Cuisine	3.775	3.675	0.893
Need to Promote Good Physical and Mental Health	3.365	3.765	-3.568*
<b>Dimension 2: Shopping &amp; Various Activities</b>	<b>2.953</b>	<b>3.187</b>	<b>-2.275*</b>
Need to go shopping	2.695	3.140	-3.454*
Need to Buy Local Handicrafts	2.745	3.295	-4.305*
Need to Visit Relatives and Friends	2.575	2.895	-2.157*
Need to Learn New Things, such as Cooking, Massage, and Meditation	3.205	3.140	0.502
Need to Engage in Adventuring/Physical Activities	3.285	3.145	1.106
Awarding Yourself	3.215	3.505	-2.5*

\* Statistically different at 0.05 significant level

For pull dimensions, results in Table 6 indicate a statistical mean difference in *accessibility & comfort* and in most of its measurement items. Respondents from Asian countries consider closeness to relatives/friends, closeness to hometown, accessibility, appealing festivals, comfort, and diverse tourist attractions more important than those from western countries do. As for *culture & diverse attractions*, the only item with a significant mean difference is safety and cleanliness, on which Asian tourists regard it as more important than their western counterparts do.

**Table 6** Comparison for equality of the mean difference for pull factors

Pull factors	Western	Asian	t-value
<b>Dimension 1: Accessibility &amp; Comfort</b>	3.012	3.421	-4.351*
Closeness to Relatives or Friends	2.540	3.055	-3.669*
Closeness to Hometown	2.565	3.165	-4.246*
Accessibility	3.07	3.535	-4.027*
Appealing Festivals	2.955	3.370	-3.377*
Weather	3.215	3.340	-1.083
Comfort	3.34	3.830	-4.73*
Diverse Tourist Attractions	3.400	3.650	-2.236*
<b>Dimension 2: Culture &amp; Diverse Attractions</b>	3.676	3.831	-1.890
Cultures and Traditions	3.92	3.940	-0.196
Historical Sites	3.76	3.870	-1.040
Natural Attractions	3.695	3.810	-1.115
Local Food	3.765	3.885	-1.143
Local People Hospitalities	3.700	3.905	-1.913
Safety and Cleanliness	3.395	3.760	-3.295*
Affordable Budgets	3.5	3.645	-1.329

\* Statistically different at 0.05 significant level

## Discussion and Implications

This study identifies two push motivation dimensions, namely *culture & relaxation* and *shopping & various activities* as well as two pull motivations, namely *accessibility & comfort* and *culture & diverse attractions* that are associated with how foreign tourists are motivated to visit Chiang Mai. Push and pull motivation dimensions extracted from EFA in this study are different from prior studies, in which either different groups of tourists or different tourist

destinations were investigated (see Hanjin & Lam, 1999; Kim & Lee, 2002; Correia et al., 2007; Park & Yoon, 2009; Jang & Wu, 2006; Nikjoo & Ketabi, 2015; Gilbert & Terrata, 2001; Sastre & Phakdee-Auksorn, 2017. When the same tourist destination is considered, Ashton (2018) examined the motivation of spiritual retreat tourists towards Chiang Mai, which is not the same target group of this study. When comparative studies of tourist motivations are considered, motivations are either similar or different (see Rosenbaum & Spears, 2009; Park et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2015; Rittichainuwat, 2007).

In this study the results also indicate that tourists from western and Asian countries differ in some push factors as found in other prior researches such as Rittichainuwat (2007) and Park et al. (2015). Although *culture & relaxation* is the most important push factor among tourists in both groups, western and Asian tourists are driven by mostly different motivations to visit Chiang Mai. In particular, the two most important drives for tourists from western countries are the need to learn different cultures and to experience local people's way of life. However, Asian tourists place more importance on the need to relax their mind and promote physical and mental health. This difference is understandable because Asian tourists have similar cultures and ways of life as those of Thai people while western tourists do not. When the second most important push motivation is considered, the results reveal that *shopping & various activities* dimension was statistically different between the two groups of tourists. Asian tourists place more importance on some factors such as shopping, buying local handicrafts, visiting friends & relatives, and awarding themselves than western tourists do. Therefore, Asian tourists consider more diverse factors to travel to Chiang Mai.

