

## The Tourist Motivation and Behavior of International Backpackers Attending the Full Moon Party in Thailand\*

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### Abstract

This research article surveyed international backpackers traveling to attend the Full Moon Party in Pha-Ngan Island, Thailand. The purposes of this research include 1) studying the behavior of international backpackers; 2) analyzing the level of international backpackers' motivation, especially their push and pull factors; and 3) comparing the relationship between international backpackers' characteristics and their behaviors and motivations. The participants in this research consisted of 300 international backpackers, who were 18 or above in age and purposefully travelled to attend the Full Moon Party in Pha-Ngan Island in Suratthani province. Data was collected using a survey and then was statistically tested using the chi-square method and Pearson's correlation coefficient at a significance level of 0.05. The results of exploratory factor analysis (EFA) indicated a total of 10 factors with 24 variables. These factors were classified into 4 push factors— 1) escape and novelty seeking, 2) feeling free, 3) opening up to the world, and 4) social needs—and 6 pull factors—1) partying, 2) uniqueness, 3) only for myself, 4) sea lover, 5) diversity, and 6) loner. It was observed that the personal factors of international backpackers were most closely related to their motivation factors (i.e., push and pull factors) and their travel behaviors at a significance level.

**Keywords:** Tourists, Backpackers, Tourist Behavior, Tourist Motivation, Full Moon Party

**JEL Classification Code:** L26, M31, Z32

### 1. Introduction

In Thailand, tourism has become a principal way of producing national revenue and economic circulation. In

addition, tourism has stimulated national development through investments in infrastructure and related services, spreading revenue and economic activities to local communities, and improving the quality of life for citizens. In 2019, for example, revenue from travel and tourism contributed 3,319 billion Baht which was 19.7% of the GDP and at the same time it also contributed in creating approximately 8 million jobs or 21.4% of total employment (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2020). Indeed, 2,137.5 billion Baht which is equivalent to 21.1% of total exports, came from international tourists' spending (WTTC, 2020). In terms of the number of international tourists, the Ministry of Tourism and Sport (2019) reported that 39.8 million international tourists arriving in Thailand in 2019 were divided into two groups. The first group consisted of 29.7 million international tourists (74.29%) who made plans and traveled on their own, known as foreign individual tourists (FITs). The remaining 10.1 million (25.71%) traveled to Thailand using services offered by travel companies or package tours. The majority of international tourists came from East Asian countries, followed by European countries (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2019).

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Tourist arrivals through the mode of package tours and services offered by the travel companies, also termed as group tours or mass tourism, were formerly popular, especially for those traveling to Thailand for the first time. For FITs, international tourists generally planned routes and activities on their own, and probably they used a few of the services from travel agencies as well. However, one subgroup of FITs—backpackers—distinctively differed from others. Backpackers, as defined by Hampton and Hamzah (2016), are “tourists who travel with [other] backpackers, live on a budget, and normally travel for longer periods than conventional holidays.” They arrange their own itineraries, routes, transportation, guidebooks, IT, and activities at destinations (Audrey, 2018). As such, backpacker tourism has become very popular and could be seen in an increased community of online communications to share/exchange information and experiences with others (Pooyongyut, 2016).

The different speeds, rhythms and paces of backpacker travel have also helped to promote economic and environmental sustainability (Iaquinto, 2018). In Thailand, the diversity of natural resources, cultural heritage, festivals, local identities, outstanding infrastructure, transport, and hospitality has increasingly attracted backpackers from all over the globe. For example, backpackers from Australia consider Bangkok as a major air hub and regional entry point to other backpacker destinations, including Koh Pha-ngan in Suratthani Province (Hampton & Hamzah, 2016). This research article focuses on Koh Pha-ngan, located in Suratthani Province, the third province in Southern Thailand, ranked behind Phuket and Krabi provinces in attracting the attention of the international tourists. In addition, its global reputation for the Full Moon Party, held outdoors monthly on the beach and ranked among the world’s top five parties (Malam, 2008), has drawn backpackers from around the globe to the island (Hampton & Hamzah, 2016; Malam, 2008). In 2018, a total of 825,000 out of more than 1.1 million tourists (approximately 75%) coming to Koh Pha-ngan intended to attend the Full Moon Party, generating approximately 2 billion Baht got local businesses and residents on the island (Thai PBS, 2018). In addition to the Full Moon Party, the Half Moon Festival, the Black Moon Party, and other tourist activities (i.e., Sramanorah waterfall, Ban Sabaii Beach Bar, snorkeling, scuba diving, bird watching, trail trekking, and the lifestyles of local fishing villages) also attract visitors to the island (Tobi & Marcel, 2020).

