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MARTIAL ARTS TOURISM

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Motivation of Inbound Tourists to learn Muay Thai in Thailand as a Destination Choice

Key words: tourism behavior, destination marketing, decision making, marketing, tourism motivation, martial arts

Background. *Muay Thai*, known as 'Thai Boxing', is a famous sports tourist attraction in Thailand, and it is essential for marketing and tourism development professionals to understand the motivations that attract foreign inbound tourists to use their vacation time to learn Muay Thai.

Problem and Aim. Few studies have focused on the push-and-pull motivational factors affecting this to determine if these motivations fit past research on the decision to participate in sports or martial arts. This study was designed to identify and assess the roles of push-and pull factors in the decision to learn Muay Thai among inbound tourists visiting gyms in Bangkok, Thailand.

Methods. Quantitative analysis of a total of 384 valid responses was analyzed by confirmatory factor analysis.

Results. The results show that the decision to learn Muay Thai in Thailand by international tourists is more influenced by pull factors such as Thailand being the country of origin for Muay Thai, over push factors, such as the desire to attain success and achievement.

Conclusions. These results provide essential marketing implications for national branding and tourism development utilizing the sports industry. In particular, they identify market segmentation based on demographic data, focusing on five push factors and five pull factors to design promotional programs and decision-making regarding sports destination development. The findings contribute to the tourism and marketing literature on travel motivation, destination choice, and decision-making behavior among international tourists.

Introduction

Muay Thai, or 'Thai Boxing', is an alluring martial art that is the most popular sports tourist attraction in Thailand [Crisafulli *et al.* 2009]. For those visiting Bangkok, learning this close-combat technique has become a way to relax, exercise, and entertain, and is a unique part of Thailand's culture that immerses the tourist rather than merely performs, developed over the centuries into a sport rather than a weapon. Referred to as "The Art of Eight Limbs," Muay Thai uses eight parts of the body, such as the elbow, knees, hands, fists, and shin, for both defensive and offensive maneuvers [Crisafulli *et al.* 2009; Li, Wang 2010].

With a fast-growing martial arts participation rate and diverse attraction across cultures and demographics, Muay Thai's useful and practical attributes have become a solution for those wanting to understand mixed martial arts fighting in a relatively short period [Davies, Deckert 2018; Li, Wang 2010]. However, its rise as a major international sport is likely to be traced to Thailand's high rate of inbound tourism and it being the most popular sport in Thailand [Vail 2014].

Today, visitors to Bangkok can do more than just observe Thailand's well-documented natural beauty, with a growing number of tourist attractions focused on interactive experiences rather than just passive relaxation [Buathong, Lai 2019]. While many sports are spectator-only, Thailand's Muay Thai offers a unique blend of opportunities to watch, such as Lumpinee Boxing Stadium, or participate, such as through local gyms providing lessons and making available traditional Muay Thai masters. These training sessions range from a single lesson to that of a few months and offer various levels

of experience to accommodate all ranges of potential practitioners.

A survey conducted by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) in 2016 found that the top-ten nationalities that traveled to learn Muay Thai were 11,219 British, 6,800 Australian, 5,852 French, 4,688 German, 4,253 Swedish, 2,183 Russian, 1,855 Denmark, 1,841 Japanese, 1,781 New Zealand, and 1,633 Spanish, respectively [TATIC 2017].

In tandem with the continued growth of sports tourism [Getz, Page 2016], Muay Thai has allowed for the expansion of Bangkok gyms to accommodate tourist demands for training and exhibition. This increased demand has benefited both the regional and national economies of Thailand and allowed for additional tourism expansion opportunities in areas that were previously limited [James 2005]. Understanding the push-and-pull factors that motivate international tourists to undertake Muay Thai is essential to determine the best strategy for future economic development and marketing to improve inbound tourist rates.

Many researchers have investigated motivational factors for people that get involved in sporting activities [e.g., Burton 2003; Gill et al. 1983; Gould et al. 1985; Koivula 1999; Kondric et al. 2013; McDonald et al. 2002; Wankel 1993] with some analyzing the motivational factors for martial arts participation [e.g., Boudreau et al. 1995; Jones et al. 2006; Ong, Ruzmin 2015; 2015; Stefanek 2004; Twemlow et al. 1996; Vertonghen et al. 2015]. Results of these studies have varied, mostly due to the use of different scales and broad participant demographics [Gill et al. 1983; Koivula 1999; McDonald et al. 2002]. Few studies have sought to understand the difference in motivations between martial arts and sports, and fewer still have analyzed motivations for those willing to travel and participate in education instead of participation in leisure activities and attendance at exhibitions.

Understanding participants' motivation regarding sports is considered a central research question [Kondric et al. 2013], and essential for destination-related tourism marketing and development strategies meant to accommodate inbound tourists [Green 2002]. Using the push-and-pull motivation factor framework, this study aims to confirm if there is a difference between sports and martial arts participation motivation and to determine inbound tourists' motivations regarding the decision to spend vacation time to learn Muay Thai, a martial art, as a sport.

