Research Report

อิทธิพลของประสบการณ์เดินทางท่องเที่ยวที่มีต่อความพึงพอใจและความภักดีต่อ

จุดหมายปลายทาง:

กลยุทธ์เพื่อส่งเสริมการท่องเที่ยวของจังหวัดภูเก็ต

The Effects of travel experience on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty:

Strategies to promote Phuket's Tourism

By

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บทคัดย่อ

ที่ผ่านมามีงานวิจัยจำนวนมากที่ศึกษาในเรื่องความพึงพอใจของนักท่องเที่ยวที่มีอิทธิพลต่อความ
ภักดีต่อจุดหมายปลายการท่องเที่ยว อย่างไรก็ตาม ตัวแปรสำคัญตัวแปรหนึ่งที่เกี่ยวข้องโดยตรงกับการ
เดินทางท่องเที่ยวของนักท่องเที่ยว คือ ประสบการณ์เดินทางท่องเที่ยว ซึ่งยังมีการศึกษาอยู่น้อย โดยเฉพาะ
อย่างยิ่งในวงการวิชาการของไทย ยังไม่ได้มีการศึกษาถึงความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างประสบการณ์เดินทาง
ท่องเที่ยว ความพึงพอใจของนักท่องเที่ยว และความภักดีต่อจุดหมายปลายทาง ทำให้เกิดช่องว่างองค์ความรู้
ในเรื่องดังกล่าว โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งการศึกษาปัจจัยต่างๆ ที่มีอิทธิพลต่อความภักดีต่อจุดหมายปลายการ
ท่องเที่ยว ซึ่งถือได้ว่าเป็นเรื่องสำคัญในการส่งเสริมการท่องเที่ยวของประเทศให้มีประสิทธิผลมากขึ้น
นอกเหนือการดึงดูดนักท่องเที่ยวกลุ่มใหม่ ดังนั้น งานวิจัยในครั้งนี้จึงมีเป้าหมายการวิจัยเพื่อศึกษาอิทธิพล
ของประสบการณ์เดินทางการท่องเที่ยวที่มีผลต่อความพึงพอใจของนักท่องเที่ยว และความภักดีต่อจุดหมาย
ปลายการท่องเที่ยว โดยเลือกจังหวัดภูเก็ตเป็นพื้นที่กรณีศึกษาเนื่องจากเป็นจุดหมายปลายสำคัญในประเทศ
ไทย และเป็นแหล่งท่องเที่ยวที่มีศักยภาพสูงในการดึงดูดให้นักท่องเที่ยวกลับมาเยือนซ้ำ การศึกษาในครั้งนี้
เก็บรวบรวมข้อมูลจากนักท่องเที่ยวชาวต่างประเทศจำนวน 457 คน ที่เดินทางมาจังหวัดภูเก็ต โดยใช้การ
เลือกตัวอย่างแบบบังเอิญ และใช้แบบสอบถามเป็นเครื่องมือวิจัย โดยใช้สถิติเชิงพรรณนา ได้แก่ ค่าร้อยละ
ค่าเฉลี่ย ส่วนเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน และสถิติเชิงอ้างอิง ได้แก่ การทดสอบค่าที (t-test) และการวิเคราะห์
เส้นทางอิทธิพล (path analysis) ในการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูล ส่วนการค้นหาความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างประสบการณ์
เดินทางท่องเที่ยว ความพึงพอใจของนักท่องเที่ยว และความภักดีต่อจุดหมายปลายทาง ใช้การวิเคราะห์
สมการโครงการ (Structural Equation Modeling - SEM) ด้วยโปรแกรมสถิติสำเร็จรูป AMOS

ผลการวิจัยพบว่า กลุ่มตัวอย่างนักท่องเที่ยวชาวเอเชียและชาวยุโรปมีประสบการณ์เดินทางท่องเที่ยว แตกต่างกันในบางเรื่อง เช่น สภาพภูมิอากาศและความสะอาดของจังหวัดภูเก็ต ส่วนประเด็นอื่นๆในเรื่อง ประสบการณ์เดินท่องเที่ยวในจังหวัดภูเก็ต ทั้งสองกลุ่มมีความเห็นคล้ายคลึงกัน ในด้านของความพึงพอใจ พบว่า กลุ่มตัวอย่างทั้งสองกลุ่มมีความพึงพอใจต่อจังหวัดภูเก็ตไม่แตกต่างกัน สำหรับการทดสอบสมมติฐาน ของสมการโครงสร้าง พบว่า แบบจำลองเส้นทางอิทธิพลของประสบการณ์เดินทางท่องเที่ยวที่มีต่อความพึง พอใจและความภักดีต่อจุดหมายปลายทางการท่องเที่ยวของจังหวัดภูเก็ตที่ผู้วิจัยได้พัฒนาขึ้น มีความ กลมกลืนกับข้อมูลเชิงประจักษ์ โดยพิจารณาจากค่าดัชนีความกลมกลืน ได้แก่ chi-square = 155.28, df = 63, chi-square/df = 3.33, NFI = 0.95, CFI= 0.96, และ RMSEA = 0.08 โดยพบว่า ประสบการณ์เดินทาง ท่องเที่ยวในเรื่องเกี่ยวกับคน (เช่น คนในท้องถิ่น และผู้ให้บริการภาคธุรกิจ) มีอิทธิผลทางตรงและทางอ้อม ต่อความภักดีต่อจุดหมายปลายทาง ส่วนประสบการณ์เดินทางท่องเที่ยวในด้านอื่นๆไม่มีอิทธิผลทางตรงต่อ ความภักดีต่อจุดหมายปลายทาง แต่จะมีอิทธิผลทางตรงต่อความพึงพอใจของนักท่องเที่ยว และมีอิทธิผล ทางอ้อมต่อความภักดีต่อจุดหมายปลายทาง โดยผ่านความพึงพอใจ

ในส่วนของข้อเสนอแนะ ผู้บริหารท้องถิ่นและหน่วยงานด้านการท่องเที่ยวในจังหวัดภูเก็ต ควร ร่วมมือกันเพื่อรณรงค์และส่งเสริมให้ประชาชนในจังหวัดภูเก็ต (ประชาชนท้องถิ่นและผู้ให้บริการภาค ธุรกิจ) ตระหนักถึงความสำคัญของการเป็นเจ้าของบ้านที่ดี โดยให้การต้อนรับนักท่องเที่ยวด้วยอัธยาศัย ไมตรีที่เป็นมิตรและอบอุ่น ให้ความช่วยเหลือแก่นักท่องเที่ยว และให้การบริการที่มีคุณภาพ ตลอดจนการ รักษาคุณภาพและความสะอาดของจังหวัดภูเก็ตและชายหาดที่สวยงาม อันจะทำให้นักท่องเที่ยวกลับมาเยือน จังหวัดภูเก็ตซ้ำ

คำสำคัญ: ประสบการณ์เดินทาง ความพึงพอใจ ความภักดีต่อจุดหมายปลายทาง ภูเก็ต

Abstract

Although there is an extensive amount of research on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty, however, an important factor like travel experience has been little investigated, particularly its effect on destination loyalty. In particular, there is a lack of empirical study investigating the relationships between travel experience, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty; resulting in a gap on such knowledge. An examination on the factors affecting destination loyalty is essential to the development for more effective tourism promotion strategies. This study, therefore, aims to examine the effects of travel experience on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. Phuket, the world famous island in the southern part of Thailand, was selected as a site of investigation due to its high potential to promote destination loyalty. Data were collected from 457 international tourists visiting Phuket through a convenience sampling method, using self-administered questionnaires. This study employed descriptive statistics (percentage, mean, and S.D) and inferential statistics (t-test and path analysis) to analyze data. The Structural Equation Model (SEM) approach by AMOS was used to test the causal relationship between travel experience, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty. The results showed that the measurement model was valid and fit the empirical data with the acceptable level of fit (chi-square = 155.28, df = 63, chi-square/df = 3.33, NFI = 0.95, CFI= 0.96, และ RMSEA = 0.08). According to the results, it was found that there were some differences in travel experience between Asian and European respondents on climate and cleanliness in Phuket. However, there were no differences on other travel experiences as well as tourist satisfaction. Based on the path analysis through SEM method, the structural model proposed in this study supported the statistically significant relationship between travel experience, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty. The model indicated that only travel experience associated with people had positive direct and indirect effects on destination loyalty while the rests did not have a significant relationship with destination loyalty. However, all travel experiences factors had positive direct effects on tourist satisfaction, and indirect effects on destination loyalty through tourist satisfaction.

For recommendations, local authorizes and tourism organizations in Phuket should work closely to create public awareness and campaigns among local people for being good hosts in welcoming and assisting tourists as well as providing quality services. Also, the conservation and maintenance of tourism resources and cleanliness should be emphasized.

Key words: travel experience, tourist satisfaction, destination loyalty, structural equation modeling, Phuket

Acknowledgements

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10 January 2016

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Chapter 1
Introduction

This chapter aims to provide the overview of research project including research background, objectives, contributions, hypotheses and definitions of key terms used in this study.

1.1 Research Background

Currently, tourism has become a popular global leisure activity due to the high revenues generating to the country's economy. For Thailand, the tourism industry is one of the largest and important sectors for the nation's economy due to the significant impacts to employment, business growth and revenue circulating throughout the country. Although the tourism industry in Thailand has been growing during the past decades, the market competition within the region is likely to be intensified and more competitive within the region. Today, all ASEAN countries are intensively competing each other to promote their tourism activities with the aim to increase the number of in-bound tourists. Consequently, each country has allocated large amount of budgets to promote and develop marketing campaigns to attract more tourists to their destinations.

In relation to Thailand, given the importance of the tourism industry to the country's economy as well as the current competitive market situation, it is essential for Thai tourism marketers and authorities to develop effective marketing strategies to attract more international tourists to Thailand. One of the most effective marketing strategies which have been widely used in most businesses (including tourism industry) is building customer loyalty to increase repeat customers (Oppermann, 2000; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Retaining existing customers is usually argued to have a lower cost than finding the new ones (Fornell & Wernerfelt, 1987 cited in Chi & Qu, 2008). Furthermore, loyal customers are more likely to act as free word-of-mouth bringing more networks of friends, relatives and potential customers to a product or service (Shoemaker & Lewis, 1999 in Chi & Qu, 2008). Today, customer loyalty has been implemented as one of the powerful marketing tool in the competitive market for both tourism and non-tourism industries.