Rogerson (2008) noticed that international research on backpackers has two streams of academic investigation. First, researchers have examined the cultural and social aspects of backpacking tourism. The other stream involves market-related and policy-relevant studies. In this study, the researchers intended to further Rogerson (2008) market-related study on backpackers. This study explores their motives and behaviors while traveling to attend the Full Moon Party in Koh Pha-ngan, Suratthani Province.

The empirical results could be used for marketing and attracting international backpackers to the island. For local businesses, the implications from this study could provide guidance on how to best respond to the needs of their customers. Meanwhile, government and institutional bodies might refer to the findings and recommendations to implement their policies and strategies in planning, developing, marketing, and promoting the island (Ayusuk & Autcharyapanitkul, 2017).

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Tourism, Tourists, and Backpackers

Tourism has become a complex and globalized phenomenon, showing socioeconomic importance (Darbellay & Stock, 2012). More specifically, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (1994) defined tourism as follows: Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon that entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents), and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure. According to the above definition of tourism, visitors to a destination include both “tourists” and “excursionists.” Indeed, Cunha (2014) explained that “tourists” implies visitors who stay over 24 hours or spend at least one night at an establishment at the destination, while excursionists or day visitors do not stay overnight. The decision-making involved in traveling to a destination encompasses the desire to travel, collecting and evaluating information, making choices about travel, preparation and experience, and evaluating satisfaction (Mathieson & Wall, 1982).

Juganaru et al. (2016) referred to similar concepts and definitions of tourism in the Methodological Manual for Tourism Statistics, commonly known as the Eurostat Data Explorer. They concluded that “tourism refers to the activities of visitors” and “is a subset of travel” (Juganaru et al., 2016). Travelers move between different locations for any reason and any duration, but visitors move forward to their destinations. Visitors, alternatively called tourists, spend less than one year traveling (Brochado & Gameiro, 2013). They travel for business, leisure or other personal purposes—not for employment or studies. Their travel might occur within a country (as such, they would be called domestic tourists) or across two or more countries (in which case they would be called international tourists). For measurement at the border of international tourism statistics, inbound tourists refer to the non-resident arrivals in a country, while outbound tourists denote residents leaving the country (Juganaru et al., 2016).

In this research, inbound tourists to Thailand were investigated. The researchers specifically targeted backpackers because they have the potential to make a direct

contribution to local economic growth (Visser, 2003) and environmental conservation (Zaradic et al., 2009). Advances in the development of transportation networks, transport technology, low-cost airline companies, and low-budget accommodations have increasingly and globally contributed to backpackers' rising mobility (Richards & Wilson, 2004). Compared to more traditional kinds of tourists, Iaquinto (2018) argued that backpackers have longer holiday behavior. Their speed, rhythms, and paces of travel help to promote and contribute to a destination's sustainability in terms of direct spending on local economic activities and the biophysical environment (Iaquinto, 2018). Jensen and Hjalager (2019) also found that host site engagement and nature factors are the motivating factors for recurring and continuous backpacking travelers.

## 2.2. Theories of Tourist Behavior and Motivation

Tourist behavior comprises of all the actions that the tourists engage in while they are traveling, they might be aware of some of their actions while they might not be aware of some. Tourist behavior may or may not be observed depending on different purposes and implications of the travellers (Paris & Teye, 2010). In general, tourist behavior can be investigated at two levels. The first level, called "overt behavior," which refers to behaviors or actions that could be observed or sensed by others. The second level, or tourists' covert behavior, denotes their internal or inner-body actions, thoughts and controlled emotions. Both covert and overt behaviors are often related, but covert behavior usually influences overt actions (Yaemjamuang, 2018).