Literature Review

The essential concepts analyzed for this study the push and pull motivations of tourism with respect to special-interest travel. Brotherton and Himmetoglu [1997] compared existing typologies and frameworks, adding

to previous studies regarding leisure tourism [de Grazia 1964; IsoAhola 1983; Kelly 1983] and tourism self-benefits and motivations [Dann 1977]. In their research, Brotherton and Himmetoglu [1997] determined the existence of a "tourist interest continuum", which categorized tourists into three levels. General interest tourism is the broadest, followed by mixed interest tourism and special interest tourism. Part of this synopsis involved determining the decision-making process tourists went through and which questions they would ask before making a final decision regarding their travel plans. General interest tourists would focus on where they would like to go only, whereas mixed interest tourists would question where they want to go and what activities are available. However, special interest tourists are different in that they first determine their interests and desired activities and then investigate where they can fulfill that desire. To analyze tourists' motivation, Brotherton and Himmetoglu [1997] created a tourist interest continuum to classify tourists into select groups further to evaluate their motivation level. These categories included "dabblers", "enthusiasts", "experts", and "fanatics," which were similar to the categories used within leisure studies [Stebbins 1982]. Whereas leisure tourism research considers travel as a hobby and evaluates lifestyle activities, tourism typologies analyze a traveler's motivation decision-making process in totality and additionally consider the travel destination choice [Trauer 2006].

Consumer behavior and the decision-making process concerning traveling, festivals, and special events have received increased scholarly research attention, particularly as countries attempt to respond to global disruption within the tourism industry. It has been determined that tourists decide a holiday destination based upon what location satisfies their internal and intrinsic desires while evaluating the external attributes that a destination provides [Mohammad, Som 2010]. Recently, push and pull variables were analyzed to understand the decision-making process for tourists searching or "hunting" for their travel destination [Suni 2018]. Combining these two factors, both internal and external, forms an international tourist's motivation and allows them to make informed and specific decisions that result in international vacationing.

Motivation is defined "as the need that desires an individual to act in a certain way to achieve the desired satisfaction" [Berlin, Martin 2004]. An underlying behavioral force particularly connected to learning [Dweck, Legget 1988], someone's motivation to travel can shed insight into their participation in sports education while on holiday. Studies regarding sports participation found that individuals sought fun, skill development, challenge, and fitness [Kondric et al. 2013]. In contrast, martial arts participants sought to acquire the ability to defend themselves and increase their physical fitness [Twemlow et al. 1996].

When researchers specified a specific martial art, such as taekwondo [Zeng *et al.* 2015], important push factors were found to motivate those seeking to learn, such as physical exercise, skill development, friendship, and seeking to become more disciplined [Stefanek 2004]. These studies suggested that push factors described the important factors. Sometimes it was the martial arts instructor or a unique teaching method found to increase participation [Elling, Wisse 2010]. Individuals who were found to have a strong motivation for affiliation and friendship, followed by fitness, reward, competition, situational, and skill development, chose to study martial arts [Jones *et al.* 2010]. Little insight has been provided on what motivates tourists' behaviors and determines if their motivation coincides with martial arts practitioners or general sports enthusiasts. The varying motivations between sports and martial arts participation and the lack of study regarding tourists' motivation to participate in such events mean that by understanding why tourists study Muay Thai in Thailand, a greater context can be provided regarding sports marketing, education, and exhibition participation of tourists.

Push/Pull Factors

This concept involves the theory that people travel because they are pushed and pulled to do so by "force". The push-and-pull model for how individuals make decisions has been utilized within different fields of study [Crompton 1979; Dann 1977; 1981; Hsu, Lam 2003; Jang, Cai 2002; Zhang, Lam 1999] including event choice [Lee *et al.* 2004], senior citizen traveling habits [Jang, Wu 2006], destination loyalty and satisfaction [Yoon, Uysal 2005], entrepreneurial behavior and migration in virtual social networks [Chang *et al.* 2014; Kirkwood 2009], and how international students choose a destination for education [Chen 2017]. Gnoth [1997] defined push factors as internal motives or forces that make tourists a travel decision, while pull factors are something that destinations must attract tourists to come.

A review of the literature indicated that push motivation might be stimulated by a destination's unique or specific attributes [Dann 1977]. Most push factors are intrinsic motivators, such as escape from a mundane environment, exploration, relaxation, prestige, health and fitness, adventure, and social interaction [Caber, Albayrak 2016; Gazley, Watling 2015].

In contrast, pull factors emerge due to the destination's attractiveness, including the cultural and natural environment, special events, and other tourist attractions [Caber, Albayrak 2016; Gazley, Watling 2015; Uysal, Jurowski 1994]. Traditionally, push factors explain the desire to travel, while pull factors are considered more decisive in explaining destination choice [Caber, Albayrak 2016; Crompton 1979; Gazley, Gilbert, Terrata 2001;

Kassean, Gassita 2013, Morrison 2013; Watling 2015; Woodside, Martin, 2008]. Since either push or pull factors may influence an inbound tourist's decision to learn Muay Thai in Thailand as a destination choice, both push factors and pull factors need to be analyzed.