In the tourism context, the concept of customer loyalty may be referred as "destination loyalty". In particular, tourism can be perceived as a product (or destination) which can be resold (revisited) and recommended to other people (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). The issue of destination loyalty (or post-purchase behavior) has a contribution to generating revenues to the tourism industry. The more the number of tourists revisit the destination, the greater the revenue the

businesses can earn. In order to examine the concept of destination loyalty, it is important to explore what makes loyal tourists (repeat visitors). A review of literature indicates that one of the most important factors contributing to loyal tourists is "tourist satisfaction" (Baker & Crompton, 2000). Many studies have revealed a close relationship between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. Some scholars argue that satisfied tourists are more likely to return or revisit the same destination, and are more willing to share their positive travel experience with their friends and relatives (Chi & Qu, 2008). Today, it is not surprisingly that there is an abundance of tourist satisfaction studies in relation to other factors such as tourist behavior, travel motivation, and destination loyalty. Although there are several prior studies investigating the relationships between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty, however, there should be more factors affecting those two variables. A review of literature indicates that "travel experience" is one of the important factors associated with tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty (Alexandris, Kouthouris, & Meligdis, 2006; Oppermann, 2000). Generally, it is argued that tourist satisfaction occurs through tourists' emotional state after experiencing the trips (Baker & Crompton, 2000). In particular, when tourists have positive travel experience while visiting the destination, they are more likely to be happy or satisfied with their trips, and later they may come back to the same destination. As a result, in addition to tourist satisfaction, we can argue that tourists with positive travel experience of services and destination attributes may return to the destination as well as spread their word-of-mouth to their friends or relatives after the trip. This argument is, therefore, worth for further investigation to reveal the relationships between travel experience, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty. However, little effort was made to reveal such relationships, particularly the examination of the effect of travel experience on tourist destination and destination loyalty.

Since studies on tourists' travel experience are limited, and scholars are yet to examine its effect on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. In particular, the relationships between the three variables (constructs) are not fully explored, especially in the Thai tourism literature. This study, therefore, **aimed** to examine the effect of travel experience on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. The examination of the three constructs will yield the greater knowledge on their interrelations and provide a better understanding on the role of travel experience and tourist satisfaction in developing destination loyalty for Thailand's tourism industry. Understanding the determinants of tourist loyalty will allow destination practitioners to concentrate on the influencing factors that lead to tourist retention (Chi & Qu, 2008, Kim & Brown, 2012). The contribution of this

study will not only generate new knowledge to better understand the construct of the factors affecting destination loyalty but will also assist tourism authorities/planners in refining or determining appropriate tourism development and strategies to retain loyal customers/tourists; thereby helping promoting Phuket's tourism.

In this study, Phuket is selected as an area of investigation to reveal the interrelationships among the three variables because Phuket is a world well-known destination with high potentiality to promote destination loyalty. The city has attracted people of all ages from all over the world for decades. According to Tourism Authorities of Thailand (2015), Phuket was ranked the 2nd place for the top tourist destinations in Thailand with the overall of 8,395,921 international tourist arrivals, and revenues more than 200,000 million Baht. Besides the beautiful beach coastal lines, Phuket has a variety of tourist attractions and activities to offer such as nature, culture, services, facilities, and entertainment. Phuket, therefore, is an appropriate destination to examine the interrelations between travel experience, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. It is hoped that the finding and the proposed model developed from this study will be helpful for local authorities to develop their plans and strategies to enhance tourists' revisitation to Phuket.

1.2 Research Objectives

- To explore and compare travel experience, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty of international tourist to Phuket between Asian and European tourists
- To examine the direct effect of travel experience on destination loyalty
- To examine the indirect effect of travel experience on destination loyalty by using tourist satisfaction as an intervening/moderating variable
- To determine the structural equation model explaining the interrelationships between travel experience, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty

1.3 Research Hypotheses

Based on the structural model (chapter 2, page 13-14), the following hypotheses have been formulated:

H1:   Travel experience has a positively direct effect on destination loyalty.

H2:   Travel experience has a positively direct effect on tourist satisfaction.

H3:   Travel experience has a positively indirect effect on destination loyalty through tourist satisfaction.

H4:   Tourist satisfaction has a positively direct effect on destination loyalty

1.4 Research Scope

There are 3 parts of research scopes needed to be mentioned as follows:

1) **Content:** This study examined the relationship between travel experience, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. Among them, travel experience (independent variable) and tourist satisfaction (intervening variable) are argued to influence destination loyalty (dependent variable).

2) **Subject investigated**: Subjects being investigated were independent international tourists who were visiting Phuket for their holiday/leisure, aged 20 years old and above. The targets are Asian and European travelers because they are the major tourist group visiting Phuket (Marzuki, 2012).

3) **Area of investigation:** Phuket was selected as an area of investigation to reveal the interrelationships among the three variables. This is because Phuket is a world well-known destination with high potentiality to promote destination loyalty. The city has attracted millions of people from all over the world for decades, and it was appropriate for this study.

1.5 Research Contributions

In terms of academic contribution, the result of the study will provide knowledge and understanding of the interrelationships between travel experience, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty through the structural equation model (SEM), particularly, the factors affecting the destination loyalty. In addition, the SEM finding will assist in the understanding on the relationships between each set of observed and unobserved variables (latent variables) as well as their causal relationships within the established constructs. This study, therefore, helps extend the theoretical knowledge on the destination loyalty literature, especially in Thai tourism context.

Moreover, the findings may assist in teaching and learning for the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality in related courses such as Destination Management, Tourist Behavior, and Tourism Marketing. Finally, the study will be useful as a secondary source for further research on related topics.

For the managerial contribution, the findings will be valued for local tourism authorities/practitioners to better understand the causal relationships between tourists' travel experience, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty. In particular, this study will also develop the structural model based on their relationships. As a result, these findings will enable them to develop or deliver more appropriate tourism products, services, and facilities responding to tourists' needs/wants and expectations. Knowing what tourists experience in Phuket and how they are satisfied with destination attributes will help tourism authorities develop appropriate policy and management. In particular, the result of destination loyalty in understanding why tourists are loyal to Phuket will assist them to make greater development or improvement in tourism destination resources in order to enhance tourists' loyalty and their revisitation as well as their recommendations to families/friends. The more likely tourists intend to visit Phuket, the more likely they also visit Thailand and other parts of the country; thereby spreading more tourism revenues. In addition, SEM findings and the factors being examined will provide guidance for developing more effective marketing strategies such as tourism campaigns, public relation, advertising, printed media, Internet and social media marketing to increase the number of repeat visitors. For example, the finding on travel experience (what they experience) and tourist satisfaction (what they are satisfied) will be helpful for marketers in designing or promoting attractive tourist activities and events to enhance their re-visitation, word-of-mouth, and recommendations to others.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Several technical terms are used in this study. In order to better understand the context of this study, the definitions of technical terms are provided as follows:

Travel experience refers to the exposure of tourists to tourism environment (e.g. tourist attractions, local people, culture) and the interaction between tourists and service providers (tourism business, facilities). Travel experience may occur through tourists' engagement, involvement, perception and participation in events, activities, people or natural/cultural places (Caru & Cova, 2007).

Tourist satisfaction refers to the result of tourists' evaluation and comparison with the perceived performance of products/services with expectation (Heung & Cheng, 2000). If performance exceeds expectation, the result turns to be satisfied, however, when expectation exceeds performance, the result becomes dissatisfied.

Destination loyalty refers to tourists' intention to revisit the same destination, and their intention to recommend the destination to their friends/relatives (Toyama & Yamada, 2012).

Destination attributes refers to the components of tourism industry in a particular destination. They are the basic tourism products and services such as accommodation, dining, shopping, tourist attractions, leisure activities, and accessibility (Chi & Qu, 2008).

A construct refers to an idea or concept established by combining several pieces of information or knowledge. It is a creation of something such as an idea or system by making various things fit together (Longman Dictionary, 2006).

Latent variable refers to a variable that is not directly observed but it may be measured via an observable variables. In this study, latent variables are travel experience, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty.

Observable variable refers to a variable that is directly observed or measurable. For example, "are you satisfied with this trip?" or do you enjoy the beach in Phuket?"

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter aims to review related literature on tourist satisfaction, destination loyalty, and travel experience. Its purpose is to provide general knowledge and overall concepts regarding the research topic as well as to establish a conceptual framework.

2.1 Overview of Tourism in Phuket

Tourism has been recognized as the economic activity which rapidly grows into the world's largest industry. With the rapid growth of tourism industry in Thailand, toady tourism has been regarded as one of the most important tools used to boost economies and promote country's development. The growth of tourism in Southeast Asia has developed very fast and each country is attempting to promote tourism to generate revenues to the country (Marzuki, 2012). Every nation has developed various marketing campaigns to persuade tourists to visit its state by promoting attractive tourist destinations, local culture, food, architecture, folklore and man-made tourist attractions. As tourism industry makes lots of benefits to the country, the Thai government has established various national policies to develop Thailand's tourism continuously. Thailand, the leading tourism state of the ASEAN, has various major tourist attractions located in different parts of the country both natural and cultural heritages. Among the major tourist destinations, Phuket is one of the most famous places for beach tourism among international tourists. Phuket is Thailand's largest island and the only province-island in the country. It has many beautiful natural attractions, particularly the beaches and small islands. Phuket is not only well-known for its sea, sand, and sun but is also famous for its charming local culture (Thai, Chinese and Muslim) and historical attractions. According to Marzuki (2012), Phuket has experienced tremendous development since 1980s. Many construction projects have been carried out on the islands with the main purpose to accommodate tourism development. Rapid investments by the government and private sector have significantly turned Phuket into a popular tourist destination and a shopping paradise for local and foreign tourists. As a result, Phuket has attracted millions of people from all over the world for decades. Since Phuket is rich in the natural resources, particular the image of beach tourism, and becomes the top tourist destinations in Thailand, it, therefore, was chosen as the area of investigation on the destination loyalty due to its high potentiality to attract loyal/repeat tourists.