Tourist motivation is derived from motivation theory. (Kotler & Keller, 2016) stated that individuals have an array of different needs at all times. Some are physiological needs and involve tension (e.g., hunger, illness). Other needs are initiated from psychological tension (e.g., belonging, respect, ownership, and enjoyment). Once needs have been stimulated appropriately, motivation emerges and is transformed into action. In Maslow (1954) hierarchy of needs, an individual's array of different needs can be grouped into basic physiological and biological needs, moving up to the highest level, called self-fulfillment or self-actualization. The travel career ladder (TCL), initially developed by Pearce and Caltabiano (1983), uses Maslow's hierarchy of needs and developed the travel career ladder (TCL) in describing tourist motives. Like Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Pearce and Caltabiano (1983) classified tourist motivations into five stages: relaxation, stimulation, relationships, self-esteem and development, and fulfillment. Once tourists gain more travel experience, they look forward to fulfilling their higher stage of needs. It was also found that traveler satisfaction and quality of life had a profound effect on traveler loyalty (Rohman, 2020),

as well as proper advertising and positive word of mouth was also a key factor in increasing the number of tourists (Paudel et al., 2021) including the promotion of natural resources, raising awareness of environmental protection, creating a local cultural identity, creating a special product for tourists, strengthening the support of local authorities for tourism activities and price policy development are important factors in satisfying tourists (Le & Le, 2020).

## 2.3. Push and Pull Factors

In investigating tourist motivations and behaviors, Jeong (2014) and Seabra et al. (2016) suggested that the framework of push and pull factors has been the most employed. The push-pull factors or the sign-gestalt paradigm, originally articulated by Tolman (1959) and later publicly introduced to scholars by Dann (1977), have been used to answer why people decide to travel, or what motivates them to travel. This framework explains that people are pushed by their internal motivations and pulled by external stimulations. Their travel decisions, therefore, are propelled by their internal motivations and pulled by a destination's beauty and attractiveness. To be more specific, the push and pull factors used in this study are as follows.

Push factors – Needs that emerge from tourists' internal motivations and stimulations, which influence their decision to travel instead of doing other intangible activities, and are related to their sociopsychology and environment, creating internal desires among individual tourists.

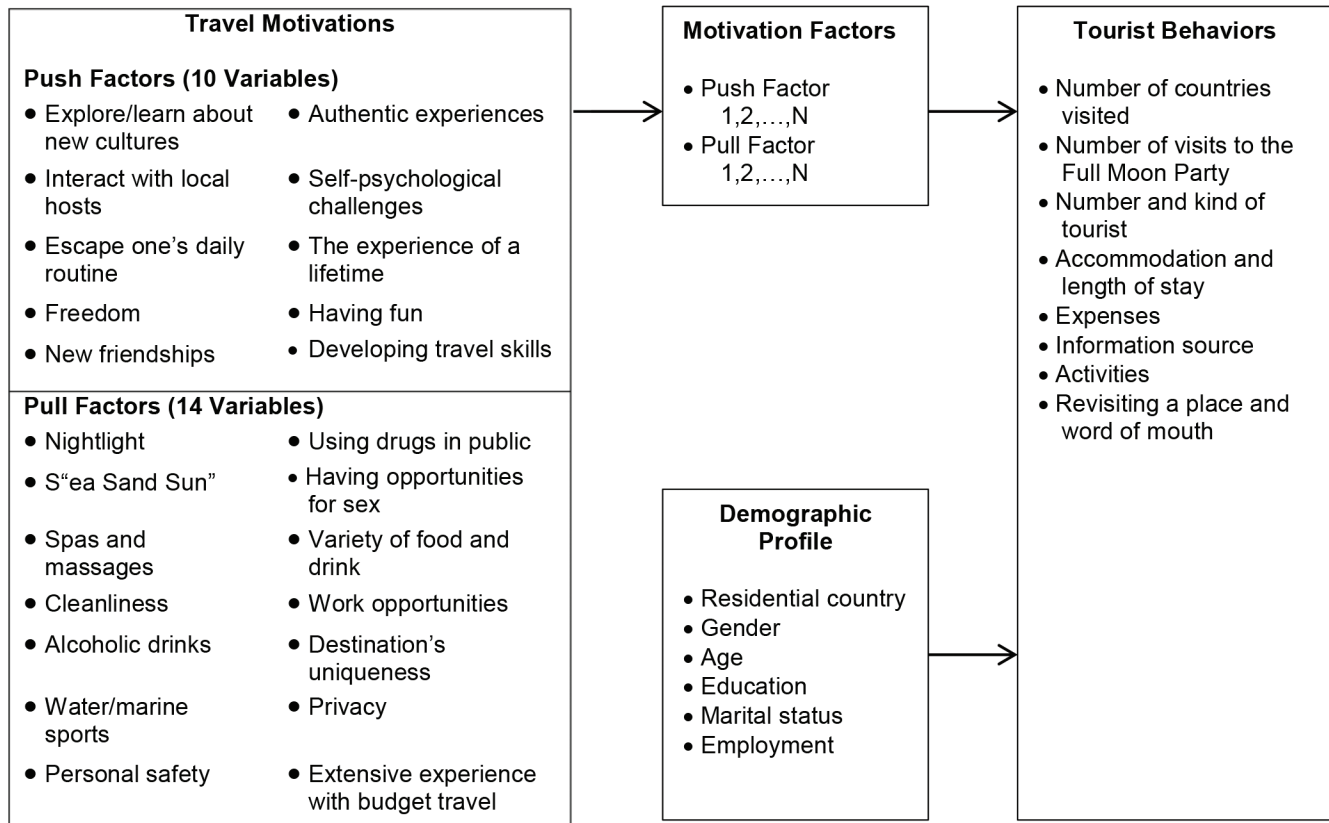
Pull factors – Needs that emerge from tourists' external stimulations, which influence their decision to travel. In general, pull factors are related to tangible characteristics or elements of a destination (e.g., beaches, tourism facilities, cheap airfare, etc.).