1. Research Framework

In this study, the model was developed, including two primary constructs: push factors (getaway/escape, social interaction interest in sports, hobby/relaxation, spiritual needs, knowledge gain, success/achievement) and pull factors (budget/inexpensive, history and culture, easy to travel, enjoy the fun, art of protection, country of origin). We intended to analyze the motivation of inbound tourists learning Muay Thai and measure the effects of push and pull factors on the decision to learn Muay Thai. Figure 1 presents the proposed framework for this study.
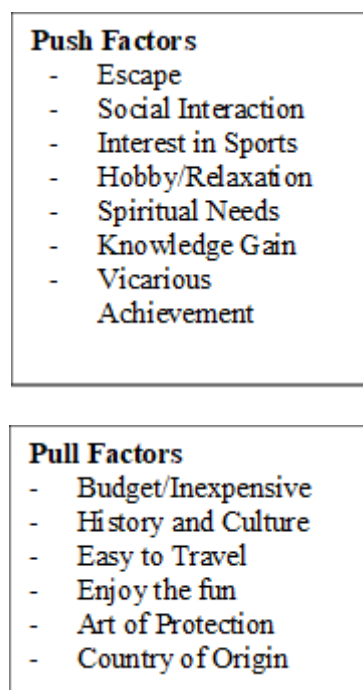

Push Factors
- Escape
- Social Interaction
- Interest in Sports
- Hobby/Relaxation
- Spiritual Needs
- Knowledge Gain
- Vicarious Achievement

Pull Factors
- Budget/Inexpensive
- History and Culture
- Easy to Travel
- Enjoy the fun
- Art of Protection
- Country of Origin

Fig. 1. Proposed Research Model

Using the push-and-pull theory, the hypotheses for this study were broken down into two, regarding push factors and pull factors. First, we hypothesize that there will be a significant positive relationship between push factors (H1) and the decision to learn Muay Thai by international tourists in Thailand, specifically regarding the desire for a getaway and escape (H1a), social interaction (H1b), interest in sports (H1c), hobby/relaxation (H1d), spiritual needs (H1e), and success/achievement (H1g). Next, we hypothesize a significant positive relationship between pull factors (H2) and the decision to learn Muay Thai by international tourists in Thailand, specifically regarding an inexpensive budget (H2a), history and culture (H2b), ease to travel to the gym (H2c),

enjoyment and fun (H2d), for the art of protection (H2e), and being the martial art's country of origin (H2f).

2. Research Methodology

A survey utilizing self-administered questionnaires was the best suited for this study, distributed to tourist practitioners who used gyms classified as 'Boxing Gyms,' located in Bangkok, Thailand. While the total number of 'boxing gyms' number around 912 within the metro Bangkok area [Ministry of Tourism & Sports 2013], there are 26 such gyms (e.g., Toongtong Muay Thai Gym, Sor Vorapin Muay Thai Gym, Petchyindee Muay Thai) that are consistently popular among international tourists [Database tourism product 2019].

Data collection was conducted from January 5, 2020, to March 10, 2020, from Muay Thai gyms found in Bangkok, Thailand. Since this study's focus was intended to be international tourists who had come to learn Muay Thai but the exact number of international tourists coming to Thailand to learn Muay Thai kickboxing in Bangkok is unknown (in terms of exact numbers). Although TAT showed that 42,105 international tourists traveled to Thailand to learn Muay Thai in 2016, it remained undetermined the amount that came explic-

itly to Bangkok and the motivations of these travelers to study Muay Thai in Thailand. Therefore, as the population element has no probabilities for an equal chance of selection in the sample, a nonprobability; convenience sampling was the appropriate sampling method for this study [Cavana et al. 2001]. The researchers used Cochran's [1977] formula to calculate the sample size selection. Around 384 people found by researchers at boxing gyms in Bangkok were sample size, using the Cochran formula. The questionnaires were delivered in person to 384 international tourists based in Bangkok.