2.2 Tourist Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty

      Customer (tourist) satisfaction is an important concept found in the core of marketing (Kozak, Bigne, & Andreu, 2004). In general, customer satisfaction is the result of the evaluation and comparison the perceived performance of goods/service with expectation (Hill, 1986 cited in Heung & Cheng, 2000). Expectations are compared with actual perceptions of performance as the goods or services are consumed (Bitner, 1990). If performance exceeds expectations, the result is customer satisfaction, however, when expectations exceed performance, the result is customer dissatisfaction (Bitner, 1990; Heung & Cheng, 2000). In relation to tourism, the concept of customer satisfaction has been long used in the tourism literature. According to the tourism literature, customer satisfaction or **tourist satisfaction (TS)** may be measured through several approaches. For example, a model of expectation/disconfirmation (Chon, 1989 cited in Yoon & Uysal, 2005), in this model, tourist satisfaction may be measured through the result of tourists' evaluation and comparison with the perceived performance of products/services with expectation (Heung & Cheng, 2000). If performance exceeds expectation, the result turns to be satisfied, however, when expectation exceeds performance, the result becomes dissatisfied. Another popular satisfaction model is perceived overall performance (Tse & Wilton, 1988 cited in Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Based on this model, tourist satisfaction is measured on a function of the actual performance. According to Tse & Wilton, this model is effective when tourists do not have expectation about the destination, and only their actual satisfactions on the destination are evaluated (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). This satisfaction model seems to be appropriate for this study due to its simplicity for tourists in Phuket. In overall, tourist satisfaction is important to successful destination marketing because it influences the choice of destination, the consumption of goods and services, repeat visits, word-of-mouth publicity, and destination loyalty (Fornell, 1992; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Kozak et al., 2004). An understanding of tourist satisfaction is a basic tool used to evaluate the performance of destination products and services (Schofield, 2000 cited in Yoon & Uysal, 2008). Monitoring tourist satisfaction is, therefore, an important task for destination authorities/planners to get feedback and detect problems that cause tourist dissatisfaction which may have a negative impact on future visitation (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). Therefore, it is argued that an assessment of tourist satisfaction can help destination authorities adjust their efforts on enhancing tourists' travel experience, improving the quality of products/services, and developing effective destination marketing strategy (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Yoon & Uysal, 2008). In the tourism literature, prior studies reveal a significant relationship between tourist satisfaction, intention to return, and positive word-of-mouth communication (Beeho & Prentice, 1997; Hallowell 1996). Satisfied tourists are likely to recommend destinations they have visited to their friends and relatives or express favorable comments about the destination (Beeho & Prentice, 1997; Ross 1993). On the controversy, dissatisfied tourists may not return

to the same destination and may not recommend it to other tourists (Chen & Chen, 2010). Even worse, dissatisfied tourists may express negative comments about a destination and damage its market reputation (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). In a study of tourists visiting Mallorca, Spain, Kozak & Remington (2000) reported that the more satisfied the tourists were with their visits, the more likely they were to return and recommend the destination to others. This strongly suggests that destinations that can identify attributes that satisfy tourists increase their chances of having loyal tourists.

Loyalty is generally defined as customers' intentions or behaviors to re-buy or re-patronize certain product/service; thereby causing repetitive same-brand purchasing (Hawkins, Best & Coney, 1995; Oliver, 1999). The concept and degree of loyalty is one of the critical indicators used to measure the success of marketing strategy (Flavian, Martinez, & Polo, 2001 cited in Yoon & Uysal, 2005). In marketing literature, loyalty measures a consumer's strength of affection towards a brand (Backman & Crompton, 1991). It is based on a consumer brand preferences or intention to buy the brand. Customer satisfaction, customer experience, value, service quality, performance, price, and brand name may contribute to loyalty (Backman & Crompton, 1991; Oliver, 1999). In relation to tourism literature, **destination loyalty (DL)** refers to tourists' intention to revisit the same destination, and their intention to recommend the destination to their friends/relatives (Toyama & Yamada, 2012). The concept of destination loyalty has been widely examined among tourism scholars to develop effective ways to attracts more tourists to their destinations (Kim & Brown, 2012; Toyama & Yamada, 2012; Mechinda, Serirat, & Gulid, 2009; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Destination loyalty is an important indicator used to develop competitive advantages of the destination and effective marketing strategy (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). In general, destination loyalty may be measured through tourist's intention to revisit the same destination, and their intention to recommend the destination to others (Toyama & Yamada, 2012). Of these two measures, repeat visitation is considered as a very strong indicator of future behavior (Mechinda et al., 2009).

In the tourism literature, there were empirical studies revealing that tourist satisfaction is a strong indicator of repeat visitation and recommendation of the product/service to others, which is the main component of loyalty (Chi & Qu, 2008; Kozak, Bigne, & Andreu, 2004; Toyama & Yamada, 2012; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). If tourists are satisfied with their holiday destination, they are more likely to return to the same destination, and recommend that destination to other people (Kozak, Bigne, and Andreu, 2004; Toyama & Yamada, 2012). A review of literature indicates a number of studies conducted to measure the relationship between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. Kozak et al. (2004), for example, explored satisfaction and destination loyalty by comparing between non-repeat and repeat tourists in Calpe, Spain. The finding revealed some significant differences in destination loyalty between first-time visitors and repeat visitors (e.g.

season time to visit Calpe and leisure activities). In particular, the finding indicated that the level of satisfaction and the number of past visits considerably influence tourists' intentions to make repeat visits. Yoon and Uysal (2005) investigated the effects of satisfaction on destination loyalty in Northern Cyprus. The findings revealed that satisfaction was found to directly affect destination loyalty in a positive direction. Also, satisfaction was determined to be a medicating construct between travel motivation and destination loyalty. The study suggested that destination managers should establish a higher tourist satisfaction level to create positive post-purchase tourist behavior to sustain destination competitiveness. Another study by Valle, Silva, Mendes and Guerreiro (2006) explored the relationship between travel satisfaction and destination loyalty in Arade, Portugal. The study established a direct causal relationship between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty intention. The study showed that tourists experiencing higher satisfaction levels revealed favorable intention behavior: the willingness to return to Arade and to recommend it to others. Chi and Qu (2008) examined the impact of tourist satisfaction (attribute satisfaction and overall satisfaction) on destination loyalty in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. They examined the impact of the attribute satisfaction separately from the overall satisfaction on the destination loyalty. The study revealed that tourists' destination loyalty was influenced by high satisfaction. In particular, both attribute satisfaction and overall satisfaction influenced the destination loyalty. The study suggested destination managers focus on establishing a high tourists' satisfaction level so as to create positive post-purchase tourist behavior. A recent study by Toyama and Yamada (2012) explored the relationships between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty in Takayama City, Japan. The findings disclosed that the overall satisfaction had a direct influence on destination loyalty. The study suggested that destination authorities reduce the risk of unsatisfactory experience by improving destination's services and quality in order to create tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty.

In sum, although there is a number of prior studies investigating the relationship between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty, few scholars have attempted to examine an important variable like travel experience in an association with tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. Travel experience is regarded as an important variable influencing the destination loyalty. When tourists visit a destination, they also experience (consume) most elements of tourism products and services (e.g. hotels, food, local culture, transportation, and safety). Like tourist satisfaction, it may be argued that tourists are more likely to return to the same destination if they have experienced positively with the destination. Therefore, an interesting variable like 'travel experience' is worth examining its relationship between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty.

2.3 Tourists' Travel Experience

Although there are several prior studies investigating the relationships between tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty, however, there should be more factors affecting those two variables. A review of literature indicates that "travel experience" is associated with tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty (Alexandris, Kouthouris, & Meligdis, 2006; Oppermann, 2000; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Moreover, several scholars have addressed that satisfied tourists tend to transmit their positive travel experience to others and may repeat their visitation (Kozak & Rimmington, 2000; Operman, 2000). They also argued that the activities tourists doing at the holiday destinations and experiences during these activities are a source of tourist satisfaction. With the importance of travel experience, little effort has been undertaken to investigate the interrelationship and the impact of tourists' travel experience on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. In particular, the examination of **onsite** tourists' travel experience at the destination (or destination experience) is overlooked. This part, therefore, aims to review related literature on tourists' travel experience.

According to the literature, **travel experience (TE)** refers to the exposure of tourists to tourism environment (e.g. tourist attractions, local people, culture) and the interaction between tourists and service providers (tourism business, facilities). Travel experience may occur through tourists' engagement, involvement, perception and participation in events, activities, or tourist attractions of the destinations (Caru & Cova, 2007). In order words, travel experience may relate to what tourists see, feel, meet, or contact with tourism suppliers and destination features. In general, a destination is the location of a cluster of attractions and related tourist facilities/services (Andriotis, Agiomirgianakis, & Mihiotis, 2009). It may argue that when tourists visit a particular destination with positive travel experience, they are more likely to be happy or satisfied with their trips, and later they may come back to the same destination. In this sense, tourists with positive experience of products, services, and other resources provided by tourism destinations could produce repeat visits (loyalty) and word-of-mouth effects to their friends or relatives (Chi & Qu, 2008). Hence, assessing tourists' travel experience may help destination authorities/planners in understanding of the destination attributes that may have the impact on tourists' positive experience and their intentions to revisit to the destination (Kim & Brown, 2012).