In this research, travel motivations, including push and pull factors, were investigated to identify tourists' behaviors using the conceptual framework in Figure 1.

## 3. Research Methods and Materials

### 3.1. Population and Sampling

International backpackers, 18 years of age or older, purposefully traveling to attend the Full Moon Party in Pha-Ngan Island in Suratthani Province, were included in this investigation. The researchers used non-probability statistics through accidental or convenience sampling for data collection techniques. The appropriate size of a sample was calculated using exploratory factor analysis, 5–10 times of the observed variables (if the size  $\geq 100$  samplings; 300 samplings = appropriate; and 500+ samplings = highly appropriate), based on justifications by Hair et al. (2009) and Comrey and Lee (1992). For this study, there were 24 observed variables. The appropriate



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Research Framework

size of a sample was 120–240 participants, as previously verified by Hair et al. (2009), and 300 or more participants, as previously described by Comrey and Lee (1992). The decision to collect data from 300 informants in this study was therefore rigorously sufficient to analyze the results.

### 3.2. Data Analysis

The instrument for data collection used in this research was a questionnaire. The researcher adjusted this questionnaire by studying documents regarding the theories and concepts of related research contributions. The SPSS program was used to analyze the basic statistics of the examined data such as frequencies, means, and standard deviations, and the data was further analyzed using an exploratory factor analysis, and inferential analysis.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Descriptive Analysis

The respondents were mostly male (59.0%), 21–25 years old (48.0%) or 26–30 years old (28.0%), single (67.7%), Bachelor's degree holders (58.3%), employed

(30.0%), and European (61.3%). Most international backpackers purposefully visited Thailand and attended the Full Moon Party for the first time. The second large group of respondents had attended the party 2–3 times previously. They mostly traveled with friends or relatives, as well as in couples and with a small group of 3–4 people. They searched for travel information using the internet, social media and tourism websites, spent 4–7 days on the island, and stayed overnight at resorts, bungalows, and hotels. Average total spending was 1,000 Baht per day. They enjoyed general activities like other tourists did while staying on the island. In addition, they visited natural attractions (i.e., waterfalls, mountains, and trails and trekking), were involved in outdoor and adventure activities, and enjoyed the nightlife.

Regarding international backpackers' motivation, most respondents had a high level of significance for all push-factor variables ( $\bar{x} = 4.03$ , S.D. = 1.269). A similar outcome was found in investigating the pull-factor variables ( $\bar{x} = 3.97$ , S.D. = 1.263), but only the variable of opportunities for sex indicated a moderate level of significance ( $\bar{x} = 3.14$ , S.D. = 1.315). Most respondents also confirmed whether they were revisiting the destination, signaling a high level of loyalty to the destination ( $\bar{x} = 4.25$ , S.D. = 1.083). Finally, international

backpackers intended to imply their word, indicating a high level of loyalty to the destination or suggesting that others visit the destination as well ( $\bar{x} = 4.19$ , S.D. = 1.051).

## 4.2. Exploratory Factor Analysis: EFA

The results of initial data appropriateness in elementary analysis (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin; KMO) and Bartlett's test were sufficiently related, indicating the exploratory factor analysis of international backpackers' motivation (see the findings in Table 1).