The questionnaire in this study was developed utilizing prior push-and-pull motivation studies [Chen, Mo 2014; Ko, Kim 2010; Phau et al. 2013], which were designed to capture respondents' perceptions that influence learning Muay Thai and destination choice. Closed-ended questions were used for the questionnaire in four sections. The first section referred to a pre-existing interest in Muay Thai. The second section identified pull and push factors; 21 push motive items were generated for escape, social interaction, interest in sports, hobby/relaxation, spiritual needs, knowledge gain, and vicarious achievement, together with 20 pull motive items for budget/inexpensive, history and culture, easy to travel, enjoy the fun, the art of protection, and country of origin. Next, the third section obtained data on travel characteristics (primary purpose, frequency of visit to Thailand, length of the current visit,
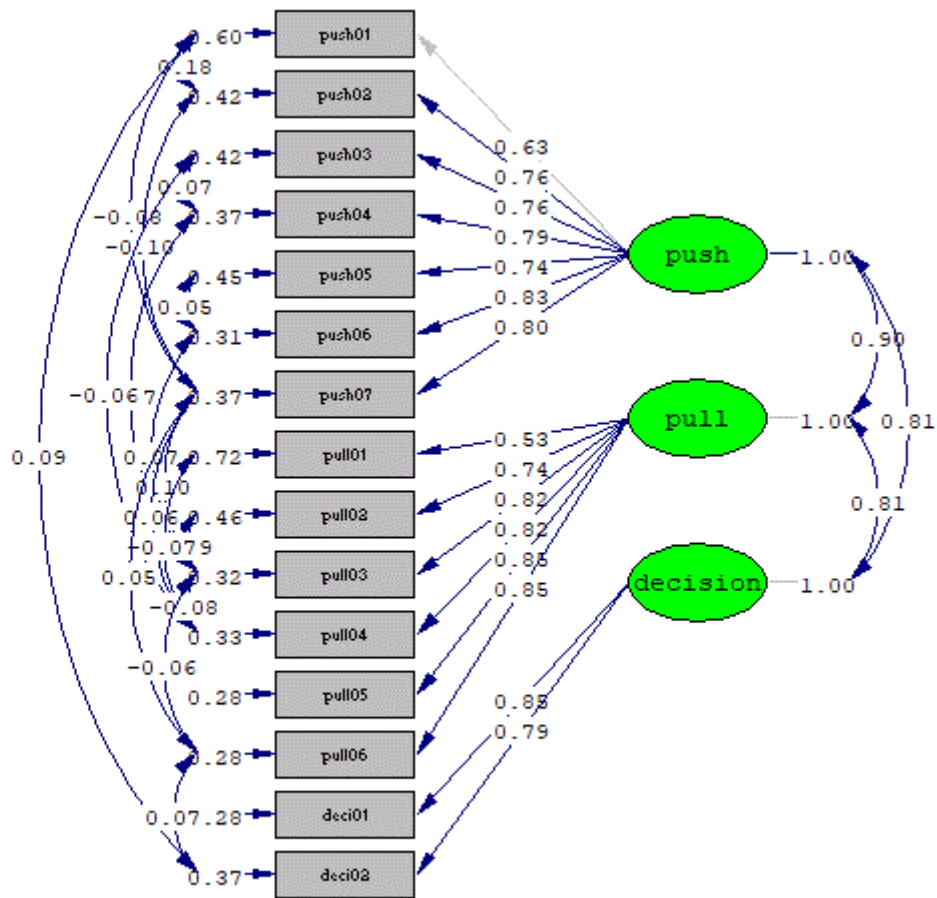
Chi-Square=85.90, df=70, P-value=0.09529, RMSEA=0.024

Fig. 2. Final adjusted model

and travel party). Finally, the fourth section was designed to obtain personal information (age, gender, nationality, educational level, and employment status). The research variables were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The research instruments' content validity includes review by using a panel of three experts and testing in a pilot sample to ensure the reliability and validity of the scales. Thirty respondents participated in the pilot study. Cronbach's alpha was applied to test reliability. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to test the factors that have been developed, and Multi regression was conducted to test hypotheses.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis

In this study, the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) statistic was used to confirm each latent variable's "construct validity" that was placed in the model. The final adjusted model reveals that Chi-Square value is not significant at a 0.05 level (Chi-Square = 85.90, df = 70, p-value = 0.09529) [Hooper, Coughlan, Mullen 2008]. A Chi-Square probability value greater than .05 indicates a good model fit, with a model's ability to represent the data. We want the chi-square to be insignificant for a good model fit, as shown in Figure 2, to determine how closely observed data match the relationships specified in a hypothesized model.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis was used to confirm the construct validity. The proposed measurement model in this research involved multi-item constructs. The measurement model included three constructs. Push factors have seven components: Escape/Getaway, Social Interaction, Interest in Sports, Hobby/Relaxation, Spiritual Needs, Knowledge Gain, Success/Achievement. Pull factors have six components: Budget/Inexpensive, History and Culture, Easy to Travel, Enjoy the Fun, Art of Protection, Country of Origin. The decision to learn Muay Thai in Thailand as a destination choice has no component. However, there are two questions: You are certain that you want to learn Muay Thai, and Bangkok is one of the best Muay Thai training destinations in Thailand. Such measurement models were determined by the goodness of fit index, which is one indicator of the fit of the measurement model. Hair *et al.* [2010], and Schumacker and Lomax [2004] indicated Goodness-of-fit indexes: chi-square (χ2), goodness-of-fit (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit (AGFI), comparative fit index (CFI), normed fit index (NFI), standard root mean square (SRMR) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). These indexes were used to assess the CFA results. Hair et al. (2010) indicated that the p-value should gather than 0.05 if there is a good model fit. GFI and AGFI used to indicate Absolute Fit Indices should be greater

than 0.90 to accept a model, and a value above 0.95 indicates a good fit [Schumacker, Lomax 2004]. Other fit measures such as RMSEA and RMR, the discrepancy per degree of freedom, of 0.05 or less are considered to indicate a good fit of the model; those between 0.05 and 0.08 indicate a good fit; those greater than 0.08 indicate a poor fit [Diamantopoulos, Siguaw 2000]. To indicate Relative Fit Indices, CFI, and NFI should be equal to or greater than 0.90 to accept the model [Hair *et al.* 2010]. As mentioned above, to confirm all the final scales, if there were good measurement models, the CFA results were presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Goodness of fit indices for the measurement models