A review of related literature indicates that there are some studies examining tourists' travel experience in different aspects. For example, **Kivela and Bralic (2007)** examined tourists' experiences with service providers in Croatia. The study sought to explore and classified travellers perceptions about inhospitable experiences while holidaying and considering the role of perceived injustice in the elicitation of divergence of emotions following the inhospitable encounter. The research was undertaken based on qualitative data gathered by way of interviewing both domestic and international travellers about their

experiences with service staff while on holidays in Croatia. Of the 200 people interviewed, 17% had something negative to report, and 45% were clearly very annoyed and upset about some of the encounters they had with Croatia s service providers. The findings revealed that both domestic and international tourists perceived emotions and injustices were predictive of the type of inhospitality received. With a better understanding of the nature and causes of the negative emotions experienced by the travellers as a result of inhospitable encounter, it should be possible to implement appropriate recovery systems that are designed to reverse the effects of inhospitable encounters. Another study by **Kim & Brown (2012)** examined the impact of perceived travel experience on overall satisfaction and destination loyalty. They used regression analysis to examine which perceived specific travel experience items and personal characteristics influence visitors' satisfaction and destination loyalty. The findings indicated that discovering new experience, adventure experience, and geological attractions had the potential to influence return behavior. In addition, the study found that visitors' previous experience with the destination and length of stay were important determinants of the overall satisfaction. **Mehmetoglu & Normann (2013)** compared the effects of specific company product and destination product on tourists' experience in visiting northern Norway. The findings indicated that the effect of the company product was much greater than that of the destination product on tourists' overall holiday experience. The findings also revealed that three factors of company products (personnel, information, and product variety) and destination products (transportation, accommodation, and dining facilities) had a significant influence on the tourists' overall holiday experience. Examining the effect of past experience on destination loyalty, **Martin, Collado, & Bosque (2013)** found that past experience had a significant influence on two dimensions of destination loyalty (i.e. the intention to return to a destination and the intention to recommend the destination). However, with the regression analysis, the study revealed that past experience had a greater effect on the 'intention to return' than the 'intention to recommend'. A recent study by **Ekiz and Khoo-Lattimore (2014)** investigated the impact of Goa City's attributes on leisure travel experience and destination loyalty. The findings disclosed that all the attribute destinations investigated (services, tourist attractions, accessibility, price, and environment) had the influences on destination loyalty. Among them, price and accessibility were found to have the least impact on tourists' loyalty to Goa City.

In conclusion, although there are some studies investigating tourists' travel experience in various aspects, studies examining the relationships (construct) between travel experience, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty by the structural equation model (SEM) are rare. In particular, there is a lack of empirical studies investigating the direct and indirect effect of travel experience on destination loyalty through tourist satisfaction. Moreover, the Thai literature is suffering from the lack of related studies on this construct. Since travel experience, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty

are the key variables in the tourism literature, examining their relationships will yield a valuable contribution to the existing literature as well as for the destination authorities/planners to take the benefit of the research findings to refine their tourism policies and strategies for a better development of tourism industry in Phuket.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study has been developed based on the above literature revealing that there are the interrelationships among travel experience, travel satisfaction and destination loyalty (Chi & Qu, 2008; Kim & Brown, 2012: Pizam & Ellis, 1999; Rahman, 2014). In overall, it is argued that when tourists have positive experience with their trips, they are likely to be satisfied with the destination. While tourists are satisfied with the destination (or their trips), they are likely to return or revisit the same destination. In addition, it may argue that tourists with positive experience of the services and products in the destination may be likely to revisit the same destination as well (Mehmetoglu & Normann, 2013). Conceptually, it may be inferred that travel experience (independent variable) may **directly** influence travel satisfaction (intervening variable) and destination loyalty (dependent variable). Meanwhile travel experience may also **indirectly** affect destination loyalty through travel satisfaction. Based on these interrelationships (construct), the conceptual framework (proposed structural model) for this has been established as shown in Figure 1.
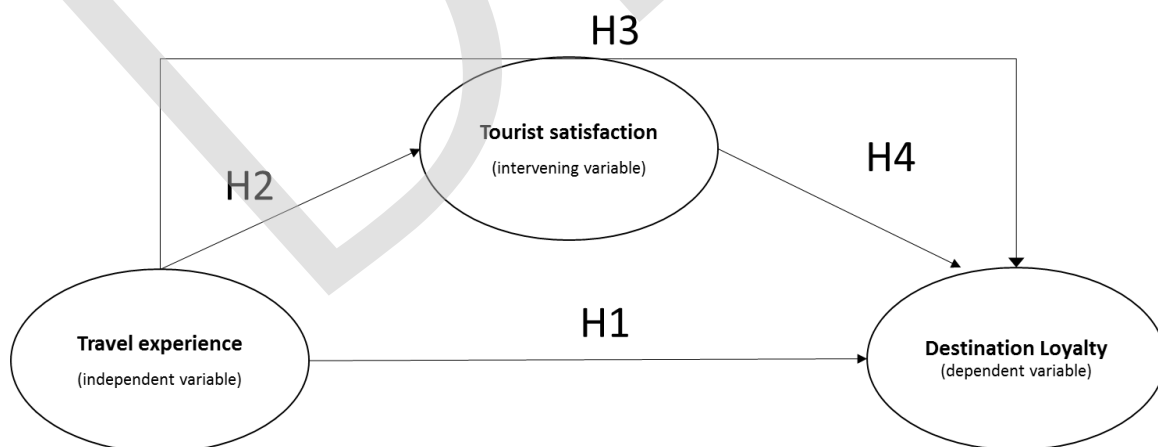
Figure 1: Proposed structural model

2.5 Research Hypotheses

Based on the proposed structural model (Figure 1), the following research hypotheses were formulated:

H1:   Travel experience has a positively direct effect on destination loyalty.

H2:   Travel experience has a positively direct effect on tourist satisfaction.

H3:   Travel experience has a positively indirect effect on destination loyalty through tourist satisfaction.

H4:   Tourist satisfaction has a positively direct effect on destination loyalty

Chapter 3

Research Methodologies

This chapter aims to describe research methodologies employed to investigate travel experience, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty of international tourists to Phuket. The objective of this chapter is to discuss about population, samples, sampling method, research instrument, pre-testing, data collection, and data analysis.

3.1 Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Method

The target population in this study was independent international tourists (age 20 years and above) who were visiting Phuket for holiday and leisure purposes. According to the statistical report by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (2014), the number of international tourists to Phuket was 8,034,981 people. This study used a sample size estimation by Yamane (1978). By using Yamane's formula of sample size with an error of 5% and confidence coefficient of 95%, the estimation for the sample size was 400 people. Due to the characteristics of the population in this study, a non-probability sampling by a convenience sampling method was employed.

3.2 Research Instrument

Questionnaire was used to collect the data. It consisted of 4 sections: 1) tourists' demographic information 2) travel experience 3) tourist satisfaction and 4) destination loyalty. Each section has details as follows:

- **Tourists' demographic information**: There were 8 general questions regarding demographic information of the respondents.

- **Travel experience:** Following the literature, destination is the location of a cluster of attractions and related tourist services/facilities (Andriotis et al., 2009). Travel experience may occur through tourists' engagement, involvement, and participation in events/activities and the exposure to tourism environment of the destinations (Caru & Cova, 2007). Therefore, what to measure on travel experience were adapted in accordance with tourists' exposure to tourism suppliers' products/services (e.g. hotels, restaurants, service, facilities, activities), destination attributes (i.e. beaches, cultural places, people, cost of living) and tourism environment (infrastructure, cleanliness, safety). As a result, there were 5 destination dimensions related to tourists' travel experience in Phuket. They were 1) natural environment 2) people & culture 3) price & value 4) services & facilities 5) safety &

cleanliness. These dimensions are the common destination features found in prior studies (Chi & Qu, 2008; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Kim & Brown, 2012; Sangpikul; 2008). Given the 5 destination dimensions, there were a total of 14 statements to measure tourists' travel experience in Phuket. According to the literature, travel experience can be assessed by the feeling of tourists' enjoyment with the destination features (Alegre & Garau, 2010; Reisinger & Turner, 2003) or positive travel experience with the destination (Kim & Brown, 2012). Some of the statements are, for example, "I enjoy beaches in Phuket" and "I appreciate Thai culture and local way of life". Respondents were asked to rate their agreement on a 5-point Likert scale (5=strongly agree to 1=strongly disagree).

- **Tourist satisfaction:** According to the literature, tourist satisfaction is generally measured by 2 items: (1) attribute satisfaction and (2) overall satisfaction (Chi & Qu, 2008; Hsu, 2003; Kozak & Rimmington, 2000). Satisfaction research has indicated that tourists are generally satisfied with individual attribute of the destination (i.e. nature, culture, services) which subsequently leads to overall destination satisfaction. Base on a review of destination attribute literature applicable to Phuket, this study measured tourist satisfaction through ten destination attributes and one single overall satisfaction. The ten destination attributes were reviewed from related literature (Ekiz & Khoo-Lattimore, 2014; Kim & Brown, 2012), and were modified to correspond to Phuket's destination features (i.e. beaches, leisure activities, culture, services, and tourism environment). Meanwhile the single overall satisfaction was measured on the overall tourist satisfaction towards Phuket. As indicated in chapter 2, this study employed the satisfaction model from Tse & Wilton (1988) due to its appropriateness for this study. According to this model, prior studies have used it to measure the overall perceived satisfaction at the destination (Bolton & Lemon, 1999; Chi & Qu, 2008). For the attribute satisfaction, the respondents were asked to evaluate their satisfaction on 5-point Likert scale (1=least satisfied and 5=most satisfied), for example, "how satisfied are you with the beach/natural environment of Phuket?" or "how satisfied are you with the services of tourism businesses in Phuket?. As for the overall satisfaction, the respondents were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with Phuket on a 5-point Likert scale (1=least satisfied and 5=most satisfied).

- **Destination loyalty:** Most prior studies have measured destination loyalty on two items: (1) the intention to revisit the destination in the future and (2) the likelihood to recommend the destination to other people (Chi & Qu, 2008; Kim & Brown, 2012; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Following the literature, this study asked the respondents to rate their intention to revisit Phuket in the near future and their likelihood to recommend Phuket to their relatives/friends by using a 5-point Likert scale (1=least likely and 5=most likely).

3.3 Pre-testing

According to Cavana et al. (2001), researchers should conduct a pre-test to evaluate the reliability and validity of the research instrument before gathering data. For this study, there was a pre-test conducted before the final data collection. The reliability test was conducted to measure an internal consistency of the questionnaire items. The first draft of the questionnaire was distributed to 50 randomly selected foreign visitors returning from Phuket at the Southern Bus Terminal. A reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) was performed for "travel experience" and "attribute satisfaction" with a result of 0.81 and 0.89, respectively. An alpha of 0.70 or above is considered acceptable as a good indication of reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994 cited in Chi & Qu, 2008). The validity test (face validity) was also undertaken with the same samples to obtain feedback and comments on the clarity and appropriateness of the research questions. Based on the pilot test, some modifications (e.g. wording, revision of some sentences) were revised, and the final version of the questionnaire was developed.