The analytical results of the push variables revealed a KMO of 0.653, an average distribution of the  $\chi^2$  at 522.906 for Bartlett's test, and significance of 0.000 or less than 0.05. Hence, H0 in this study was rejected, and the 10 variables associated with the push factors were sufficiently related for factor analysis. There were 4 anticipated push factors derived from the 10 variables at 65.25% variance. Each factor consisted of 2–3 variables, as follows:

- Push Factor 1: Escape- and novelty-seeking tourists consisted of 3 variables, including escape one's daily routine (Push 5), having fun (Push 7), and authentic experiences (Push 3).
- Push Factor 2: Feeling free contained 2 variables, including the experience of a lifetime (Push 8) and freedom (Push 10).
- Push Factor 3: Opening up to the world comprised 2 variables, including exploring/learning about new cultures (Push 1) and developing travel skills (Push 9).
- Push Factor 4: Social needs consisted of 3 variables, including new friendships (Push 6), interacting with local hosts (Push 2) and self-psychological challenges (Push 4).

The analytical outcomes of the pull variables indicated a KMO of 0.601, with an average chi-square distribution of 613.192 for Bartlett's test, and a significance of 0.000 or less than 0.05. Hence, H0 in this study was rejected, and the 14 variables associated with pull motivation were sufficiently related for factor analysis. There were 6 anticipated pull factors derived from 14 variables at 64.97 variance in the following.

- Pull Factor 1: Party consisted of 3 variables, including using drugs in public (Pull 2), nightlife (Pull 1), and alcoholic drinks (Pull 3).
- Pull Factor 2: Unique comprised 2 variables, including spas and massages (Pull 9) and the destination's uniqueness (Pull 7).
- Pull Factor 3: Only for myself consisted of 2 variables, including work opportunities (Pull 11) and personal safety (Pull 13).

- Pull Factor 4: Sea lover contained 2 variables, including water/marine sports (Pull 10) and "sea sand sun" (Pull 5).
- Pull Factor 5: Diversity embodied 2 variables, including extensive experience with budget travel (Pull 6) and a variety of food and drink (Pull 8).
- Pull Factor 6: Loner consisted of 3 variables, including having opportunities for sex (Pull 4), privacy (Pull 14) and cleanliness (Pull 12).

## 4.3. Inferential Analysis

The findings showed a significant relationship (0.05) between the respondents' demographic traits and their travel behaviors (see Table 2).

- Respondents' residences were significantly related to the majority of the behavior that they engaged in, excluding people traveling together, their intended desire to revisit, and word of mouth.
- Respondents' genders were significantly related to numerous countries they visited, the frequency of their visits to the Full Moon Party, and their intention to revisit in the future.
- Respondents' ages were significantly related to their behaviors in choosing accommodations, length of stay, and information source.
- Respondents' education levels were significantly related to the number of countries they visited, the frequency of their visits to the Full Moon Party, and length of stay.
- Respondents' marital status was significantly related to the number of countries they visited, the frequency of their visits to the Full Moon Party, the length of their stay, and their expenses and activities while traveling.
- Respondents' employment was significantly related to the number of their previous visits to the Full Moon Party, people traveling together, accommodations, length of stay, and information sources.

The findings illustrated in Table 3 suggest an inferential relationship between international backpackers' motivations and their behaviors while traveling to the Full Moon Party. For push motivation factors, analytical statistics indicating relationships at different levels of 0.05 between push motivations and the behaviors of international backpackers who attended the Full Moon Party included the following.

- Push Factor 1: Escape and novelty seeking tourists were significantly related to the number of companions they had while traveling and also who were those companions, length of stay, tourism website information sources, outdoor and adventure activities, and relaxation at the accommodation.

**Table 1:** EFA Results of International Backpackers' Travel Motivations to Attend the Full Moon Party, Based on Push-factor Variables and Pull-factor Variables