Indices	Criterions	Final Model
χ^2/df	<2	1.227
p-value	>0.05	0.095
GFI	>0.90	0.97
AGFI	>0.90	0.95
CFI	>0.90	1.00
NFI	>0.90	0.99
RMESA	<0.05	0.024
RMR	<0.05	0.008

Table 2. Factor loadings, t-value, R^2 C.R. and AVE values of push factors, pull factors and decision to learn Muay Thai

Variables	B	S.E.	t-value	R^2	CR	AVE
Push Factor					0.91	0.58
Escape	0.63	--	--	0.40		
Social Interaction	0.76	0.09	15.14**	0.58		
Interest in Sports	0.76	0.11	12.34**	0.58		
Hobby/Relaxation	0.79	0.12	12.71**	0.63		
Spiritual Needs	0.74	0.11	12.10**	0.55		
Knowledge Gain	0.83	0.12	13.13**	0.69		
Vicarious Achievement	0.80	0.12	11.95**	0.63		
Pull Factors					0.90	0.60
Budget/Inexpensive	0.53	0.03	10.88**	0.28		
History and Culture	0.74	0.03	16.45**	0.54		
Easy to Travel	0.82	0.02	18.93**	0.68		
Enjoy the Fun	0.82	0.02	19.13**	0.67		
Art of Protection	0.85	0.02	20.23**	0.72		
Country of Origin	0.85	0.02	20.20**	0.72		
Decision to learn Muay Thai					0.81	0.67
You are certain that you want to learn Muay Thai.	0.85	0.03	18.95**	0.72		
Bangkok is one of the best Muay Thai training destinations in Thailand.	0.79	0.03	17.33**	0.63		

** P-value < 0.01 (t-value ≥ 2.58)

----- No report S.E. and t-value Because Fixed-Parameter

In Table 2, the completely standardized loadings of observed variables ranged from 0.53 - 0.85. The standardized loading that meets the criterion should be greater

than 0.5 [Hair et al. 2006]. R^2 of observed variables ranged from 0.28-0.72. All completely standardized loadings have a significant impact at a level of significance 0.01 (all t-value are more than 0.5).

According to Diamantopoulos and Siguaw [2000], the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should be higher than 0.50, and the Composite reliability (C.R.) of the construct should be greater than 0.70 [Hair *et al.* 2006]. From Table 2, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of all the constructs fell between 0.58 and 0.67, which were higher than 0.5, indicating that the observed variables of these constructs can adequately explain the variation in item scale values. Additionally, the result yielded Composite Reliability (C.R.), ranging from 0.81-0.91, which was higher than 0.7, indicating that all the constructs have adequate composite reliability.

The reliability assessment of survey data in this study, such as Cronbach's alpha, was computed. Each construct with the value of Cronbach's alpha is considered acceptable if higher than 0.7 [Nunnally 1978]. The result of the Cronbach's alpha for the fourteen constructs were as follows: escape (α = 0.952), social interaction (α = 0.946), interest in sports (α = 0.949), hobby/relaxation (α = 0.945), spiritual needs (α = 0.946), knowledge gain (α = 0.944) and success/achievement (α = 0.943), fits the budget/inexpensive (α = 0.944), history and culture (α = 0.945), easy to travel (α = 0.943), enjoy the fun (α = 0.945), art of protection (α = 0.944) the martial art's country of origin (α = 0.944), and decision to learn Muay Thai (α = 0.945). Then, multiple regression was employed to measure the effects of push factors and pull factors on the decision to learn Muay Thai in Thailand.

Demographic Characteristics

The unit of analysis of this study was an individual international tourist. The findings indicated that the majority of the sample (62.2%) were males, and 37.8% were females. The majority of respondents were aged 35 to 44 years old (38%), followed by 21 to 34 years old (25.8%) and 55 to 64 years old (24%). The group over 65 years old (8.9%) and under 20 years old (3.4%) had the lowest number. 77.1% of respondents held bachelor's degrees, while 14.8% possessed a diploma. Employed participants had 60.4%, Self-employed had 21.9%, retired/renter had 8.3%, student/pupil had 7.3%, and unemployed had 2.1%. There were Americans (53.1%), Asians (26.6%), and Europeans (20.3%). For the primary travel purpose of learning Muay Thai (90.9%) and other motivations (9.1%). 2-3 previous visits were 52.9%; the first time visiting Thailand was 31.0%, and more than three previous visits were 16.1%. In terms of length of the current visit, the highest proportion of respondents was more than one month (46.6%), followed by more than two months (28.4%), more than two weeks (20.8%), and more than three months (4.2%) respectively.

Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

Descriptive statistics for 14 variables examined in this study. Means, standard deviations, and correlations among all variables are shown in Table 3. The mean and SD scores displayed by ordering the scores from highest to lowest as follows: interest in sports (M = 4.37, SD = .495), art of protection (M = 4.29, SD = .566), vicarious achievement (M = 4.28, SD = .564), enjoyment/fun (M = 4.27, SD = .517), social interaction (M = 4.26, SD = .568), history and culture (M = 4.26, SD = .575), knowledge gain (M = 4.25, SD = .583), decision to learn Muay Thai (M = 4.25, SD = .556), easy to travel (M = 4.24, SD = .572), budget/inexpensive (M = 4.21, SD = .576), country of origin (M = 4.19, SD = .543), hobby/relaxation (M = 4.18, SD = .593), spiritual needs (M = 4.16, SD = .562) and escape (M = 4.13, SD = .639). The Pearson product-moment correlation method was applied to identify the correlation of the variables studied. The results of the correlation among all variables exhibited a range from 0.301 to 0.991, as presented in Table 3. The correlation coefficient indicated the strength of association between BUD and COO is moderate (r = 0.741) and that the correlation coefficient is highly significant (P < 0.01). Also, ESC has a low *positive correlation* with INT (r = 0.301). Many of the variables comprising a construct are said to have a moderate positive association with each other, and none of the items will exceed 0.8. Thus, multicollinearity is not a problem in this study. The correlation matrix further provides initial evidence for the hypotheses that there is a positive association between the decision to learn Muay Thai and push factors, as well as pull factors.

Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is conducted to test the main effect hypotheses. Multiple regression analyses are performed to estimate the effects of push factors: getaway/escape, social interaction, interest in sports, hobby/relaxation, spiritual needs, knowledge gain, and success/achievement, and pull factors: budget/inexpensive, history and culture, easy to travel, enjoyment/fun, the art of protection and country of origin on the decision to learn Muay Thai. The results of the multiple regression analysis are described in Table 4 and Table 5. In Table 4, the overall regression model is significant (R^2 = 0.539, F = 62.784, p< 0.01). The regression analysis identifies that the overall model accounts for merely 53% of the variance in the dependent variable, which is the decision to learn Muay Thai in Thailand as a destination choice. The results show that vicarious achievement (β = 0.264, p< 0.01), interest in sports (β = 0.219, p< 0.01), social interaction (β = 0.169, p< 0.01), hobby/relaxation (β = 0.146, p< 0.01) and knowledge gain (β = 0.112, p< 0.05) are significantly predictors of the decision to learn Muay

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation matrix of study variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. ESC	4.13	0.639	1													
2. SOC	4.26	0.568	0.414**	1												
3. INT	4.37	0.495	0.301**	0.345**	1											
4. HOB	4.18	0.593	0.360**	0.544**	0.486**	1										
5. SPN	4.16	0.562	0.395**	0.525**	0.458**	0.592**	1									
6. KNG	4.25	0.583	0.462**	0.579**	0.536**	0.648**	0.669**	1								
7. VA	4.28	0.564	0.432**	0.559**	0.428**	0.609**	0.593**	0.646**	1							
8. BUD	4.21	0.576	0.463**	0.599**	0.475**	0.599**	0.551**	0.633**	0.626**	1						
9. HIS	4.26	0.575	0.426**	0.611**	0.458**	0.565**	0.474**	0.629**	0.573**	0.721**	1					
10. ET	4.24	0.572	0.469**	0.703**	0.453**	0.658**	0.551**	0.685**	0.698**	0.690**	0.684**	1				
11. EF	4.27	0.517	0.382**	0.598**	0.469**	0.578**	0.572**	0.657**	0.664**	0.700**	0.631**	0.600**	1			
12. AOP	4.29	0.566	0.427**	0.556**	0.423**	0.608**	0.587**	0.636**	0.991**	0.622**	0.574**	0.688**	0.663**	1		
13. COO	4.19	0.543	0.419**	0.658**	0.430**	0.601**	0.545**	0.651**	0.669**	0.741**	0.680**	0.664**	0.679**	0.661**	1	
14. MT	4.25	0.556	0.376**	0.553**	0.516**	0.594**	0.523**	0.608**	0.630**	0.633**	0.621**	0.633**	0.616**	0.630**	0.672**	1

Notes: * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

ESP= Escape; SOC= Social Interaction; IS= Interest in Sports; HOB= Hobby/Relaxation; SPN=Spiritual Needs; KNG= Knowledge Gain, VA= Vicarious Achievement; BUD= Budget/Inexpensive; HIS= History and Culture; ET= Easy to Travel, EF= Enjoy the fun; AOP= Art of Protection; COO= Country of Origin; MT= Muay Thai.

Thai. Therefore, we conclude that the evidence supports H1b, H1c, H1d, H1f, and H1g.