3.4 Data Collection

The data for this study were collected by a self-administered questionnaire method in Phuket during May 2015. Due to the characteristics of the population in this study (infinite population), a non-probability sampling method by a convenience sampling method was employed. The data were collected at major tourist attractions in Phuket (i.e. city areas and famous beaches). During the surveys, the respondents were asked if they would be interested to participate in the survey. Once they agreed, questionnaires were distributed on site and collected by researcher team (researcher and college students). All research respondents received small souvenirs for their participation. In overall, a total of 457 questionnaires were collected and usable for final data analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis

The SPSS and AMOS statistical software packages were used to analyze the data. AMOS was employed in this study because it works inside the software SPSS, which was available to researcher (author) and used to treat the data. Descriptive statistics were used to describe general information of the respondents whereas inferential statistics (i.e. t-test) were used to test the differences between Asian and European respondents on travel experience and tourist satisfaction. Path analysis was employed to test the interrelationships (direct and indirect effects) between travel experience, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty. The proposed model was tested by using a SEM method by AMOS software.

Chapter 4

Research Findings and Discussions

The purpose of this chapter is to present research findings, hypothesis tests, and discussions.

In order to easily understand the content of this chapter, it is divided into 4 sections as follows.

Section 4.1:   Profile of research respondents

Section 4.2:   Findings of travel experience, tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty

Section 4.3:   Structural equation model analysis (SEM) and hypotheses testing

Section 4.4:   Research discussions

Section 4.1: Profile of respondents

Table 4.1: Profile of research respondents

Characteristics	Descriptions	Number (n=457)	Percent (100%)
Gender	Male	256	56.0%
	Female	201	44.0%
Age	20 - 30 years	182	40.0%
	31 - 45 years	146	32.0%
	46 - 59 years	83	18.0%
	60 years or older	46	10.0%
Marital status	Married	247	54.0%
	Single	174	38.0%
	Divorced/Separated/Widowed	36	8.0%
Education	Bachelor degree	270	59.0%
	Master degree or higher	104	23.0%
	High school or lower	83	18.0%
Occupation	Company employee	151	35.0%
	Government officer	82	18.0%
	Independent/self-employed	68	15.0%
	Business owner	42	9.0%
	College student	36	8.0%
	Unemployment	27	6.0%
	Housewife	23	5.0%
	Retired	23	5.0%
	Others	5	1.0%
Monthly Income	US$ 1,000 or lower	55	12.0%
	US$ 1,001 – 2,500	132	29.0%
	US$ 2,501 – 3,500	150	33.0%
	US$ 3,501 – or higher	118	26.0%
Number of visit to Phuket	First time	315	69.0%
	2-3 times	106	23.0%
	4 times and more	36	8.0%
Regional base	Asian tourists	232	51.0%
	European tourists	225	49.0%

According to Table 4.1, most of the respondents (56%) were males and 44% were females. Most of them were in the age group of 20 - 30 years (40%) and 31 – 45 years old (32%). More than half of them were married (54%), and the majority (59%) had education at the college level (bachelor degree). The respondents came from different occupations, for example, 35% were company employees, 18% were government officers, 15% were independent/self-employed, and 9% were business owner. Approximately 29% of the respondents had monthly income in the range of US$ 1,000 – 2,500 while 33% had income in the range of US$ 2,501 – 3,500, and 26% earned approximately US$ 3,501 or higher. Among 457 respondents, 69% were first time visitors, while 23% visited Phuket 2-3 times, and 8% returned to Phuket 4 times and more. In overall, 51% were Asian tourists whereas 49% were European tourists.

Among Asian tourists (232 respondents), they came from China (52), Malaysia (40), Singapore (27), Indonesia (23), South Korea (21), Japan (18), Taiwan (15), India (12), Hong Kong (9), Philippines (7), Pakistan (5), and middle-east countries (3). While European tourists (225 respondents), they came from UK (41), Germany (35), France (30), Sweden (27), Russia (25), Italy (15), Norway (13), Switzerland (11), Belgium (9), Spain (8), Austria (6) and eastern European countries (5).

Since the major tourist groups visiting Phuket are Asian and European travelers, a comparative analysis in travel experience, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty will be presented accordingly.

4.2 Findings of Travel Experience, Tourist Satisfaction, and Tourist Loyalty

This part will present the findings of travel experience, tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty, respectively.

Table 4.2: Mean score of tourists' travel experience in Phuket

Travel experience in Phuket	Mean	S.D.
1. I enjoy beaches in Phuket.	4.53	0.89
2. I like beautiful natural environment of Phuket.	4.51	0.98
3. Phuket has good services for accommodation and facilities.	4.42	0.71
4. I appreciate Thai culture and local way of life	4.36	0.74
5. Local people in Phuket are friendly to tourists.	4.33	0.84
6. Service staff/employees are nice and helpful.	4.31	0.75
7. I enjoy leisure and entertainment in Phuket.	4.29	0.86
8. Phuket has a low cost of living.	4.22	0.84
9. I feel safe during my stay in Phuket.	4.19	0.88
10. Phuket is a valued destination (worth for money).	4.14	0.66
11. Food in Phuket is hygienic.	3.99	1.01
12. Phuket has a pleasant climate.	3.88	0.84
13. Phuket is a clean city.	3.75	0.77
14. I experience easy travel within Phuket.	3.48	0.64

(5= strongly agree and 1=strongly disagree)

Table 4.2 shows the mean score ranking of tourists' opinions on their travel experience in Phuket. The top three most favorable travel experience in Phuket are 1) enjoying beaches (mean=4.59), 2) appreciating the beauty of natural environment (mean=4.51), and 3) experiencing good services for accommodation and facilities (mean=4.47). While the least two favorable travel experience in Phuket are 1) cleanliness in Phuket (mean=3.75) and 2) traveling within Phuket (mean=3.48).

Table 4.3: Comparison of travel experience in Phuket between Asian and European tourists

Travel experience in Phuket	Asians	Europeans	T-value	p-value
1. I enjoy beaches in Phuket.	4.60	4.45	-3.56	0.45
2. I like beautiful natural environment of Phuket.	4.52	4.48	-1.10	0.21
3. Phuket has good services for accommodation and facilities.	4.49	4.33	-1.02	0.30
4. I appreciate Thai culture and local way of life	4.28	4.43	1.48	0.13
5. Local people in Phuket are friendly to tourists.	4.28	4.37	-0.45	0.65
6. Service staff/employees are nice and helpful.	4.22	4.39	0.098	0.32
7. I enjoy leisure and entertainment in Phuket.	4.25	4.33	0.69	0.48
8. Phuket has a low cost of living.	4.23	4.19	-0.45	0.65
9. I feel safe during my stay in Phuket.	4.19	4.18	-0.34	0.97
10. Phuket is a valued destination (worth for money).	4.18	4.09	-.072	0.45
11. Food in Phuket is hygienic.	4.01	3.95	.041	0.67
12. Phuket has a pleasant climate.	4.02	3.72	-2.11	0.03*
13. Phuket is a clean city.	3.98	3.51	-5.07	0.00*
14. I experience easy travel within Phuket.	3.45	3.49	0.44	0.14

* significance at 0.05 level

In order to better understand the difference between travel experience between two major tourist groups (Asians and Europeans) visiting Phuket, t-test analysis was performed. According to Table 4.3, t-test reveals statistically significant differences ($p<0.05$) for travel experience between Asian and European respondents regarding climate and cleanliness in Phuket. The finding indicated that European respondents rated lower score on these two issues (3.72 and 3.51) than Asian counterparts (4.02 and 3.98).

Table 4.4: Mean score of tourists' satisfaction towards Phuket

Tourists' satisfaction toward Phuket	Mean	S.D.
1. Beaches	4.41	0.81
2. Friendliness of local people	4.30	0.89
3. Services of business	4.23	1.12
4. Local culture/cultural attractions	4.12	1.41
5. Leisure/recreation activities	4.11	0.76
6. Prices of product/service	3.97	1.25
7. Nightlife/entertainment	3.85	0.97
8. Safety	3.71	0.92
9. Cleanliness	3.49	1.06
10. Accessibility	3.47	0.66
11. Overall satisfaction	4.02	0.74

Table 4.4 shows the mean score ranking of tourist satisfaction towards Phuket. The top three satisfied attributes of Phuket are 1) beaches (mean=4.41), 2) friendliness of local people (mean=4.30), and 3) services of business (mean=4.23); suggesting that the respondents may be more satisfied with these attributes than other items. While the least satisfied attributes are 1) safety (mean=3.71), 2) cleanliness in Phuket (mean=3.53), and 3) accessibility (mean=3.48). However, the overall tourist satisfaction towards Phuket is 4.02.

Table 4.5: Comparison of tourists' satisfaction towards Phuket between Asian and European tourists

Tourists' satisfaction toward Phuket	Asians	Europeans	T-value	p-value
1. Beaches/natural environment	4.37	4.45	-2.26	0.20
2. Friendliness of local people	4.30	4.29	0.63	0.10
3. Services of business	4.18	4.27	-0.33	0.13
4. Local culture/cultural attractions	4.08	4.15	-1.02	0.74
5. Leisure/recreation activities	4.03	4.09	-0.61	0.54
6. Prices of products/services	3.94	3.99	-1.24	0.21
7. Nightlife/entertainment	3.79	3.90	-0.57	0.56
8. Safety	3.72	3.70	0.83	0.40
9. Cleanliness	3.69	3.30	-0.35	0.00*
10. Accessibility	3.50	3.44	0.46	0.88
11. Overall satisfaction towards Phuket	4.01	4.03	-0.22	0.82

* significance at 0.05 level

Similarly to Table 4.3, Table 4.5 presents the t-test analysis indicating statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) for tourist satisfaction between Asian and European respondents regarding cleanliness in Phuket. The finding indicated that European respondents rated lower score (mean=3.32) on this issue than Asian respondents (mean=3.69). This suggests that European respondents may be more likely to be less satisfactory about cleanliness in Phuket than Asian respondents.

Table 4.6: Mean score of tourists' loyalty to Phuket

Destination loyalty	Mean	S.D.
1. Likelihood to return to Phuket	4.03	0.78
2. Likelihood to recommend Phuket to friends, family, relatives	4.31	0.84

(5= strongly agree and 1=strongly disagree)

Table 4.4 shows mean score of destination loyalty. Based on the finding, the respondents rated their likelihood to return to Phuket with an average score of 4.03 while the likelihood to recommend Phuket to others was rated at 4.31.