Motivational Factors and Variables	Factor Loading	Communalities	EV <sup>a</sup>	% Variance	Factor Mean <sup>b</sup>
<b>Push Factor 1: Escape and Novelty Seeking Tourists</b>			1.714	17.14%	4.23 (1.20)
Push 5 Escape one's daily routine	0.767	0.724			
Push 7 Having fun	0.761	0.646			
Push 3 Authentic experiences	0.450	0.439			
<b>Push Factor 2: Feeling free</b>			1.703	17.03%	4.01 (1.30)
Push 8 The experience of a lifetime	0.871	0.815			
Push 10 Freedom/independence	0.784	0.673			
<b>Push Factor 3: Opening up to the world</b>			1.574	15.74%	4.14 (1.12)
Push 1 Explore/study other cultures	0.769	0.625			
Push 9 Develop travel skills	0.653	0.533			
<b>Push Factor 4: Social needs</b>			1.531	15.31%	3.78 (1.42)
Push 6 New friendships	0.820	0.747			
Push 2 Interactions with local hosts	0.689	0.713			
Push 4 Self-psychological challenges	0.586	0.608			
<b>Pull Factor 1: Party</b>			1.714	12.24	3.94 (1.32)
Pull 2 Using drugs in public	-0.799	0.772			
Pull 1 Nightlife	0.778	0.649			
Pull 3 Alcoholic drinks	0.511	0.528			
<b>Pull Factor 2: Uniqueness</b>			1.584	11.31	4.24 (1.15)
Pull 9 Spas and massages	0.809	0.774			
Pull 7 Destination's uniqueness	0.715	0.667			
<b>Pull Factor 3: Only for myself</b>			1.562	11.16	4.10 (1.23)
Pull 11 Work opportunities	0.756	0.715			
Pull 13 Personal safety	0.684	0.640			
<b>Pull Factor 4: Sea Lover</b>			1.520	10.86	4.06 (1.20)
Pull 10 Water/marine sports	0.784	0.691			
Pull 5 "Sea sand sun"	0.616	0.660			
<b>Pull Factor 5: Diversity</b>			1.399	10.00	3.78 (1.35)
Pull 6 Extensive experience with budget travel	0.829	0.719			
Pull 8 Variety of foods and drinks	0.434	0.626			
<b>Pull Factor 6: Loner</b>			1.318	9.411	3.89 (1.27)
Pull 4 Having opportunities for sex	0.607	0.410			
Pull 14 Privacy	0.728	0.675			
Pull 12 Cleanliness	0.382	0.571			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. <sup>a</sup>Eigenvalue;  
<sup>b</sup>Mean scale: 5 = Extremely important, 1 = Extremely unimportant, standard derivations in parentheses.

**Table 2:** Results of Inferential Analysis Between the Demographic Traits and the Behavior of International Backpackers Who Attend the Full Moon Party

Behavior of International Backpackers	Resident	Gender	Age	Education	Marital Status	Employment
1. Number of countries visited	√	√	×	√	√	×
2. Number of visits to the Full Moon Party	√	√	×	√	√	√
3. Traveling companions	×	×	×	√	√	√
4. Number of tourists traveling together	√	×	×	√	×	×
5. Accommodations						
• Hotel	×	×	×	×	×	×
• Guesthouse	√	×	√	×	×	√
• Resort	√	×	√	×	×	√
• Hostel	√	×	√	×	×	√
• Bungalow	√	×	√	×	×	√
• Rental house	√	√	√	×	√	√
6. Length of stay	√	×	√	√	√	√
7. Expenses	√	×	×	×	√	×
8. Information sources						
• Self-knowledge	√	×	√	×	×	√
• Relatives or friends told them about it	√	×	√	×	×	√
• Past experience	√	×	√	×	×	×
• Travel magazine	√	×	√	×	×	×
• Social media	√	×	√	×	×	√
• Tourism website	√	×	√	×	×	√
• Internet	√	×	√	√	√	√
• Travel guidebook	√	×	√	×	×	√
9. Activities						
• General activities that others do	√	×	×	×	√	×
• Nightlife	√	×	√	×	√	√
• Outdoor and adventure activities	√	×	×	√	√	√
• Visiting natural attractions	×	×	√	×	×	×
• Visiting historical and cultural attractions	×	×	×	×	√	×
• Water/marine activities	×	×	×	√	√	×
• Massages and spas	√	√	√	√	√	×
• No activities, only relaxing at the accommodation	√	×	×	×	√	×
10. Intention to revisit	×	√	×	×	×	×
11. Telling about the place/recommending it to others	×	×	×	×	×	×

√Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0.05$ ; × Not a statistically significant difference:  $p > 0.05$ .