Table 4. Regression analysis results of hypotheses 1a-1g

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
1 (Constant)	.269	.206		1.304
Escape/Getaway	.015	.036	.017	.413
Social Interaction	.169	.046	.173	3.698
Interest in Sports	.219	.048	.195	4.556
Hobby/Relaxation	.146	.048	.155	3.039
Spiritual Needs	.007	.050	.007	.147
Knowledge Gain	.112	.055	.117	2.026
Success/ Achievement	.264	.050	.268	5.240

Notes: $R = 0.734$; $R^2 = 0.539$; *Adjusted* $R^2 = 0.530$

Significant levels at *p < 0.05 and **p < 0.01

In Table 5, the analysis result of the Stepwise method confirmed that there were only five out of the six pull factors that significantly correlated with the decision to learn Muay Thai. These five factors were, the country of origin (β = 0.243, *p*< 0.01), easy to travel (β = 0.139, *p*< 0.05), enjoyment/fun (β = 0.127, *p*< 0.05), art of protection (β = 0.172, *p*< 0.01) and history of culture (β = 0.134, *p*< 0.05), thus, H2b, H2c, H2d, H2e and H2f are supported.

Table 5. Regression analysis results of hypotheses 2a-2f

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
1 (Constant)	.519	.174		2.983
Budget/Inexpensive	.064	.059	.066	1.089
History of Culture	.134	.053	.139	2.527
Easy to Travel	.139	.054	.144	2.567
Enjoyment/Fun	.127	.058	.119	2.195
Art of Protection	.172	.052	.175	3.288
Country of Origin	.243	.059	.237	4.093

Notes: $R = 0.750$; $R^2 = 0.562$; *Adjusted* $R^2 = 0.555$

Table 6. Regression analysis results of hypotheses 1 and 2

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
1 (Constant)	.624	.084	.533	7.437
Push	.308	.092	.240	3.351
Pull	.624	.084	.533	7.437

Notes: $R = 0.753$; $R^2 = 0.568$; *Adjusted* $R^2 = 0.565$

Significant levels at *p < 0.05 and **p < 0.01

Significant levels at *p < 0.05 and **p < 0.01

The analysis result from the Stepwise method confirms that two factors significantly correlate with the decision to learn Muay Thai, which are push factors (β

= 0.308, *p*< 0.01) and pull factors (*β* = 0.624, *p*< 0.01), and thus, H1 and H2 are supported.

3. Discussion

While examining the effects of push-and-pull factors in the decision to learn Muay Thai in Thailand as destination choice, the findings of this study purport positive relationships between both push factors (vicarious achievement, interest in sports, social interaction, hobby/relaxation, knowledge gain) and pull factors (being the country of origin, the art of protection, easy to travel, history of culture, enjoyment/fun), and the decision to learn Muay Thai in Thailand as a destination choice. Desire to be successful and gain achievement was found to be the primary predicating push factor, and therefore these results concur with the findings of earlier research on sports participation motivations [Gill *et al.* 1983; Gould *et al.* 1985; Stefanek 2004], suggesting that athletes are highly motivated by skill development and challenge. On the other hand, the highest supported pull factor that motivated individuals to travel to Thailand and then learn Muay Thai was that Thailand is the country of origin of this martial art. Regarding pull factors, the driving motivation to travel to Thailand to learn Muay Thai was the desire to acquire genuine Thai training, which includes the subtle nuances of the martial art, which is only possible by someone with direct experience and mastery. Tourists can be trained for a few days or weeks during their trip through Thailand. More than 60,000 full-time, experienced boxers exist out of a 60 million population, with hundreds of specific "Box" camps spread throughout Thailand. In Bangkok alone, there are already over 200 of these Muay Thai camps focused on professional Thai boxer training and can help tourists focus on understanding martial art and the ability to achieve top results. Tourists can also immerse themselves in the unique Muay Thai culture, reinforced by Thailand's national cultural aspects.

Overall, this study's findings contributed to the needed additional tourism and marketing insights into the differences between martial arts and other sports. Although this study's evidence was consistent with prior research on the importance of fun and enjoyment as significant motivations for people taking part in risky sports [Koivula 1999; Ko *et al.* 2008; Wankel 1993], when analyzing inbound tourist motivations regarding Muay Thai, tourists valued the location and a feeling of accomplishment as their primary motivations. This difference can assist marketers and developers to evaluate the difference between sports motivation and Muay Thai motivation.

Pull factors were found to be significantly more motivating than push factors, providing a deeper context as to what aspects most impact an individual tourist and their desire to spend vacation time focused on martial arts education. Out of 384 participants, 276 had a pre-existing pre-travel interest in Muay Thai.

The fact that they were surveyed learning Muay Thai in Thailand and turning their interest into practice provided higher-than-expected support for pull-over-push factors. This pull-over-push result is consistent with Nezakati *et al.*'s [2013] study, which revealed a significant relationship between a person's interest in sport and their willingness to travel abroad to take part in sports tourism, and our findings seem to confirm that relationship, specifically regarding Muay Thai. Inbound tourists to Bangkok interested in Muay Thai learn that Wai Khru is the fighters' way to respect their trainers. This taught code of conduct is a unique attribute that cannot be found in other countries. In contrast, the study of Zeng *et al.* [2015] identified that push factors play a significant role in motivating participants to learn a martial art. Thus, this study supported the conceptual framework for push-and-pull factors suggested by the literature, even when applied to inbound tourists utilizing a martial arts education context within a different cultural setting, helped isolate which factors were more influential.