Table 4.7: Comparison of tourists' loyalty to Phuket between Asian and European tourists

Destination loyalty	Asians	Europeans	T-value	p-value
1. Likelihood to return to Phuket	4.05	4.00	-1.13	0.25
2. Likelihood to recommend Phuket to friends, families, relatives	4.33	4.28	-0.87	0.93

In order to see the loyalty difference between groups, Table 4.7 by t-test reveals no statistically significant differences ($p>0.05$) for destination loyalty between Asian and European respondents. The finding indicates that Asian and European respondents seem to rate similar scores on their likelihood to return to Phuket (4.05 and 4.00), and their likelihood to recommend Phuket to others (4.33 and 4.28).

Section 4.3:   Structural Equation Model Analysis (SEM)

This section presents data analysis by using the structure equation model (SEM) method by AMOS. The SEM method was utilized in this study because it allowed researcher 1) to examine the relationships among the latent constructs and observed variables 2) to test hypotheses, and 3) to estimate the overall fit of the hypothesized model to the data (Imcharoen, 2011). SEM has the advantage of a structure model, which provides an accurate picture of the relationship among the established constructs.

Prior to hypotheses testing, structure equation model (SEM) by AMOS software was used to examine1) the measurement model and 2) the structure equation model (Arbuckle, 2007). Before discussing about them, two steps of testing these two models were conducted based on the following methods proposed by Byrne (2001). The first step is to determine if the overall fit of the model and data is satisfactory. The second step is to test the validity and reliability of the measurements within the constructs in order to assess the adequacy of the local fit. Criteria to measure both overall fit and local fit indices are presented as follows.

The overall fit is often assessed by using Chi-square value, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Normed Fit Index (NFI), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). In general, the chi-square value should be used as a guide rather than an absolute index of fit due to its sensitivity to sample size (Anderson & Gerbing, 1982), this value therefore is optional (Byrne, 2001). With this regard, the model fit assessment is mainly based on the remaining fit indices (i.e. CFI, NFI, and RMSEA). CFI value close to 0.95 indicates an excellent fit to the data (Hu & Bentler, 1999) while CFI value of 0.90 or greater indicates a reasonable fit. Meanwhile, NFI value exceeding 0.90 demonstrates a good fit (Byrne, 2001). And, RMSEA value less than 0.06 denotes a good model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999) while value between 0.08 - 0.10 represents an adequate fit (Byrne, 2001).

While local fit indices indicate the validity and reliability of the measurement model. In order to determine if the local fit of the measurement model is adequate, the following two indices should be considered: 1) individual item reliability and 2) convergent validity. The individual item reliability is assessed by examining the loadings. An item scoring less than 0.4 should be dropped out from the model (Hulland, 1999). Meanwhile, the convergent validity is linked with an individual construct by assuming that the items in the specific construct should share a high proportion of the variance in common (Hair et. al, 2006). To measure convergent validity, the three testing instruments are used: (a) Cronbach's Alpha, (b) construct reliability (composite reliability), and (c) average

variance extracted (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Cronbach's Alpha with a value of 0.7 is suggested as a benchmark of high quality (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), while construct reliability with a value of 0.6 or greater indicates a very good fit (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988), and average variance extracted with a value of 0.5 or greater indicates evidence of an internal consistency (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

4.3.1 Measurement model

Before developing the structural equation model, the measurement model is tested as a pre-requisite to the evaluation of the structural equation model (Anderson & Gerbing, 1982 cited in Chi & Qu, 2008). It explains the relationship between **latent constructs** (travel experience, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty) and **indicators** (observed variables). In the measurement model, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to examine the reliability and validity of the measurement model (Anderson & Gerbing, 1998 cited in Toyama & Yamada, 2012).

Table 4.8 presents the fit indices and their acceptable thresholds for measurement model. They were calculated to assess the quality of the measurement model. With the fit indices in Table 4.8, all of them passed the threshold level. This indicated that the proposed CFA (Table 4.9) fit with the empirical collected data.

Table 4.8: Fit indices and their acceptable thresholds for measurement model

Criteria	Acceptable threshold level	Computed statistics from the current study	Fit result
Chi-square (x^2)	> 0.05	407.41	Acceptable
x^2/df (or CMIN)	< 3.00*	2.73	acceptable
Comparative fit index (CFI)	> 0.90	0.92	Acceptable
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	> 0.90	0.91	Acceptable
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	< 0.10**	0.07	Acceptable

Remarks: df=149

* x^2/df < 3.00 is acceptable (Kline, 1998; Paswan, 2009)

** RMSEA in the range of 0.05 to 0.10 is considered an indication of fair fit (MacCallum et. al, 1996), and is acceptable (Garson, 2011; Steiger, 2007)

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is shown in Table 4.9 (page 29) presenting the results of the measurement model with 3 latent constructs and 20 indicators (observed variables). Following Table 4.9, it presents the internal fit indices which composed of factor loading and individual item reliability of all items used in each construct including Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE) in the measurement model. All factor loadings were greater than a criterion value of 0.4; indicating a good correlation between the items (Kaiser, 1974), meanwhile Cronbach's alpha exceeded 0.6, and indicator reliabilities were higher than 0.4; indicating acceptable threshold reliability (Hullland, 1999). At the same time, composite reliabilities of the three constructs were higher than the recommended level of 0.60, indicating high internal consistency (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Finally, the average variance extracted (AVE) for all constructs were greater than the threshold value of 0.50 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Therefore, in overall, all of the constructs and indicators (observed variables) in this study were acceptable; suggesting the measurement model fit the empirical data.

Table 4.9: Results of CFA for measurement model

Construct & indicators	Standardized loading	Indicator reliability	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
(1) Travel experience: Beach & natural environment			0.84	0.86	0.67
Enjoy beaches	0.74	0.55			
Beautiful natural environment	0.88	0.78			
Climate	0.82	0.68			
(1) Travel experience: People			0.70	0.71	0.56
Friendliness of local people	0.69	0.51			
Hospitality of serviced staff	0.57	0.53			
Thai culture/local way of life	0.75	0.56			
(1) Travel experience: Valued destination			0.76	0.74	0.59
Low cost of living	0.78	0.61			
Worth for money	0.79	0.63			
(1) Travel experience: Services & facilities			0.70	0.72	0.51
Accommodation/facilities	0.77	0.59			
Leisure/entertainment	0.78	0.61			
Accessibility/transportation	0.61	0.67			
(1) Travel experience: Safety & cleanliness			0.80	0.89	0.74
Safe travel	0.85	0.73			
Hygienic food	0.63	0.59			
Clean city	0.81	0.65			
(2) Tourist satisfaction			0.71	0.72	0.50
Products & services	0.87	0.76			
People & culture	0.42	0.71			
Safety & cleanliness	0.76	0.58			
Overall satisfaction	0.78	0.62			
(3) Destination loyalty			0.76	0.77	0.63
Likelihood to revisit	0.69	0.67			
Recommendation to others	0.99	0.82			

(1) = first construct (travel experience)

(2) = second construct (tourist experience)

(3) = third construct (destination loyalty)

4.3.2 Structural equation model

After the measurement model based on assumptions and theories was tested, it is found that the measurement model was adequate and acceptable fit. The final measurement model composed of all items and constructs from Table 4.9 was later built into the structural model as shown in Figure 1. It should be noted that an equivalent structural model is not presented because it is not a final structural where the conclusion is drawn. However, the structural model was revised and modified until the model fit the observed data and was presented as the final model as shown in Figure 1. The overall fit indices were assessed to check the model fit. The calculated indices were chi-square = 155.276, df = 63, chi-square/df = 3.334, CFI = 0.964, NFI = 0.950, and RMSEA = 0.08 as shown in Figure 4.1. The value of chi-square/df (or CMIN) higher than a threshold value of 3.0 indicates an enough model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Moreover, CFI values that compared the hypothesized model against an independent baseline model (Arbuckle, 2005) were higher than the required values of 0.90, demonstrating good fit model (Byrne, 2001). NFI value was greater than 0.90; demonstrating a good fit. RMSEA value is 0.08, indicating a moderate fit (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). Based on all fit measurement values, the proposed structural model had adequate fit between the model and data. Therefore, all path coefficients from this structural model can be interpreted with hypotheses.

In relation to **hypotheses testing**, we tested the standardized parameter estimate that links the three variables in terms of its sign and statistical significance. Standardized path coefficients can be used for examining one latent construct in relation to another.

According to Hypothesis 1 (chapter 2 page 14), results from this study (Figure 1) indicated that travel experience associated with "people" had a positive direct effect on destination loyalty (standardized path coefficient = 0.12). This finding implies that people (i.e. local people, serviced staff) have an important impact on tourists' decision to re-visitation. However, the rests of travel experience factors did not have a significant relationship with destination loyalty. This result, therefore, partially supports the first hypothesis (H1).

In relation to hypothesis 2, it was found that all travel experience factors had positive direct effects on tourist satisfaction (standardized path coefficient = 0.34, 0.17, 0.19, 0.22, 0.22, respectively). This result fully supports the second hypothesis (H2); suggesting that travel experience had a close relationship with tourist satisfaction. In other words, any travel experience occur during the trip would ultimately affect their satisfaction. Among them, travel experience with beach & nature environments had the highest value (effect size) on tourist satisfaction.

For hypothesis 3, the finding (Figure 4.1) showed that all travel experience factors had positive indirect effects on destination loyalty through tourist satisfaction (standardized path coefficient = 0.26, 0.13, 0.14, 0.17, 0.17, respectively). This finding fully supports the third hypothesis (H3).

Finally the hypothesis 4, tourist satisfaction had a positive direct effect on destination loyalty (standardized path coefficient = 0.75); supporting the fourth hypothesis (H4). This suggests that tourists who were satisfied with their trips in Phuket were more likely to be repeat visitors.