**Table 3:** Results of Inferential Analysis Between the Motivations and Behaviors of International Backpackers who Attended the Full Moon Party

Behaviors of International Backpackers	Push Motivation Factors					Pull Motivation Factor				
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Number of countries visited	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2. Number of visits to the Full Moon Party	x	x	√	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
3. Travel companions	x	x	x	√	x	x	x	x	√	x
4. Number of tourists traveling together	√	x	x	√	x	x	x	x	x	x
5. Accommodation										
• Hotel	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
• Guesthouse	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
• Resort	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
• Hostel	x	x	x	√	√	x	x	x	x	x
• Bungalow	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
• Rental house	x	x	x	x	x	x	√	x	x	x
6. Length of stay	√	x	x	√	x	√	√	x	x	√
7. Expenses	x	x	√	x	x	x	√	√	x	x
8. Information sources										
• Self-knowledge	x	x	x	√	x	x	x	√	√	x
• Relatives or friends told them about it	x	x	√	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
• Past experience	x	x	√	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
• Travel magazine	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
• Social media	x	√	x	√	x	x	x	x	x	√
• Tourism website	√	√	√	√	x	x	x	x	x	x
• Internet	x	√	x	√	x	x	√	√	x	x
• Travel guidebook	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
9. Activities										
• General activities that others do	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
• Nightlife	x	x	x	x	x	x	√	√	x	x
• Outdoor and adventure activities	√	x	x	x	x	x	√	x	x	x
• Visiting natural attractions	x	x	x	x	x	√	x	x	x	x
• Visiting historical and cultural attractions	x	x	x	x	x	x	√	x	x	x
• Water/marine activities	x	√	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	√
• Massage and spa	x	√	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
• No activities, only relaxing at the accommodation	√	x	x	x	x	√	√	x	√	√
10. Intended revisit	x	x	√	x	x	√	x	x	√	x
11. Telling about the destination/recommending it to others	x	x	x	x	x	x	√	x	x	√

√Statistically significant difference:  $p < 0.05$ ; \*Not a statistically significant difference:  $p < 0.05$ .



- Push Factor 2: Feeling free was significantly related to social media and tourism websites for tourism sources, internet, water/marine activities, diving, and spas and massages.
- Push Factor 3: Opening up to the world was found to be significantly related to the number of previous visits the travelers made to the Full Moon Party, expenses, word of mouth from friends or relatives for tourism sources, previous experiences, tourism websites, and their intention to revisit.
- Push Factor 4: Social needs was found to be significantly related to the number of companions the travelers had and also the profile of their companions, hostel accommodations, length of stay, self-knowledge as a tourism source, social media, tourism websites, and the internet.
- For pull motivation factors, analytical statistics showing relationships at different levels of 0.05 between pull motivations and the behaviors of international backpackers who attended the Full Moon Party included the following.
- Pull Factor 1: Party was significantly related to hostel accommodations.
- Pull Factor 2: Uniqueness was significantly related to the length of stay, visiting natural attractions, relaxations at the accommodation, and their intention to revisit.
- Pull Factor 3: Only for myself was significantly related to the rental house, length of stay, expenses, internet as an information source, nightlife, outdoor and adventure activities, visiting historical and cultural attractions, just relaxing at the accommodation, and telling about the destination/recommending it to others.
- Pull Factor 4: Sea lover was significantly related to expenses, internet, self-knowledge for tourism sources, and nightlife.
- Pull Factor 5: Diversity was significantly related to companions traveling together, self-knowledge of tourism sources, relaxation at accommodations, and the intention to revisit.
- Pull Factor 6: Loner was significantly related to length of stay, social media for tourism sources, water/marine activities, diving, just relaxing at the accommodation, and telling about/recommending the destination to others.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Regarding demographic traits, the respondents were mostly male, single, Bachelor's degree holders, employed, and 21–30 years old. It is very much possible or expected that the male tourists prefer adventure activities more than

their female counterparts, who look for convenient and safe travel. Gen Y tourists or working teenagers who earn and save money have purchasing power and are keener to travel compared to other generations. Single respondents who are independent (they do not yet have families) often have the freedom to make decisions. Hence, they might travel more often, spend more money, and stay overnight longer than other groups of married tourists.

Second, the results of exploratory factor analysis (EFA), using motivation, were more efficient than the demographics and behavior of international backpackers. Indeed, comparing different groups of international backpackers using both demography and behavior indicated similarities in most statistical testing or less practical EFA. As such, international backpackers traveling to attend the Full Moon Party were similar in terms of their demographic profiles and behaviors, but different in their travel motivations. The findings of this research support Kotler and Keller (2016) suggestions that although travelers may be similar in terms of demographic characteristics, their mental habits may be different.