A few useful implications of this study in terms of push factors are as follows. Customized services should be provided differently for western and Asian tourists. For instance, homestay might be another option of accommodation for Western tourists. In addition, the finding provides more opportunities for local businesses such as Thai cooking schools or Thai massage schools to offer homestay services to enhance their students' experience during their periods of study. On the other hand, Asian tourists need to relax and elevate their health both physically and mentally. Thus, they might be interested in specific services such as spa and massages. Moreover, Asian tourists could be potential customers for local businesses that provide services related to wellness or well-being.

With regards to pull factors, the most important aspect of Chiang Mai was *culture & diverse attractions*, by which western and Asian tourists perceive it similarly. This finding is not

surprising since tourist destinations must have their unique images that are well-known to all tourists. Thus, it is possible that tourists are drawn by similar attributes towards a certain place. For western tourists, their main drive to visit Chiang Mai was to learn new cultures, which is consistent with the most important aspect of Chiang Mai, *culture & diverse attractions*. In prior research, push and pull factors are positively related (Kim & Lee, 2002). In this study, such relationship is also revealed. Western tourists who visit Chiang Mai need to learn new cultures and one of the most important aspects of Chiang Mai is cultures and traditions. Therefore, results in this study are consistent with Nikjoo & Ketabi (2015), which found that tourists who are driven by the need to learn new things or new cultures are likely to go to the place with cultural attractions. In addition, the major drives of Asian tourists to visit Chiang Mai are to relax their mind and promote good physical as well as mental health, which are related to the safety & cleanliness attribute of Chiang Mai.

When the second pull dimension *accessibility & comfort* is considered, Asian tourists give more importance to this dimension. From their perspectives, attributes of Chiang Mai that attracted them were not only culture and other attractions but some other attributes such as closeness to relatives/friends/hometown, accessibility, appealing festivals, comfort, and diverse tourist attractions. The results were consistent with their main drives to travel to Chiang Mai, which was the need to relax and promote good health, which require various aspects of the destination to serve their needs physically and mentally.

A few implications of the pull factors can be described as follows. For local tourism businesses, it is necessary to understand the tourists' views of a location, as it enables them to offer suitable services to tourists (Kim et al., 2015). Findings from this study could imply that businesses in Chiang Mai should be aware that tourists are generally drawn to Chiang Mai because of its cultures and variety of attractions such as traditions, local foods, historical sites, natural attractions, and local hospitalities. Such findings could be used in arranging package tour programs for tourists in general. Nevertheless, a slight divergence exists among tourists from different cultural backgrounds. Service providers should adjust their tour programs based on what tourists really want. For instance offering Asian tourists with various activities since it is more important to them than the western tourists. However, such activities should not be too tough since they prefer more comfort. Some activities like trekking or elephant bathing might not be of their interest. From our findings, Asian tourists regard appealing festivals more importantly than their western counterparts. Since Chiang Mai has many interesting festivals throughout the year, such information should be communicated to this specific group as well.

In conclusion, results from this study show that differences in motivations exist between tourists from different cultural backgrounds as found in Park et al. (2015). Tourists from various cultures are pushed to make travel decisions by different factors. When considering a travel destination, tourists from different cultural backgrounds are drawn by distinct attributes of the same location. Such information enables tourism marketers to apply appropriate marketing strategies to suit the needs of tourists from diverse cultural backgrounds (Li, 2014; Kim et al., 2015; Park et al., 2015).

## Limitations of the study

In this study tourists were classified into two groups: Asian and Western. This is a somewhat limited classification because there might be some difference even within the Asian or Western groups themselves. We might learn some new useful insights if we could have a finer classification.

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