4. Conclusions and Implications

The study attempts to understand motivation factors in the decision to learn Muay Thai in Thailand as a destination choice and attempts to supplement the theoretical and literature contribution to the relationships among push and pull factors regarding marketing and tourism. This study's outcomes offer evidence that the decision to learn Muay Thai in Thailand as a destination choice has a positive relationship with both push and pull factors, with pull factors considered to be more critical than push factors.

By using the push and pull motivation theory to investigate the decision to learn Muay Thai in Thailand as a destination choice among international tourists, we have provided insight into ways to attract international tourists to a particular destination, like Bangkok, Thailand. Findings purport that there are different internal push motivation factors such as the desire for social interaction, interest in sports, a hobby or relaxation, gain knowledge, or achieve and succeed, all of which motivate the target to decide to learn Muay Thai in Thailand as a destination choice. Additionally, we identified the external pull factors that led to this decision, such as learning or understanding the history of a culture, ease of traveling to the location, enjoyment and fun, learning the art of protection, and learning directly within the sport's country of origin. To achieve and to succeed was the most significant push motive for inbound tourists to travel to learn Muay Thai, while the sport's country of origin illustrated its highest significance as a pull motivation.

Based on these findings, the push and pull motivation theory was a useful way to explain why people who

participate in martial arts desire to travel or take a vacation and why they select to visit a particular destination. This study will contribute to the current understanding of Muay Thai practitioners, which can help marketers in building consumer profiles. Muay Thai has different consumer needs depending on desire, competition levels, culture, background, past experiences, and discipline in Muay Thai. Understanding the motivations that impact international tourists to travel to a destination for sports tourism and what motivates them to want to learn Muay Thai can help tourism developers and travel marketers develop effective strategies that fit the consumer behaviors of sports tourists. Effective marketing strategies can be created when market segmentation, specific services, and promotional activities are analyzed regarding customer expectations and motivations.

Additionally, hospitality and travel agencies can better facilitate product and service planning, marketing communication and improve visitor attraction and retention. A deeper understanding of what factors influence Muay Thai participation is key to further development in the sports and martial arts Thai tourism industry.

Limitations and Future Research

Nevertheless, the limitations of this study need to be addressed in future research. Firstly, more research on martial arts practitioners and their attitudes and perceptions towards different programs can further improve understanding of the factors that influence their consumption behavior. Secondly, further study of the demographic differences (i.e., gender, ethnicity) in motivation factors and constraint factors is needed that will be beneficial for marketers regarding sporting or cultural events, tourism attractions, and local small businesses, including gyms. Thirdly, qualitative and quantitative research in regard to the field of study is suggested to expose a deeper level of apprehension into the behavior of inbound tourists.

Acknowledgments

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Motywacja turystów pobytowych do nauki Muay Thai w Tajlandii jako destynacji turystycznej

Słowa kluczowe: zachowania turystyczne, marketing destynacji, podejmowanie decyzji, marketing, motywacja turystyczna, sztuki walki

Streszczenie

Tło. Muay Thai, znany jako "tajski boks", jest znaną sportową atrakcją turystyczną Tajlandii, dlatego też istotne jest, aby specjaliści od marketingu i rozwoju turystyki zrozumieli motywacje, które przyciągają zagranicznych turystów przyjezdnych do wykorzystania czasu wakacji na naukę Muay Thai. Problem i Cel. Niewiele badań koncentrowało się na czynnikach motywacyjnych oraz na określeniu, czy motywacje te pasują do wcześniejszych badań dotyczących decyzji o uczestnictwie w sporcie lub sztukach walki. Niniejsze badanie miało na celu zidentyfikowanie i ocenę roli czynników wypychających *(push)* i przyciągających *(pull)* w decyzji o nauce Muay Thai wśród turystów przyjezdnych odwiedzających siłownie w Bangkoku w Tajlandii.

Metody. Analizie ilościowej poddano 384 ważne odpowiedzi, które poddano konfirmacyjnej analizie czynnikowej.

Wyniki. Wyniki pokazują, że na decyzję o podjęciu nauki Muay Thai w Tajlandii przez turystów międzynarodowych większy wpływ mają czynniki typu pull, takie jak bycie krajem pochodzenia Muay Thai, niż czynniki wypychające typu push, takie jak chęć osiągnięcia sukcesu i dobre rezultaty.

Wnioski. Wyniki te dostarczają istotnych implikacji marketingowych dla brandingu narodowego i rozwoju turystyki z wykorzystaniem branży sportowej, szczególnie w zakresie identyfikacji segmentacji rynku w oparciu o dane demograficzne, koncentrując się na pięciu czynnikach typu *push* i pięciu czynnikach *pull* w celu projektowania programów promocyjnych i podejmowania decyzji dotyczących rozwoju destynacji sportowych. Wyniki badań stanowią wkład do literatury z zakresu turystyki i marketingu w odniesieniu do motywacji podróży, wyboru miejsca docelowego i zachowań decyzyjnych wśród turystów międzynarodowych.