Third, the motivations of international backpackers to attend the Full Moon Party could be categorized into 4 push factors and 6 pull factors. It seems that all 4 push factors reflect Maslow's hierarchical needs. For example, Push Factor 1: escape and novelty seeking tourists and Push Factor 2: Feeling free enabled international backpackers, as learning tools, to travel and explore different cultures different from their own, which underscores Maslow's physiological needs. As such, these tourists seek opportunities to get away from their routine lives, gain new and unique experiences, and to feel free from their repetitive lifestyles. In responding to their needs and motivations for traveling, a destination should offer or promote a new experience in terms of attractions, variety of food, activities, traditions, culture, and festivals that they have not experienced in their past travel and it enhances their joyful moments. Thus, international backpackers traveling to Koh Pha-Ngan should gain an authentic experience, be impressively satisfied, and intend to revisit in the future. Push Factor 3: Opening up to the world could be linked to Pearce's travel career ladder (Pearce & Caltabiano, 1983), which has been originally derived from Maslow's self-esteem and development. It appears that international backpackers traveling to attend to the Full Moon Party look forward to improve their intended special skills and capabilities. Push Factor 4: Social needs outstandingly reflect Maslow's love and belonging needs and Pearce's travel career ladder (Pearce & Caltabiano, 1983), indicating that tourists establish participative relationships and friendships with local hosts while traveling.

The pull motivation factors of international backpackers were related to previous studies in various regards. For example, Pull Factor 1: Party and Pull Factor, was the

main purpose of traveling for this group of tourists; simply responding to their need and motivation perhaps is the best way to enhance their satisfaction with the Full Moon Party and to anticipate their intention to revisit in the future and recommend the destination to others. Pull Factor 2: Uniqueness is reflected in Iso-Ahola (1982) study, implying that people travel to seek intrinsic rewards, especially for interpersonal needs in cultural learning, relaxation, and leisure. Pull Factor 3: Only for myself is related to Pearce's Travel Career Ladder (Pearce & Caltabiano, 1983), suggesting that traveling stimulation is relevant to an individual's safety concern. Thus, offering activities related to health and wellness tourism (i.e., a detoxification course, vegetarian and keto food, yoga and meditation) might be of interest. Pull Factor 4: Sea lover denotes that international backpackers are interested in and love beach destinations and marine tourism. As explained by Malam (2008), the physical beauty of geographical attractions and activities (e.g., beaches, coral reefs, the ocean, etc.) has caused Koh Pha-Ngan to gain the reputation of being a lost paradise. Not surprisingly, the island is included in backpacker routes in Southeast Asia (Hampton & Hamzah, 2016). Pull Factor 5: Diversity indicates that this group of tourists demands a variety of choices in traveling, experience, food and drinks, and cultural activities. Pull Factor 6: Loner points to specific needs for international backpackers. They demand a low level of disclosure and basic facilities, which reflects an initial need among human beings, "existence," as explained in Alderfer's ERG Theory (Alderfer, 1969), and physiological and safety needs among Maslow's 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> hierarchical needs.

Fourth, the behavioral outcomes of international backpackers who attended the Full Moon Party suggest that most travelers intended to attend it for the first time. They looked for adventure activities and entertainment; searched for information through the internet, social media, and tourism websites; spent 1,000 Baht per day on an average; and stayed at resorts and bungalows for 4–7 nights. Activities for international backpackers while staying on the island are generally like for other tourists, followed by visiting natural attractions (e.g., waterfalls, mountains); trail-trekking, outdoor and adventure activities; and enjoying nightlife. This set of behaviors reflects the unique characteristics of backpackers (Welk, 2004), who recognized low budget travel. Backpackers often need three essential things while traveling: accommodation, food, and transportation. For various enchanting attractions like natural beauty and geographical resources, cultural life, the identity of local communities, cuisine, festivals, the friendly characteristics of hosts, cheap living cost, sanitation and safety, and convenient transportation, Pha-ngan Island has become a popular backpacker travel destination in Southeast Asia (Hampton & Hamzah, 2016).

Finally, the findings regarding the intention to revisit and recommend the destination to others among international backpackers who attended the Full Moon Party confirmed their behavior in revisiting as well as the high potential of word of mouth. Indeed, this result indicates that loyalty to the destination is high to very high.

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