Travel experience factors
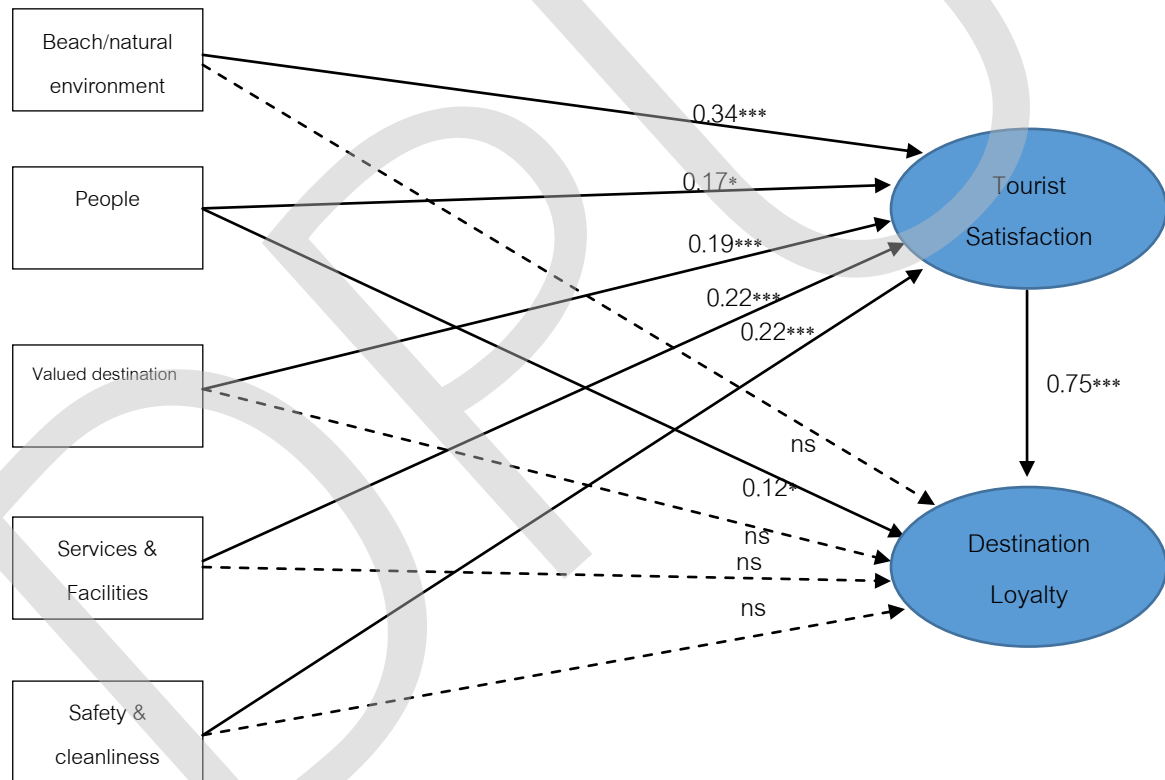
Figure 4.1: Structural model (final model)

Fit indices: Chi-square = 155.276, df = 63, Chi-square/df = 3.334, NFI = 0.950, CFI = 0.964, RMSEA = 0.08

Remarks:

ns = no significant relationship

* p-value is significant at .05

** p-value is significant at .01

Table 4.10: The effects of structural model

Tourist experience factor (independent variable)	Destination loyalty (dependent variable)		
	Direct	**Indirect**	**Total**
1. Beach & natural environment	-	0.26	0.26
2. People	0.12	0.13	0.25
3. Valued destination	-	0.14	0.14
4. Services & facilities	-	0.17	0.17
5. Safety & cleanliness	-	0.17	0.17

Table 4.10 presents the direct, indirect, and total effects of the structural model. The examination of the standardized path coefficients showed that travel experience associated with "people" had a similar value for both direct effect (0.12) and indirect effect (0.13) on destination loyalty. In terms of the total effect, the travel experience associated with "beaches & natural environment" (0.26) and "people" (0.25) had a stronger effect on destination loyalty than the other three factors: valued destination (0.14), facilities (0.17), and safety (0.17).

4.4 Research Discussions

4.4.1 Discussion of Travel Experience and Tourist Satisfaction

In general, the finding of this research revealed that the respondents had a good travel experience with Phuket's beaches and its natural environment. They were also satisfied with this attribute. However, travel experience with destination cleanliness and accessibility appeared to have lower scores on these attributes. This finding seems to correspond with previous research conducted in Phuket (Polnyotee & Thadaniti, 2014; Thongkundam, 2012). These past studies disclosed that local transportation, accessibility, sanitation and cleanliness in Phuket were needed to be improved/developed in order to promote Phuket tourism and attract more visitors. If Phuket aims to a world-class tourist destination, these issues need immediate action from local authorities and related parties. In addition, the finding also revealed some differences on travel experience pertaining to Phuket's climate and cleanliness between Asian and European respondents. This may result from respondents' different perceptions and their regional backgrounds. In case of the climate, Phuket is located in a tropical area with warm weather throughout the year. In particular, this study collected data in May which is a relatively warm month. Generally, the weather in Asia is much warmer than in Europe. It may be possible that Asian tourists may be more acquainted with warm climate than European tourists. With these reason, this might make their perceptions (feeling) on Phuket's climate differently by reflecting in the survey. In addition, Asian and European respondents seemed to have different travel experience on the cleanliness of Phuket. This finding is similar to prior studies conducted in Phuket disclosing that Phuket has a negative image on low standard for sanitation and cleanliness (Naina, 2009; Thongkundam, 2012). The reason why both groups had the differences on this issue may be because European respondents come from developed countries with high standard on infrastructure, services, and facilities, when compared to most Asian respondents coming from developing countries. It could be also possible that the Europeans may rate the cleanliness in Phuket lower than it counterpart due to different perceptions and experience in their countries.

4.4.2 Discussion on the Relationship between Travel Experience, Tourist Satisfaction, and Destination Loyalty

According to the SEM findings, it was found that only the travel experience associated with people had a positive direct effect on destination loyalty while the rests of travel experience did not have any effects on destination loyalty. This finding is similar to previous research (Chin & Qu, 2008; Mehmetoglu & Normann, 2013; Thongkundam, 2012) revealing that people is an essential component that may affect tourists' trip satisfaction and their decision to revisit the destination. For example, Thongkundam (2012) indicated that friendliness of people was the top strength of Phuket. Likewise, Chin and Qu (2008) found that tourists' travel experience with tourism resources (including local people) in the destination could result in repeat visit. Furthermore, Mehmetoglu & Normann (2013) disclosed that people (service/business employees) had a significant influence on tourists' overall holiday experience. Based on these past studies, this suggests that people component plays an important role contributing to destination loyalty. However, the SEM finding also revealed that other travel experience factors (natural environment, valued destination, facilities, and safety) did not have direct effects on destination loyalty but all of them had direct impacts on tourist satisfaction. This could be justified that destination loyalty may not only occur due to tourists' travel experience but it may occur through a combination of travel experience and tourist satisfaction together (suggesting that several factors may contribute to loyalty). In order words, when tourists have a good travel experience at the destination, this may lead to their overall satisfaction. With high satisfaction, they are more likely to revisit the destination. This finding may imply that travel experience alone may not be adequate to the formation of destination loyalty but it would be involved with overall tourist satisfaction with the destination attributes. In terms of the direct effect between travel experience and tourist satisfaction, it was found that travel experience associated with beaches & natural environment had the highest positive effect on tourist satisfaction. This suggests that the more favorable the experience tourists have with the natural environment, the higher the satisfaction is. This finding is not a surprise since Phuket is a well-known destination for its beautiful beaches and natural environment. Millions of international tourists come to Phuket to admire this attribute. Several studies (Sangpikul, 2010; Thongkundam, 2012) indicated that the beauty of Phuket's beaches is the top tourist attraction and the most important factor associated with destination loyalty. This reason could help justify the above finding.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

This is the final chapter of the research report. The purpose of this chapter is to summarize research findings, provide recommendations, and address research limitations and future research opportunities.

5.1 Conclusions

Based on the research objectives, this study has summarized the research findings as follows:

According to the **general findings**, the top three most favorable tourists' travel experience in Phuket were 1) enjoying beaches 2) appreciating the beauty of natural environment, and 3) experiencing good services for accommodation and facilities. While the least two favorable travel experience were 1) cleanliness in Phuket and 2) traveling within Phuket. When comparing based on the regions, Asian and European respondents had different travel experiences on some issues such as climate and destination cleanliness. European respondents seemed to rate lower score on these two issues than Asian counterparts. With regards to tourist satisfaction towards Phuket, the top three most satisfied attributes are 1) beaches 2) friendliness of local people, and 3) business services whereas the least satisfied attributes are 1) cleanliness and 2) accessibility. According to the statistical testing, Asian respondents seemed to be more satisfied with Phuket's attributes than its counterpart. Finally, regarding the destination loyalty, it was found that both groups had a similarity on the likelihood to return to Phuket and the likelihood to recommend Phuket to others.

In relation to the **major findings**, based on the path analysis through SEM method, the study found that only travel experience associated with people had a positive direct effect on destination loyalty while the rests did not have a significant relationship with destination loyalty. This finding confirmed partial relationship between travel experience and destination loyalty. However, all travel experiences factors had positive direct effects on tourist satisfaction. This result fully confirmed the relationship between travel experience and tourist satisfaction. Furthermore, all travel experiences factors also had positive indirect effects on destination loyalty through tourist satisfaction. Finally, the structural equation model proposed in this study supported the statistically significant relationship between travel experience, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty. Given the final structural model, travel experience partially affected destination loyalty, at the same time, it also indirectly affected destination loyalty through tourist satisfaction as a moderating variable. Meanwhile, all travel experiences directly affected tourist satisfaction, and indirectly affected destination loyalty. **In overall**, this study has confirmed the assumption that there is an existence of the

relationship between travel experience, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty by showing the direct and indirect effects among the three variables.

5.2 Recommendations

The part aims to provide important practical recommendations for local authorities and destination managers in order to use the benefits of the current research findings to improve and develop Phuket's tourism.

Firstly, based on the general findings on tourists' travel experience and tourist satisfaction towards Phuket, the finding revealed that Phuket is facing several challenges such as cleanliness and accessibility. Therefore, the government sector and related parties should focus on these issues by working together on setting a strategic plan and action plan to cope with the above challenges. For example, they may plan or manage in terms of staff and garbage bins in major tourist attractions. Furthermore, a concept of "Green Phuket" or "Keep Phuket Green" should be seriously campaigned and undertaken among local people, business sector and tourists to reduce the garbage problem. Regarding the problem of accessibility (local transportation), the government should pay attention to the development of local transportation in terms of sufficiency and reasonable cost. This challenge may require the development on city infrastructure and a master plan (short term and long term plans) to reduce the problem through various stakeholders both locally (city administrators) and centrally (Ministry of Transport) due to a complicated task. In a short-term plan, more public accessibility should be provided in terms of vehicles and services (e.g. public/private bus, taxi, van). Meanwhile, for the long-term plan, the government should pay attention to the investment and infrastructure development.

Secondly, according to the major SEM findings, destination managers should understand and closely consider the relationship between travel experience, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty as established from this study. According to the SEM findings, it was found that only travel experience associated with "people" had the *direct effect* on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty, at the same time, it also had the *indirect effect* on tourist satisfaction. This suggests that *people* (i.e. local residents, vendors, and service staff) play a crucial role in building tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty to Phuket. In other words, the more favorable travel experience tourists have with local people, the higher their satisfaction and loyalty are. This finding should provide an important implication for local authorities and tourism organization to concern about the "people" as an essential component contributing to Phuket's tourism. For instance, they may work together to create a public awareness for local people (including residents, venders, service staff) for being a kind and friendly host to welcome and assist tourists. Related work-shops, seminars and campaigns may help

to achieve this task through the collaboration between government, business, and educational institutes. In particular, the educational institutes (schools and colleges) are an essential part to enhance and foster this important value within their institutes. The government and private sectors may also create awareness and train their employees on this issue as well. In addition, regular campaigns or related activities may be established to build a good experience and relationship between hosts and visitors such as beach cleaning, friendship sports, food festival, local events or other social events.

Thirdly, the SEM findings have indicated that all of the travel experience factors had positive direct effects on tourist satisfaction. This may imply that anything tourists experience during their trips would directly affect their satisfaction. Therefore, this finding provides an important implication for local authorities to keep in mind about building tourist satisfaction through various approaches. This may involve the development of 1) infrastructure (accessibility, local transportation), 2) the standard of business services (accommodation, restaurants, tour operators, entertainment), and 3) the conservation of tourism resources (natural and cultural attractions). Tourist safety and city cleanliness should also be emphasized. Related parties should have policies, plans and procedures to manage these tasks through the network of government agency, private sector, and local community.

Finally, it should be noted that tourist satisfaction had a strong effect on destination loyalty (with standardized path coefficient = 0.75). This suggests that tourist satisfaction is highly related to destination loyalty. In other words, tourists with high satisfaction with the destination are more likely to revisit Phuket. Therefore, the government and local authorities should consider the role of tourist satisfaction in enhancing destination loyalty (Chi & Qu, 2008). Importantly, both of them should be the key players in managing and planning destination attributes (infrastructure) in order to promote higher level of tourist satisfaction and revisitation (Chi & Qu, 2008). They may work together to manage destination attributes through appropriate strategy, plan or project. For instance, in order to maintain and manage natural resources (i.e. beaches, islands, forestry areas), protection policy, conservation plan, and legal action should be seriously taken into consideration. In particular, the sustainable management approach should emphasized. There should be also a regular monitor from city administrators and tourism officials to visit beaches and natural areas in Phuket throughout the year to monitor the development and quality of the tourism sites.

In general, Phuket's tourism strategies are often based on mass market, and marketing approaches are focused on 3S products (sea, sand, sun). The contribution of this study from the above recommendations may assist the local authorities and related parties to define Phuket's tourism strategies by highlighting tourists' travel experience in Phuket with the nature (beaches) and Thai hospitality (friendliness of local people).

5.3 Theoretical Contributions

Travel experience, one of the important variables associated with tourists' trip at the destination, *however*, very little effort has explored it in relation to tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. In particularly, there is a lack of empirical studies examining the effect of travel experience on tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. Based on the theoretical assumption, this study, therefore, has added and examined this variable in order to test the relationship and its effects on the tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty in Phuket. Through the SEM method, the finding has **confirmed** the assumption by revealing the relationship between the three variables (constructs). The study indicated that there were some relationships between travel experience, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty; both direct and indirect effects. In particular, travel experience (with people) had a direct effect on destination loyalty whereas it also had an indirect effect on destination loyalty through tourist satisfaction as intervening variable. With this finding, the relationship of the three constructs has been established through the current study by **extending** the existing knowledge and related literature on destination loyalty. Given the SEM finding, travel experience may be regarded as another important variable associated with tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty. This finding has yielded a better understanding between the three constructs, and is worth for future research by applying the structural model established from this study to be used in other areas (e.g. Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Pattaya) for the benefits of increasing loyal tourists to Thailand.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research Opportunities

Although the researcher attempts to ensure that the results of the current study are reliable and valid, there are some limitations associated with the study that needs to be addressed. Also, future research opportunities are provided.

Firstly, this study used a convenience sampling method (non-probability sampling), thus the results of the study may not widely generalize to the whole population (international tourists to Phuket). In addition, due to the limitation with convenience sampling method, a small number of tourists from different countries were collected during the surveys; some groups of tourists may be less than 10 people. Future research may use a quota sampling method to compensate a drawback of the convenience sampling.

Secondly, this study collected data from Asian and European tourists, the result from the study may not be generalized beyond this population. Moreover, the SEM analysis was performed with a combination of both groups (no separation). Consequently, the proposed structural model and its three constructs may show a partial relationship between travel experience and destination loyalty. Future research may conduct the SEM method by separating and analyzing each group which may yield a better/valued structural model.

       Thirdly, this study collected data from Phuket only. Future research may be undertaken in other major cities that may extend the knowledge of destination loyalty such as Chiang Mai, Pattaya and Bangkok.

       Finally, since this is a quantitative study, a qualitative research examining travel experience of international visitors to Thailand is still limited. Thus, the qualitative research methods such as interviews or focus groups should be encouraged in order to get more in-depth information and a better understanding of international tourists' travel experience in Thailand.

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Questionnaire

Research Project: A Study of Travel Experience, Tourist Satisfaction and Destination Loyalty to Phuket

This research project is granted by Dhurakij Pundit University, Bangkok. The objective of the research is to survey travel experience, tourist satisfaction and their loyalty to Phuket. The finding of the research will be used for academic purpose and all information will be treated confidently. The questionnaire consists of 4 parts. Please answer all the questions.
Your kind cooperation is greatly appreciated. Thank you

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1. General Information

Instruction: Please choose the answer that match your general information.

1. Which region do you come from? 1) Europe, country…………………………..2) Asia, country……………………………

2. Gender: 1) male   2) female

3. Age: 1) 20 - 30   2) 31 – 45   3) 46 - 59   4) 60 or more

4. Marital status: 1) single   2) married   3) widowed/divorced/separated

5. Educational: 1) High school or lower   2) Bachelor/college degree 3) Master degree or higher

6. Occupation: 1) students   2) company employee   3) government officer   4) business owner

5) independent/self-employed   6) unemployment   7) housewife   8) retired   9) Others,……...

7. Monthly income: 1) less than US$ 1,000   2) US$ 1,001 – 2,500

                          3) US$ 2,501 – 4,000   4) US$ 4,001 or higher

8. Number of visit to Phuket: 1) first time   2) 2-3 times   3) 4-5 times   4) 6 times or more

2. Travel Experience in Phuket

Please indicate the level of your opinion for your travel experience in Phuket in each question below.

------------------------------- Level of your opinion --------------------------

Your Travel Experience in Phuket					
2.1 I enjoy beaches in Phuket.	5 (most agree)	4	3	2	1 (least agree)
2.2 I like beautiful natural environment of Phuket.	5 (most agree)	4	3	2	1 (least agree)
2.3 Phuket has a pleasant weather.	5 (most agree)	4	3	2	1 (least agree)
2.4 Phuket has good services for accommodation and facilities.	5 (most agree)	4	3	2	1 (least agree)
2.5 I like Thai culture and local way of life	5 (most agree)	4	3	2	1 (least agree)
2.6 Service staff/employees are nice and helpful.	5 (most agree)	4	3	2	1 (least agree)
2.7 Local people in Phuket are friendly to tourists.	5 (most agree)	4	3	2	1 (least agree)
2.8 Phuket has a low cost of living.	5 (most agree)	4	3	2	1 (least agree)
2.9 I feel safe during my stay in Phuket.	5 (most agree)	4	3	2	1 (least agree)

	Level of your opinion				
2.10 Phuket is a valued destination (worth for money).					
2.11 Food in Phuket is hygienic.	5 (most agree)	4	3	2	1 (least agree)
2.12 I enjoy leisure and recreation activities in Phuket.	5 (most agree)	4	3	2	1 (least agree)
2.13 Phuket is a clean city.	5 (most agree)	4	3	2	1 (least agree)
2.14 I experience easy traveling within Phuket.	5 (most agree)	4	3	2	1 (least agree)

3. Tourist Satisfaction in Phuket

Pleas indicate the level of your satisfaction toward Phuket in each question below.

----------------------------- Level of your satisfaction -----------------------------

Tourist Satisfaction in Phuket					
3.1 Beaches in Phuket	5 (most satisfied)	4	3	2	1 (least satisfied)
3.2 Friendliness of local people	5 (most satisfied)	4	3	2	1 (least satisfied)
3.3 Local culture/cultural attractions	5 (most satisfied)	4	3	2	1 (least satisfied)
3.4 Leisure/recreation activities	5 (most satisfied)	4	3	2	1 (least satisfied)
3.5 Service of businesses (hotel, restaurant, tour operators)	5 (most satisfied)	4	3	2	1 (least satisfied)
3.6 Nightlife/entertainment	5 (most satisfied)	4	3	2	1 (least satisfied)
3.7 Safety in Phuket	5 (most satisfied)	4	3	2	1 (least satisfied)
3.8 Prices of products/services	5 (most satisfied)	4	3	2	1 (least satisfied)
3.9 Cleanliness in Phuket	5 (most satisfied)	4	3	2	1 (least satisfied)
3.10 Accessibility	5 (most satisfied)	4	3	2	1 (least satisfied)
3.11 In overall, how much are you satisfied with your holiday/vacation in Phuket?	5 (most satisfied)	4	3	2	1 (least satisfied)

4. Your Loyalty to Phuket

Please indicate the level of your opinion for your loyalty to Phuket in each question below.

------------------------------ Level of your opinion ------------------------------

4.1 In the next 1-3 years, how likely will you return to Phuket again?	5 (most likely)	4	3	2	1 (least likely)
4.2 How likely will you recommend or suggest Phuket to your friends, family or relatives?	5 (most likely)	4	3	2	1 (least likely)

Thank you for your cooperation